



Episode 19: The 3 Keys to Getting Buy-In

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Today, let's talk about how to get buy-in from others. Life is a constant negotiation, both at home and at work, about what we want and what other people want. When we have an idea about a new project or approach, we often try to influence and persuade those we're working with. Sometimes, we get that buy-in that we want. They say yes! Yes, you can move that idea forward, or, yes, I'll give you the funding!

Other times, our persuasion tactics fall flat. We can't budge the other person's thinking. Even though we're the expert, even though we've spent hours thinking about the solution, even though we care deeply, we get a resounding No. Then, we feel disappointed in ourselves and frustrated that we didn't state our case convincingly. Well, it's time to change that.

Today, let's talk about how to equip you so that you have a higher chance of getting buy-in from others. Let's help you feel more empowered, clear, and confident for these important conversations.

All it takes is a few strategies for you to step into your leadership, state your case more convincingly, and create alignment. Because, after all, I know you have important ideas that are just waiting to be put into action.

The good news is that there are ways we can communicate with more clarity and conviction, and it all starts by considering the listener's brain.

We all have brains in our heads. You have a brain, your manager has a brain, your colleagues have brains. And sometimes these brains are thinking effectively. What I mean by that is that the prefrontal cortex, the higher-level thinking part of the brain, is fully engaged and the brain is thinking expansively and can see other points of view.

Other times, though, a brain might not be thinking effectively. When we're under pressure, when we're overwhelmed, our bodies get stressed. This leads to a stressed brain. A stressed brain has a harder time thinking long-term about possibilities and seeing other points of view.

Your opportunity when trying to get buy-in is to make a conversation brain friendly for the other person's brain. Brain-friendly conversations have a higher chance of getting buy-in and feeling successful.

So it's critical that when you have an important conversation, you need to have a sense of the state of the brain you're talking to. If the brain you are talking to is stressed, overwhelmed, or worried, chances are that it will be harder for the conversation to go in the direction that you want.

Step 1 is to understand the brain of the listener and how ready it is to hear your point of view. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. What do you know about what's on their plate? What pressures are they under? Try to find a time when they're not as overwhelmed, when their brain is calmer, when they seem more relaxed for a conversation. A relaxed body equals a relaxed brain.

Now, this isn't always possible. Sometimes, we just have to have the conversation. In that case, try to think about the situation from the other person's point of view. Pause and ask yourself, when I share this new idea, what might they be worried about? How might it affect their workload? If you consider these questions as you formulate your talking points, it will help you focus what you say in a way that eases their brain.

Speaking of talking points, step number 2 is about clarity and preparation – both for our key messages and the information we want to share and the questions we want to ask. You know how athletes warm up and prepare before they run onto the field? Well, it's the same with us. We need to take the time to prepare before important conversations.

Here are the ways to get clarity and prepare. First, ask yourself, what are the 3 main points I that want to share? What 3 things do I want the other person to know? Really think about this, and be specific and concise. This makes it easier for the listener's brain to receive information.

I also recommend preparing by clarifying your ask. An ask is a specific question that you really want the answer to. So many times we ask questions and they're not actually the right questions for the situation. Make your question count by choosing your specific ask.

Here's an example: I was coaching a client recently to prepare for an important meeting in which she was going to ask for money for a new initiative. When I asked her, what's your ask, she said that her ask to her boss was, Will you support me? This is a vague question, because support means different things to different people. I encouraged her to make a specific ask, which might be something like: Will you send an email to key stakeholders with an endorsement? Or, will you show up at the next committee meeting to share your excitement for this initiative? Thinking clearly about the specific ask makes a conversation more brain-friendly by letting people know exactly what we'd like.

Let's recap. Step #1 is about understanding the listener's brain. Step #2 is clarifying talking points and your ask.

Step #3 is to practice out loud. Everything sounds different in our head as compared to saying it out loud. To get buy-in, you'll want to choose the phrasing, the words, and the tone that make you feel confident, assertive, and collaborative. The problem is that most of us speak and operate from the same narrow range all the time. In reality, though, each of us has a broader range of tones and words we can use. Try out other ways of speaking as you prepare. And please have fun with this step. How might a mouse make this ask? How might a lion?

You can practice with others, in front of a mirror, or by recording yourself into your phone and playing it back. Get comfortable with how you want to show up, and then choose and align your words, tone, and body language to convey the level of confidence that you want.

As you prepare for your buy-in conversation, I invite you to think about 2 other big ideas. One is about success and defining what a successful conversation would be. If you emailed me after the conversation, saying, Deb, that was a huge success, what would you be pointing to?

Now, if you said, it would be a success if the other person saw my point or agreed with me, I invite you to change your definition of success.

Please define success based solely on what's in your control. The reality is that in most cases, we have no control over other people. We cannot control what other people think, what they say, what they believe. Please do not define success based on criteria that you have no control over. It's not fair to you.

Instead, define success by what is in your control. A successful meeting might be one in which you had prepared, had clear talking points, and used confident language. Or a successful meeting might be one in which you showed up bold; you made a bold ask. Define success based on what's in your control. And then after your successful meeting, be sure to celebrate your efforts.

Lastly, please remember that it can be hard to be a visionary. While you might easily see what's possible, it can take others longer to catch up. Please remember that even if your idea is not accepted the first time, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't have brought it up. An idea can take time to come to fruition, and your introducing it might have been the first important step.

We talked about a lot today. So, let's bring this to you. The next time you want to get buy-in, put these 3 steps into action. One, make it brain-friendly by understanding the other person's perspective and what might be most important to them. Two, create your 3 concise talking points and your specific ask. Three, practice out loud ahead of time so that you can be as confident and bold as you'd like.

Define what a successful meeting would be for you, by choosing a definition in your control. And be proud of being a visionary and trailblazer....and keep at it. The world needs you, your purpose, and your ideas.

Thank you so much for listening and for being part of my community. If you want more tips for effective thinking and communicating, go to my website debelbaum.com and sign up for my newsletter. Use your words and ideas to guide you in the right direction, for you, right now.

Until next time!