

Talent Development

Exercises

Help your employees develop themselves by learning the language of turning negatives into positives. The purpose of this exercise is to practice the art of re-framing negative statements into positive ones. This exercise is a great "workshop opener."

INTRODUCTION: Negative statements put others on the defensive. If you find yourself using negative statements, remember that it is positive statements that contribute to solving a problem. Hand out the worksheet on the following page.

WORKSHEET

Listed below are typical statements that could arise during a conflict resolution session. Write in the space next to each negative statement the appropriate positive counterpart statement. (See the first line for an example.)

Negative Statement	Positive Counterpart Statement
You aren't listening to me.	I'd appreciate your full attention for a while.
I've never heard of anything like this.	_____
That's not the way we did it before.	_____
You're wrong!	_____
I don't think you're open to change.	_____
You're not willing to give me what I need.	_____
Don't tell me what to do.	_____
You never give me a chance.	_____
You always get your way, regardless of others.	_____
You got exactly what you wanted and I got nothing.	_____
I don't see it your way.	_____
I'm not going to do that.	_____
That's not acceptable to me.	_____
I'm not going to discuss this further.	_____
You go your way; I'll go mine.	_____
Never!	_____
The meeting can't go on like this.	_____

Suggested Positive Counterpart Statements

There is certainly more than one way to convert negative statements into positive ones. Below are some suggested examples. Think about whether your positive statements will help avoid putting the other party on the defensive.

Negative Statement	Positive Counterpart Statement
You aren't listening to me.	I'd appreciate your full attention for a while.
I've never heard of anything like this.	This is new to me.
That's not the way we did it before.	It might be a good idea to look at a new way of

Negative Statement

Positive Counterpart Statement

You're wrong!

doing it.

I don't think you're open to change.

Let's look at it; you may be right.

You're not willing to give me what I need.

Though it means change, please give it a chance.

Don't tell me what to do.

Can we find a way to meet both our needs?

You never give me a chance.

Perhaps you can hold your suggestions for a while.

You always get your way, regardless of others.

I would prefer to make my own decision.

You got exactly what you wanted and I got nothing.

We both need to come out of this satisfied.

I don't see it your way.

I'd like to see both of us win.

I'm not going to do that.

We may have a different points of view; let's explore.

That's not acceptable to me.

I'd rather try something else.

I'm not going to discuss this further.

I'd like to look further and discuss options.

You go your way; I'll go mine.

Let's schedule another time to meet.

Never!

Let's try to find a mutually agreeable solution.

The meeting can't go on like this.

Sometimes...

Let's schedule another meeting to give us some time to think.

SUMMARY

There are many positive counterpart statements that could be used instead of any single negative statement. One key to advancing the conflict-resolution process is to select the most appropriate positive counterpart in context. Experience and common sense should help; you can experiment by practicing using this skill in your everyday communication.