NEUBERG
GORE

SATURN
LEADERSHIP

CUBE for Conflict™
A Universal Guide for Challenging Conversations

This worksheet is a survival guide for...

Influence and Problem Solving

Free CUBE survival guides also available for:

Specific Challenges
1. Influences & Problem Solving
2. Group Decision-Making
3. Conflict Resolution
4. Negotiations
5. Consultative Sales
6. Delivering Bad News
7. Delivering Urgent Communications
8. Clean Up - They made a Mistake
9. Clean Up - You made a Mistake

Managing Performance Issues
10. Peer-to-Peer Negative Feedback
11. Negative Feedback to a Direct
12. Holding People Accountable
13. Role Underperformance
14. Layering Someone
15. Letting Someone Go

Online At:
https://saturnleadership.org/challenging-conversations/

C REATE CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES

- Framing the conversation is setting up the conversation for success.
- Creating clarity about the goal of the conversation and the agenda will help everyone align and focus on the desired outcomes. Don't beat around the bush--even if it's a tough conversation, and make sure you both are willing to have the conversation.
- In most conversations, we want to establish a mood of openness, collaboration, and connection. Be soft on the person and hard on the problem.

U NDERSTAND EACH OTHERS WORLDS...THEIR WORLD FIRST

- The best solutions and highest follow-through will come when there is mutual understanding of each party's underlying interests. Don't argue over the solutions--build them together.
- Most people are poor listeners, especially if they are upset or have strong opinions. Set up their listening by first understanding them. Even if they say something you disagree with, stay curious and ensure they feel heard. Paraphrasing is an extremely powerful and much underused tool.
- Also be sure to share your interests and priorities.

B RAINSTORM OPTIONS

- This is the time in a conversation to create value--to find ways that all the parties can be satisfied. Brainstorm together and expand ideas.
- If you get caught into narrowing into one solution too fast or critiquing solutions, it will shut down creativity and you'll likely leave value on the table.

E ND WITH COMMITMENTS

- Make sure everyone is clear and aligned on next steps (who is doing what by when). Often, commitments that may have seemed obvious were misunderstood.
- Commitments may be process commitments, such as having a follow-up meeting.
- Capture commitments in writing and send an email re-confirming them.

NEUBERG
GORE

1.0 Influence and Problem Solving
◆Best Practices◆

SATURN
LEADERSHIP

C REATE CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES

- Establish an open and collaborative mood. Center yourself in this mood.
- Clarify the goal of the conversation—focus on the shared, desired outcome.
- Be soft on the person and hard on the problem. Care about them personally, but also name the elephant in the room and challenge directly.
- Create the agenda and timing together.
- Ensure the right people are included from the start.

U NDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S WORLDS… THEIR WORLD FIRST

- Be curious: Dig for underlying interests, priorities, and feelings.
- Stay curious. See dissent as an opportunity to learn.
- Paraphrase to ensure you heard correctly and demonstrate understanding.
- Share your interests and priorities.
- Synthesize: List shared priorities and differences.

B RAINSTORM OPTIONS

- Set a mood of creativity: Clarify you are brainstorming, not decision-making.
- Co-create many possible solutions.
- Expand ideas: Do not narrow into one solution.
- Redirect critiques back to brainstorming.

E ND WITH COMMITMENTS

- Decide and commit to clear next steps (who is doing what by when).
- Be obstinate about your vision & interests, flexible about tactics.
- Move the ball down the field with small steps.
- Ensure everyone fully commits even if they disagree.
- Setup a check-in, milestone or next conversation.
- Write an email to summarize the decisions and commitments that were made.

NEUBERG GORE

SATURN LEADERSHIP

C REATE CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES

- Trying to get to agreement too quickly (1 step forward, 2 steps back).
- Being too nice and not naming the real intent of the conversation.
- Unilateral moves including setting up an agenda without a discussion.
- Having the conversation in the wrong circumstances.
- Underestimating the importance of mood, e.g. moving forward before cleaning up trust issues.

U NDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S WORLDS… THEIR WORLD FIRST

- Expecting to be heard before hearing the other person.
- Solving problems based on solidified positions rather than underlying interests.
- Believing you understand what's important to them without confirming
- your assumptions.
- Not empathizing with their perspective, especially when you disagree.
- Not explicitly sharing your interests and priorities.

B RAINSTORM OPTIONS

- Focusing on the first solution that seems the best rather than fully exploring possibilities.
- Judging, critiquing or ignoring ideas while brainstorming. Not gently correcting when others critique or judge.
- Throwing out ideas without caveating that you are just exploring.

E ND WITH COMMITMENTS

- Walking away with two different ideas of next steps.
- Accepting unrealistic commitments or withholding concerns.
- Thinking too big rather than just focusing on the next step.
- Not personally thanking people for what worked in the conversation.

1.2 Influence and Problem Solving
- Preparation Sheet -

CREATE CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES

What will I say to create an open and collaborative conversation?
-
-
-

UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER'S WORLDS… THEIR WORLD FIRST

My Interests
List my interests and then rank their priority:
-
-
-

Their Interests
Guess about their interests (take their perspective):
-
-
-
-

What open-ended questions can I ask them to confirm or disprove my guesses?
-
-
-

BRAINSTORM OPTIONS

Brainstorm possibilities (no idea is a bad idea):
-
-
-

END WITH COMMITMENTS

What are the smallest, realistic next steps coming out of this conversation?
-
-

Saturn C.U.B.E. for Conflict™
Post-Conversation Self-Assessment

CREATED CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES

The What
- ❏ I created and shared a vision of success that they bought into.
- ❏ I set a forward-looking, positive tone.
- ❏ The elephant was named (the problem, the complaint, the request).
- ❏ It was clear what was being discussed or decided (and what was off the table).

The Relationship
- ❏ The conversation established us as friends not foes--they know I am a support for them.
- ❏ They felt appreciated by me.

The How
- ❏ We agreed on topics, agenda, and timing for the conversation.
- ❏ We identified who else needs to be consulted before a decision can be made.

UNDERSTOOD EACH OTHER'S WORLDS…THIERS FIRST

Their World
- ❏ I understood their world and their point of view even if it was inaccurate (interests, cares, feelings, priorities, challenges, or concerns).
- ❏ I demonstrated understanding through paraphrasing.
- ❏ For cleanups, I identified what I did to contribute to the problem and took responsibility for any negative impact I had.

Your World
- ❏ I shared my world, point of view, and underlying interests and priorities.
- ❏ I owned my opinions as interpretation not as facts.
- ❏ I ask to be paraphrased if I was doubtful that they understood me. .

Shared Reality
- ❏ We now have a shared reality--we know where we agree, where we disagree, or what's still unknown.
- ❏ We identified common priorities and differences.

BRAINSTORMED OPTIONS
- ❏ We brainstormed options and did not debate or assess them while brainstorming.
- ❏ We came up with several options and did not just jump into the first solution that came up.
- ❏ We let the ideal path be generated through the brainstorm.
- ❏ For cleanups, we also discussed the relationship and how to ensure any misunderstanding doesn't happen again.

ENDED WITH COMMITMENTS
- ❏ We gained clear commitment on next steps (who is doing what by when).
- ❏ We left the meeting in a way that WE had a shared commitment.
- ❏ For cleanups, we agreed to specific actions to deal with similar breakdowns in the future.
- ❏ I reconfirmed my support for the other person.