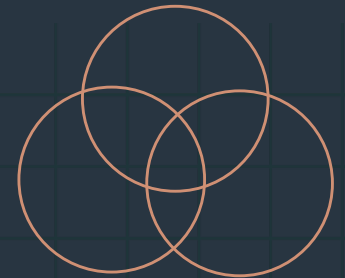




**Bowhay Institute *for*
Legislative Leadership Development**
MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE



Hi everyone, what a pleasure it was to work with you. Below are the slides we used for our session. I've added some language – in these orange boxes – to just remind you what we did, so that you can use these slides as a reference tool any time you're having a tough conversation. I hope it's helpful!

- Naseem

DEALING WITH DIFFERENCE

COLLABORATION SKILLS FOR TODAY'S LAWMAKER

NASEEM KHURI
JULY 21, 2026
MADISON, WI

SCRIPT

You wrote down a script of an influence conversation you had that did not go well

What was said in the conversation

I said:

They said:

I said:

They said:

I said:

They said:

Example

I said: This project plan is not going to work.

They said: Yes it will.

I said: Are you kidding? We'll miss the deadline if we do it this way.

They said: No, it should be fine.

I said: No. It won't be, and it'll be our fault.

They said: Calm down. You're worrying about nothing.

CONVINCE ME...

We role-played a conversation where you were trying to convince me to vote. The idea is to start to become aware of what habits we have and what tactics we use when trying to influence someone.



“I’m not voting”

COMMON APPROACH

ASSUMPTIONS

I can change their mind

I can change their mind
with my arguments

I can bring them to my side

PURPOSE

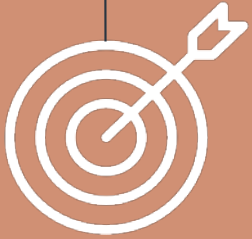
Convince them
to do/think something

ACTIONS

Use my arguments

Communicate talking points/key messages,
lecture, defend, etc.

When we start off with the purpose of “convince them to do something,” we may take the actions listed above. And we may not realize what assumptions are driving that purpose.



PURPOSES

- **Enhancing your awareness of:**
 - the process by which you deal with difference, collaborate and align across the aisle, internally, and with constituents.
 - the assumptions you might make when trying to manage difference, collaborate and align.
- **Using tools** to analyze such conversations and better prepare for, conduct and review them.
- **Building confidence** in your ability to improve your skills over time.

ASSUMPTION ONE

I can change their mind

When we ask someone to do or think something, we deny them autonomy. We're taking away their role in being a part of the outcome.

When teenagers were filming themselves eating Tide Pods, Tide launched a nationwide campaign telling people "Don't eat Tide Pods!" Unsurprisingly, it backfired.





The Tide PR campaign just told people what to do.

What should Tide Pods be used for?
DOING LAUNDRY. Nothing else.
Eating Tide Pods is a BAD IDEA.



Four days later,
Google searches for
Tide Pods doubled. A
week later, by seven
times.

Cases of teens
ingesting Tide Pods
more than doubled
that of prior two
years combined.

WHAT DO THEY NEED TO CHANGE THEIR MIND?

1.

AUTONOMY

They need to be the one
to change their mind

2.

3.

DENYING AUTONOMY

We often see examples of what happens when we deny autonomy.

Instructing jurors to disregard inadmissible testimony

They weigh it more heavily

Telling college kids to stop drinking alcohol

They drink more

Telling people smoking is bad for you

They get more interested in it



1998

- Cigarettes were largest cause of preventable deaths and disease
- In the US, smoking responsible for 1 in 5 deaths
- Cost of \$150 billion per year
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of high school students had smoked
- One in four seniors smoked daily

AUTONOMY

10

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The Truth Campaign is an example of influencing by honoring people's autonomy, and their need to make decisions for themselves.

1998

“The ad didn’t demand anything from teens. There was no message at the end telling them not to smoke, what to do, or what would or wouldn’t make them cool. The spot just let them know that, whether they realized it or not, cigarette companies were trying to influence them – and that the media was in on it.”

AUTONOMY

Results

In Florida

- More than 30,000 teens quit
- Within two years, teen smoking rates reduced by half

Nationwide

- Rates dropped by 75%
- Prevented more than 450k youths from smoking in first four years



AUTONOMY

SHIFT YOUR ASSUMPTION

FROM

I can change their
mind

TO

AUTONOMY
They need to be the one to
change their mind

ADVICE

In the moment
Manage their expectations.
“I’m not trying to change your mind.”

Over time
Offer time and space for them to
make up their own mind.

ASSUMPTION TWO

I can change their mind with my arguments

LADDER OF INFERENCE

The Ladder tells the story of how we all come to our conclusions. We each have our own ladder, and we tend to argue with our conclusions. We rarely do the work to understand what drives those conclusions.

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind



With my arguments

They'll come to my side

Conclusion

What is the conclusion we draw?

Lens

How do we interpret this data? What values, assumptions, beliefs do we draw upon?

Selected Data

What information are we focusing on?

Data

What is the available data?

LADDER OF INFERENCE

The more certain we are (in other words, the more firmly our ladders are in place), the harder it is to be persuasive with others. And, there are certain factors like biases that keep our ladders more firmly in place and make it harder to move them.

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind



With my arguments

They'll come to my side

Conclusion

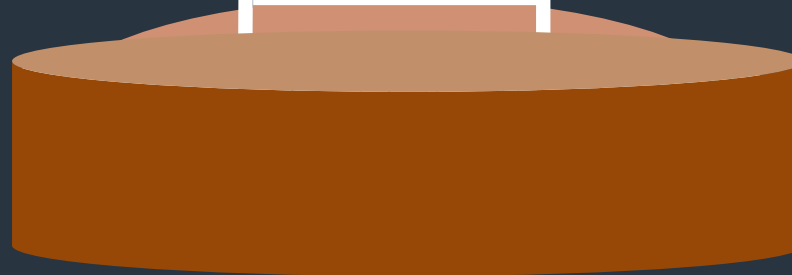
What is the conclusion we draw?

Lens

How do we interpret this data? What values, assumptions, beliefs do we draw upon?

Selected Data

What information are we focusing on?



I asked you to raise your hand and count the number of 'F's you saw on the screen, and only lower your hand when you were certain.

THOSE OF US WHO FOCUS ON
ISSUES OF FAIRNESS TOO OFTEN
EFFECT AGREEMENT BY GIVING IN,
INSTEAD OF FIRST USING OUR
POWERS OF PERSUASION TO
AFFECT A FAIR OUTCOME THAT
FULLY SATISFIES ALL OF OUR
LEGITIMATE INTERESTS

16 35

Study: tests of logical reasoning, grammar, and sense of humor.

People who
scored the
LOWEST

They thought they
did better than
62%
of their peers

had

when in reality

The most
INFLATED
opinions of their
skills

They
outperformed
only
12%
of them

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

✓

With my arguments

They'll come to my side

CERTAINTY

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

✓

With my arguments

They'll come to my side



The Dunning Kruger Effect

- People with low ability in a particular area tend to overestimate their competence, while those with high ability may underestimate theirs.
- People who lack skill also lack the ability to recognize their own incompetence.

CERTAINTY

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

✓

With my arguments

They'll come to my side



Survey of American adults

“How confident are you that you could safely land a passenger airplane in an emergency situation, relying only on the assistance of air traffic control?”

CERTAINTY

32% of adults
have confidence

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

✓

With my arguments

They'll come to my side

46% of men
and 20% of
women have
confidence

Very confident

13%

Somewhat
confident

19%

Not very
confident

17%

Not at all
confident

42%

Not sure

9%

	All	Male	Female
Very confident	13%	20	7
Somewhat confident	19%	26	13
Not very confident	17%	18	16
Not at all confident	42%	28	55
Not sure	9%	9	10

BIASES

THE TENDENCY TO MAKE
DECISIONS OR TAKE ACTION IN AN
UNKNOWNLY IRRATIONAL WAY

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind



With my arguments

They'll come to my side

Confirmation Bias

- We look for information that backs up what we already believe
- Explains why facts and data are insufficient: vaccines, climate change, etc.
- “Asymmetrical updating:” we dismiss information that challenges what we already believe.

BIASES

THE TENDENCY TO MAKE
DECISIONS OR TAKE ACTION IN AN
UNKNOWINGLY IRRATIONAL WAY



“As we get more and more
information, we will change our
beliefs more and more but mostly
in response to information that
already fits our views.”

JANUARY 28, 1986



In the moments leading up to the Challenger disaster, a group of contractor engineers were trying to persuade their bosses and the NASA administrator to stop the launch. Unfortunately they failed; NASA was set on launching, and looking for information to back up that conclusion.

NASA was also willing to disregard or minimize the information those engineers were offering them, as it contradicted the conclusion they had already made.

**Lowest temperature
allowed for safe launch**
54 degrees



**Temperature
that day**
28.9 degrees

BIASES

THE TENDENCY TO MAKE
DECISIONS OR TAKE ACTION IN AN
UNKNOWNLY IRRATIONAL WAY

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind



With my arguments

They'll come to my side

Remember the professor who asked his students a question, and rigged a roulette wheel to land on certain numbers. The students' answers hovered around those numbers, even though the wheel had nothing to do with the question.

Anchoring Bias

- We over-rely on one key piece of information—usually the first one we received



CERTAINTY

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

✓

With my arguments

They'll come to my side

- This is about right and wrong. I'm right.
- Your mind is an empty vessel. I will pour 'truth' into it, and persuade you.
- I will be able to persuade you right now.
- If you are *not* persuaded, you must be stubborn, uneducated, not smart, etc.
- What is persuasive to me is persuasive to you.

When we are so certain about our arguments, we often make these assumptions. And the more certain we are, the harder it is to convince others.

WHAT DO THEY NEED TO CHANGE THEIR MIND?

1.

AUTONOMY

They need to be the one
to change their mind

2.

VALIDATION

They won't change their
mind until I hear them

3.



EXERCISE

CONFIDENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR B:

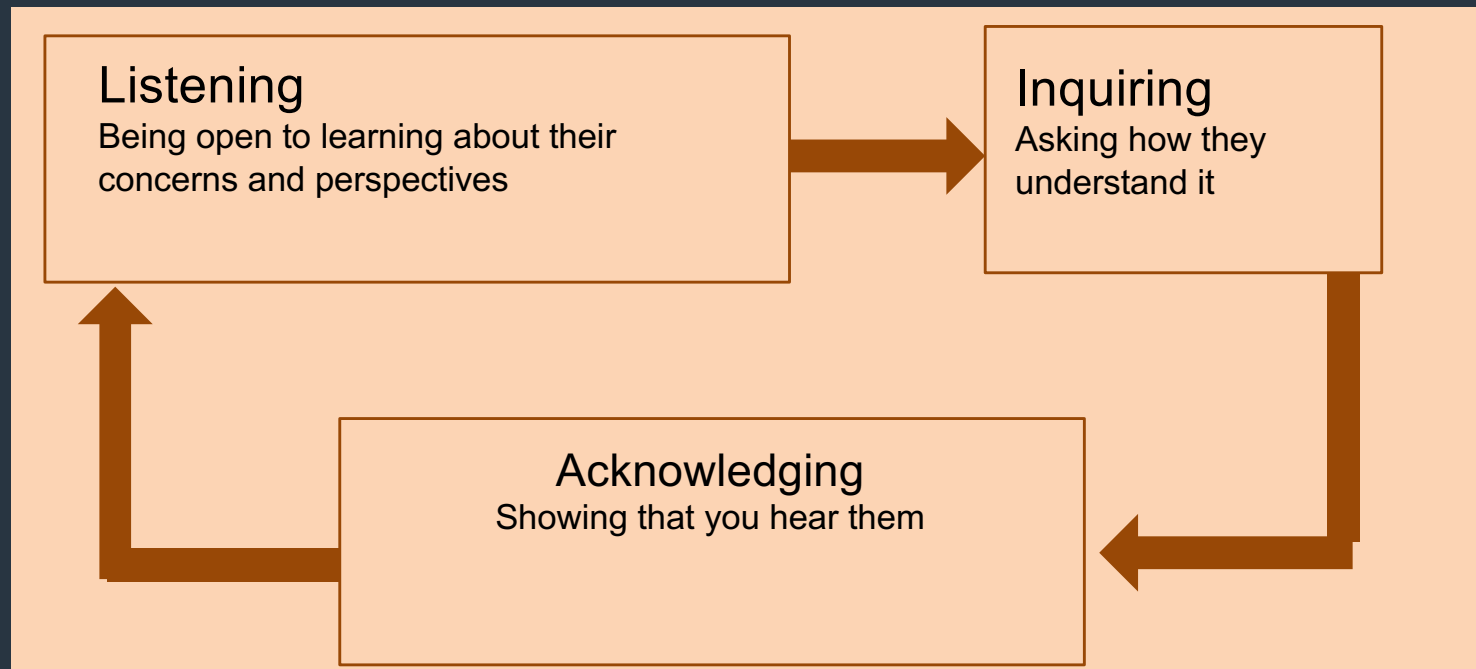
**COUNT (IN YOUR HEAD) THE NUMBER OF
STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS THAT A MAKES.
BE READY TO REPORT ON EACH.**

In this exercise, A was tasked with selling something of value to B, and B was tasked with counting the number of statements and questions that A made. In most cases, A made a lot more statements than asked questions. Without making a deliberate decision on how we communicate, we can easily fall into the 'advocacy trap' of using our arguments without yet understanding our audience.

VALIDATION

UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

How often do we make deliberate decisions on which skill to use and when?



In responding to the question, “as President, how did you influence others?” Clinton first agreed with Bush’s strategy of assembling the top experts, having them argue, and using whatever arguments rose to the top.

Then he stopped himself, and said “actually, the first thing I do is look across the table.”



INQUIRY

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind



With my arguments

They'll come to my side

Exploratory

- “So what’s your view on this?”
- “Can you say a little more on...”
- “What concerns you the most?”
- “What questions do you have?”
- “Is there any other information that would help you decide here?”
- “What *other* concerns might you have?”
- “What would be helpful for you to know as you make this decision?”

Impact

- “What benefit do you see to my proposal here? For you? For others?”
- “Do you know anyone who is affected by this issue, and what their experience was?”

Clarifying

- “Can you say a little bit more about that?”

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

UNDERSTANDING

- “I understand you.”
- “I’ve been there.”
- “I feel you.”

vs.

HEARING

- “I hear you.”
- “I believe you.”
- “I see how you feel that way.”

ASSUMPTION

I’ll change their mind

✓

With my arguments

They’ll come to my side



Roger Boisjoly of Morton Thiokol made the assumption that his data would be enough to pursue his bosses and the bosses at NASA to abort the scheduled launch of the Challenger on Jan. 28, 1986. Relying on data and only advocating using that data was insufficient to change minds.

CANVASSING

In this example, I was trying to convince a voter to vote for the candidate I supported.

After one question, I moved to advocacy, and was ineffective.

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

✓

With my arguments

They'll come to my side



I

Hi! I'm here to talk about Candidate Blahblah. What do you care about in this election?

Unemployment.

A

Well, Candidate Blahblah has a great plan to reduce unemployment.

Okay...

A

Candidate Blahblah's plan involves...

You know what? I'm actually pretty busy.



What I thought they cared about:
UNEMPLOYMENT

CANVASSING

After two questions, I was still ineffective. Clearly I was not solving for the right problem.



ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

✓

With my arguments

They'll come to my side

I

Hi! I'm here to talk about Candidate Blahblah. What do you care about in this election?

I

Why is that important?

Unemployment.

I'm unemployed. Have been for six months.

A

Well, Candidate Blahblah has a great plan to reduce unemployment.

Okay...

A

Candidate Blahblah's plan involves...

You know what? I'm actually pretty busy.



What I thought they cared about:
UNEMPLOYMENT

CANVASSING

It took me three questions and one line of acknowledgment to understand what was really driving this person. Only then would I be effective with his advocacy.

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

✓

With my arguments

They'll come to my side



SCORE YOUR SCRIPT

A

I said: This project plan is not going to work.

They said: Yes it will.

A

I said: Are you kidding? We'll slip the deadline if we do it this way.

They said: I don't think so. Should be fine.

A

I said: No. It won't be, and it'll be our fault.

They said: Calm down. You're worrying about nothing.

- Write an "A" next to every advocacy statement you made
- Write an "I" next to every question you asked
- Write a "K" next to every piece of acknowledgment you used

Example

One person we interviewed held all of these views. Advocates would not be effective until they learned all of them.

I'M NOT VOTING"

Horizontal: "why else?"

Vertical: "why?"

"what's your concern?"
"It won't do anything."

"say more about that..."
"I don't live in a swing state. It goes the way it goes regardless if I vote."

"so it doesn't matter?"
"Nope – what would my vote do?"

IRRELEVANCY

"why else aren't you voting?"
"Well, I don't want to have to choose between the lesser of two evils."

"say more about that..."
"They're both just a part of the system, and they're not going to change it."

"why does that matter to you?"
"I can't trust them to look out for the little guy"

TRUST IN THE SYSTEM
AS A WHOLE

"any other reasons?"
"Yeah, even if I decide to take it, I don't want to tell my dad."

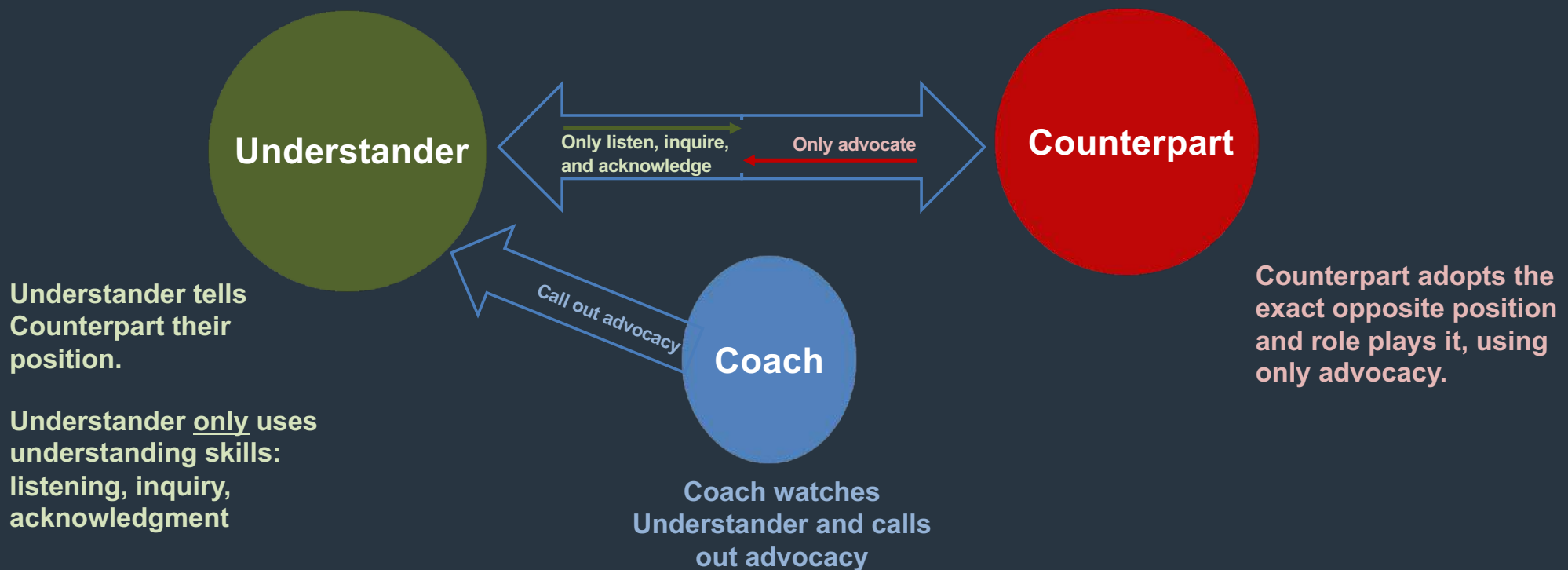
"Your dad doesn't want you to vote?"
"Nope – he distrusts the system more than I do."

"What's your concern?"
"I just don't want to upset him."

STAYING LOYAL TO
FAMILY

EXERCISE

Write down, in one sentence a position on an important issue:
“I believe strongly that _____”



FALSE...

When doing the understanding work, beware of falling into false inquiry and false acknowledgment

FALSE INQUIRY

"Don't you think that..."

"Isn't it true that..."

"You don't really think that..."

FALSE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind



With my arguments

They'll come to my side

"I understand you, but..."

"So you're saying [wrong]"

Playing it back (mocking)

SHIFT YOUR ASSUMPTION

FROM

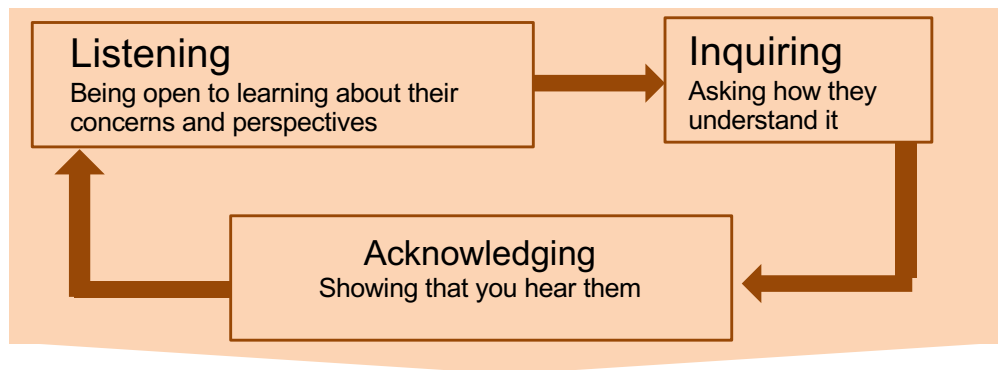
I can change their
mind with my
arguments

TO

VALIDATION
They won't change their mind
until I hear them

ADVICE

**Understand their
perspective**



ASSUMPTION THREE

I can bring them to my side

WHAT DO THEY NEED TO CHANGE THEIR MIND?

1.

AUTONOMY

They need to be the one
to change their mind

2.

VALIDATION

They won't change their
mind until I hear them

3.

GUIDANCE

We can sort out this
difference together

ADAPTIVE ADVOCACY



ASK YOURSELF:

Are they ready to hear my advocacy?

- Do they feel heard?
- Have they shown interest in solving this problem?
- Have they shown interest in helping you?

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

With my arguments



They'll come to my side

ADAPTIVE ADVOCACY



SHARE PERSPECTIVE:
Bring them up your ladder with you

- “Here’s how I reached my conclusion”
- “Do you track my thinking?”
- “Would you come to a different conclusion?”

ASSUMPTION

I’ll change their mind

With my arguments



They’ll come to my side

ADAPTIVE ADVOCACY

BRING THEM UP YOUR LADDER

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

With my arguments

✓ They'll come to my side



Option 1

Option 2

Students were 21% more likely to buy Option 2

ADAPTIVE ADVOCACY

BRING THEM UP YOUR LADDER

60%

Request only

“Excuse me, I have 5 pages. May I use the Xerox machine?”



94%

Request with real reason

“Excuse me, I have 5 pages. May I use the xerox machine, because I’m in a rush?”

93%

Request with fake reason

“Excuse me, I have 5 pages. May I use the xerox machine, because I have to make copies?”

BRING THEM UP YOUR LADDER

I used arguments that flew right past my friend; he was selecting different data, interpreting it differently, and then coming to a very different conclusion. Only until I could go down his ladder and take him up mine could we identify where exactly we saw things differently.



BRING THEM UP YOUR LADDER

MY LADDER

This is a great band.

By playing this song so well, this band is really honoring the culture of the neighborhood

The music sounds great.

The band is playing a go-go song.

Conclusion

What is the conclusion we draw?

Lens

How do we interpret this data? What values, assumptions, beliefs do we draw upon?

Selected Data

What information are we focusing on?

Data

What is the available data?

HIS LADDER

This band stinks.

White musicians playing *that* music in *this* neighborhood feels like appropriation of our culture.

The musicians are all white.

The band is playing a go-go song.

UNDERSTANDING SKILLS



ADAPTIVE
ADVOCACY



ADAPTIVE ADVOCACY



“Nations with allies thrive, and those without allies decline — it’s that simple.

We must be willing to do more than to listen to our allies. We must be willing to be persuaded by them.”

-James Mattis

TO BE PERSUASIVE, SHOW YOU CAN BE PERSUADED

- If you don't expect to change your thinking, why would they change theirs?
- Does the solution reflect their thinking as well? If it doesn't, will it last?

ASSUMPTION

I'll change their mind

With my arguments



They'll come to my side



BE PERSUADED:
Build a new path forward together

ADAPTIVE ADVOCACY

BUILD A NEW PATH

Remember the example of restaurant reviews. One group of subjects received only positive comments of a restaurant. The other group received those same comments, plus one slightly negative comment. The second group was more likely to go to the restaurant.

If we are only presenting our counterparts with arguments, we will be less persuasive than if we acknowledge what they are saying. A simple “you have a good point there” acts as a blemish, and makes your arguments more persuasive.

Group A

- + Great food
- + Nice ambience
- + Wonderful service
- + Easy to make reservations

Group B

- + Great food
- + Nice ambience
- + Wonderful service
- + Easy to make reservations
- Hard to park

The Blemishing Effect

When consumers receive mildly negative information after already receiving positive information, the “blemish” highlights the positive information and makes it seem even more positive

SHIFT YOUR ASSUMPTION

FROM

I can bring them to
my side

TO

GUIDANCE
We can sort out this
difference together

ADVICE

Use adaptive
advocacy

A

ASK YOURSELF:

Are they ready to hear my advocacy?

B

SHARE PERSPECTIVE

Bring them up your ladder with you

C

BE PERSUADED

Build a new path forward together

ASSUMPTIONS

I can change their mind

I can change their mind
with my arguments

I can bring them to my side

PURPOSE

Convince them
to do/think something

ACTIONS

Use my arguments

Communicate talking points/key messages,
lecture, defend, etc.

AUTONOMY

They need to be the one to
change their mind

VALIDATION

They won't change their
mind until I hear them

GUIDANCE

We can sort out this
difference together

Hear each other and
understand how we might
disagree

Co-create a new option

AUTONOMY

Manage their expectations

VALIDATION

Understand their perspective

GUIDANCE

Use adaptive advocacy

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE'VE DONE

ASSUMPTION ONE I CAN CHANGE THEIR MIND

**“Convince Me”
exercise**

**Tide Pods / Truth
Campaign**

ASSUMPTION TWO WITH MY ARGUMENTS

Ladder of Inference

**Certainty: F Exercise,
biases**

Selling exercise

Challenger analysis

**Canvassing / iceberg
examples**

“Hot Buttons” exercise

ASSUMPTION THREE I CAN BRING THEM TO MY SIDE

**Photocopy machine
example**

Arm exercise

**Competition: Geico ad /
truck story**

Restaurant example

SUMMARY OF ADVICE

AUTONOMY

Manage their expectations

In the moment: manage their expectations.
“I’m not trying to change your mind.”

Over time: Offer time and space for them to
make up their own mind.

VALIDATION

Understand their perspective

Listening
Being open to learning about
their concerns and perspectives

Inquiring
Asking how they
understand it

Acknowledging
Showing that you hear them

GUIDANCE

Use adaptive advocacy

- A. Ask: are they ready to hear my advocacy?
- B. Bring them up my ladder
- C. To be persuasive, show I can be persuaded

“I remember what it’s like for the next set of players to come out. The Royal Box is empty, everyone’s away, and it’s kind of awkward, and I wanted to be out there.”



SUGGESTED READING

Some related books, in no particular order:

- *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Robert B. Cialdini (New York: Collins Business Essentials, 1993)
- *The Catalyst: How to Change Anyone's Mind*, Jonah Berger (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020)
- *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know*, Adam Grant (New York: Viking, 2021)
- *Influence is Your Superpower: The Science of Winning Hearts, Sparking Change, and Making Good Things Happen*, Zoe Chance (New York: Random House, 2022).
- *Leadership is Dead: How Influence is Reviving It*, Jeremie Kubicek (New York: Howard Books, 2011)
- *Masterful Coaching: Extraordinary Results by Impacting People in the Way They Think and Work Together*, Robert Hargrove (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995)
- *Descartes Error*, Antonio Damasio, (New York: Putnam, 1994)
- *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman, (New York: FSG, 2011)
- *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman (New York: Bantam Books, 1995)
- *How the Mind Works*, Steven Pinker, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997)

STAY IN TOUCH

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