

Offer Opinions

Question

How do I communicate my honest opinions to a partner agency?
How do I respond constructively if they get defensive?



Key Message

An important part of the Trusted Adviser role is **communicating your views and observations honestly** to a partner agency. Even if it is not entirely comfortable for them – or for you – the relationship demands honesty and frankness. Having a way to **maintain objectivity** and **staying results-focussed** is essential when you have these conversations.

Part A – Putting your views forward

The model below describes a conversational pattern called **PEAR** (**P**resent – **E**ffects – **A**lternative – **R**ewards) that commonly brings about *positive behavioural change*. It is based on (i) *getting agreement* as you go, (ii) concentrating on the *future*, not dwelling on the past and (iii) *eliciting* information and views, not just stating your own. Use this template by 'plugging in' observations you have made and 'mentally rehearsing' the conversation. Either take in the template as notes to use in a face-to-face or telephone conversation - or simply set an intention for yourself to stick to the steps below and not be sidelined.

Describe the present situation

I've made an observation that you might be interested in . . .
I've noticed that . . .
From our point of view . . .

Also get THEIR observations:
So tell me what happened from your perspective?
What exactly did you do?
How / What specifically . . . ?
What have you noticed?
Run me through what you did . . .

Acknowledge effects

I suspect the effects of that may be . . .
When that happened . . .
That appears to have caused . . .

Also get THEIR observations:
So what are the effects of this?
What has that led to?
How has this affected XXX?
What problems does that cause?
Why is that a problem?

Generate alternatives

What could you/we do differently?
How could we change this situation?
If we had another way of doing this, what would it be?
What would you prefer to do instead?
What are some alternative ways of handling this next time?
How can we recover from this situation?

Also ADD your own observations:
I'd prefer it if . . .
I see three possible solutions here . . .
A way that has worked in the past is to . . .
In a similar situation . . .

Summarise rewards

If we made this change, how might it be better for you?
How would that make life easier for you?

Also ADD your own observations:
The benefit for you would be . . .
That would mean . . .

Part B – Responding to Defensive Reactions

For a Trusted Adviser to *feel comfortable* giving opinions to a partner agency, they must also feel comfortable *responding to defensive reactions non-defensively*. People respond defensively when they feel *outside their comfort zone*; many of the proposals and suggestions you make might trigger this feeling, so you should *expect defensive reactions*. Use the template below to (i) recognise the five most common defensive reactions and (ii) respond calmly and constructively using the Reflect & Return technique.

Recognising 5 Common Defensive Reactions

Justify

"But the reason for that was . . ."

Blame

"That wasn't our fault because . . ."

Deny

"No, that's not the way it happened at all"

Attack

"I'm disappointed in your inability to . . ."

Compare

"I'm sure there are other agencies out there who are in our position . . ."



How to Respond Calmly & Constructively

Reflect

(their message)

"So what you're saying is . . ."



Return (to 🍊)

*"What could we do **differently** that would take what you're saying into account?"*

*"Based on what you're saying, what **benefits** could come from **doing this differently**?"*

*"Given that, can we agree on what the **effects** have been?"*

*"Let's just focus in on this particular instance. How has that **affected** things?"*

*"That's a concern I'm certainly happy to address. For the time being, let's continue looking at what the **effects** have been . . ."*

