

Assertiveness Techniques for Managers

Simple steps lead to positive dialogue, positive results.

by Linnda Durré for Recharger Magazine

Assertiveness training is one of the most important tools for managers. Rid yourself of childhood restrictions, fear, hesitation, and social misinformation. Know the difference between being aggressive — bullying, yelling, screaming, intimidation, and being assertive — being diplomatic, strong, factual, clear, and firm, which can successfully solve interpersonal difficulties with your employees and in your life. Stop being a martyr, a victim and a doormat. Avoid blaming other people for your situation. Believe that there is a workable resolution. Take responsibility and stand up for yourself to get what you need and want from others in a caring, direct way. Good managers know how to be positive, identify the faulty behavior, and focus quickly on a win/win solution.

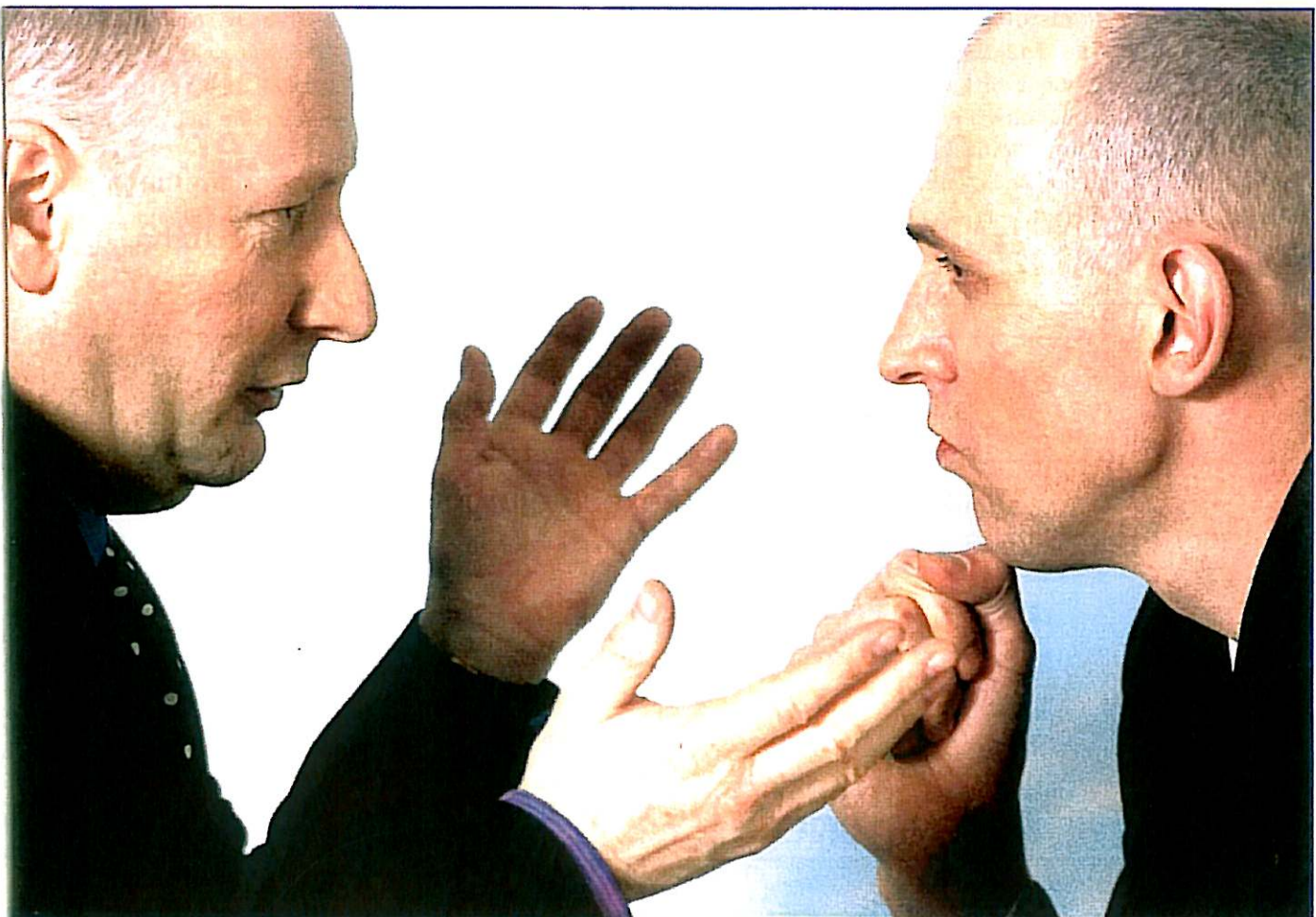
Here are the steps of assertiveness:

State the problem

Use “The Sandwich Technique” — Start out with a positive compliment about the person, then go directly to the problem and give feedback stating it clearly and giving examples of the toxic or faulty behavior and how you want it to change, and then end on a positive note of what you’d like to have happen.

Bob: “Jack, you are a valued co-worker here, and we’ve been working together for five years. We’ve noticed your work isn’t in on time and I’m wondering what’s wrong. It’s unlike you. Is there anything I or the company can do to help you meet your deadlines?”

Take responsibility and stand up for yourself to get what you need and want from others in a caring, direct way. Good managers know how to be positive, identify the faulty behavior, and focus quickly on a win/win solution.



Be quiet and listen to what the person is saying and how they're saying it. Observe their body language.

State your feelings

Say how the person's behavior makes you feel. Use words like frustrated, angry, and annoyed. Be specific. Avoid accusations and blame.

Bob: "When your work isn't completed on time, it slows up the whole department because we all depend on your reports. When you don't give me advance notice, I can't make arrangements with the others. I need to know what's wrong so we can correct it. When you don't tell me what's happening, I feel cut out of the loop, powerless and frustrated."

Offer solutions

Give the person options for their behavior and how much better it would be when behavior changes.

Bob: "What can I do to help you to get the reports in on time? Do you need another administrative assistant for a few days? Do you need to partner up with someone to share the workload? Are there any problems at work I can take care of? Let me know so we can fix it."

Give an ultimatum

If the situation doesn't improve, you'll have to issue an ultimatum.



Some people like to include it with the first conversation so the other person knows where they stand.

State what you intend to do if compliance isn't achieved like reporting it to the boss or HR.

Bob: "If you can't get the reports in on time, let me know immediately. If your work continues to be late you are jeopardizing your position at the company and you may be demoted or fired. I may have to report it to our boss or HR if it's not corrected and I'd rather not have to do that, so please get the reports in on time."



Look and listen

Hear the person's response and their feedback.

Be quiet and listen to what the person is saying and how they're saying it. Observe their body language. Know what they're saying between the lines. Use active listening techniques to establish rapport by paraphrasing what you hear.

Bob: "I understand that you thought you could get it done without coming to me, and now you see you couldn't do it. I know how hard you're working and what pressure you must feel."

Dialogue

Have an honest discussion, listen, don't interrupt each other, and comment on each thing the person says. Be prepared to hear them remark on each thing you have said and respond accordingly.

Bob: "I'm not here to blame you, I'm here to find a win/win solution that works for all of us. Let's see how we can remedy this. Perhaps an assistant will be the solution. Let me schedule an assistant and get this started right now."

Resolution

Decide what the action plan will be and agree on it, perhaps in writing.


Bob: "So, Jack, our agreement is that I'll schedule you for an assistant for several weeks so you'll be able to catch up and get your reports in on time."

Follow up

Send a letter and/or e-mail summarizing the discussion and what the decision was. He should cc it to whoever might also be affected — bosses, other co-workers, and HR to cover himself and others. He can e-mail it, and I recommend hand delivering it so people can't say, "I

never got it." According to a tech consultant, approximately 5 to 7 percent of all e-mails never reach their intended place. Add a sentence at the end, like, "If you have any questions about or additions to this memo, please respond in writing."

This allows the co-worker recourse to respond, and ensures that you have covered your back, which is crucial in any company, whether you are the co-worker, boss, or owner. People can say, "I never said that," or "I didn't agree to that," but if you put it in writing, then you're covered. Ask them to send a reply e-mail, agreeing to the solution.

These steps of assertiveness can assist and empower you, whether you're a co-worker, manager, or a boss in dealing with toxic situations. Be clear, firm, and compassionate. Stay focused, communicate honestly and openly, and cooperate for a win/win solution. It works! 

Contact Linnda Durré at 407-739-8620 or
Linnda.Durre@gmail.com.