

Traveling with Key Principles

1. Offer the “whys” when possible.

Provide rationale to the people who are affected by or charged with implementing a decision, idea, or change. Knowing why something has been done builds trust, minimizes rumors, and helps people operate more on facts rather than assumptions.

2. Encourage people to assume responsibility by asking for their participation—not only to carry out a plan, but also to think through issues and solutions.

Unleash people’s ideas with open-ended questions (what, how, which, why, who) that will stimulate creativity and invite participation.

3. Aim to understand and respond to both *facts* and *feelings*.

People want to know that their emotions aren’t being minimized or dismissed. When they aren’t, they’ll be more likely to share information throughout the discussion. Show that you understand what people are saying; however, you need not necessarily agree with them.

4. Focus on facts and clarify the motives of others.

This is especially important when discussing sensitive issues such as performance improvement. To keep from damaging people’s self-worth and confidence, stick to the facts and avoid jumping to conclusions. Show that you value and respect them by asking clarifying questions like, “Can you help me understand why this happened?”

5. Help others think and do.

You help people think of ideas, alternatives, and solutions so *they* can execute the plan. This might include linking members of your team to other experts in the organization or juggling their assignments and reprioritizing their tasks.

6. Make participation your first choice.

Instead of giving your ideas or thoughts first, ask other people for theirs. Offer your thoughts later or build on others’ ideas as you move along. Instead of telling people what to do, seek their participation first.

7. Empathize with positive feelings too.

It’s just as important to identify and respond to feelings of happiness, pride, and achievement as it is to identify and respond to feelings of frustration, anger, and anxiety.

8. Make sure your ideas, opinions, and experiences supplement—not replace—others’.

If experience has taught you a lesson that will help others avoid mistakes, share it. If your knowledge of the organization explains the bigger picture, offer it. Provide your insights, but don’t dominate the discussion.

9. Resist the temptation to take over.

Encourage others to identify the type and extent of help they need. Don't automatically take responsibility when someone asks for your help. Define and confirm roles and responsibilities.

10. Defuse negative emotions.

Strong emotions can prevent a discussion from achieving its purpose. By actively listening to, identifying, and addressing these feelings, you can meet people's need to be heard while you keep the discussion moving forward.

11. Be specific and sincere when recognizing accomplishments.

When receiving positive feedback, people need to hear specifically what they did well and why. This encourages them to continue meeting or exceeding expectations in similar situations in the future.

12. Disclose feelings appropriately.

Disclosing your true feelings builds trust and can help people see issues in a new light. Be sure that the feelings you convey relate to the situation and that the person or group will benefit from hearing how you feel.

13. "You're meeting your production dates, and that's important to the company. Just as important is your follow-through with the team. You agreed to submit forecasting data to the team last week. As of today, they still haven't received it."

14. "Maybe it would help if I explained why I'm making this request. I just learned that . . ."

15. "I know you're having trouble dividing responsibility for this project. What help do you need from me so that you can come up with a plan that's fair to everyone?"

16. "We need to make sure the manual covers the most difficult issues. What technical problems do you think we should address in the procedures manual?"

17. "When you wrote down open issues during our meeting, it helped us keep on schedule and enabled us to cover all the agenda items. Thanks for your help."

18. "On the last project your customers weren't happy with the way their complaints were handled. Because this new project involves a more complex system, I'm feeling reluctant to turn it over to you."

19. "While I support the overall plan, I'm afraid that introducing these changes at this time will jeopardize our deadline."



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