NEUBERG GORE
& ASSOCIATES

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

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.

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.

F | RAME THE CONVERSATION

- Share your commitment to their success.
- Ask for a conversation to discuss what is not working, how to better support them, and to create a plan to move forward.

U | NDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S WORLDS… THEIR WORLD FIRST

- Be objective and straight-forward about the results that are not being achieved or what's not working.
- Ask for them for their perspective and to share what happened, obstacles that they are facing, and how you can support them better. 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.
- Share the impact of the commitment or role not being fulfilled.
- Share your perspective on why things are not working. Be straightforward.

E | XPLORE OPTIONS

- Address the specific situation and explore how you can support them. Discuss learnings and corrective actions to be taken.
- Discuss options for possible role changes. Is there another role that might be a better fit for this person? (Sometimes, there is more alignment around this than you might expect.)

L | EAD A COMMITMENT LOOP

- Decide and fully align on clear next steps. Agree to corrective actions and support structures to allow the person to bring their best.
- Ensure you schedule another meeting with specific milestones to be achieved by that date. The timeline is essential.
- Write an email together and send it to them to ensure clarity.
- Reconfirm your support for the other person and work as a team to succeed.
- Get into agreement around the consequences if they don't succeed.

FRAME THE CONVERSATION

- Waiting to give negative task-based feedback until things have gotten this bad.
- Avoiding or delaying the conversation.
- Not being clear about your dissatisfaction.
- Not having this conversation in a mood of support with hopes that things will get better.
- Not getting clear about the consequences if things don't improve.

UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S WORLDS… THEIR WORLD FIRST

- Not asking for their story.
- Not taking responsibility for your role.
- Softening your truth to avoid discomfort.

EXPLORE OPTIONS

- Not exploring options for how to support them and get them back on track.
- Not exploring options for other roles.

LEAD A COMMITMENT LOOP

- Lack of clarity of next steps and check-ins.
- Lack of a clear path to success and the timeline for it.
- Lack of sense of support and engagement.

FRAME

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

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

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

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

UNDERSTAND YOUR INTERESTS

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

GUESS ABOUT THEIR INTERESTS

What is their story and their obstacles?
-

EXPLORE OPTIONS Brainstorm what you can both do differently moving forward:
-

Discuss options for milestones, check-ins, and support:
-

LEAD NEXT STEPS Who is doing what by when? What are the commitments and the timeline?
-

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.