

The language of persuasion

We have had some recently interesting discussions with clients about persuading a 'Mr Stropky' to embrace a new change process in English. Mr Stropky is a made up of that stubborn person in the office who likes to moan and is resistant to change. We identified a number of principles in using language to be persuasive.

How to be persuasive in English - your principles

1) Use 'we' to highlight that the change is for the benefit of everyone. Talk in inclusive language that gives emphasis to the joint process of collaboration.

2) Sometimes using 'you' can be effective in highlighting how the change process will be beneficial to that individual.

Examples:

- You would directly benefit from this... because.
- By introducing... you would be able to....
- This change process would give you the
- If we implement this new system, you will be able to....
- This new way of working will give you/empower you to....

3) Present your new idea using non-directive language. Avoid expressions like 'you must', 'you have to', 'you are going to', even 'you should' needs to be treated carefully as it can feel judgmental.

Examples:

- We think it could be a good idea to....
- We believe that the best way to move forward is to....
- Our vision is to....

- With this change we hope to....
- We are committed to implementing... because of....

4) Clearly highlight the need/reason/urgency for change. Clearly outline the risks if change is not introduced.

Examples:

- If we don't... we risk/we could see/we will/we won't be able to....
- Without change we could face the real possibility....
- This represents a great opportunity to....
- It is vital that we....
- In today's climate it is essential that we....
- It is imperative that we....

5) Clearly state the benefits of the change process to the audience.

Examples:

- By implementing/making this change we would see... we could... we would be able to....
- We would free up/streamline/optimize/reduce/strengthen....
- We would be able to focus/concentrate on....
- The benefits of this change are....
- We would transform....
- We would achieve significant/substantial/dramatic/profound....

6) Actively listen to the feedback of the other person. Give them space and time to really express their perspective.

7) Don't patronize and talk down to the person.

8) Avoid management speak, jargon, abbreviations. The best communication is simple, easy to understand and generous to your audience.

9) Directly relate the change to the values and strategy of your organisation but don't get lost in the vision thing! Don't be too abstract when talking about the values of your organization - it can come across as preaching.

I hope this has been helpful. If you have any questions, please do get in contact - toby@tlp.lu.
