

# Effective Communication

“An organization's results are determined through webs of human commitments, born in webs of human conversations” Fernando Flores

## Learning Objectives

1. Learn the components of effective communication.
2. Discuss the Ladder of Inference and practice with this model.
3. Discover how to overcome the root causes of difficult conversations.
4. Learn how to make meaningful requests and commitments.

## Ineffective Communication:

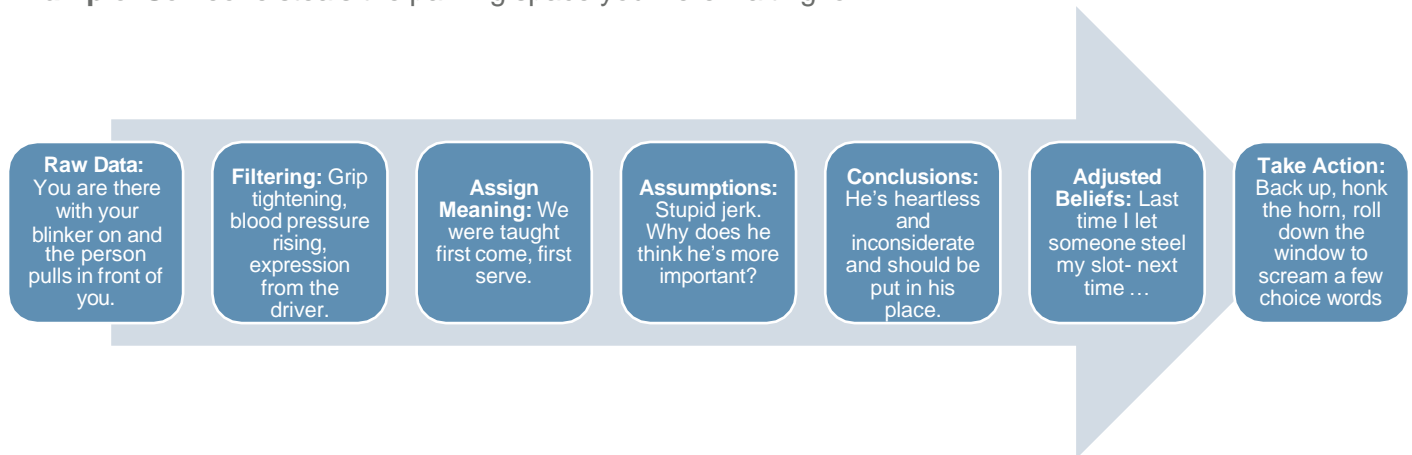
- **Preaching:** We deliver “sermons” to protect and promote our ideals.
  - Problem: We can't see gaps in our knowledge because we believe we've already found the truth.
- **Politicking:** We seek to win over an audience by campaigning and lobbying for the approval of our constituents.
  - Problem: We ignore or dismiss whatever doesn't win the favor of our constituents.
- **Prosecuting:** We shoot down others “flawed” reasoning by marshaling arguments to win our case.
  - Problem: We're laser-focused on changing other people's minds but ours are set in stone.

**The Overconfidence Cycle:** Pride → Conviction → Confirmation Bias → Validation

**The Rethinking Cycle:** Humility → Questioning Understanding → Curiosity → Discovery

## The Ladder of Inference:

**Example:** Someone steals the parking space you were waiting for.



*What if you knew the man's wife was in labor and needed to pick her up and take her to the hospital?*

**To Climb down the ladder:** Know the difference between assertions and assessments.

Assertion	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A measurable, observable fact. True or false. Not influenced by mood, emotion, or beliefs.</li><li>• “John didn't come to the last two meetings.”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One's opinion, judgment, or story we tell ourselves about that fact.</li><li>• “John doesn't care about what our department is doing.”</li></ul>

## Designing How to Work Together:

- Sharing your user's guide:
  - You get the best of me when ...
  - You get the worst of me when ...
  - I am the most productive when ...
- How are we willing to flex to meet each other's needs?
- What will we do when we have a conflict or don't meet each other's needs?

## Making Difficult Conversations Productive:

1. Maintain curiosity
2. Avoid blame
3. Understand Intent vs. impact
4. Communicating requests and commitment

## Maintaining curiosity – the shift from “!” to “?”

Instead of asserting our opinion, get into the mode of being curious.

Not only will this give you more data, but it will also give the other person the opportunity to express themselves and feel heard (as we talked about earlier, this brings down their resistance), which will automatically bring down the stress level.

## The role of blame and how to avoid it:

- Contribution Shifters: Everything is someone else's fault.
- Contribution Absorbers: Everything is my fault.
- Starting statements to help avoid “the blame game”:
  - “I'd like to try to figure out how we got here so that we can figure out what we each need to do differently to ensure this doesn't happen again.”
  - “There are some things I wish I'd done differently here...”
  - “Going forward, it would really help me if you would...”

## Conversation starters to explore conflict responsibly:

- “Please help me to understand your (action/point of view, etc.)”
- “Here are other data we should try to reconcile with yours.”
- “Say more about that...”
- “Here's what I'm confused about...”
- “Something significant to me is... and here's why...”

## Intention vs Impact:

- Other people's intentions are not visible to us.
- We make up attributions about intentions based on the impact on us.
- We often assume the worst.
- As a leader, we need to share more about our intentions so that people do not fill the “vacuum” with assumptions based on our impact.

## Requests and Commitments:

If we want to avoid resentment, we need to learn how to make clear requests:

- Who
- What
- By When
- Context
- Conditions of satisfaction

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And provide clear answers by saying: yes, no and/or counteroffering and committing to commit.