



Assertiveness with Respect

Remember the definition for Team Resource Management (TRM) in pipeline control rooms: **TRM includes strategies, knowledge, and skills to make the best use of all available resources to create a culture of pipeline safety and high reliability in control rooms.** In previous articles, we have considered the subjects of situation awareness, decision-making, and communications. Those nontechnical skills and others work together to enhance teamwork. What is being done in your organization to create a culture of pipeline safety and high reliability? Is your team working well together using all available resources?

A critical skill in TRM is assertiveness with respect, which is the ability to challenge others when appropriate and state one's view without being aggressive. This article will contrast assertiveness, passivity, and aggressiveness and provide five simple steps for assertiveness with respect. Have there been times in your company where assertiveness might have prevented an incident? Or where passivity or aggressiveness contributed to an incident?

Consider whether you practice these positive behaviors for assertiveness and whether or not you avoid the negative behaviors. What does your organization do to encourage the positive behaviors and to discourage the practice of the negative behaviors?

Positive Behaviors
Assertively states point of view even in light of pressure from others or one's own doubts
Stands ground based on a sound assessment; continues to carry out actions as intended or does not give in to pressure without good reasons
Uses appropriate tone of voice for situation
Challenges others if information is conflicting or incorrect or if actions are inappropriate
Negative Behaviors
Backs down unnecessarily when challenged
Becomes aggressive or meek when putting across point of view
Reluctant to challenge others if information is conflicting or incorrect or actions are inappropriate

Consider these definitions and ask which best describes you at work:

Passive – Lacks initiative, remains inactive and silent in interactions with others. Submits to will of others.

Aggressive – Inclined to behave in an actively hostile fashion through speech, actions, and gestures. Imposes will on others.

Assertive – Behaves in a way that expresses one's confidence, rights, opinions, and that earns respect from others. Neither submits to will of others nor imposes will on others.

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The table below lists behavior differences. The goal should be to practice the assertive behaviors at work. How likely are you to be assertive with peers, managers, and support personnel in your control room organization? What might lead you to become passive or to be aggressive? What do you need to do differently to practice assertiveness?

Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Is afraid to speak	Speaks openly, but respectfully	Interrupts others
Speaks softly or tentatively	Uses a conversational tone	Speaks loudly
Will not look at people	Makes good eye contact	Glares and stares
Little or no expression	Expressions match message	Intimidating expressions
Agrees with group	Considers different viewpoints	Only considers own feelings
Believes self is inferior	Believes self is equal	Believes self is superior

Use these five simple steps to practice assertiveness with respect. They are by Todd Bishop, from "The National Fire Fighter Near Miss Reporting System."

1. Get the person's attention.
2. State your concern.
3. State the problem as you see it.
4. State a solution.
5. Obtain agreement or buy-in.

Your company should have an operations philosophy that outlines the standards for how work will be done. Those standards should match your personal standards about the safe and correct ways to perform work. In hazardous industries, there is no room for compromise. An assertive individual will always do the right thing and will challenge anyone who is not doing the right thing. Will you be assertive about your rights to a safe work environment that values public, personal, and environmental safety?

*"The only healthy communication style is assertive communication."
Jim Rohn*