

Problem Solver or Complainer?

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No matter where we work, we will most likely have concerns about how things are done or how decisions are made. This is especially true if we are passionate about our work and our goals.

Expressing our concerns is very critical for many reasons, among them the well-being of the organization, its people and its mission as well as our perspective and ideas.

Many times we want to express our concerns in a constructive manner but do not always succeed. Instead, we run the risk of being viewed as complainers. The risk of being viewed as complainers will have a negative impact independent of how reasonable and sound our concerns may be.

Below are a few suggested steps to consider when expressing and voicing a concern. These steps should increase the chances of a more effective outcome:

- Announce that you have a concern that you would like to share with the group and respectfully ask to be heard. Allow others to accept to hear your concern. Make sure your timing is appropriate. Expressing concerns should not occur when angry but only after we have reflected on the main reasons for our concerns and how the group can take action to help address them;
- Be positive, specific and objective: Why is the concern important to you, to your group, or to the organization as a whole? How is it affecting you? How is it impacting the goals and the mission of the group? Can you think of something positive to express before you state your concern? It could be as simple as expressing your commitment to the well-being of the organization and/or mentioning another recent initiative that benefitted the group;
- Be a problem solver not a complainer: Make suggestions on how you can mitigate the concern and improve the situation;
- Agree to take the initiative, be part of a solution and engage others to prepare and implement the necessary steps to address the concern;
- Agree on the success metrics to evaluate progress;
- Keep an open mind and be flexible as you engage others to provide you with feedback; and
- Remember to thank the group for giving you the opportunity to voice your concern.

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