

Mark / Lena conflict resolution - September 6, 2022

The purpose of our gathering is for the both of you to air out any differences, rediscover what you actually like about each other, and establish a path forward with zero grudge-holding and mutual respect.

In conflict resolution, CEOs always go last in sharing their side. This is because on a company org chart, everyone usually reports to the CEO, so the CEO is perceived as having the most power. If the CEO goes first, it inherently puts the rest of the leadership team in a disadvantageous position, since he or she may feel like he or she is expected to say yes to all of the CEO's requests, or otherwise be seen as a difficult teammate.

By having the CEO go last, this gives the CEO the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to receive feedback graciously, listen deeply to his or her leadership team, and restore any trust that has been fractured in the process. As everyone is sharing their pleasant and unpleasant emotions, the CEO's job will be to make sure his or her teammates feel 100% heard and understood. Only once that's true, will they then collaborate to find ways to address the concerns.

By doing it this way, the CEO will then be able to give their feedback in a way where the leadership team will be ready and willing to listen - trust is actively being restored.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- When your co-founder shares with you their pleasant emotions, please express your gratitude by saying thank you. Keep it genuine and sincere.
- When your co-founder shares with you their unpleasant emotions, try not to get triggered or react defensively. Should you feel defensive, see if you can respond with curiosity. Remember, the steelman is there for a reason: for you to realize the other side has tried putting themselves in your shoes, and they are not being hostile. Their honesty should be a breath of fresh air for you, because it means they believe you are worth hearing the honest take - even if they don't stand to benefit from sharing their unfiltered views.
- When making your co-founder feel heard, repeat back to them what you think they meant. Please exaggerate as much as you can.

Try using your own name in the recap - for example, if someone said, "Regina, I really dislike it when you cut me off as I'm talking," I would make them feel heard by saying, "Got it - I think what I'm hearing is... Regina, you fucking bitch, you are so rude and self-absorbed! You never listen and just love hearing yourself talk. Can you let me finish my goddamn sentence??" If I say this, this person will understand I have truly listened.

Part One: Pleasant Emotions

- **Behavior/habit:** I think you are extremely organized, always making sure all tasks are structured and scheduled properly.
- **Feeling:** When you do this, I feel relaxed and reassured that we are on track to meet our goals.

- **Behavior/habit:** I really admire how you remain calm even during chaotic situations.
- **Feeling:** When you stay calm, I feel like we can get through any problem, no matter how difficult it seems.

- **Behavior/habit:** I appreciate you taking the time to explain the budget breakdown for the upcoming project.
- **Feeling:** When you did this, I felt informed and confident that our financial planning is solid.

Part Two: Unpleasant Emotions

- **Story:** During the last project review, I shared my suggestions for improving client communication, but you dismissed them without much discussion. The story I tell myself is that you don't value my input, especially on matters involving client relations.
- **Feeling:** This made me feel unheard and undervalued. It left me feeling like my ideas aren't taken seriously.
- **Steelman:** Without the emotional bias, I realize you were likely focused on addressing higher-priority issues at that moment, and client communication felt secondary.
- **Request:** In the future, I'd appreciate it if we could set aside time to discuss my suggestions more fully before making a decision.

- **Story:** You made a decision to cut resources for our marketing campaign without consulting me, even though I'm leading that area. The story I tell myself is that you don't trust me to manage the marketing budget responsibly.
- **Feeling:** This made me feel disrespected and undermined in my role.
- **Steelman:** Without the emotional bias, I see you may have been concerned about overall budget constraints and felt it was urgent to act quickly.
- **Request:** I'd like us to have an open discussion before any major budget changes are made in the future, so I can provide my input and we can decide together.

Part One: Pleasant Emotions

- **Behavior/habit:** I appreciate how you always take the initiative to reach out to clients, ensuring they feel heard and cared for.
- **Feeling:** When you do this, I feel proud to be part of a team that values customer relationships so deeply.

- **Behavior/habit:** I admire your creativity when it comes to brainstorming new ideas for campaigns and projects.
- **Feeling:** This makes me feel excited and motivated to push the boundaries of what we can achieve.

- **Behavior/habit:** I really like how you consistently follow up on tasks, ensuring that nothing falls through the cracks.
- **Feeling:** This gives me peace of mind, knowing that the details are always handled efficiently.

Part Two: Unpleasant Emotions

- **Story:** Last month, you scheduled client meetings during a time I had blocked off for other work without checking with me first. The story I tell myself is that you don't respect my time or my priorities.
- **Feeling:** This made me feel frustrated and stressed, as I had to scramble to rearrange my work.
- **Steelman:** Without the emotional bias, I realize that you were likely trying to accommodate the clients' schedules and thought it was important to meet their needs quickly.
- **Request:** In the future, I'd appreciate it if you could check with me before scheduling meetings to ensure that it works with my availability.

- **Story:** During our strategy session, you mentioned that we should focus solely on digital marketing, downplaying my idea for incorporating traditional advertising. The story I tell myself is that you don't think my expertise in that area is valid.
- **Feeling:** This made me feel overlooked and insecure about my contributions to the strategy.
- **Steelman:** Without the emotional bias, I can see that you might have been thinking about current trends and wanted to focus on what seemed more efficient in the moment.
- **Request:** I'd like us to be more open to considering different perspectives when discussing strategy, especially when one of us feels strongly about a particular approach.