

Sales Coach Series

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Assertiveness

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The Dilemma

I've been told that I sometimes behave aggressively towards colleagues. What am I doing and how can I change?

The Coaching

Firstly learn to distinguish between aggressive, passive and assertive behaviour.

Aggressive:

- presenting your will or views as more important than the other persons'
- stating your opinion as fact - 'this procedure is useless'
- asking emotive, loaded questions to box the other person into a corner
- making threats and ultimatums
- making demands
- adopting closed or threatening body language and failing to observe personal space boundaries

Passive:

- understating your needs - 'it's not important' when it is
- putting yourself down and apologising for needing input or assistance
- considering other peoples' needs to be more important than yours -when they're not
- making rambling statements full of hesitation and justification, thereby playing down your needs

These behaviours are underpinned by whether you acknowledge your and other peoples' rights to have their needs taken into account. It is not unusual to oscillate between passive and aggressive behaviour - think of the very meek individual who suddenly 'snaps' when pushed to the limit as an obvious example.

Assertiveness ensures you stand up for your rights without violating others' through recognising that you both have needs of equal importance.

Assertive people:

- distinguish fact from opinion
- ask open questions and offer suggestions and feedback without weighted advice
- search for solutions
- seek to understand the other person's viewpoint and regard them positively
- are honest about their needs
- maintain 'open' body language and observe personal space

Build empathy and seek to recognise these tendencies in yourself and others.