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Focal Point and IP Inclusive Building Inclusion Through Confident Conversations - Webinar

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Building inclusion through confident conversations



- How confident communication can create a psychologically safe and inclusive culture where we are more able to speak up
- How to adapt your communication style so that it is more confident and assertive in a variety of situations
 - How assertiveness differs from passive and aggressive styles
 - Setting boundaries while maintaining good working relationships
 - Making positive contributions to the teams you work with
 - Ensuring your perspective is taken into consideration

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What is a confident conversation?

- A confident conversation is where those involved are assertive; they can speak with clarity, ask good questions, listen and are consistent in their behaviour
- It is not about being loud, dominant, using fancy language or being word perfect
- It is when there is mutual respect for everyone involved



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The key elements of a confident conversation



- Clarity
 - Clear purpose, language and boundaries
- Asking good questions
 - To understand i.e. a request for help
 - To check assumptions
 - To see if they need to change their minds
- Listening
 - Paying attention and not just hearing
- Being consistent by using assertive qualities
 - Remaining calm but clear
 - Respecting themselves and others

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What are the benefits of having confident conversations?

- Improves relationships
- Better decisions
- Stronger trust builds up over time
- Less conflict and fewer misunderstandings
- People are more willing to speak up
- Higher performance
- Better problem solving and creativity
- Less anxiety leading to better resilience
- A healthier culture
- A more inclusive environment

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What are the risks of not having confident conversations?

- Relationships become strained
- Poorer decisions are made
- Trust erodes over time
- More conflict and more misunderstandings
- People less willing to speak up
- Lower performance
- Poorer problem solving and creativity
- Anxiety increases and resilience lessens
- An uncomfortable culture
- A less tolerant and inclusive environment

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Defining assertive behaviour

Standing up for your rights in a way that does not violate the rights of others

Expressing yourself directly and honestly

Balancing your rights with your responsibilities



What characterises the different behaviours?

You have three new colleagues. You feel

- One of them is behaving **non-assertively**
 - How are they behaving that has led to you thinking this?
- The second is behaving in a **aggressive** way
 - How are they behaving that has led to you thinking this?
- The third is behaving in an **assertive** way
 - How are they behaving that has led to you thinking this?



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Some characteristics of aggressive behaviour:

- Bullying behaviour
- A raised voice
- They know best
- A dictating attitude
- Overpowering body language
- Controlling behaviour
- Short and sharp wording
- Criticising others
- Harsh facial expressions
- Rude behaviour
- No feelings
- No concern for others
- Not calm, up tight
- “Two-faced” behaviour
- Belittling or undermining people
- Withholding information
- Can be out of their depth?
- Insecure?

Possible consequences of aggressive behaviour...

- A loss of respect
- Unapproachable
- Nobody consults them
- They lose touch
- Isolation; nobody wants to communicate with them
- No loyalty; colleagues won't put themselves out for them
- No longer a team

People behaving aggressively believe

- I'm right!
- I'm important
- No one else knows what they're talking about
- I know it all!

Some characteristics of non-assertive (passive, submissive) behaviour

- Lack of confidence
- Quiet
- Meek and mild
- Shy
- Scared of negative answers and saying the wrong thing
- Indecisive
- Lack of knowledge
- Can't say "No" at the appropriate times

Possible consequences of non-assertive behaviour

- Losing authority, another will assume their role
- People lose confidence
- People lose respect
- Loss of "leadership" as no direction or guidance
- Unable to say "no" to customers/colleagues
- Let yourself down
- The team structure breaks down
- Team conflict
- Heavy workload and no sense of purpose
- Apparent lack of organisational skills
- Lack of decision making

People behaving non-assertively think

- I want to be liked
- I'm scared of being the centre of attention
- I don't want to make the wrong decision
- If I keep quiet, it will go away
- Someone else will do it
- What's the point, it will happen anyway
- I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings
- I can't say "No"
- I don't like confrontation
- I'll just say "Yes", it will keep them happy
- I wish I had confidence in myself
- What problem?
- I was brought up like this (i.e. culture)

The characteristics of assertive behaviour

- Introduce themselves
- Good eye contact
- Confident posture
- Self-assured
- Warm
- Conversationalist
- Interested, ask questions
- Shows emotions in a balanced way
- Well informed
- A good listener and are attentive
- Has a view, but is comfortable about disagreeing
- Not aggressive
- Makes sure the other person is comfortable
- Apologies for mistakes
- Can say “I was wrong” and will learn from mistakes

Consequences of assertive behaviour

- Mutual respect
- Seen as being fair
- Happy colleagues = good morale = good atmosphere to work in
- Highly motivated colleagues
- Being seen as having integrity
- Approachable
- Known to have concerns for colleague’s welfare
- Improved performance from colleagues, which makes own job easier
- Achieve desired outcomes or even surpass them
- Colleagues are ready to compromise
- Role model through setting examples
- Colleagues will be honest

In the minds of people behaving assertively

- Wanting to maintain mutual respect
- Focused on getting the job done
- Forward thinking and planning
- Concern for others and wanting to listen to their opinions
- Willing to take ideas on board
- Having a confidence and belief in their role

Possible traits of a non-assertive/passive team member

- Taking on more than they can or should be handling
- Letting things drift and not dealing with things
- Not saying “no” when they should
- Avoiding giving feedback
- ...?



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Possible traits of an aggressive team member



- Not interested in people's views or opinions
- Very procedural
- Not explaining the purpose of tasks, but expecting them to be done well
- Not very flexible
- Lacking empathy
- ...?

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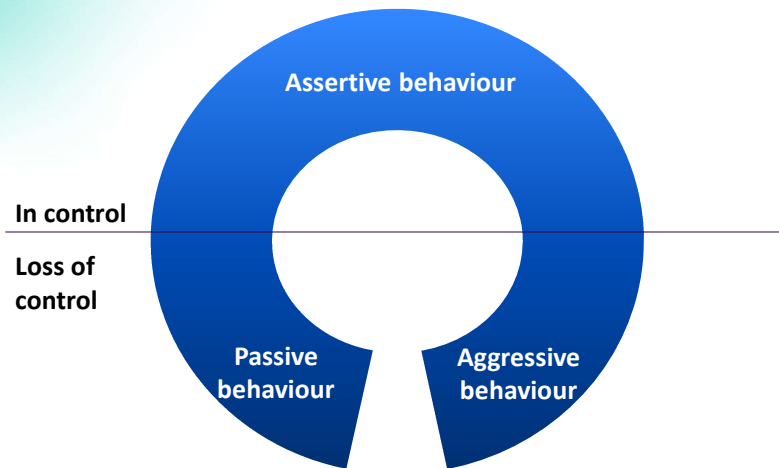
Possible traits of an assertive team member

- Adjusting their voice appropriately to the circumstances
- Having the right personal space
- Being calm at all times
- Taking the right time to explain things
- Giving feedback in a good environment
- Being honest and clear
- Being clear on the motivation for their behaviour
- ...?



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Behaviour types - spectrum



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Think about the spectrum and what the triggers may be for you to move either way on it?

What might tip you into "loss of control"

What can you do to prevent this happening?

Being assertive is hard

- What stops us being assertive?
- Are there certain times or situations it is harder?
- How can we overcome this?



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Communicating assertively

When we are being assertive, we look at situations from both our own and the other person's perspective

Key skills to help create open, two-way relationships



Effective questioning



Active listening



Using appropriate non-verbal communication

How we communicate



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Statistics from Albert Mehrabian's theory on communication

If non verbal communication is not in tune with the words you use, what people choose to believe is the non verbal message.

Good communication skills require a high level of self-awareness.

It is important that you are very aware of the impact you make in your words, tone and body language.

Being conscious of your “**intent**” and then matching this with your language, tone and body language will help with interpretation and your message landing as intended.

Understanding your personal style of communicating will go a long way toward helping you to develop positive relationships.

By becoming more aware of how others perceive you, you can adapt more readily to their styles of communicating and can make another person more comfortable with you, by selecting and emphasising certain behaviours that fit within your personality and resonate with another.

Saying “no” at the right times



- Ask “good” questions
- Listen...don’t just hear
- Be aware you may have made assumptions, which need to be clarified
- Once you have made your decision, stick to it
- Be assertive throughout the conversation

Assertive phrases

I have 3 important projects/deadlines I'm working on until Friday, so I won't be able to do that for you this week. I do want to help. Can I work with you on that next week?

I would like to be able to do this and what will really help me is xxx

I'd like to do it this way. How does that affect you?

I've stayed late three times this week. Can we pick this up early tomorrow?

We can definitely add this in. If we do, we will then need to adjust the timeline. How would you like to proceed?

I'm currently working on x. Should I pause that to focus on this instead?

When you do/say xxx, I feel abc

Based on my experience with this I would like to suggest we try xxx

It seems like we have a different view on this. Can we chat through so we can find a way to get a result that will work for us both?

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Planning a conversation

Starting with the end in mind...

- You have had the conversation and you feel it has gone well
 - What happened? What is *your* measure of success?
- Preparing for the conversation
 - Be clear on the facts/know a procedure(s) you will be referring to/discussing
 - Be able to explain the *why*; *why* a procedure is needed, *why* certain steps are important
- Thinking about the beginning of the conversation
 - What is the best way of opening?
 - What specific example(s) will you use?
 - What questions will you ask?
- Will it be helpful to run it through with a trusted colleague...a line manager...an ally...?

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Scenario 1 -The danger of unrealistic expectations

An attorney wants you to cut corners to save time and get a project finished earlier. You suspect they have given an unrealistic expectation to the client.

You need to get them to see that the firm's procedures need to be followed and the problem of giving unrealistic expectations to clients.

- What is a successful outcome?
- How will you open the discussion?

As an ally

- How can you support someone in a situation like this?
- What can you do to prevent situations like this happening in the future?



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Scenario 2 - Not playing the blame game



An attorney has blamed you unfairly for a misunderstanding with a client.

You don't want to get into a 'blame someone else' situation, but want them to see this was not your fault and then to work with them to rectify the situation in a productive way.

- What is a successful outcome?
- How will you open the discussion?

As an ally

- How can you support someone in a situation like this?
- What can you do to prevent situations like this happening in the future?

Scenario 3 - Time to set some boundaries?

A line manager texts you regularly outside of working hours asking you to log on and get a piece of work done, always saying it is urgent.

They also expect you to work through your lunch break to meet a deadline.

Up to now you have done this but know this isn't fair and want to put a stop to it.

- What is a successful outcome?
- How will you open the discussion?

As an ally

- How can you support someone in a situation like this?
- What can you do to prevent situations like this happening in the future?

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Scenario 4 - The benefit of fresh eyes



Your line manager has emailed the wrong data to a client and you have also spotted some of the information on an attachment is incorrect.

You have been in the team for a month and feel awkward about pointing out mistakes to someone senior and much more experienced than you, but know you need to.

- What is a successful outcome?
- How will you open the discussion?

As an ally

- How can you support someone in a situation like this?
- What can you do to prevent situations like this happening in the future?

Scenario 1 - The danger of unrealistic expectations

Success

- The attorney understands *why* the firm's procedures must be followed and the need and benefit for *realistic* expectations

Before the conversation

- Always know *why* something must be done/procedure followed
- Know when you can get the work done, so you are being realistic too

Opening the discussion

- Hello X, can we discuss how we can work together to finish the Y project please?
- I want to get this done as soon as I can, but must follow the right procedures. Can I check the date the client needs it by?

As an ally

- Role model the right behaviour; ensure you are never asking for short cuts to be taken, putting pressure on people because you have offered the client things earlier than is realistic
- Use opportunities such as team meetings or one-to-ones to reinforce these points and talk about why the firm has the policies/procedures in place
- Be alert to colleagues putting pressure on others particularly in less senior roles to them

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Scenario 2 - Not playing the blame game

Success

- Without the conversation sounding like you're blaming someone else, the attorney knows it wasn't your fault, and you have agreed to work together to put the situation right

Before the conversation

- Find out what has gone wrong, be reassuring that this is not about finding out who to blame, but understanding what happened and creating an opportunity to learn from this/improve processes/procedures
- Have ideas as to how you can put things right, while listening to what the attorney is saying

Opening the discussion

- Hello X, I know there has been a misunderstanding with a client. It wasn't my fault and I am sorry it has happened. I have got some ideas about how we can rectify the situation, which I would like to discuss with you please

As an ally

- Role model positive behaviours and have this as part of your style; when a mistake is made focus on finding out what happened, how things can be put right and the learning rather than whose fault it was. If the same mistake is made by the same people going forward a feedback conversation may be needed
- Use opportunities such as team meetings or one-to-ones to reinforce these points and style of approaching situations where mistakes are made
- Be alert to colleagues whose style is to find who to blame and encourage/stop/influence them to stop doing this
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Scenario 3 - Time to set some boundaries?

Success

- The line manager understands your working hours, including your lunch breaks and will respect them. You have discussed the criteria for something to be urgent

Before the conversation

- Think through what you want to say about boundaries, i.e. are you ok to be contacted if something is urgent? If so, discuss what the definition of this is. Urgent situations should not be work that should have been foreseen and you asked to do it earlier

Opening the discussion

- Hi X, I'd like to talk about agreeing when you can contact me out of my working hours, including my lunchbreaks. I understand sometimes there will be things that need to be actioned urgently and I would like to discuss how we can keep those to a minimum please

As an ally

- Role model this approach. Keep requests to work out of office hours and in lunchbreaks for unforeseen and/or urgent situations for all team members, including peers and senior managers
- Use opportunities such as team meetings, or other meetings, including one-to-ones to reinforce this approach. Clarify it is not an expectation to work outside your working hours and nor will you be thought less of if you set these boundaries, but the opposite!
- Be alert to colleagues putting pressure on others particularly in less senior roles to them to accept regular requests and step in to stop this continuing

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Scenario 4 – The benefit of fresh eyes

Success

- Your line manager is appreciative of you spotting the error and has encouraged you to carry on using your fresh eyes/eyes for detail

Before the conversation

- Be clear on what was wrong and have the right information to hand

Opening the discussion

- Hello X, thanks for your time. I think my fresh eyes are being useful as I have spotted a couple of things that will be good to look at, as I am not sure the right things have gone out to a client. Give the examples and wait for your line manager to comment

As an ally

- Role model these behaviours, be open to people spotting errors. Much better that happens in-house than have a client spot it for the first time
- Use opportunities such as team meetings or one-to-ones to reinforce this approach and that you are always open to any of the team spotting an error and telling you at the earliest opportunity
- Be alert to others not being open and/or receptive to having mistakes pointed out to them by colleagues, whatever their position in the firm

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Reviewing the conversation

Starting with the end in mind...

- What happened?
- Did it meet your measure of success?
- What helped you?
- What will you do the same next time?
- Did anything not go as you would have liked?
- What will you do differently next time?
- Well done for doing it! Conversations like this are rarely easy, but do get easier
- The key to success is planning



Action planning

Identify

- One phrase to stop using
- One boundary to implement this week
- One conversation to have

Please put one example in to the chat function

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through confident communication
- May 26 - Evaluation



thank you

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If you have any questions or would like any further help or advice, please contact us on:

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