



Confront the right way

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COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: I have been told I’m too combative when I confront others at work. But seriously, people need to get their act together. They don’t have a clue about what it takes to make our projects successful. Every lame idea they try to implement leads to disaster. When I occasionally confront them, they don’t listen because I’m “too insulting” to them. Well boo hoo. Nonetheless, it’s hard for me to get anywhere at work without their cooperation so how can I better confront these sub-par managers?

THE CONFRONTATOR



DEAR CONFRONTATOR: First, the tone of your comments indicates you may have an aggressive personality. Maybe you need to dial it down a notch when interacting with others. Many people tend to shut down and/or avoid outspoken or combative people. So lighten up and maybe they’ll open up.

When it comes to confrontation, I recommend you think of it as an opportunity to clarify the issue rather than confront the person. John Maxwell, one of the top leadership consultants in the world, issued these ten commandments for engaging in confrontation:

- 1) Do it privately, not publicly.
- 2) Do it as soon as possible.
- 3) Speak to one issue at a time. Don’t overload the person with a long list of issues.
- 4) Once you’ve made a point, don’t keep repeating it.
- 5) Deal only with actions the person can actually change. If you ask the person to do something he or she is unable to do, frustration sets in.
- 6) Avoid sarcasm. Sarcasm may indicate you’re angry and it may cause them to resent you.
- 7) Avoid words like “always” and “never.” They usually detract from accuracy and make people defensive.
- 8) Present criticisms as suggestions

or questions if possible.

9) Don’t apologize for the confrontational meeting. Doing so detracts from it and may indicate you are not sure you had the right to say what you did.

10) Don’t forget the compliments. Use the age-old “sandwich” technique: compliment--confront--compliment.

Try these techniques the next time you confront someone. Not only will they make your encounter more productive but you won’t come across as a mean-spirited bully who only cares about their own perspective. Ideally, you want to be a leader and manager who gets it right and does it right, so confront the right way!



For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to www.DearChiefAdvice.com and submit your comments or email them to Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com.