



## What All Great Conversations Need

By Deborah Brown-Volkman, PCC

**Not getting what you want in your career? Maybe you're not asking effectively.**

**Communication should be simple, and it certainly doesn't have to be as difficult as a lot of people make it out to be. You say one thing, and then the other person says another. The challenge comes from the fact that each person communicates differently. People listen to what is being said differently, and they interpret what they hear differently, too.**



The burden of getting a message across successfully falls on the person who *needs* to get that message across. This person is you. The more you can simply state what it is that you want, the easier it will be for you to get it. The clearer you can be

upfront, the better your results will be. Miscommunications will be minimized, and the next steps in getting what you want will become plainly evident. It really is that easy. Or is it? Certainly, some people make communicating a lot more complicated than it ought to be.

So, how can you communicate well? Simply follow these four steps below.

### 1. Have a Purpose

Purpose is a desired result or effect. Purpose is your intention - i.e., the positive outcome that you want to make happen. Great conversations happen in the mind first, when you are able to visualize yourself obtaining a favorable result. Once you can see yourself being successful, you become successful.

*In order to figure out your purpose, ask yourself the following:*

- What do I want?
- What would I like the other person to say?
- What would I like the other person to do?
- What would I like to see happen after the conversation is over?

It's important that you not have a conversation without a purpose. If you don't have a purpose, you will tend to flub your way through the conversation, and the other person will not get what you are saying or understand what you are asking for.

### 2. Have a Focus

You have focus when you are working toward something specific. You have a very definite goal in your mind that you want to reach. Unlike purpose, which gets you ready to have the conversation, focus keeps you on track when you are already talking.

*You can get focused by asking yourself the following:*

- What do I want to see happen?
- What are the specific things I need from this conversation?
- What are the specific things I need the other person to say?
- What are the specific things I need the other person to do?
- What will be the specific points I will make sure I cover/discuss?
- What do I see going wrong with the conversation, and how can I turn it around?

There are a variety of different ways to say focused. You can bring an agenda or a list of items that you want to discuss, or you can state your purpose upfront. This way, if the conversation goes off track, you will have something to bring you back to your original intent.

### 3. Get Agreement

An agreement is an arrangement between parties regarding a course of action. You know an agreement has been reached when the other person understands what you are saying and agrees to do what you have asked him or her to do.

*You know that you have reached an agreement when you have covered the following items:*

- Both sides have had the opportunity to speak.



## Career Tips

- There are no other points left to be covered at present.
- The parties shake hands or put into writing what was agreed to.

Agreement is important. It signifies that you have covered all of the bases, listened well, asked and answered all questions, and accomplished your purpose. You had a goal in mind and you reached it. Good for you.

### 4. Create Next Steps

The next steps are the things that will happen after the conversation is over. During the conversation, you will discuss what will happen next. You will also spell out the timing of things, the order in which these things will occur, and arrange another time when you and the other party will speak again.

You are the person responsible for making sure that the next steps have been created. Do not leave it up to the other party. Keep the next steps in mind while you are creating your focus and reaching an agreement.

*While you are creating subsequent tasks, ask yourself the following:*

- What will I do next?
- What will the other person do next?
- When will we meet again?

- When will we check in to make sure we are both on track?
- When will our agreement be complete?



Without next steps, the agreement ends with the conversation.

Great conversations rarely happen without preparation. You have to put in the necessary effort. When you take the time to do the work beforehand, your results will be much better afterward.

So, what do you say? You only have one life to live, so it might as well be a life you love!

### About the Author

Deborah Brown-Volkman, PCC, is the president of Surpass Your Dreams, Inc., a successful career, life, and mentor coaching company that works with senior executives, vice presidents, and managers who are looking for new career opportunities or seeking to become more productive in their current roles. She is the author of *Don't Blow It! The Right Words for the Right Job*, *Coach Yourself to a New Career*, and *How to Feel Great at Work Every Day*. Deborah can be reached at <http://www.surpassyourdreams.com>.

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