

AVOIDING COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWNS: REQUESTS, OFFERS, AND COMMITMENTS

A Webinar for The State of Pennsylvania Systems of Care
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Coach Approach Skills

Presence and Centering
Listening
Clarifying
Asking Good Questions
Feedback
Creating Accountability
Modeling Behavior

Key Coach Approach Mindsets

Our intention should always be to:

- Help others be successful so they can make decisions independently
- Understand what is going on in a situation beyond our assumptions and biases
- Offer our support to other people and their continued development
- Be curious and flexible when faced with complexity

Because the World is Complex...

We often experience breakdowns in communication resulting in:

- ✓ **Complaints** – you should have...I wish you had....
- ✓ **Disappointments** – I thought you were going to...you said you would....
- ✓ **Loss of Trust** – you promised you would...I was counting on you to....

Speech Acts

We create our relationships and our work based on what we say – our speech creates action

- Requests**
- Offers**
- Commitments**

We can be more intentional about how we use language to make relationships and work go better

Suggested Reading: Language and the Pursuit of Leadership Excellence

Why are Requests, Offers, and Commitments so important?

Organizations are “networks of commitments, human beings who are making and managing promises with each other”


These promises and commitments are made through requests and offers.

But....are we clear in our requests? Do we realize that our “yes” is a promise?

Language and the Pursuit of Leadership Excellence


Elements of Effective Speech Acts

1. Committed/Authentic Speaker
2. Committed/Authentic Listener
3. Future Action and Conditions of Satisfaction
4. Timeframe
5. Context
6. Mood



Requests

“We want the future to unfold in a different way than it seems to be heading by itself, and in order to put things in action...we make a request”



- ✓ It is especially important to have a conversation before you make your request
- ✓ Authentic requests are questions – “no” is an acceptable answer to a request
- ✓ Understand if they accept or reject your request
- ✓ If the request is rejected, ask what they can commit to instead
- ✓ Be sincere in what you’re asking for, and declare your satisfaction when the request is delivered

Examples of Not Really Clear Requests

- X I’d like you to follow up more frequently
I would like you to follow up with me each Tuesday at 4 for a 30 minute meeting
- X This should have a higher level of quality
I would like you to review and spellcheck our material before you send it to me
- X Someone should remember to take notes next time
I would like you to take notes in our supervision meetings going forward
- X We need to keep the community space clean
I would like you to take responsibility for ensuring that everything is picked up and put away, and no food is left out
- X Please handle my 4 o'clock appointment
I would like you to let my appointment know that I will be running 10 minutes late, apologize on my behalf, and offer them a drink.

Offers

Offers are made to address concerns by providing support

- ✓ "How can I support you?" is a general offer of support
- ✓ You can be specific with your offer to be clear about what you're willing to do
- ✓ Just like requests, we must allow room for others to reject our offers, and be open to their requests about how we can support them
- ✓ Offers can quickly become commitments!



Commitments/Promises

You are making a commitment whenever you say you will do something (whether you realize that or not!)

Commitments are to be taken seriously – imagine you're "under oath"

Commitments should be clear, actionable, and as precise as you can make them

Whether we keep or break commitments impact:

- Trust
- Relationships
- Success
- Self-Esteem

So if we need to break a commitment we need to acknowledge, apologize, repair

Examples of Commitments

We often make promises without realizing the inherent commitments

- We will start the meeting at 9
- I will call you at 3
- I will get this to you by the end of the day
- I will let you know if anything changes
- Let's have lunch next week
- We'll talk about this later

Breakdowns in Requests or Commitments

If Requests, Offers, and Commitments...

1. Are (or interpreted as) disingenuous
2. Are unclear or unintentional
3. Do not have adequate accountability or follow-up

Breakdowns result from a lack of transparency

Breakdowns are opportunities for breakthroughs



**Time
Management
is really
Commitment
Management**

The Big Rocks

