



Communication with Staff

Listening, Feedforward, Non-Violent Communication (NVC), Praise, Criticism, Concern/Warning, Bad News, Advise, Coaching and Delegation

In aiming to help staff develop, as a leader or peer you can communicate in various ways with your colleagues. You may (among others):

- Listen emphatically (which frequently includes so-called “Active listening”);
- Provide feedback on request and receiving it;
- Express your feelings and requests on your own behalf (NVC);
- Express appreciation;
- Constructively criticise mistakes and agree on solutions;
- Bring “Bad news” to staff (whether that relates to their performance or not);
- Providing instructions, suggestions and advise;
- Coach and facilitate the staff to find their own solutions and next steps;
- Appropriately delegate tasks

Each of these communications can be effective, yet they also have their own “niche” and rules. In other words: The right choice and right implementation of the mode of communication, impacts whether your communication will be understood, accepted and put into practice. While some of these communications are described in detail in other syllabi, this document serves to provide a comparative overview and summary.

Empathic Listening

The slogan “Seek first to understand, then to be understood” (Stephen R. Covey) is a reminder of the power of listening. Covey, renowned as author of “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, argues that listening and showing empathy is tremendously time saving, as compared to cutting in with advise before the other person has felt free and clear enough to get to the pith of an issue. Rather than listening to others with the intent to reply, “Empathic listening” (Habit 5 of the 7 Habits) is about listening with the intent to understand. It is *not* about agreeing or disagreeing, solving or fixing, or figuring someone out. It is a key leadership skill to get to the bottom of issues, and develop deep, nurturing and effective relationships. Empathic listening is relevant in cases where the other person expresses dissatisfaction, probably even suggestion action already, but where you sense that the real “hurt” is not yet understood. You may not need empathic listening when someone asks “Could you pass me the salt?”, but it will help enormously when somebody exasperates that the project is becoming a nightmare.

The *empathy* in emphatic listening means showing your openness and warmth to the other person and to what he or she is saying. It is not about siding up with the other person, e.g. by agreeing that they are indeed the victim and that such and such a person was indeed



nasty to them. If you genuinely agree, you might express it, but more important than that, is that you show that you are willing and interested to listen and accept the person, beyond whether you agree or not. Furthermore, empathy puts the speaker and the listener on the same level (as opposed to sympathy, which can have a sense of superiority). The warmth or love may be open and playful rather than suffocating and possessive.

Covey's findings are in line with the approach of renowned psychiatrist Milton Erickson, who found that to influence people, with reduced chances of lapses after the counselling interactions are over, a leader (or counsellor) may "follow" (listen) first. Milton Erickson's approach has been described as "Follow, follow, lead", emphasising that, to be effective, a leader's activity of advising and directing has to be less dominant (in time and attention) than his or her role in listening.

The technique known as "Active listening" is a helpful support tool in emphatic listening, which is in essence an attitude. In active listening you regularly summarise what the other person has said, and ask for a clear confirmation that your summary was accurate (or a correction if it was not).

In learning active listening it is often helpful to strictly summarise *only* what the other person *said* ("So, did you essentially say that...?"), while in a more advanced application you may also integrate your *impressions* of the feelings of the other person ("So, it seems that you feel...?"). Including your impressions (based on body language and intonation, rather than on speculation) is skilful and conducive *when you mostly are right* (the speaker will rejoice: "This person *really* gets me, even before I spell out everything... and he/she empathises!"). But when you make repeated wrong guesses (and certainly if you do not pick-up and correct yourself if you receive negative responses to your summaries) you may damage trust. The speaker will lose hope that you understand and truly want to understand, or fears that you are scheming to pigeonhole and figure him or her out.

Two specific issues in "simply" summarising the thoughts and feelings of another person, are not to engage in talking about your role (accepting or rejecting blame and guilt), nor to confirm (or reject) pre-mature solutions. As we shall see later, this means that we help the speaker to rephrase his or her very views in NVC language.

Examples of focusing on the speaker rather than on the listener

Speaker: "I am frustrated with this project because you messed it all up."

Non-empathic: "Come on, don't blame me..." This ensures you will never get to understand the other person – at least not as a friend

Empathic: "You feel frustrated and feel the project was not well managed." This neither confirms nor denies whether you played a role in causing the feelings of the speaker, but shows acceptance of his/her views and thus encourages the speaker to explore and say more.

Example of focusing on perception rather than pre-mature solutions

Speaker: "We should just dump the whole project."

Non-empathic: "No we should not, we should work harder at it..." This again breaks rapport. After this response the speaker will bicker with you as an enemy or withdraw and not share his/her true feelings anymore.

Empathic: "You feel so frustrated with the project that you think of giving up on it." If you are a genuine listener you do not reply vaguely, because you hope that later you can than still push the speaker into continuing the project. Rather you want to encourage that the problems come on the table, after



which you can explore what is the best way forward (which may be to stop the project)

Feedback and NVC

Feedback and NVC are about communicating a message clearly, yet with minimal chances that it leads to unnecessary friction. In feedback you communicate a personal response to offer the other person a learning opportunity, while in NVC the reason is to make a request (which can be a request for action or simply for understanding).

Like the phrase “Active listening”, “Feedback” is a term that has a general meaning, but also a specific, technical definition. In general, it stands for any response from others or even a system (regardless of the intention behind the feedback). In communication literature (and this document), however, the technical term “feedback” stands for a response in which the one who gives the feedback does so without judgement and with the sole purpose to help the other person learn (often at the request of the recipient of the feedback). Technically “feedback” stands for informing a person about the effect the actions of that person had on you.

When applying this narrow definition, feedback becomes distinct from Non-Violent Communication (NVC), as developed by Marshall B. Rosenberg. In NVC, it is the one who provides the message, who wants to get something of his or her chest, and intends to influence the other person, yet in such a way that the chances of misunderstanding, resistance and escalation are minimal. NVC is about saying what you want on sensitive topics. It is a set of steps to say that which you find hard to say in an open, inoffensive way. It operates on the premise that your care about both the subject that you want to talk about and about your relationship with the person you want to communicate with. It presumes that you believe in the effectiveness and ethics of honesty, and hope to influence the other person through free conviction rather than through pressure or verbal violence. Thus NVC is a language to confront issues with a win-win attitude, rather than with aggression (in which you harm relations) or avoidance (in which you keep quit).

Traditionally feedback is taught to consist of maximum four definite steps, and some authors argue that feedback should not include or be followed by advice. We will present these steps, but also their intended function. Our stand is that, at the end of the day it is not important whether you follow these exact steps, but it is important whether you achieve the desired result. Thus, in the section on “expressing feelings” we share ideas on alternative options how to achieve the same effect.



	Feedback	<i>Example</i>	Function
Introduction	Would you like to receive feedback on...	... <i>your presentation this morning</i>	Helps the other person feel free to receive or decline feedback (now)
1. Observation	I observed that...	... <i>you sometimes stood between the slides and the audience</i>	Helps the other person recall the facts, and feel that you do not judge
2. Effect-on-you [similar to NVC: feeling and need]	The effect on me was that I...	... <i>personally got a bit distracted</i>	Helps the other person see that you are open up, giving trust that he can also relax
3. [Optional] Reflection	[Reflection and conclusion by receiver or giver, once the feedback itself was accepted]	... <i>so maybe I decide before I show my slides on which side I stand</i>	Helps the person find options that would not have the undesired effect

Key points in feedback:

1. Be clear to yourself whether you just want to provide a learning opportunity to the other person (then chose feedback), or whether you (also) wish to communicate for your sake (then chose NVC, or a more assertive/content-oriented communication)
2. Keep the “observation” short and factual, and refer to a specific (“Yesterday you were five minutes late” rather than “You are usually late”)
3. Describe the effect of the other’s action on you, without implying universal necessity. In other words: Realise that the same behaviours may have a different effect on someone else, and just speak on your own behalf (“I was surprised” rather than “You made me shocked”, because “made me” suggests an immutable law, and therefore sounds “heavier”. This tends to make listeners defensive)
4. “Sandwich” feedback. Start with behaviour you appreciated, then discuss behaviour your believe could be improved, and end on a positive note again
5. That’s all! But asked by your listener, you can engage in communication beyond the “feedback” (such as listening or advising)
6. In receiving feedback, don’t argue – When the barber shaves you, sit still! But whenever you feel an urge to defend, check internally whether you merely received feedback, or an (implicit) criticism. If the latter, you may of course address it, for example using NVC
7. If your listener starts to argue, interrupt. If you truly did not criticise, a defence is misplaced. Defending when there is no attack is an example of a “skimming transaction”. An appropriate response corresponds to both the subject and the predicate of the previous speaker (see below box for some examples)

“Do you like sugar?”

- Subject: You
- Predicate: Liking sugar

Skimming responses:

- “Sugar is very nice” (this response is uncertain about the subject)
- “I like lots of things” (this response is uncertain about the predicate)

“I was confused about your presentation”



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject: I • Predicate: Being confused (about your presentation) <p>Skimming responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How dare you say that; I prepared so well!” (respondent seems to believe he/she is criticised, which was not the case) • “But John liked it!” (respondent ignores that the feedback was given by Marc, on personal title)

The four steps in NVC

	NVC	<i>Example</i>
Introduction	I would like to share and my view and request about...	... <i>your leave request</i>
1. Observation	I observed...	... <i>that you put in a leave request today for leave starting tomorrow</i>
2. Feeling	I felt a bit...	... <i>uncomfortable</i>
3. Reason = Need	Because...	... <i>I wish to be flexible yet had counted on you for some work</i>
4. Request for action or understanding	Can you...	... <i>understand my dilemma? or ... postpone the start of your leave 1 day?</i>

As a means to remember the four components of NVC easily, they can be connected to four parts of the body, and distinguished from violent communication:

Body reminder	Aggressive	NVC
Head (eyes, ears)	Judgement (“You are wrong because...”)	Observation (“You did...”)
Throat (emotion, like when you swallow)	Quasi feeling (“That made me feel...”)	Feeling (“I personally felt a little...”)
Heart (wish or need)	Strategy (“The way it should be is...”)	Wish/need (“Because I wish/need...”)
Belly (guts feeling) or hands (action)	Demand (“Now, do as I say”)	Request (“Could you please...”)

Critical points in NVC:

- Points 1-3 (as well as 5 and 6) under “feedback” all apply. However, in NVC it is essential that you share your feeling, even if very slightly. Let me repeat: You have to share your feeling, but only a little. Why so?
 - You want the other person to relax and be genuinely open to you, so it makes sense if you make the first gesture. Engaging in NVC is like requesting a fellow warrior to take down his or her armour. Who would do that, unless you first take down yours? So that is why you express *some* of your feeling
 - But do not make it serious and elaborate. If you are too heavy-handed about your feelings, your listener may become uncomfortable or suspicious
- Explaining the reason behind your feelings helps to keep them “light” and puts them in perspective. In explaining the reason behind your feeling, you may reach common ground. While feelings are personal, the values and principles from which they arise are (more) universal. Talking about values and principles thus helps to understand



and appreciate each other. So the critical point here is to learn discern and express such values and principles – the “Why’s” behind your emotions

3. Share your request only once you are quite sure your observation, feeling and wish are well understood. A non-violent request is not a demand – You may give a suggestion for action or only indicate what result you would like. In either case you ask for the other person’s view and commitment, rather than try to impose yours

To sum up the differences between NVC and feedback:

- In NVC the speaker wishes to share a message, in feedback the speaker is willing to speak if the other person is willing/interested
- In NVC feeling is essential, while in feedback you share the effect it had in you, which may or may not be a feeling
- In NVC we try to unearth the values and principle underneath our feelings, while in feedback we do not
- NVC includes a request, whereas feedback does not

Realising and Expressing emotion

Feedback and NVC both imply expressing emotions in words, sometimes as light and easy as “I liked it”, “I was positively surprised” to more heavy ones as “I was a bit disappointed” or “It annoyed me somewhat.” This raises the question when it is skilful to express emotions, and when not, which is chiefly an issue of assessing the effect you expect it will have on the other person (though you never know for sure). Here is what we found:

- Sharing genuine positive emotions (including appreciation and acceptance of another person) can have a powerful experience for them – see the below issue on Praise
- Sharing your emotion can help a discussion to become more open and vulnerable, instead of a fight of facts and arguments. It is like letting down your armour and thereby inviting the other party to do the same. Sharing your emotion can help to focus on the issue as the problem, and see each other as friends facing it
- Putting your emotion into words can be helpful if you assess that you have already communicated your (negative) emotion implicitly through body language and intonation, probably leading to tension. Putting words to your emotion is then again a disarming acknowledgement, similar to the case above
- Expressing the strength of your feelings about the issue, can help people to wake up to how important this issue is to you, thus preventing that the discussion waltzes over you and draws pre-mature conclusions without having gone to the bottom of the problem. This is like an alarm system (“It really concerns and bothers me...”)
- In all above cases we assume that you express emotions, but take responsibility for them: “I personally feel...” rather than “You make me feel...” Stating your emotion to blame, shame or scare other people may yield short-term gains, but will do long-term damage to relationships
- Emotions can also be expressed through body language (a pat on the shoulder, a loving look) and sometimes this is more helpful than words

In brief: Expressing and verbalising your emotion to the other person is “optional”. However, being aware of your own emotion is very helpful. Recognising them, chances are less that they subconsciously steer your behaviour negatively.



A reason for caution in discussion emotions is that in many cultures feelings are seldom expressed, or if expressed mostly with the intent to blame, shame or scare. Even if your message does not have such undertones, many a listener may erroneously interpret your message as judgmental and threatening. At the same time we encourage straightforwardness: We can never predict and manipulate how others receive our communications, but once we say what we wanted to say, we can observe their response and reply to that again.

Finally note that “expressing” emotions does not necessarily mean “verbalizing” them. A pat on the shoulder, a prolonged silence or a nod of the head, a smile and a look in the eye may communicate more than a thousand words. So we would encourage you to explore and enlarge your emotional “vocabulary” in all these directions. That said, we like to point out that you impede your growth if, for cultural or other reasons, you rationalize that it is in your setting better not to communicate emotions *at all*. We have witnessed how powerfully people mature and gain in effectiveness when they bring their heart to their workplace.

Feedforward

Observing that we learn much better from positive and future-oriented reflections than from past-oriented and negative reflections, some authors advocate “feedforward” (as Marshall Goldsmith calls it) over feedback. A simple yet powerful model for that is:

- + Share what you liked in the performance of the person
- ↑ Suggest what to change and how
- Explain what difference that would make

Summary: Which basic method when

	Receiving (listening)	Sending (speaking)
Non-sensitive issue	Active Listening (summarise and check)	Stimulate the listener to summarise the key point
Sensitive issue	Empathic listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback or feedforward (if you just want to offer a learning opportunity) • NVC (if you have a request)

Praise

Below we share key messages on praise, as they are put forward in the Training Arts video “The importance of praise” (starring John Cleese). A key message is that we tend to be too shy to praise, while it is cheap, can be done with complete sincerity and has great effective on staff performance, turn-over, and contentment and working culture.



Seven Golden Rules on praise

1. Make it specific
2. Talk about it [have a chat how you appreciate the behaviour]
3. No sting in the tail [no negative closing statement]
4. Put it on record [e.g. in periodic performance review talks with the staff member]
5. Make it public [this is nowadays questioned, as it may yield compliment competition, while in some cultures staffs may dislike standing out. However, an interesting practice shared with us recently was that in an organisation all people receive a personal certificate of appreciation by the year end. For each staff, the management reviews and captures what he or she is appreciated for]
6. Pass praise on [if you hear a compliment about someone, tell that person]
7. Look for opportunities to praise people

Constructive Criticism

The below key points come from the same video series produced by Training Arts, as the one on Praise. The video on criticism is titled “Performance matters: The Needs for Constructive criticism”. Some key issues:

- We tend to do it not at all, too late and too unclear (indulgent and passive – preserving the relation, but harming the issue), or too aggressive (addressing the issue, at the expense of the relationship. Of course the ideal is to do it assertively: Addressing the issue without violence to the person.
- The purpose *is*...
 - help people recognise mistakes
 - invent and agree remedies
- The purpose *is not*...
 - show who is boss
 - vent irritation
 - put people down
 - win a battle

Seven golden rules on constructive criticism

1. Do it:
 - ◆ quickly (but think first!)
 - ◆ face to face
 - ◆ in private
2. Agree the facts [what happened; who made a mistake]
3. Ask and listen [to the person you believe made a mistake]
4. Criticise the action, not the person
5. Explain why it matters [explain the impact]
6. Agree a remedy
7. End on a compliment [what the person does well]



NVC may very well be integrated into this flow of steps, so that it becomes:

1. Do it:
 - ◆ observation
 - ◆ feelings
 - ◆ reason
 - ◆ [postpone the NVC “request” to step 6]
2. Agree the facts [what happened; who made a mistake]
3. Etc...

Why, once again, would we use such a soft and subjective entry as NVC (in which you share personal feelings) rather than cementing the “offender” with facts and figures that cannot be escaped and denied? The reason is that the effect we are after is learning and self-sustained change. We do not introduce the subject in a subjective way because we are scared to touch it, but because we want to invite honest introspection. After having shown that we are engaged and open, we still go to the step of agreeing the facts, which are important at that stage. Hopefully by that time we look dispassionately at the facts together, rather than try to impose our own angle, using spotlights and selective focus to our convenience (in line with our personal defence and interests).

A particular case that calls for critical action is under-performance, if related to motivation. The first question therefore is: Is the management genuinely interested and committed to address it? A sustainable improvement requires a culture of discipline, infused into the DNA of most if not all staff – not just a relentless leader who chases after everyone. So the question is: Does the management give priority to building and sustaining such a culture? If the answer is a yes, train your managers and spread the word. Give staffs a warning, and act on it if performance remains anywhere below outstanding.

Remember that the job of the management is only to remove demotivators and obstacles; not to motivate staff. Your staffs should be self-motivated in the first place; that’s why you hired them. Ignoring and accepting under-performance by some demotivates those who perform as per their capacity. According to Jim Collins, who did elaborate research on what made some organisations great, defining elaborate bureaucratic rules is certainly not the solution to under-performance. Energy should not go into putting forth arguments to establish who achieves or fails to achieve minimal performance. The energy should go to doing the job – as best as one can. Introducing strong bureaucratic control, will not get the apparatchiks to work, and will make the good workers leave.

Concern and Warning

A meeting of concern differs from criticism in its magnitude. Potentially the concern is such that, if there is no recognition and improvement, you may wish to end collaboration. It is a critical test of a manager’s ability. Over-indulgent managers accept that performance problems go unaddressed, while aggressive managers address problems in ways that lead to unnecessary escalation. Yet this implies by no means that throughout this meeting you hint and implicitly threaten with drastic measures. To the contrary: You openly express concern, but also express an interest to help address the issue, if you find a common perception. The recommended procedure is as below:



1. Check with yourself whether you are emotionally over-reacting, or whether your concern is appropriate. You may contact some people to verify the effect of the behaviour you are concerned about. How much evidence you collect is related to management style, but you may aim to avoid two extremes:
 - a. Just reacting on (hot) emotion
 - b. Aiming to collect enough data to have legal ground to fire him or her, while he/she is not informed of your concern and the fact that you collect data (but might come to realise it indirectly)
2. Verify that you have backing from your own management. If they chose to be indulgent, you may chose to do so too. Alternatively you may express to them that you believe that indulgence is the wrong choice, and/or that this approach clashes with you style, and that they have to either back or replace you
3. Call for a meeting of concern as soon as you have a (major) concern. Do not indulge in hoping for automatic improvement and also do not start secretly collecting massive evidence so as to corner the person. In your invitation to the meeting indicate that it is a meeting of concern and you may indicate the area of your concern. Probably it relates to motivation, attitude, stress management, efficiency or communication skills
4. Share your concern by following NVC (sharing one or two observations, your feeling and concern, in reference to your wish regarding collaboration and finally) asking whether the other person recognises the concern.
 - a. If the person recognises the issue and is open, jointly look at objectives, plans and milestones to commit to, and discuss possible support (document the timed action plan and share it with the staff member)
 - b. If the response is defensive (denying or belittling his/her role while pointing out the wrongs of others, including yourself), clarify that this meeting is not about blame, but that you see weaknesses which you want to be addressed. The aim of this meeting is to come to a common perception and agreed action plan for the concerned person
 - c. If, even after such clarification, you do not find a common ground of jointly looking at a weakness and looking for solutions, then you may have three options:
 - i. You jointly agree how to collect evidence to show whether the behaviour does have a negative impact on others (cq is negatively perceived by them). If in your assessment the evidence supports your view that the behaviour is unacceptable, call another meeting of concern/warning
 - ii. You inform the person that you will by yourself collect further data from third persons to verify whether the behaviour that you are concerned about is also perceived by them. If in your assessment the evidence supports your view that the behaviour is unacceptable, call a warning meeting
 - iii. If your judge your information already conclusive enough, the meeting of concern turns into a warning
5. You conduct a warning meeting in which you unilaterally formulate what you demand is in terms of change, with a timeline. In this case it is important to document the timed action plan and share it with the person
6. Offer support (by yourself, a colleague or a coach) if so wished by the person concerned. Forcing a coach on someone who has not yet become willing to work on his/her weaknesses, is unproductive. What may help is to hire a mediator or coach for yourself as manager, to learn how to address this and similar cases
7. Monitor the achievement of the milestones of the action plan. If not, call for a bad news meeting

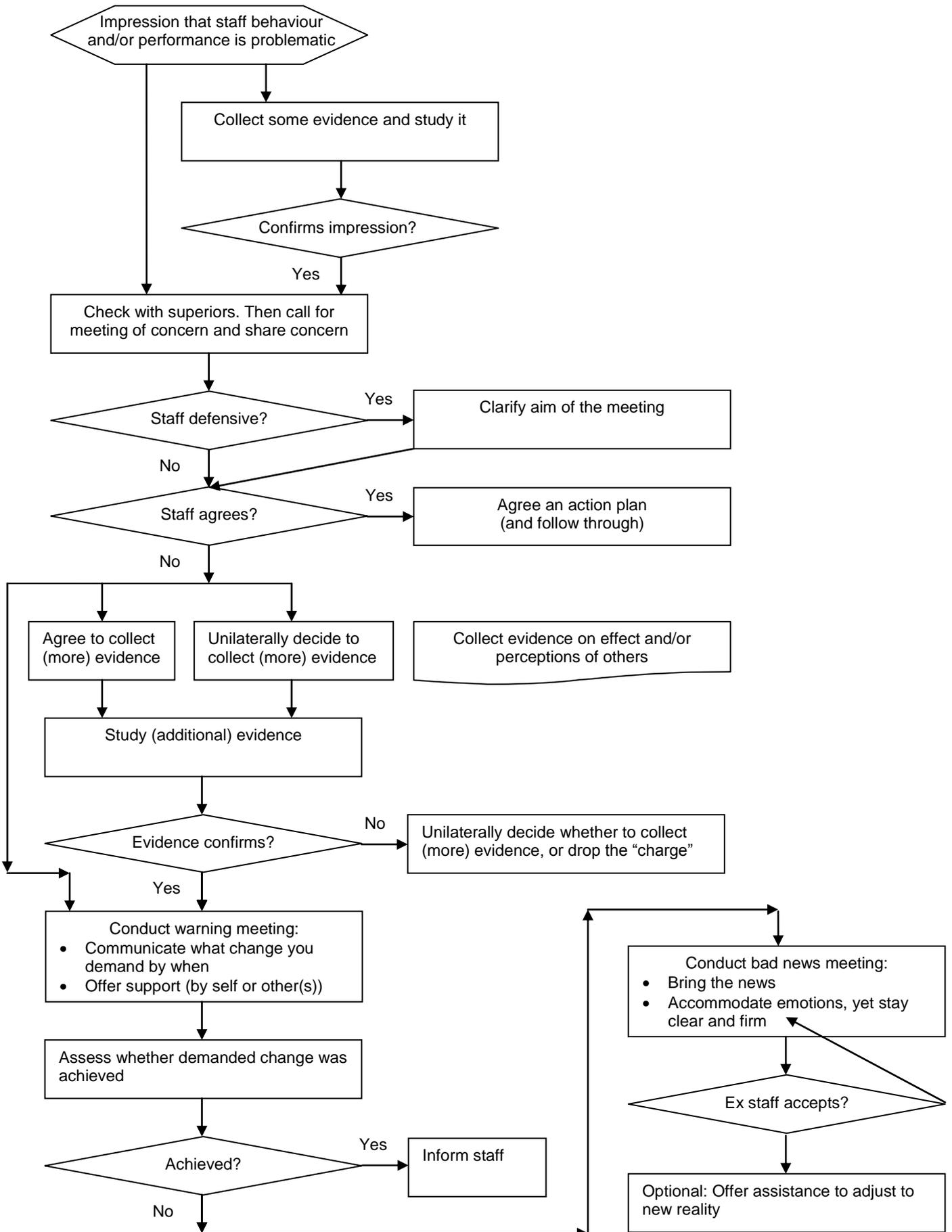


Objective and Subjective

In a warning or bad news meeting, it is often helpful to clarify that your decision is both objective and subjective. It is objective in the sense that the facts are facts (even possible ambiguities in the facts can be acknowledged as a fact). And the assessment of what these facts mean, the evaluation, is also as objective as possible: You use objective criteria and compare behaviour and performance to earlier communicated norms and standards.

And yet it often leads to rest when you own up for the subjective element in your decision. Yes, a different manager might have decided differently based on the same facts. But you happen to be the decision maker on this case. You can explain your decision, listen to possible new facts and arguments and even consider them, but you do not negotiate, and you need not defend yourself against the possible critique that another manager might have decided otherwise. That argument is irrelevant, since you are charged to decide on this issue, and you take the decision and the responsibility for your decision. This makes it human, and can put a halt to excessive questioning or malevolent manipulation.

In “First break all the rules” Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman share that great managers regard any level of performance unacceptable “that hovers around average with no upward trend.” As great managers want to set their staff up for success, they do not let underperformance continue very long (meaning anything beyond three months). They feel it is more caring to “pull the trigger early” than to demand improvements which are beyond the current potential of their employee, believing that even with enough willpower an apple tree will not turn into a peach tree.

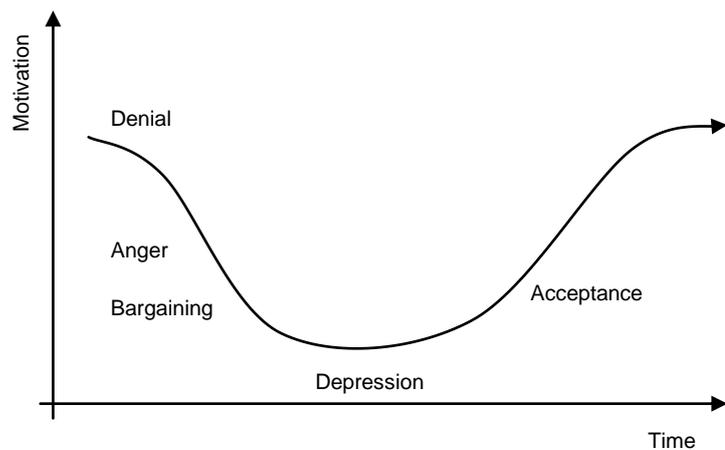




Sharing Bad News

Sharing bad news differs from criticism and concern in the sense that a decision is already taken (whereas in constructive criticism, an action is jointly agreed upon), and it may be that bad news has nothing to do with the behaviour and performance of the employee (e.g. when an organisation will fire staff due to downsizing). The steps in sharing bad news are three, but the middle step can take time and energy:

1. Share the bad news:
 - a. quickly (but think first!), preventing that rumours reach first
 - b. face to face (not via letters)
 - c. in private or public (whatever is applicable)
2. Accommodate that the other persons assimilates to the news, yet keep clear and firm (unless you have reason to review the decision)
3. Offer to assist him/her in responding to the new reality



Related to the second stage, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, doing research on how patients respond to the diagnosis of terminal

illness, found the following pattern, which also describes the general steps in assimilating professional bad news. Below we share personal/medical as well as professional/organisation examples.

Shock and denial

- There are always random sales fluctuations; these data don't prove anything!
- A little lump in the breast need not be cancer! Maybe the test results were swapped

Anger

- Why our organisation, last year we did so well?! The boss has done it!
- It's all the mistake of my doctors and friends, who never really took good care of me

Bargaining

- OK we have an image problem, but couldn't we just change our logo, rather than turn the whole organisation upside down?
- Couldn't we try Aquarius acupuncture rather than chemotherapy?

Depression

- Goodness, so it's that bad and hopeless...
- I feel so ashamed I got you all into this mess...

Acceptance

- Well if that really is the case, then what do we do to regain customer trust?
- Well if my life is that short, I am ready for what still remains for me



Accept that stage two may take time, and projection of negative feelings, although you need not accept abuse language and behaviour.

Instructions and advising

The current paragraph and the next two headings (coaching and delegation) roughly correspond to how to give tasks to increasingly mature staff according to Hersey and Blanchard's model of "Situational Leadership"). Staffs that are fairly new at a task, may initially require detailed instruction and/or training, referred to as "telling". Maturing a little, the manager can step back into advising, mentoring, or "selling" - discussing options with the employee, and convincing him or her of what is considered best practice. The next two steps are "participating" (in which the staff member takes the lead, but receives coaching), and delegating in which relatively large tasks are delegated with less frequent and intense supervisions on the *how*. Some critical points on the latter two styles of personnel leadership are shared below.

Coaching

We could make a distinction into two situations of coaching:

- Coaching on performance targets or so called instrumental competencies, in which case the manager can be the coach. In this case, the boss delegates actual tasks to an employee and in the process trains the staff member
- Coaching on behaviour objectives or intermediate competence, which can well be done through peer review or with an external professional coach. If coaching aims at behaviour and attitude level, an option is to follow the so called GROW model

The manager as coach takes steps which combine coaching and delegation, because that is what this is exactly about:

1. Set the objectives (of the delegated tasks, as well as those of the coaching meeting)
2. Review progress, lessons and remaining issues
3. Encourage discovery, by
 - a. Letting the staff think of solutions, and listening actively
 - b. Draw out the consequences: Let the staff member think through what would be the consequences of the proposed solutions
 - c. Then (and only then) bring in own experiences (including failures, which lightens the atmosphere) and possible advise. Advising is not forbidden, but it leads to less learning and may lead to resistance, than discovery by the coachee him- or herself
4. Agree on next steps, defining the mandate. What should and can the employee do, and what not. And, as described under delegation, you inform others of the delegated authority ("John, from now onwards Minh decides about the finance of that project, up to expenditures of 200,000")
5. Summarise your agreements

In Coaching on behavioural competencies, one may follow the GROW model. GROW is an acronym for Goal, Reality, Options, Wrap-up. Critical points in GROW are:



- Goal: As above: Set the Goal of both the full coaching trail and this session
- Reality: Discuss symptoms and feelings of the current, undesirable situation, and analyse what the causes of the symptoms [this step is often less pertinent in the task oriented coaching, which is action-oriented]
- Options, which are a brainstorm of possible responses [and which includes the steps discovery and agreement of task-oriented coaching]:
 - Sometimes at this stage the coachee “refuses” to think towards solutions, e.g. by stating that the problem is actually not all that big a deal. Do not allow the person to discount the agreed goal as not worth worrying half-way in the options stage, or ask how they benefit from maintaining the problem. The creative energy often wasted on frustration and complaining, should be made available for solutions and implementation again
 - Prevent that you are doing the work of inventing options *for* your coachee, who then one by one shoots your ideas down. Instead force your coachee to do the brainstorming. You may say: “I want at least five ideas from you, no matter how unrealistic or stupid (committing to action comes later).” Just overcome resistance and shyness of bad ideas, remembering that “A bad idea may trigger a brilliant idea”
- Wrap-up: Agree on action and summarise [as in task-oriented coaching]

Delegation

Last but not least we share some principles of correct delegation, taken from Manfred Gellert and Claus Nowak “A practical guide to working in and with teams” (2002):

- Always transfer both responsibility and the corresponding powers
- Emphasise [explain] the importance of the transferred work
- Clearly define and demarcate the area of responsibility
- Don’t interfere into the transferred area of responsibility [but coach as agreed/needed]
- Plan in time when you will be available for the team members [person or persons you delegated to]
- Tell the other team members [persons] about the delegation
- Agree, establish and practice suitable forms of monitoring
- Check sporadically whether the area of delegation is still pertinent

Delegation often goes wrong in terms of the fourth bullet point above: Abstaining from micro-management and interference. As Covey explains “You cannot hold people accountable for results, if you prescribe their methods”. You do not have to abandon your staff (if they are not yet ready for it, you should not delegate a large task in bulk). But after the delegation has been agreed, the boss becomes the helper and the staff member becomes the boss, as far as the delegated work is concerned. If you delegate a task you can still offer help, but you can’t boss around anymore.

Karl Weick, from the School of Business University of Michigan, developed a script for giving directions, which Gary Klein (author of “The Power of Intuition”) captured with the acronym STICC, which summarizes the same process:

Karl Weick

Gary Klein



- Here's what I think we face
 - Here's what I think we should do
 - Here's why
 - Here's what we should keep our eye on [assumptions and risks in RBM terminology]
 - Now, talk to me [Do you understand (active listening) and agree (feedback)?]
- **Situation**
 - **Task**
 - **Intent**
 - **Concern**
 - **Calibration**