

THE ASSERTIVENESS POCKETBOOK

By Max A. Eggert

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my son, Max Charles, who, in spite of my influence, is very much his own man and, for one so young, has developed his own way of being assertive. Max, I'm proud of you.

Thanks to Donna Coiera for transforming my handwriting into an acceptable WP format.

“Will appeal to anyone in human resources or management training. It is successful in keeping jargon to a minimum without loss of precision. The concepts are immediately relevant, and each page will offer you a new idea, a new skill or a new way to look at a situation.”

Louise Campbell, Associate Director, Human Resources, Societe Generale Australia Ltd.

“This pocketbook provides at a glance the skills required for a lifetime.”

Tracey Luscombe, Human Resource Manager, Manchester Unity Friendly Society in NSW.

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ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

HOW TO DISAGREE



Being assertive means having your own views. Since others will also have their views, this means that occasionally there will be disagreements. Acquiescing or, the opposite, attacking, are not constructive responses.

Following a simple step-by-step process will help you put your case without **getting emotional, losing your integrity or losing your respect for the other person.**

The Process

1. Affirmative Statement
2. Softening Statement
3. Indicate Process
4. State Reasons
5. Disagree
6. Offer a compromise*

* The compromise is optional and it is for you to decide whether or not to make a concession.

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

DISAGREEMENT PROCESS



1. The Affirmative Statement

This is simply saying 'YES'. It might sound strange saying this when you are disagreeing. But if you say 'NO' the other person immediately goes into argument mode and is less likely to listen. You are using 'yes' to prepare them for what you are going to say, not to indicate that you agree with them.

2. The Softening Statement

Most people's views are influenced by their background, experience or profession. You can show that you recognise this within the context of a softening statement. Here are some examples:-

- 'As an engineer I can understand why you take such a position'
- 'As someone much older than myself, with different values, I can understand where you come from'
- 'As a man working in a traditional male environment and culture I can understand why you said that'
- 'As a manager whose prime responsibility is for output I can understand your position makes a great deal of sense'

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS



DISAGREEMENT PROCESS

3. Indicate Process

This explains to the person the process you will use to outline your position or your reasons for the stance that you have taken. Here are some examples:

- 'If I may, I would like to say something about that ...'
- 'Let me give you my reasons'
- 'Can I tell you how I have arrived at my viewpoint ...?'
- 'Let me outline briefly my position and the reasons for it ...'

If there is going to be any sensible discussion, the other person has to let you put your case. If they are not prepared to listen then you are wasting your time anyway, and it would be better to terminate the discussion immediately.

4. State Reasons

Here you simply give the reasons or justification for your position. This can either be done in a straightforward way, or you can give a balanced view of pros and cons, explaining why you have come down on the side that you have.

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

DISAGREEMENT PROCESS



5. Disagree

Do not apologise or use tentative language here. Use the strongest language that you can, remembering to accompany what you have said with appropriate body language. Here are some examples:

- 'So I cannot agree with you'
- 'So I must disagree'
- 'So I think you are mistaken'

The two letters of the adverb 'so' are exceptionally powerful because they make your conclusions 'so' logical and natural.

6. Compromise

This is optional, but helpful if there is little or no cost to you. However, your compromise should always be conditional on your getting what you want (see examples).

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS



DISAGREEMENT PROCESS

EXAMPLES

Position: 'I don't think you should go out tonight'

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Affirmative</i> | 1. 'Yes' |
| <i>Softening</i> | 2. 'I can quite understand why you would like me to stay in and keep you company as I have done the last three Saturdays' |
| <i>Indicate</i> | 3. 'Let me explain why tonight is so important to me' |
| <i>State</i> | 4. 'I particularly want to see this production of Macbeth because it has had excellent reviews and if I don't see it tonight I will miss it' |
| <i>Disagree</i> | 5. 'So I have decided that I am going to go out' |
| <i>Compromise</i> | 6. 'But I am more than happy to keep you company tomorrow.' |

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS



DISAGREEMENT PROCESS

EXAMPLES

Position: 'I want you to work overtime tonight'

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Affirmative</i> | 1. 'Yes, I can understand that' |
| <i>Softening</i> | 2. 'We have been short staffed all week and I know it has been difficult' |
| <i>Indicate</i> | 3. 'But I have to tell you something' |
| <i>State</i> | 4. 'I have not seen my children very much this week and tonight I promised to take them to the park' |
| <i>Disagree</i> | 5. 'So I cannot work overtime tonight' |
| <i>Compromise</i> | 6. 'Would it be helpful if I stayed tomorrow?' |

Position: 'You can't have an increase in salary'

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|--------------------|---|
| <i>Affirmative</i> | 1. 'Yes, it must be difficult' |
| <i>Softening</i> | 2. 'I know that business has not been good these last 6 months' |
| <i>Indicate</i> | 3. 'But my position is this' |
| <i>State</i> | 4. 'I was promised a raise within 3 months of starting and that was deferred; I have now been here 12 months, and besides doing good work, you have increased my responsibilities considerably' |
| <i>Disagree</i> | 5. 'So it is important that I get the pay rise due to me. Thank you.' |

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS



'I' STATEMENTS

'I' statements are among the most powerful you can make, both for yourself and others.

In 'I' statements you are affirming who you are and what you want. Using them is the hallmark of assertiveness.

'I' statements can be used in a variety of ways:

- Situation
- Interpretation and understanding
- Feelings and emotions
- Wants and needs
- Future actions



About the Author

Max A. Eggert BSc, MA, FCIPD, CFAHRI, ABPS, MAPS

Max is a management psychologist specialising in assisting individuals reach their maximum potential. Besides being retained by major international corporations as coach, mentor and strategist, he has been interviewed frequently on TV, radio and in the print media both in Australia and in Europe. Max has degrees in psychology, industrial relations and theology. He has fifteen books in print in twelve languages, one of which is a standard text and two are frequently in the ten best business books. Several of his books are on the recommended reading lists of Sydney, London, Harvard, Westminster and Sussex Universities.



Contact

Level 31
88 Phillip Street
Sydney
NSW 2000
Australia

Tel. +61 2 8211 0500
Fax. +61 2 8211 0555
Mobile 040 360 2286
E mail: max@transcareer.com.au

*"Max is an international
psychologist who has the gift of
making the complexities of human behaviour
understandable and relevant to business."*

Financial Times, London