POWER

Definitions

Dialogue
Open, honest conversations in which the participants explicitly set aside decision making to assure mutual understanding even if in disagreement. There is active inquiry about negative feelings, concerns, disagreements, and new ideas which are explored as opposed to ignored, debated, or discounted.

Components of Dialogue

Active Listening
Listening with an emphasis on asking questions and checking understanding so the speaker feels heard and understood.

Active Telling
Telling that assures you are understood while minimizing defensiveness and/or withdrawal.

Two key methods
- Using “I” or “my” statements (e.g. “My perception is...”) vs. asserting “The Truth.”
- Asking for reactions, disagreements, and concerns.

Checking understanding
Summarizing, repeating back, and/or reflecting back.

Selected Forms of Power

Relational Power
The capacity to influence others and help create an environment of empowerment. Includes a wide range of abilities such as the ability:

- to discover what people really care about;
- to discover others’ concerns and challenges;
- to elicit and manage differences so that all feel heard and understood;
- to facilitate discovery of collaborative, creative solutions;
- to be open to others’ concerns at all times while not abandoning one’s own interests;
- to influence upwards effectively.

Positional Power
Legitimized authority within an organizational hierarchy to make decisions and assure accountability (e.g. ability to hire, fire, give performance reviews, allocate resources).

Professional power
Legitimized expertise—e.g. credentialed roles.
Power Tips for Situational Reflection and Action Planning

### Principles, methods

**Self Management**
- Explore your own and others’ thinking, feelings, and actions.
- Orient to your True North (purpose/vision) for results and relationships.
- Find discrepancies between your thinking, feelings, and actions and your True North.
- Prepare for action.

**Decision Making**
- Clarify who, how, when.
- Use dialogue to explain decisions, elicit reactions, engage in problem solving concerns, and to plan implementation.

**Dialogue**
- Explicitly set aside decision making to assure mutual understanding even if in disagreement.
- Orient to the principles and practices of dialogue in each conversation.

**Structures and Processes**
- Establish a shared True North (purpose/vision) for relationships.
- Establish and consistently use norms for dialogue and feedback.
- Make everyone (including leaders) accountable for following norms.
- Assure alignment.

### Tips if you have more power (positional or professional)

Remember the risks of having more positional or professional power:
- Listening less. Talking more.
- Insufficient empathy—trouble getting in others’ shoes.
- Needing to have all the answers.
- Not needing input or advice.
- Thinking you are having a more positive impact than is the case.
- Thinking people really understand or agree when they do not.
- Being impatient with resistance.
- Withdrawing from decisions, giving feedback, setting boundaries on behavior, or assuring accountability.
- Not asking for feedback.
- Becoming overly directive.

### Tips if you have less power (positional or professional)

Remember the risks of having less positional or professional power:
- Fear which inhibits action.
- Withdrawal from communication.
- Attacking due to anger (e.g. arguing and/or blaming).
- Wanting leaders to have all the answers and give direction.
- Not owning your relational power.
- Not setting your own True North (purpose/vision) for results and relationships.
- Difficulty getting in the shoes of those with more positional or professional power.
- Difficulty defining any action which seems to have acceptable risk.

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## Principles, methods

- Prepare for dialogue, decision making, and feedback.
  - Get in their shoes.
  - Find curiosity.
  - Consider roles and decision-making authority.
  - Consider other triggers for you and in the organizational environment that will make your efforts harder/easier.
  - Prepare to be unconditionally constructive.
  - Design the next conversation as a Small Test.

### Tips if you have more power

- **Promote and participate in dialogue:**
  - Always welcome input.
  - Assure *balanced* participation—involve everyone.
  - Talk less. Listen more.
  - Explicitly and repeatedly invite negative feelings, concerns, disagreements, and challenges.
  - Assert personal views with “I” statements (i.e. not as Truth) and invite differing views (i.e. adhere to *Active Telling*).
  - Disclose your own fallibility, mistakes, and need for advice.
  - When influencing, use the “Tips if you have less power.—use dialogue to influence others.”

### Tips if you have less power

- Always consider *first* asking about others’ concerns and ideas before you give yours.
- **Over-communicate your intentions for the type of relationships you want to build** (your True North/vision).
- Be sure to summarize, repeat back, and/or reflect back.
- Stay engaged and follow-up about concerns or rough spots that happen in dialogue.
- Ask about the personal experience of obstacles to participation.
- Meet 1:1 regularly with each person who reports to you.

## Use dialogue to influence others:

- Always consider starting by clarifying *their* goals (*what is important to them*) and *their* challenges vs. starting with your agenda—especially if you are influencing upwards.
- Be explicit about your intentions to help. Ask how you can be of help.
- Before exploring ideas, decide if it is better to start with *Active Listening* or *Active Telling*.
- With *Active Telling*, connect your ideas to how they help with their goals and challenges—especially if you are influencing upwards.
- Assert personal views with “I” statements (i.e. not as Truth) and invite differing views (i.e. adhere to *Active Telling*).
- With *Active Listening*, find out their ideas for addressing challenges: Which challenge is most important? What ideas have they had? What small next step could be taken?
- Check understanding to clarify areas of agreement and of concern.
- When influencing upwards, if risks seem high, take a small step of lower risk—e.g. only ask questions about *their* thinking on goals and challenges.

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<tr>
<th>Principles, methods</th>
<th>Tips if you have more power (positional or professional)</th>
<th>Tips if you have less power (positional or professional)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decision Making</strong></td>
<td>• Assure clarity and consistency of decision-making processes.</td>
<td>• Promote clarity of decision making—ask about who, how, when.</td>
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<td>• Clarify who, how, when.</td>
<td>• Emphasize participatory decision making—always consider seeking input from those impacted. Determine and include the key stakeholders.</td>
<td>• Help to determine the key stakeholders who should be involved in decisions.</td>
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<td>• Identify who has authority in the situation to decide.</td>
<td>• Always explain the rationale for decisions relative to how it fits with the vision (i.e. make clear in some way that the intention is not to control).</td>
<td>• Ask questions to seek the rationale for decisions.</td>
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<td>• Decide on decision type (authoritative, consultative, consensus, delegated).</td>
<td>• Seek positive and negative reactions to decisions.</td>
<td>• Ask permission to give positive and negative reactions—use <em>Active Telling</em>.</td>
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<td>• Clarify the decision process (input from whom, how, when).</td>
<td>• Set problem solving into motion for concerns.</td>
<td>• Clarify processes to address concerns and to design implementation.</td>
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<td>• With input, include key stakeholders: those impacted by the decision and those with expertise.</td>
<td>• Avoid rushing decisions unnecessarily especially if conflicts emerge.</td>
<td>• With high stakes meetings, consider setting aside decision making for a future date.</td>
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<td>• Assure a clear process for consensus decisions.</td>
<td>• Always sustain progress on implementation even as you work with those who have negative feelings.</td>
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<th>Structures and Processes (Feedback, Accountability, and Alignment)</th>
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<td>• Establish a shared True North (purpose/vision) for relationships.</td>
<td>• Address persistent non-collaborative behavior via performance intervention.</td>
<td>• Participate actively in clarifying and assuring team norms.</td>
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<td>• Establish and consistently use norms for dialogue and feedback.</td>
<td>• Include staff input into leaders’ formal performance reviews.</td>
<td>• Remind your team about setting aside time in meetings for feedback about what is working and not working relative to norms. (The more practice with feedback, the better everyone will get at it.)</td>
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<td>• Specify a positive purpose for feedback.</td>
<td>• Assure frequent mutual feedback—not just in periodic formal performance reviews and not just feedback for others. Regularly ask for feedback about your impact on others.</td>
<td>• Avoid triangulation—always give feedback directly, never to a third party. Talk to third parties only for advice to prepare for a direct conversation.</td>
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<td>• Frequently—e.g. at the end of meetings—check-in about what worked well and what did not relative to norms.</td>
<td>• Go first—ask for feedback. Take the lead in being vulnerable. Acknowledge mistakes. Welcome negative feedback.</td>
<td>• Avoid hallway complaining. Instead, use those conversations to plan for constructive action.</td>
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<td>• Make everyone (including leaders) accountable for following norms.</td>
<td>• Assure that the organizational vision includes quality of relationships.</td>
<td>• Catch and acknowledge your mistakes.</td>
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<td>• Assure alignment</td>
<td>• Assure alignment through a cascade of regular (e.g. monthly) ongoing review meetings—both group and 1:1.</td>
<td>• When giving feedback upwards identify how the behaviors you are concerned about impact the work toward goals.</td>
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<td>• Assure high quality meetings.</td>
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<td>• Assure a cascade of ongoing review meetings up, down, and across the organization at least monthly.</td>
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