



Blueprints

FOR MANAGERS

Blueprints for Managers

Is a unique and comprehensive approach to help develop managers and supervisors. Providing the foundation, strategies, and tactics to better manage and lead their employees.

Foundational Blueprints

In leadership, your belief system, attitudes, perceptions, and past experiences have a direct affect on how you lead others. Your Foundational Blueprints are areas to learn and grow, developing a strong leadership base or foundation to stand throughout your career.

Strategic Blueprints

In management, strategy is the thinking process required to plan a change, or to organize something. What are the cause and effects of your management decisions? Strategic Blueprints are vital to the long term success of your organization and career.

Tactical Blueprints

In management and leadership, Tactical Blueprints are the "who, when and where outlines" for obtaining your strategic goals. Managers need tactical plans to measure their successes.

6A - How to Deal with Difficult People & Customers



- Neutralize difficult customers
- Building bridges to difficult people
- Understanding Trigger Phrases

WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT MANAGING DIFFICULT PEOPLE

"Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step."

Lao Tzu

"It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will affect its successful outcome."

William James

"To find fault is easy; to do better may be difficult."

Plutarch



Session Learning Goals

- 1) **Neutralize difficult customers**
- 2) **Building bridges to difficult people**
- 3) **Understanding Trigger Phrases**

Session Opener - Foundational Ideas:

We each have our own way of dealing with conflict. The techniques we use are based on many variables such as our basic underlying temperament, our personality, our environment and where we are in our professional career. However, by and large there are five major styles of conflict management techniques in our tool box.

In order to address conflict we draw from a collaborating, competing, avoiding, harmonizing or compromising style of management. None of these strategies is superior in and of itself. How effective they are depends on the context in which they are used.



Source: Reginal Adkins, PhD, *Elemental Truths*

Each statement below provides a strategy for dealing with a conflict. Rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 4 indicating how likely you are to use this strategy.

1 = Rarely 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Always

Be sure to answer the questions indicating how you would behave rather than how you think you should behave.

1. I explore issues with others to find solutions that meet everyone's needs. ____
2. I try to negotiate and adopt a give-and-take approach to problem situations. ____
3. I try to meet the expectations of others. ____
4. I would argue my case and insist on the merits of my point of view. ____
5. When there is a disagreement, I gather as much information as I can and keep the lines of communication open. ____
6. When I find myself in an argument, I usually say very little and try to leave as soon as possible. ____
7. I try to see conflicts from both sides. What do I need? What does the other person need? What are the issues involved? ____
8. I prefer to compromise when solving problems and just move on. ____
9. I find conflicts challenging & exhilarating; I enjoy the battle of wits that usually follows. ____
10. Being at odds with other people makes me feel uncomfortable and anxious. ____
11. I try to accommodate the wishes of my friends and family. ____
12. I can figure out what needs to be done and I am usually right. ____
13. To break deadlocks, I would meet people halfway. ____
14. I may not get what I want but it's a small price to pay for keeping the peace. ____
15. I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself. ____



How to score the Conflict Management Quiz:

As stated, the 15 statements correspond to the five conflict resolution styles. To find your most preferred style, total the points in the respective categories. The one with the highest score indicates your most commonly used strategy. The one with the lowest score indicates your least preferred strategy. However, if you are a leader who must deal with conflict on a regular basis, you may find your style to be a blend of styles.

Style Corresponding Statements: Total:

COLLABORATING: 1, 5, 7 _____

COMPETING: 4, 9, 12 _____

AVOIDING: 6, 10, 15 _____

HARMONIZING: 3, 11, 14 _____

COMPROMISING: 2, 8, 13 _____

COLLABORATING STYLE:

Problems are solved in ways in which an optimum result is provided for all involved. Both sides get what they want and negative feelings are minimized.

Pros: Creates mutual trust; maintains positive relationships; builds commitments.

Cons: Time consuming; energy consuming.

COMPETING STYLE:

Authoritarian approach.

Pros: Goal oriented; quick.

Cons: May breed hostility.

AVOIDING STYLE:

The non-confrontational approach.

Pros: Does not escalate conflict; postpones difficulty.

Cons: Unaddressed problems; unresolved problems.

HARMONIZING STYLE:

Giving in to maintain relationships.

Pros: Minimizes injury when we are out matched; relationships are maintained.

Cons: Breeds resentment; exploits the weak.

COMPROMISING STYLE:

The middle ground approach.

Pros: Useful in complex issues without simple solutions; all parties are equal in power.

Cons: No one is ever really satisfied; less than optimal solutions get implemented.

Knowing your style, how can you be more effective at managing conflict?



Managing Difficult People and Customers

Some customers (internal and external) are going to be difficult and challenging. They're going to get upset, complain and, in general, demand satisfaction on their terms. That's a fact of business life that exceptional managers and supervisors know and understand. Exceptional managers and supervisors prepare and train their team members on how to deal with difficult people.

1. An angry customer (internal or external) gives you an opportunity. See those difficult people as your challenge, **what can I do to _____ (a) them over**, to keep them as a long term customer.
2. Although there are different reasons customers may get upset, become challenging or get angry, **those reasons all have to do with how the customer perceives the situation.** This depends on how the customer feels and what the customer expects.
3. Reasons for being difficult: They didn't get what was expected, someone was rude or indifferent to the person or no one listened. **Regardless, their expectations were not _____ (b).**
4. When people are emotional, they become difficult, frustrated and quick to anger. They do not respond to logic. In fact the more logical you are, the angrier this may make them.
5. We are **Psycho-Logical**. One side tends to dominate at a time. **Deal with their emotions _____ (c)** before attempting to move forward.

Handling the Angry Person

6. Remain _____ (d).
7. Do the opposite of your early warning signal. When you see a signal, take control and do the opposite with practice.
8. Listen to your _____ (e) talk and change what you say to yourself.

NOT: "Who do they think they are to talk to me like that...?"

INSTEAD: "Wow this person is having a really terrible day to talk to anyone like that!"



9. Let the customer vent.
- Don't _____ (f) when they are venting.
 - Let the customer know you are listening.
 - Listen for the sigh.
10. Deal with the _____ (g).
- **Restate** - Let the customer know you heard their situation.
 - **Find agreement** - Clearly identify the problem & make the problem the enemy.
 - **Show empathy** - Communicate your concern.
 - **Thank the customer** - "Thank you for bringing this to our attention."
 - **Extend the customer's** _____ (h) - "If this had happened to me, I might have been angrier."
11. Avoid emotional _____ (i) words.

Trigger Words

"Can't"
"No"
"I Don't Know"
"Policy"
"You should have..."
"Why didn't you"
"The only thing we can do"
"Calm Down"

Calming Words

"Can"
"Here is what we can do"
"I can find out"
"Here is how we handle that"
"I understand why you..."
"I can see why"
"The best option here is..."
"I can tell you're upset"



If the difficult person continues to get more difficult then use a more progressive technique.

12. Gently Confront.

- Use the customer’s name.
- Maintain a helpful tone of voice.
- Ask directly for the customer’s cooperation.

Example

“Mr. Joe, I really want to help you. As long as you continue to yell, I am finding it difficult. I can get this resolved for you, will you _____ (j) me?”

13. Delay action or consult a second opinion.

- Promise to call back after you review the situation.
- Go to a team leader or higher manager to discuss your options.

14. Managers should thank team member for allowing the person to _____ (k).

End of video exercise:

What did the customer service rep do well?

How could the customer service rep improve?



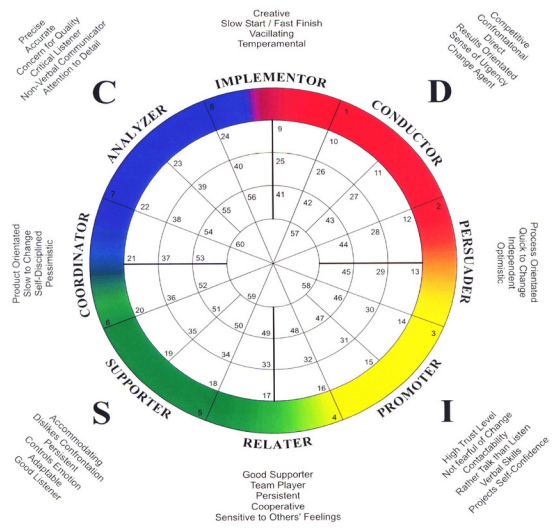
GROUP DISCUSSION OF KEY IDEAS FROM PRESENTATION



List what you think are the most important ideas from the presentation and how you can apply them to your role. Share your thoughts in small groups.

How does your natural behavior play a role in your ability to implement your key ideas?

- | | |
|----|---------------|
| a. | win them over |
| b. | not met |
| c. | first |
| d. | calm |
| e. | self talk |
| f. | interrupt |
| g. | emotions |
| h. | thought |
| i. | trigger |
| j. | let |
| k. | vent |





Blueprint #1 - Trigger Word Replacements

In small groups, brainstorm some additional words that seem to spark emotions in customers and employees within your organization.

Trigger Word examples:

“Can’t”

“Because I said so”

“No”

“I Don’t Know”

“Policy”

“You should have...”

“Why didn’t you...”

“The only thing we can do...”

“Calm Down”

Your group’s words with their replacements.

What are the reasons why these words trigger emotions in your internal and external customers.

What are some of the non-verbal mistakes that would make these words even worse?



Blueprint #2 - Blueprint for Managing Difficult People:

For this exercise, please read the role-play scenario below and complete the questions on the next page. Then, with a partner, role-play the situation using the worksheet as a guide. Take turns playing the role of the customer and the manager.

Scenario:

Your company manufactures and sells toys for children, and your newest and biggest selling product is a skateboard with running lights. The first shipment of these skateboards included assembly instructions that were poorly written and incorrect.

Consequently, customers have spent hours - unsuccessfully - trying to get the running lights to work. The solution to this problem is relatively simple and takes less than one minute to complete. When the electric connections to the lights are reversed, the lights work fine.

Mike Jones is a customer who recently purchased one of these new skateboards for his son's birthday. He has spent more than two hours assembling the product and trying to get the lights to work properly. He just called your company for assistance and a manager has referred the angry Mr. Jones to you, saying that you are, "the best person to solve this problem". After a long explanation of the difficulties he's having, getting more angry with every sentence he states, "What the **&""# are you going to do about this problem"?

Having just used inappropriate language, there is a pause, indicating your turn to speak.

Before responding, outline your answers on the next page.



Blueprint #2 continued - Blueprint for Managing Difficult People:

- 1. Remain calm.**
- 2. Let the customer vent.**
- 3. Dealing with emotions.**

A - How will you restate the problem?

B - What will you say to find agreement with this customer?

C - What will you say to demonstrate empathy to this customer?

D - What will you say to thank the customer?

- 4. Avoid emotional trigger words.**
- 5. If needed:** What will you say to gently confront this customer?

- 6. If needed:** Delay action or consult a second opinion.

- 7. How will you explain the solution and end the conversation?**



Blueprints #3 - Your Difficult Customers:

Think of a typical difficult customer scenario your firm experiences. Fill out the blueprint below to “win them over” and cement their long-term customer loyalty.

1. **Remain calm.**
2. **Let the customer vent.**
3. **Dealing with emotions.**

A - How will you restate the problem?

B - What will you say to find agreement with this customer?

C - What will you say to demonstrate empathy to this customer?

D - What will you say to thank the customer?

4. **Avoid emotional trigger words.**
5. **If needed:** What will you say to gently confront this customer?

6. **If needed:** Delay action or consult a second opinion.

7. **How will you explain the solution and end the conversation?**

My Personal Blueprint for

Managing Difficult People



Name: _____ Employer: _____

Date: _____ Manager's Name: _____

I plan to **implement**: _____

The expected results for our organization, workgroup and personally include:

Specifically, I will _____

Measurements for success include (e.g. lower costs/increase retention/revenue targets/quality)

Attainment requires (e.g. staff/budget approvals) _____

Relevant to Company Goals, _____

Time-based plan is to be started by, evaluated by and accomplished by:

I will start this goal by: _____ I will evaluate this goal on: _____ I will complete this goal by: _____

Action Steps to be taken include:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

I/we need the following people/materials/resources to reach this goal: who, what, when & where:
