

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

FUEL Introduction

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

6.0 Holding People Accountable

FUEL Best Practices

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FRAME THE CONVERSATION

- Share your support for the other person's success and your commitment to a powerful working relationship.
- Assume positive intent.
- Request a conversation to discuss a commitment that you believe was missed and to collaborate more effectively.

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UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S WORLDS... THEIR WORLD FIRST

- Get shared reality about the commitment that was made and whether it was missed.
- Ask them to share what happened. Listen and paraphrase. Appreciate the other person's view even if it's inaccurate.
- Take responsibility for any role you might have had in the outcome.
- Ask them to take responsibility for their role.
- Share the impact of missing the commitment and the importance of next steps.
- Share your assessments and concerns.

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EXPLORE OPTIONS

- Address the situation and explore what support they need to fulfill the commitment.
- Discuss how you can monitor progress moving forward.
- Discuss learnings and how to collaborate more effectively moving forward.

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LEAD A COMMITMENT LOOP

- Decide and fully align on clear next steps. What will be different?
- Agree to corrective actions and support structures to ensure it is not repeated.
- Create a clear timeline to get back on track and how you will communicate. Ensure that you feel confident about the commitment and communication moving forward.
- Reconfirm your support for the other person. Work as a team to be successful.

6.1 Holding People Accountable

Common Mistakes

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RAME THE CONVERSATION

- Assuming the issue will get better with time.
- Coming into the conversation with a one-sided story without checking your assumptions.
- Creating a mood of blame, anger or a poor mood, rather than a future-looking mood of support.

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

- Not checking your assumptions.
- Sharing interpretations as if they were facts.
- Making generalizations about the person's attitude, performance, etc.
- Assuming it's all them and you haven't contributed.
- Not empathizing with their perspective, obstacles or views.

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XPLORE OPTIONS

- Not putting any measures in place for support.
- Not discussing how to collaborate more effectively moving forward.

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EAD A COMMITMENT LOOP

- Ending the conversation without clear agreements.
- Ending without expressing support and appreciation.

6.2 Holding People Accountable

FUEL Preparation

FRAME

What happened—what are the facts, not your opinions/generalizations?

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What are some good reasons why they didn't fulfill expectations? What could you have done better?

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What additional support, clarity, prioritization, resources might they need to succeed?

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What is the level of impact and consequences if this doesn't change? What's the timeline?

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UNDERSTAND YOUR INTERESTS

What is your specific request—translate your complaint into a request?

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GUESS ABOUT THEIR INTERESTS

What is their story, concerns, and obstacles?

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EXPLORE OPTIONS

Brainstorm what you can you do differently moving forward:

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How could you handle the situation **when** it arises again?

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LEAD NEXT STEPS

Who is doing what by when? When will you check-in about this?

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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.