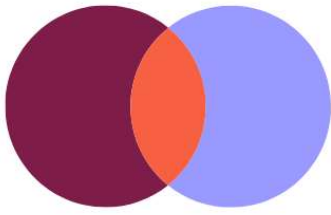# Addressing Needs in High Stakes Conversations

When difficult conversations arise, messages often get muddled. The topic alone is sensitive. But, when we add in that each participants comes into the conversation with different expectations or "rules" for how things "should" be discussed, often the message becomes obstructed by lack of a shared framework. Guiding your clients, especially executives/team leaders for how to set the guidelines ahead of a conversation can help even the most difficult conversations run smoother and get the message across clearly and respectfully. For best practices, use this activity as a one-on-one or two-on-one, ideally near to the time when the high-stakes conversation will be taking place.

Materials:

1. Addressing Needs in High-Stakes Conversations Tip Sheet (x1 per participant)
2. Highlighter (x1 per participant)
3. Birkman Map Summary (x1 per participant)

Steps:

1. Describe what a high-stakes conversation is to participants.
2. Explain how addressing each other's Needs during a sensitive discussion can lead to clearer communication for both parties.
3. Ask participants to share their Needs Map Color and read through the Needs listed. If their Needs symbol is towards the center of the Map, consider encouraging that person to read through their closest two/three colors. Have participants highlight the two bullet points they think will help the conversation be successful.
4. One at a time, ask participants to share the bullet points they selected and what that specifically sounds like to them. Encourage them to give specific examples of times that a Need was or was not met.
   o For example, I highlighted "Validate my concerns." This means giving me an opportunity to explain my point of view and feeling like my point of view was clearly understood. Once when I was struggling, my boss took the time to listen to my point of view and was able to summarize what I was feeling. That helped me feel heard so that I was ready to see her side more clearly.
5. Create a short document they can refer back to that highlights each of their Needs for future conversations.

Addressing Needs in High-Stakes Conversations

A high-stakes conversation is one where...
- The topic being discussed is especially sensitive or important
- The outcome is very meaningful to both people involved
- The nature of the conversation requires vulnerability
- You are giving feedback or advice

When Needs go unmet in these conversations, discomfort or defensiveness can keep the other person from being able to fully listen and contribute. Keep the tips below in mind when having these types of conversations. Remember, you can't guess someone's Needs based on their Usual Behavior!

RED NEEDS

- Make the message brief
- Don't bury the key information in extra details and "fluff"
- Confirm the next steps before the end of the conversation

GREEN NEEDS

- Make it a dialogue and encourage them to contribute
- Allow for follow-up conversations to circle back on the discussion
- Keep your tone assertive, assured, and confident

YELLOW NEEDS

- Provide structure at the beginning of the conversation
- Keep feelings separate from the topic at hand
- Address implications and risks

BLUE NEEDS

- Account for reflection and processing time before or after conversation
- Word choice is important—be thoughtful with how you say things
- Validate their concerns

BIRKMAN

Interests as Communication Filters

Interests give us unique insights into what motivates and demotivates participants in the jobs they seek and the tasks they perform. It can also factor into the motivation to deeply listen when the subject matter aligns with our top interest (or how difficult it may be to pay attention in conversations related to our demotivators). Use this activity with teams or individuals to illuminate subjects and structures to get their best.

Materials:

1. Interests as Communication filter table (x1 per participant)
2. Writing Instrument (x1 per participant)
3. Birkman Interest Report (x1 per participant)

Steps:

1. Explain briefly that Interests are motivators and how that can be true in communication as well.
2. Give participants time to review the information for their top two Interests and their bottom Interest.
3. Encourage participants to complete the following to sentence starters
   o With top Interests: If you want to tailor your message to inspire me, consider…
   o With bottom Interests: My attention may wander if…
4. Give participants 5-10 minutes to discuss what resonated with them from the table.
5. Allow each participant to share their personalized statement and any relevant examples.
6. Ask: What steps can you put into place to communicate better with your team? As a listener, what can you do to keep your attention engaged even when your demotivators are involved?

Communication
Interests Act as Communication Filters in the Workplace Summary

	Technical	Scientific	Persuasive	Social Service
Conversation topics:	• How something will work • Production and implementation	• The 'why' behind the problem or solution • Research	• "What's In It For Me" • "What's In It For You"	• Social or individual impact • How this will help the person or a group of people
Ways you process information:	• Technical documentation or software systems	• By asking questions • Investigating	• Speeches • Verbal exchanges • Videos or TEDTalks	• Talking one-on-one • Talking through thoughts and feelings
Tips to best communicate with you:	• Explain the logic behind the message • What happens first, second, etc. • How will other steps proceed • Focus on the mechanics of the message	• Provide ready answers for expected questions • "About now you might be asking this question…" • Emphasize the insight the message is based on	• Be influential and motivational • Talk in a convincing way • "Sell" and "promote" the idea • Stress the personal benefit	• Be thoughtful • Stress the positive betterment individuals will experience • Advocate for the person involved

	Administrative	Numerical	Artistic	Literary
Conversation topics:	• The plan or the process • Trends	• Data • Financials • KPIs	• How things look • Aesthetics and design	• The wording of messages • Language arts, books, blogs
Ways you process information:	• Forms and lists • Charts • Agendas	• Spreadsheets • Models • Metrics	• Visual presentations • Colors and graphics	• Written communication • Formal speeches or storytelling • Use metaphors and analogies
Tips to best communicate with you:	• Communicate in steps • Use agendas for meetings • Use systematic reporting procedures • Use consistent, routine communication	• Provide quantitative conclusions • Make decisions supported by data • Use precise, exact values • Discuss financial impact	• Use visuals to explain concepts • Use creative and colorful content that "pops" • Use eye-catching aesthetics • "Paint the picture" for them	• Use proper grammar, punctuation, and language • Think of the best way to phrase the message • Choose words precisely • Provide the message in writing

Using Mentimeter
To Drive Engagement

Mentimeter is an online engagement tool that can add interactivity to your presentations. One way to add Birkman data real time is to create a live average for a Birkman Component using the Mentimeter Scale function. Here's an example using Social Energy.

- Step 1: Sign up for Mentimeter (it's free).
- Step 2: Create a New Menti.
- Step 3: Choose "Multiple Choice"
- Step 4: Click on Ask your question. Change the question to: "What is your top Interest?
- Step 5: Click the box underneath your question. Under visualization type, choose bars.
- Step 6: Under "Options" list each Interest.
- Step 7: Under "Options", click "Select Multiple options" and allow participants to select 2 or 3 choices each.
- Step 8: Right click the slide you created and duplicate the slide.
- Step 9: Click your question, then change it to "What is your bottom Interest?"
- Step 10: Present from Mentimeter or download the PowerPoint add-in to add to your slides.

In a group setting, use the results to talk about what subjects the group is (generally) motivated to engage in, and what subjects the group may struggle to connect to. Talk about how this might change future meetings/presentations.

Remember to refresh after each presentation to use with different groups.

Want to learn more about Mentimeter? Click here to take a beginner course or here to see their how-to videos and helpful hints.

Join at menti.com | use code 3984 3800

What is your top Interest?

0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social Service	Persuasive	Technical	Scientific	Numerical	Administrative	Artistic	Literary