

Communication Hacks



How to Ask for What You
Need & Navigate the
Response

About Anne



Anne Shoemaker is an ICF-certified coach, career advisor and strategist for executive & aspiring executive women. Her mission is to support & elevate women into positions of influence in their careers and communities.

Today's Roadmap



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The Art of The Request

Language to Use



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Breakout #1

Discussion; Request Responses



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Breakout #2

Discussion & Wrap-Up



The Art of The Request



Request: Defined

In a professional environment,

A request is anything that you'd like someone else to do, but you don't have the authority to assign them to it.

Examples:

- Need something from a colleague in another department
- Ask for a professional development budget while negotiating a new position
- Ask for someone to be your mentor even though you've only met a few times

Haven't mastered it yet?

"I'll look into that." or "I'll try" or "Let's put a pin in it."

Why Are Requests So Hard to Make?

Takes Too Long

In the time it takes to make the request and wait for a response, you could have completed the task.

Feel You Shouldn't Have To

“Shouldn't Employee X know that they need to do XYZ before I can do ABC?”

The Request Gets Lost

Sometimes, we dilute our requests so much that they get lost in the language.



Making Requests = Smart

Making honest asks early in the relationship sets the tone & lays the foundation for you to make honest asks later

Start making requests earlier in your career than you think you should

“Magic Ratio” of Healthy Relationships

Show Interest

Listen closely to their interests, then send them an article you think they might be interested in.

Include Them

Invite them to attend an event with you, whether IRL or virtual

Be Curious

Ask them what their weekend plans are (& share yours)

Thank Them

Thank them for something they have done that you’ve appreciated & share the impact it had on you.





Demand vs. Request

Make Requests, Not Demands

Demand

- The other person feels obligated to say “yes”
- Robs someone of their agency
- Makes the other person feel disempowered

Request

- The other person can say “yes”, “no”, or make a counteroffer.
- Allows for flexibility, dialogue, and compromise
- Shows consideration for the other person’s needs, values, and interests, and gives them an ‘out’
- Builds connection as the recipient has a voice in the process

Make Requests, Not Demands

Demand

- “I am taking a four-day weekend next month.”
- “Introduce me to So-and-So.”

Request

- “I would like to take a four-day weekend next month. I have the vacation time, but I want to make sure it works with the team’s schedule. What do you think?”
- “I know you have a knack for making connections, and I would like to be introduced to someone in your LinkedIn network. Is this something you would be comfortable doing?”



Assertive vs. Aggressive

Assertive vs. Aggressive

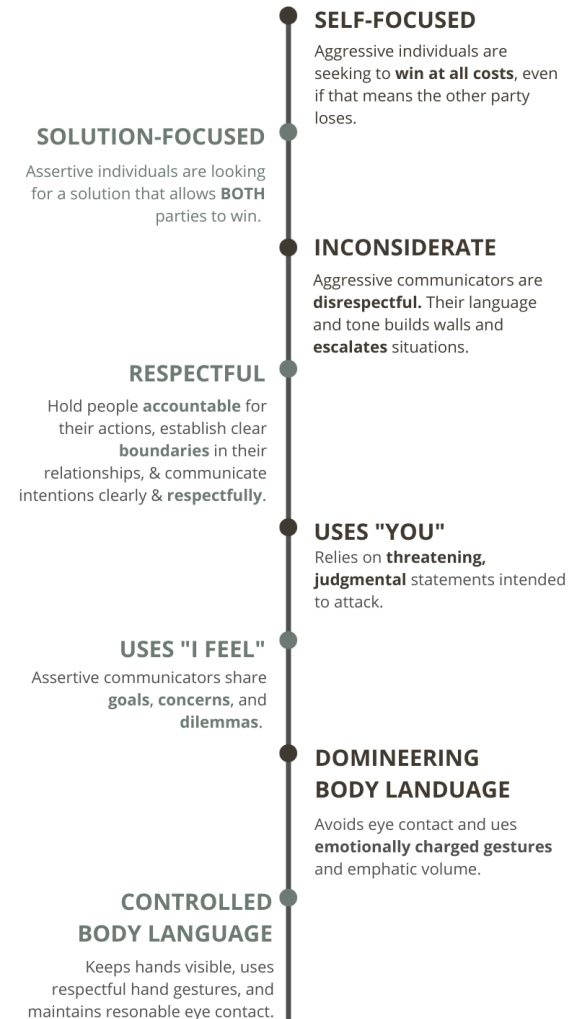
Assertive

Being forthright about your wants and needs while still considering the rights, needs, and wants of others.

Aggressive

Doing what is in your own best interest without regard for the rights, needs, and feelings or desires of others.

ASSERTIVE vs. AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION



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Assertive vs. Aggressive

Aggressive

- Self-focused
- Inconsiderate
- Uses “you”
- Domineering body language

Assertive

- Solution-focused
- Respectful
- Uses “I feel”
- Controlled body language

Assertive vs. Aggressive

Aggressive

- “I need you to tell the marketing team to stop messing around with the Annual Report and instead prioritize what’s actually important: completing the strategy for Region 1.”

Assertive vs. Aggressive

Aggressive

- “I need you to tell the marketing team to stop messing around with the Annual Report and instead prioritize what’s actually important: completing the strategy for Region 1.”

Assertive

- “We’ve dedicated more than 30 hours of the team’s time to the Annual Report these last two weeks.”



Assertive Communication Model

1. Describe the facts of the situation

Replace sentences that start with “you” with non-threatening, non-judgmental words

Assertive vs. Aggressive

Aggressive

- “I need you to tell the marketing team to stop messing around with the Annual Report and instead prioritize what’s actually important: completing the strategy for Region 1.”

Assertive

- “We’ve dedicated more than 30 hours of the team’s time to the Annual Report these last two weeks. I’m concerned that the resources that are being allocated to the Annual Report are putting the strategy for Region 1 at risk.”



Assertive Communication Model

1. Describe the facts of the situation

Replace sentences that start with “you” with non-threatening, non-judgmental words

2. Describe your feelings using “I” statements

Share your goals, concerns, & dilemmas by using “I feel”.

Assertive vs. Aggressive

Aggressive

- “I need you to tell the marketing team to stop messing around with the Annual Report and instead prioritize what’s actually important: completing the strategy for Region 1.”

Assertive

- “We’ve dedicated more than 30 hours of the team’s time to the Annual Report these last two weeks. I’m concerned that the resources that are being allocated to the Annual Report are putting the strategy for Region 1 at risk. Let’s shift our focus to strategy for these next two weeks so we can be sure to meet our org. goal, then reconvene on the Annual Report at the end of the month.”



2023

Assertive Communication Model

1. Describe the facts of the situation

Replace sentences that start with “you” with non-threatening, non-judgmental words

2. Describe your feelings using “I” statements

Share your goals, concerns, & dilemmas by using “I feel”.

3. Explain why you feel the way you do

Share your interpretations and relevant background information.

4. Explain what you want to happen next

Be clear about who, what, when, where, why, and how. Then, ask for (and listen to) other’s input.

Assertive vs. Aggressive

Aggressive

- “I need you to tell the marketing team to stop messing around with the Annual Report and instead prioritize what’s actually important: completing the strategy for Region 1.”

Assertive

- “We’ve dedicated more than 30 hours of the team’s time to the Annual Report these last two weeks. I’m concerned that the resources that are being allocated to the Annual Report are putting the strategy for Region 1 at risk. Let’s shift our focus to strategy for these next two weeks so we can be sure to meet our org. goal, then reconvene on the Annual Report at the end of the month.”

Assertive vs. Aggressive

Assertive

- “We’ve dedicated more than 30 hours of the team’s time to the Annual Report these last two weeks. I’m concerned that the resources that are being allocated to the Annual Report are putting the strategy for Region 1 at risk. ~~Let’s shift our focus to strategy for these next two weeks so we can be sure to meet our org. goal, then reconvene on the Annual Report at the end of the month.~~”
 - Assertive inquiry: “What would be the downside of shifting our focus to strategy for (...)?”
 - Assertive inquiry: “How might shifting our focus to strategy for the next two weeks impact outcomes?”
 - Assertive ask: “I’d like to suggest (or, recommend) that we shift our focus to strategy for (...)” (*soft approach*)
 - Assertive ask: “I suggest” or “I recommend” (*direct approach*)



Assertiveness Outcomes

People feel valued & respected

Messenger AND recipient

Building team players

When everyone's voice is valued, everyone will contribute.

Assertiveness opens the doors to collaboration

Deflates pressurized, stressful situations

... and moves them towards mutual understanding



5 Elements of Effective Requests

5 Elements of Effective Requests

1. What Do You Want?

- Be specific!
- List all the elements that you want, providing the most important information up front.
- Ask for what you need, e.g., “I need your advice.”

Chalmers Brothers, *“Language and The Pursuit of Happiness”*

5 Elements of Effective Requests

2. Who Do You Want it From?

- If your ask is to a team, or to an organization at large, drill down to determine who specifically you will speak with on behalf of the larger group.

1. What Do You Want?

Chalmers Brothers, *“Language and The Pursuit of Happiness”*

5 Elements of Effective Requests

3. When Do You Want it By?

- Be specific, especially when dealing with national or global teams.
 - “EOD” or “EOB” = can be misunderstood
 - “ASAP” = matter of perspective, open to interpretation
 - “Soon”, “quickly”, etc. = not clear enough
- “By Tuesday at 12:00 pm ET” = clear

1. What Do You Want?

2. Who Do You Want it From?

Chalmers Brothers, *“Language and The Pursuit of Happiness”*

5 Elements of Effective Requests

4. What Are the Conditions of Satisfaction?

- Be specific.
 - “A complete deck” or “A promotion” are not clear enough
 - “A 15-20 slide deck that covers objectives 1, 2, and 3”, “Promotion to Director of Marketing, Northeast Region, USA” = clear

1. What Do You Want?

2. Who Do You Want it From?

3. When Do You Want it By?

Chalmers Brothers, *“Language and The Pursuit of Happiness”*

5 Elements of Effective Requests

5. What Is the Context?

- Set the scene. Provide just enough context so the audience can follow along. Remind them of the situation or an earlier conversation.
- Explain the reason. What prompted you to deliver the message? Maybe you have new information or there's a deadline approaching.
- Clarify why certain deadlines are important.
- Connect to the big picture. Why should the audience care? Goals, incentives grab attention.

1. What Do You Want?

2. Who Do You Want it From?

3. When Do You Want it By?

4. What Are the Conditions of Satisfaction?

Chalmers Brothers, *"Language and The Pursuit of Happiness"*

5 Elements of Effective Requests

Example 1

- “I’d like to attend the (industry) conference in June 2024. I’ve been working at (ABC Co.) for 3 years now. While my degree is in engineering, and I’m familiar with our company’s approach to (solving industry challenge), I’d like to see what new ideas industry colleagues might have on this topic. There may be an approach we haven’t considered that could help us unlock opportunities in new markets, which is a part of our 2024 strategic plan. The early bird rate of (\$499) expires in three weeks (Feb. 1, 2024), after which registration jumps to \$899.”
 - “What additional information do you need from me to inform your decision?” (*Preliminary ask – soft approach*)
 - “I’d like to set up time to discuss my attendance. I’ll send you a calendar invite for tomorrow at 4 ET.”
 - “What objectives do you foresee leadership having to my attendance at this conference?”



Breakout 1

Make an Effective Request

Alicia is 3 years into her role as an controller at Market Leading Corp. Thus far, she has capably handled her workload, but the volume coming her way has tripled in the last 6 months and she worries about her ability to keep up long-term. She has leveraged the resources available to her, but the Big Fish Account that the sales team just brought in concerns her. The junior staff she sometimes leans on might not be able to produce what is needed for Big Fish. Alicia needs help – soon.

- 1. What Do You Want?**
- 2. Who Do You Want it From?**
- 3. When Do You Want it By?**
- 4. What Are the Conditions of Satisfaction?**
- 5. What Is the Context?**

Chalmers Brothers, *“Language and The Pursuit of Happiness”*



Discussion



Response Options



Response Options

Accept

Decline

Counteroffer

Committed Delay

Request Responses

- “What additional information do you need from me to inform your decision?” (*Preliminary ask – soft approach*)
 - Accept
 - Decline
 - “Budgets are tight and this conference is a stretch for junior staff. I can’t support your attendance.”
 - Counteroffer
 - “This is a national conference, and your focus (and our budget) is limited to this region. See what opportunities exist for professional development that could be a day-trip.”
 - Committed Delay
 - “I have the information I need and will get back to you by Fri. at noon.”
 - Non-Response Response: “That should work.”

Request Responses

- “I’d like to set up time to discuss my attendance. I’ll send you a calendar invite for tomorrow at 4 ET.”
 - Accept
 - Decline: “That won’t be necessary. I already know we don’t have the budget.”
 - Counteroffer: “How about you send me a formal proposal with budget included instead? I’ll review & respond.”
 - Committed Delay: “Tomorrow’s slammed. Let’s talk next Thursday at 12 ET.”
 - Non-Response Response: “I’ll circle back to you.”

Request Responses

- “What objectives do you foresee leadership having to my attendance at this conference?”
 - Accept
 - Decline: “Time and budget. We’re up to our eyeballs with proposals. It’ll have to wait until another time.”
 - Counteroffer: “They’ll agree in concept, but can you find the budget for it? See what you can put together.”
 - Committed Delay: “I’m not sure, but I meet with them next week. I’ll let you know how they respond.”
 - Non-Response Response: “Let me check with Senior Director.”

Responding to “No”

Example “No’s”

- “Budgets are tight and this conference is a stretch for junior staff. I can’t support your attendance.”

Responding to “No”

- “I understand that it’s a stretch for junior staff. What attributes or demonstrated potential has helped past junior staffers become qualified to attend?”
 - “Thanks for this information. I will focus on the development of these skills over the coming quarter.” OR “I’d like to add it to my professional development plan for next year.”

Responding to “No”

Example “No’s”

- “That won’t be necessary. I already know we don’t have the budget.”

Responding to “No”

- “I understand. What might help make professional development opportunities such as this more of a priority for future budget cycles?”
- “I understand. How might we make a case for this being a priority for future budgets?”
- “I would like to make a case for future participation in events such as this. Who do you suggest I meet with to begin preparing that case?”

Responding to Non-Responses

Non-Responses

- That should work.
- I'll circle back to you.
- Let me check with X.
- Sounds good.
- I'll do my best.
- I'll see what I can do.
- Great idea.

Non-Response Responses

- Put the ball back in your own court to let them know when you will follow-up with them to get their firm response.
 - “Great. I'll follow up with you in 2 days to see what you've learned.”
 - “Perfect. How's Tuesday afternoon for a quick Zoom to pin down whether you can get behind this?”

A group of diverse women are gathered around a table in a meeting room, looking at documents. The room has large windows with white curtains and a purple abstract artwork on the wall. A semi-transparent orange banner is overlaid on the image, containing the text "Breakout 2".

Breakout 2

Responding to “No” & Non-Responses

Alicia is 3 years into her role as an controller at Market Leading Corp. Thus far, she has capably handled her workload, but the volume coming her way has tripled in the last 6 months and she worries about her ability to keep up long-term. She has leveraged the resources available to her, but the Big Fish Account that the sales team just brought in concerns her. The junior staff she sometimes leans on might not be able to produce what is needed for Big Fish. Alicia needs help – soon.

Read over your request, then prepare two responses:

- 1) How would you respond to hearing “No”?**
- 2) How would you respond to “I’ll see what I can do.”**

Chalmers Brothers, *“Language and The Pursuit of Happiness”*



Discussion



Takeaways

Make ask(s) early

Language matters!

Be assertive and specific

View responses as conversation starters



Thank you

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