



Inclusive communication

Not every conversation is a coaching conversation, but using elements of coaching theory to inform the way you communicate with colleagues can help to create a more open, constructive and ultimately more inclusive exchange.

Think about:

The subtle clues we give each other about the primary way we experience the world.

When you agree with someone's opinion do you: **See** eye to eye? **Feel** the same way? Or **hear** what they're saying? Noticing these differences, expressing your ideas and asking questions in the way your colleague understands most intuitively could help them be more at ease, more in tune with you and better able to understand you, quickly. Make positive feedback more meaningful by delivering it in the right way – a written note, a shared coffee, a spoken thank you – and you can work towards making the many different people in a team feel equally valued.

The assumptions we make about what I and you, can, can't, should and shouldn't do, and how we should or shouldn't do it

'Limiting beliefs' are the unchallenged assumptions we hold to be true, often based on (but not limited to) our experiences when young or things we were told growing up. They can be:

- *About our own abilities:* 'I cannot do maths' (so why even attempt a task involving figures)
- *About the abilities of others:* 'Only graduates are management material' (which makes it easy to dismiss the other two team members going for promotion)
- *About how we view success, how we achieve it and how we judge others:* 'You must work long hours to be successful' (if you're not, you're not pulling your weight or you must be doing well by chance).

They may be explicitly stated or they may emerge through a pattern of behaviour, however they present themselves, these fixed ways of thinking can lead to self-exclusion (for fear of failing), excluding others (for a lack of understanding of their abilities), and becoming stuck in one way of doing things (at the risk of missing or dismissing other, perhaps less restrictive ways to reach the same result). Altogether when you're trying to build an inclusive and effective team this hinders progress.

You can use questions to try to understand your own limiting beliefs and help others to understand, test and to recognise choice around theirs. Ultimately the aim is to be more open to alternative modes of thinking and doing. For example: 'You must work long hours to be successful'

Ask:

Who do you identify as a role model for success at work? What do your role models do that means you consider them successful? How do your organisation and your colleagues gauge success? – *perhaps the number of hours you work is not the only measure of your success at work.*

What are you doing with the extra time? – *are you adding value?*

Do your role models always work long hours? – *perhaps other people have other strategies that you can use.*

What about outside of work – *what makes you successful there? – is there more than one way of being successful and how does your focus on working overtime affect success elsewhere?*

Do you enjoy working long hours? Why/why not? – *perhaps this is a personal choice, perhaps that should be acknowledged and the same expectation should not be applied to others.*

Seeing roadblocks as a building blocks

A great benefit of a team made up of people who think differently to one another, is its ability to explore multiple interpretations of the same event, see the potential in problems and identify where a weakness might prove a strength. This is sometimes referred to as 'reframing'. For example, the loss of a client might be a disastrous loss of income or the opportunity to spend more time nurturing higher spending customers. A focus on technical detail might not work well in marketing material, but could be an advantage when drawing up legal documents.


Encourage your colleagues to volunteer alternative viewpoints: How could this help us? What can this teach us? Where can we use this?

The value of Ecoute et répète

Think about a meeting where ideas need to be developed or interrogated. In these circumstances, listening carefully to what another person says and repeating it back in summary, can help promote better engagement from everyone. It lets the speaker know what's been understood, provides them the opportunity for correction or expansion, allows others to ask questions around details that may have been missed the first time, helps everyone to build on the ideas presented and helps you to demonstrate your full attention and the value you place on the speaker's contribution.



Q: How does this tool help me achieve diverse thinking in my organisation?



A: This tool is helpful when communicating with the diverse range of people within your organisation or in your role. Understanding how the language you use has an impact on the outcome of a conversation helps you reframe conversations based on who you are speaking with and what you want to achieve, taking into account the individual differences and preferences.