

GETTING A MESSAGE ACROSS - THE COOKBOOK RECIPE

Quite often, a manager has to get a message across to another person in the organisation; a message that the other person may prefer not to receive. The manager's objective is not only to deliver the message; but also to have the other person receive and understand that message, and be motivated to change behaviour in a positive way. It sounds manipulative, but managers are in the business of coaching and guiding the behaviour of other people.

The framework has to be one of problem-solving. At the beginning, the manager owns the problem - the fact that the other person is (or is not) doing something is a problem to the manager. The manager may as well be forthright about that fact and tell the other person. "I have a problem."

The aim of the 'recipe' below is to engage the other person in finding a solution to the manager's problem; to make it a joint problem first, and then to transfer the major responsibility for solving the problem across to the other person. Putting it simply, to get the monkey off the manager's back and onto the back of the other person.

1. I HAVE A PROBLEM

- Outline the problem using "I" messages
- The way "I" see the facts of the situation
- The way "I" feel about the situation
- What "I" predict will happen if there is no change
- How do you see my problem?

2. AGREE UPON THE STANDARDS OR GOAL

- What the organisation expects
- What I expect
- What you expect

3. WHAT DO WE INTEND TO DO

- What do you intend to do to help me overcome my problem?
- What help can I give you to overcome my problem?
- What can we agree to do?

3a. LAST RESORT (If you have Power)

- OK, you see it that way & I see it this way.
What are you going to be doing in ****time to make sure I still don't see it this way?

4. WE WILL CHECK-POINT ON.....

- Can we get together to see how it's going?

Like any recipe, it has to be modified slightly to allow for the ingredients available and the style and natural abilities of the cook. However, there are a few basic ground rules which should be followed:

- It should be as much oriented towards future performance as possible. What the other person has or has not done has now become past performance, and the only reason for reviewing it is to improve future performance.
- The solutions should be mutually acceptable. It is not the aim of the recipe to find a sneaky way for the manager to come in with already decided solutions which he or she intends to sell to or impose on the other person.
- The need is for openness between the manager and the other person. There is little likelihood that they will be in complete agreement on the causes of the problem or its solution. But driving each other into a corner or taking fixed positions certainly doesn't help in finding a mutually acceptable solution. That openness is helped by having both people understand the recipe. (Letting the other person read this sheet before the meeting is useful).