

Factsheet

Skills Boost Topic 1 Assertiveness



Introduction

Communicating appropriately with people is one of the most important skills you can develop to improve your effectiveness at work. The key technique used to help achieve this is assertiveness, which allows you to express your views and opinions without the need for confrontation, anger or upset within the working environment.

Why is it important?

To help you to manage a variety of workplace situations in a constructive way.

In simple terms people use one of 3 types of behaviour: passive, assertive or aggressive.

It's beneficial to adopt assertive behaviour in the workplace because you will often encounter conflicting priorities and points of view, and being assertive helps you to constructively manage these situations. In contrast both passive and aggressive behaviour have negative impacts and should be avoided.

Assertiveness in action

Here's a simple example to illustrate the benefit of being assertive and the negative impacts of passive and aggressive behaviour.

You are busy with a full workload and have no capacity to do anything else, and then get asked "Can you prepare this report for me this morning please?"

A **PASSIVE** response could be a simple: "Yes certainly"

This response creates an expectation that the report will be produced on time even though you already have a full workload. It could lead to confrontation when the report isn't delivered on time and creates the perception that this individual never gets things done on time.

An **AGGRESSIVE** response could be "No way, you can see I'm busy, I've got far too much to do - you'll have to give it to someone else."

This response is likely to anger the person who asked for the work to be done and creates confrontation. People who respond aggressively in the workplace risk being seen as uncooperative and difficult to work with.

An **ASSERTIVE** response would be to say, "I'm busy this morning, so won't be able to get it done. However I should be able to do it by the end of today if that helps." This response explains why the request can't be met in the timescale requested, whilst still offering to help and is a far more realistic and constructive response.

Assertiveness tips

- 1 Choose the right time and place to have a conversation
- 2 Be prepared – plan what you are going to say, practice it in your mind and out loud
- 3 Know your boundaries – being flexible is fine, however know your boundaries and limits
- 4 Aim for a win-win situation – be open to a positive outcome for everyone
- 5 Practice saying – No or Not Now and think of ways to say it – "I can't help you now, but I have time on..."

Next steps

Learning to be more assertive can take time to perfect, so don't be afraid to:

- Start gradually
- Think in advance of assertive ways to reply to people
- Practice with a colleague
- Do further research on the internet.

The Agile Nation project provides workplace support and development for women and businesses in the convergence area of Wales, to find out more visit www.agilenation.co.uk