



# Assertiveness at Work

## Delegate Manual - SAMPLE PAGES



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## WORKSHOP OUTLINE

- 9.30 Introduction and Setting the Scene  
Knowledge / Skill Checklist  
Ice Breaker: Getting to Know You  
What Do You Want To Get Out of Today?
- Communication Overview  
Why Communication Goes Wrong
- 11.00 **BREAK**
- Car Wars Exercise  
Assertiveness, Aggression and Passivity  
Rights & Responsibilities
- 12.45 **LUNCH**
- 3 Steps to Assertive Behaviour  
Assertive Behaviour: Written Skill Practice
- Listening Skills Exercises  
Importance of Body Language in Communication  
Body Language Exercises
- 3.00 **BREAK**
- Preparing to be Assertive  
Assertive Tactics inc. Broken Record and Self-Disclosure
- Assertive role plays
- Some Thoughts on Action Planning  
Knowledge / Skill Checklist  
Workshop Summary
- 4.45 **CLOSE**

"Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards."

**ANON**

## KNOWLEDGE SKILL CHECKLIST

In order to ensure that learning objectives are met by the course:

**BEFORE THE COURSE:** Rate your ability on a competence scale of 1-5 as follows:-

1= No knowledge/skill

2= A little knowledge/skill but considerable development required

3= Some knowledge/skill but development required

4= Good level of knowledge/skill displayed, with a little development required

5= Highly competent - no/very little development required

**WRITE** your numerical rating in the 1st column. **AFTER THE COURSE:** Repeat the exercise, writing your new rating, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> column

COMPETENCE	PRE . (1-5)	POST (1-5)
1. Understands what communication actually is		
2. Appreciates why communication often goes wrong between people		
3. Feels confident to be assertive at work		
4. Understands rights and responsibilities at work		
5. Knows the difference between assertiveness, aggression & passivity		
6. Is assertive with others, utilising the 3 steps to assertive behaviour		
7. Can say no to others with respect, without feeling guilty		
8. Understands a range of positive body language factors when communicating		
9. Displays active listening		
10. Is familiar with a structured approach towards preparing to be assertive		
11. Knows the meaning of broken record technique		
12. Knows the meaning of Self Disclosure		
<b>OVERALL COMPETENCE</b>		
<b>PERCENTAGE CHANGE</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> column total minus 1 <sup>st</sup> ; divide answer by 1 <sup>st</sup> column total; Multiply answer by 100):      %		



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## YOUR NOTES

*"Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better"*  
**FRANK SPENCER**

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## EXERCISE: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. In groups of twos, interview each other and get some facts about them - the job they do, the company they work for and some things about themselves (e.g. hobbies / interests). In addition, explore any 'unusual' facts about them - things that everybody else may not know about them. For example:

- Unusual hobby
- Secret ambition
- Something they did as a child that was naughty
- Met someone famous
- Unusual holiday activity
- Embarrassing incident at work

### Facts about Partner:

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2. Complete the 'What do you want to get out of today?' flipchart.

"I know that you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant"

**RICHARD NIXON**

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## COMMUNICATION METHODS

There is a range of ways that we communicate information at work:

- Face to face (1-1 or group)
- E mail
- Written messages e.g. answering a phone for someone
- Internet
- Meetings
- Presentations
- Telephone
- Voice mail
- Memos and Letters
- Faxes
- Reports
- Video conferencing
- Company newsletter

The method we choose can depend on:

- **WHAT** we need to communicate?
- **WHO** it needs to be communicated to?
- **WHY** do they need the information?
- **WHERE** are they based?
- By **WHEN** do they need the communication?
- **HOW** much feedback is required about the message?
- **HOW** emotive is the topic? (the more emotive to sender or receiver, the more we should go face-to-face)
- **HOW** did they react/respond last time? (e.g. if they ignored your email request for information last time, you may want to pick up the phone this time)
- **WHAT** are the company guidelines on which method to choose?

“Good communication is characterised by providing employees with information which they want and getting information to them quickly and through the channels they prefer.”

**LOUIS I. GELFAND**

## WHAT IS ASSERTIVENESS?

In small groups discuss the meaning of the word 'assertiveness' and how it differs from 'aggression' and 'passivity'. You may want to think about people at work who could be described by the 3 behaviours to help understand the differences.

Come up with some descriptions for each and **transfer onto the flipchart paper**. Choose a Spokesperson to feedback at the end of the exercise.

**Assertiveness is**

**Aggression is**

**Passivity is**

"Behold the tortoise. He only makes progress when he sticks out his neck."

**ANON**



## CAR WARS EXERCISE

Consider whether your behaviour in this situation is - **AGGRESSIVE, PASSIVE OR ASSERTIVE.** - and tick the appropriate box:-

AGGRESSIVE

PASSIVE

ASSERTIVE

Consider these typical Responses from people, and again rate what type of behaviour you think they represent by ticking the appropriate box:-

RESPONSE	AGG.	PASS.	ASSERT.
1. You shout out 'Oi' loudly, and say to yourself "I don't bloody well believe it." After giving the driver a dirty stare, you drive on.			
2. You get out of your car, and walk over to the driver's car. He winds down his window, and you say "Hello there. I appreciate that you may not have seen me there, but I was about to reverse into that parking space. As I was here first, I'd appreciate it if you could move."			
3. You wind the window down and shout "You ***** ***** , that was my parking spot." Give him the 2-finger gesture (believe me it's not the victory sign), and drive off.			
4. You say to yourself 'that's life' and drive off			
5. You get out of your car, and walk over to the driver's car. He winds down his window, and you say "Excuse me, mate. I was about to reverse into that parking space."			

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## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A **right** is something to which we have a just claim. It is key to assertive behaviour - expressing what we want, need or feel but not at the expense of others i.e. not violating other people's rights.

With rights come **responsibilities** too. For example:

- I have the **right** to make a mistake from time to time. I also have the **responsibility** to acknowledge the mistake, to put it right and to learn from it.
- A **right** to a fair hearing of opinions, views and ideas. A **responsibility** to put my views clearly and with balance.

The exercise overleaf may help you think through rights and their relevance to you at work.

"Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things."

**SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL**

**Can't**

- I tried it once and it did not work
- I don't know how to do that
- They can do it better than me
- Someone ridiculed my last effort
- I will never be able to do that

**Thinking Can**

- At least I am one step nearer to finding a way of doing it. What shall I try this time?
- Now how can I do that? Who can I ask for help?
- If they can do it, so can I.
- I will show them and myself that I can do it.
- It's just a matter of finding the best way for me.

**Other Tips for Positive Thinking**

- Expect to feel nervous/anxious/lack of confidence
- Don't expect immediate success
- Remember all the other things you do well
- Accept and believe honest feedback (good or bad)
- Find the courage 'to have a go'
- Learn from mistakes - even the best people make mistakes

## ASSERTIVE SKILL PRACTICE

Using the 3 steps to assertive behaviour, write assertive responses to these scenarios:

SCENARIO	ASSERTIVE RESPONSE
1. You want to go to the department meeting. Your manager says to you: "John, as everyone can't go the meeting, would you mind staying and answering the phone." You do mind.	
2. Your boss comes up and says: "I've been waiting a week now for that analysis report you were doing. Can't you cope with your workload?"	
3. At a daily briefing with the team, Cherry (your manager) comes up with an idea, which you yourself had mentioned to her only 3 days ago. The problem was that she indicated that it was her idea. You are annoyed about this, and want to tackle her after the briefing.	
4. A colleague asks you for your computer password as he's forgotten his. You feel uncomfortable about doing this. You respond:	
5. You have been with the organisation 12 months. Having coffee with a colleague who was on the same induction as you, you discover she's had 3 appraisals. You've only had one. You want to tackle Mo, your line manager, about it.	

## POSITIVE WORDS AND PHRASES

Dictionary says - Positive = “expressing certainty or affirmation to emphasise what is good”

*Positive Words and Statements - these are the things our customer wants to hear*

- “What I can do for you is.....”
- “You can be confident that..”
- “I can assure you ...”
- “Immediately”
- “I’ll do that personally for you”
- “I have a solution”
- “I will...”
- “I am positive..”
- “I will investigate this now for you...”
- “Thank you”
- “I can confirm that...”
- “I am delighted to...”
- “The good news is .....”
- “The product I would recommend for you is...”.
- “From my experience, I would suggest .....”
- “That’s not a problem”

Any favourites of yours to add to the list?:

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## ASSERTIVE PROCESS

### Start

Provides small talk / refreshments.

Thanks them for the opportunity to discuss issue.

Explains **why** they are meeting.

Explains **how** long the meeting may take.

### Middle

Explains any facts/figures around the situation.

Confirms understanding of situation with other party.

Asks them for their solution/approach.

Actively listens.

Attempts workable compromise.

Uses range of assertive tips/tactics.

Overcomes any objections.

Demonstrates positive body language.

### End

Summarises what was agreed.

Agrees a review date.

Thanks them for their time.

### Strengths

### Development Areas

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## CAR WARS EXERCISE: Solutions

1. Aggressive. Even the dirty stare's intent is of 'I'm not happy with you'.
2. Assertive. Bit of me, and a bit of you. Trying to see it from their point of view as well as stating own view. Then trying to get a workable compromise.
3. Aggressive!
4. Passive.
5. Aggressive, bordering on assertive. 'Excuse me, mate' can be said (and received) politely (assertive) or sarcastically (aggressive).

In the Car Wars Exercise, all 3 behavioural styles can be appropriate. It is how the communication is received is the key. Our reaction to this situation can depend on a range of factors including our mood, how we perceive danger and our attitude to this particular character, as he is described.

At the outset, if we ignore the perceived character traits of this driver, we still can't be sure that our perception of the situation is right e.g. we don't know whether our brake lights are working for him to see we are reversing. For all we know he could have thought we were picking up somebody from a house in the street, and was about to thank us for not taking a valuable parking space!

"If people knew how hard I worked to get my mastery, it wouldn't seem so wonderful after all."

**MICHELANGELO**