

# FUEL

## for Challenging Conversations

### Versions for:

1. Influence & Problem-Solving
2. Group Decision-Making
3. Conflict Resolution
4. Negotiations
5. Negative Feedback
6. Holding People Accountable
7. Repairing Trust (Cleanups)
8. Role Underperformance
9. Letting Someone Go

Online: [www.NeubergGore.com/FUEL](http://www.NeubergGore.com/FUEL)

# FUEL Introduction

## F

### RAME THE CONVERSATION

- Framing the conversation is setting the conversation up for success.
- Creating clarity about the goal of the conversation and the agenda will help everyone align and focus on the desired outcomes. Don't beat around the bush--even if it's a tough conversation, and make sure you both are willing to have the conversation.
- In most conversations, we want to establish a mood of openness, collaboration, and connection. Be soft on the person and hard on the problem.

## U

### NDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S WORLDS... THEIR WORLD FIRST

- The best solutions and highest follow-through will come when there is mutual understanding of each party's underlying interests. Don't argue over the solutions--build them together.
- Most people are poor listeners, especially if they are upset or have strong opinions. Set up their listening by first understanding them. Even if they say something you disagree with, stay curious and ensure they feel heard. Paraphrasing is an extremely powerful and much underused tool.
- Also be sure to share your interests and priorities.

## E

### XPLORE OPTIONS

- This is the time in a conversation to create value--to find ways that all the parties can be satisfied. Brainstorm together and expand ideas.
- If you get caught into narrowing into one solution too fast or critiquing solutions, it will shut down creativity and you'll likely leave value on the table.

## L

### EAD A COMMITMENT LOOP (3 C's)

- **Commit:** Make sure everyone is clear and aligned on next steps (who is doing what by when). Often, commitments that may have seemed obvious were misunderstood.
- **Collaborate:** See all commitments as mutual ones; work together to make them successful.
- **Complete:** When the task is complete, discuss what worked well and what can be improved in both the task and your next collaboration.
- A commitment loop is further clarified on the next page.

# A Commitment Loop (3 C's)

## Commit, Collaborate, Complete

### COMMIT

- At the end of all meetings, ensure there is clear agreement of who-is-doing-what-by-when.
- Get a committed response (yes, no, counter offer, commit-to-commit).
- Don't accept unclear or half-commitments.
- Be clear on the desired outcome (not just what they are doing, but why).
- Be clear on the action plan if there are multiple steps. If the commitment is over a longer period or critical, setup milestones and check-ins.
- Document the agreement together in an email or plan. Reconfirm alignment.

### COLLABORATE

- Understand your role in the commitment--it's a mutual commitment, not just "theirs."
- Help them win. Give them the advice, support, resources, people, etc. to be successful.
- Offer encouragement and appreciation.
- For longer/critical projects, have regular check-ins to track progress and offer support.
- If you are concerned a commitment won't be kept, have a conversation. Resolve broken commitments as they arise by initiating a conversation.
- Be clear that not all commitments should be kept. Encourage risks and failures to be communicated promptly.
- If they need to renegotiate a commitment, be open to it. Explore options for how to move forward.

### COMPLETE

- Share your satisfaction and dissatisfaction. A simple tool to use is to share plusses (what worked) and deltas (what can be better).
- Learn what you can do better to support their success and be open to their critical feedback. Own your contribution to their challenges--be both a student and a teacher.
- Offer frequent appreciation with specificity, depth and authenticity. It's a bank account of positive regard that allows you to share negative feedback more easily now and in the future.
- Share negative feedback using the FUEL model. Be sure to be committed to their success and understand their obstacles.

# 2.0 Group Decision-Making

## FUEL Best Practices

### F

#### RAME THE CONVERSATION

- Focus the conversation: What is being decided today. Get clear on the objective for each topic.
- Agree on agenda, timing, and facilitation.
- Discuss how the decision will be made and when. Who is deciding and being consulted?

### U

#### NDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S WORLDS... THEIR WORLD FIRST

- Be curious: Dig for underlying interests and priorities for all parties. Draw the quiet people out.
- See disagreement and differing priorities as an opportunity to learn. In groups, facilitate so that people are listening to understand each other.
- Synthesize: List shared priorities and differences.

### E

#### XPLORE OPTIONS

- Clarify you are brainstorming, not making decisions.
- Identify the various parts of a possible solution. Use fillers rather than actual numbers, e.g. we spend \$x on...
- Co-create many possible solutions to expand the pie.
- Come up with 2-3 good solutions or packages that pull the best ideas together and deal reasonably well with the tradeoffs and differing priorities.

### L

#### EAD A COMMITMENT LOOP

- Decide and let people know what you are prioritizing that led to the decision.
- Escalate if different priorities lead to a lack of alignment. Compromising too early can lead to suboptimal decisions for everyone.
- Be obstinate about your vision & priorities, flexible about tactics.
- Move the ball down the field with small steps.
- Ensure everyone fully commits even if they disagree.
- Set up a plan to socialize the decision, inform people, and act.

## 2.1 Group Decision-Making Common Mistakes

### F

#### RAME THE CONVERSATION

- No agenda, timeline or facilitator.
- Unilateral moves including setting up an agenda without a discussion.
- Being unclear about what is being decided and what has already been decided.
- Not clarifying who will make the decision and when.

### U

#### NDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S WORLDS... THEIR WORLD FIRST

- Not including impacted stakeholders.
- Focusing on solutions before understanding everyone's interests & priorities.
- Not drawing the quiet people out.

### E

#### XPLORE OPTIONS

- Getting too focused on your solution, rather than asking what you are missing in your idea.
- Throwing out ideas without caveating that you are just exploring.
- Judging, critiquing or ignoring ideas while brainstorming.
- Not gently correcting when others critique or judge.

### L

#### EAD A COMMITMENT LOOP

- If you are the decision-maker, it's a mistake not to clarify your priorities and why you are making the decision.
- Compromising to a suboptimal decision rather than escalating together.
- Not being clear about the decision, especially if it's unpopular.
- Accepting unrealistic commitments.
- Forgetting that collecting additional data and setting up a next meeting will move the ball forward.

# 2.2 Group Decision-Making

## FUEL Preparation

### FRAME

What is being decided (clear objective, not just topics):

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What is already decided:

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Facilitator for this conversation:

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Who is involved (Decision Owner, Consulted, Informed):

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Agenda & timing for the discussion and decision:

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### UNDERSTAND THE INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES

List everyone's interests and then discuss their priority—note people's different prioritizations:

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### EXPLORE OPTIONS p1:

Brainstorm:

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### OPTIONS p2:

Identify best 2-3 packages:

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### LEAD NEXT STEPS

Who is doing what by when to get to a decision?

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# FUEL Checklist Review

## FRAMED THE CONVERSATION

### The What

- Created a shared vision of success.
- Set a forward-looking positive tone.
- The elephant was named (the problem, the complaint, the request).
- It is clear what is being discussed or decided (and what is off the table).

### The Relationship

- Friends not foes—they know you are a support for them .
- Context of appreciation.

### The How

- Agreed on topics, agenda, and timing for the conversation.
- For decisions: identified who else needs to be consulted.

## UNDERSTOOD EACH OTHER’S WORLDS...THEIRS FIRST

### Their world

- You understand their world and their point of view even if it’s inaccurate (interests, cares, feelings, priorities challenges, or concerns).
- You demonstrated understanding through paraphrasing.
- For cleanups, you identified what you did to contribute to the problem and took responsibility for any negative impact you had.

### Your world

- They understand your world, point of view, and underlying interests and priorities.
- You owned your opinions as interpretation not fact.
- You ask to be paraphrased if there was any doubt of understanding.

### Shared reality

- You have a shared reality—where you agree, disagree, or are uncertain.
- Identified common priorities and differences.

## EXPLORED OPTIONS

- Brainstormed options; avoided debate and assessment.
- Developed several options and did not narrow too quickly on the first solution.
- Let the ideal path be generated through the brainstorm.
- For cleanups, also discussed the relationship and how to ensure the misunderstanding doesn’t happen again.

## LED A COMMITMENT LOOP

- Gained clear commitment on next steps (who is doing what by when).
- Left the meeting in a way that WE had a shared commitment.
- For cleanups, agreed to specific actions to deal with similar breakdowns in the future.
- Reconfirmed your support for the other person.