

## **Need to Influence Stubborn & Defensive Colleagues? Change How You Say It!**

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Would your job be easier if your colleagues weren't closed minded, stubborn or defensive? Are you sick of wasting time trying to persuade negative people who just won't move forward? Take a deep breath because the problem just might be you!

Since all communication takes place in a context, people's reactions to your ideas are related to your reaction to theirs. For example, when you disagree with an idea that is presented to you, are you a judger or a describer?

Intelligent and decisive people are often in the habit of judging ideas quickly and critically—no matter what the source of the idea. There's nothing personal about this—it's just critical thinking. You are talking as a judger when you make statements like these:

- According to the research, that won't work because. . . .
- The employees will never accept the change. . . .
- That didn't work the last time we tried it. . . .
- The numbers will never work. . . .

A judger decides “yes” or “no” on ideas quickly, building cycles of defensiveness along the way. Intended or not, people take a quick squash of their ideas personally. Feeling put down and defensive, people are less likely to share their own ideas and more likely to reject a judger's, even when that idea has merit.

A describer, by contrast, is slower to respond. A describer is open to listen and ponder; knowing that with reasonable reflection, both the strengths and problems with an idea will come to light. Describers use statements like these:

- Tell me how that will work. . . .
- What are your thoughts regarding getting people to accept the change?
- When we tried that a few years ago, we ran into these specific problems. Do you think we can handle them successfully now?
- Let's run the numbers and see what we find. . .

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*Keys to Articulate & Sell Ideas—for Business Success*

A describer uses his or her intelligence to draw out the pros and cons of an idea. Since the focus is clearly objective, the person suggesting the idea doesn't feel personally rejected if the idea is ultimately scrapped. Rather, the person feels respected when the idea is reasonably explored. That person, in turn, is willing to reasonably explore ideas the describer later presents. The process takes a little longer, but it is well worth it.

If you are frustrated with how colleagues respond to your ideas; if they are negative and defensive to you, the problem might actually be your fault. Have you been judging when you should have been describing?

Bonnie Budzowski works with executives, professionals, entrepreneurs and sales teams to help them articulate and sell their ideas--to influence others improve business results. She is in-demand nationally as a keynote presenter, trainer and coach. Bonnie engages and entertains participants while imparting relevant, business-savvy tools and techniques that turn communication challenges into business success.

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