

How to be Aggressive

*Without
Having Others
FEAR YOU*



PROGRESSIVE
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Sometimes Things Just Have to Get Done:

Goals must be met, deadlines have to be hit.

When pushing your people to succeed in those situations, the language you use can be seen as aggressive, inflexible or uncompromising.

The Frustrating Part:

Your male colleagues can be just as aggressive but not perceived that way! The good news is, with a few tweaks to your communication style you can drive strong results without the backlash.



Giving Orders

As a leader, you want to minimize the orders you need to give – most of the time, your people are going to know what needs to get done and work to do it.

But every once in a while circumstances will dictate that you'll need to say **“jump”** and in return need to hear **“how high?”**

- When a customer relationship is on the line.
- When operations are stalled until an issue is resolved.
- When you're up against an unmissable deadline.



It's your responsibility to identify these situations and make those hard calls. But when you're barking time-sensitive orders, it's easy to sound blunt and intimidating. If you keep a cool head and the right tone, imperatives can work – **“Go there,” “do this”** – but there are more effective ways to get things done:

- Instead, try making it a team effort:
“Let's go there.”
- Or turn it into a question:
“Can you do this?”
- Sometimes it's just a matter of politeness:
“Please go there.”
- And sometimes people just need a nudge:
“Remember to do this.”



Getting on the Same Page

When you're telling someone what needs to be done, it's tempting to say **"you have to"** or **"you should."**

But the listener may hear this and feel like you're telling them how to think. It's far more effective to flip things around and tell them how ***you're*** thinking.



Transparency is an incredible motivator

– when everybody knows the reason behind an instruction, they feel more ownership of the decision.

If your employees have all the facts, they can follow your logic and understand the conclusions.

- **“If we don’t resolve this customer’s issue, we’ll lose their business.”**
- **“The other teams can’t continue their work until this bug is fixed.”**
- **“Unless we hit this deadline, our work will be wasted on an outdated product.”**



If something has to be done a specific way, or you don't have the ability to be as transparent as you'd like, there are still less prescriptive word choices than **“should”** and **“have to”**.

Once you've told them all you can, try phrases like:

- **“I'd like you to ...”**
- **“It'd be better if ...”**
- **“The project requires ...”**
- **“Please do ...”**
- **“Please consider ...”**



Disagreement

Let's face it, sometimes people are just wrong.

But when you tell them so, they never seem to take it well. While some mistakes can be overlooked, some must be caught early or corrected immediately – before you lose work, customers, or relationships.

So how do you say **“you're wrong”** – without stepping on any toes?



- **Take Responsibility**

Your judgment is final, and the results fall on you as the leader.

If you thank your employee for their input and effort, then explain your reasons as transparently as possible, you'll leave little room for discomfort.

They may still think their way is best, but it's now your mistake to make.



- **Avoid Accidental Insults**

If you frame with a compliment or use phrases like **“all due respect,”** your listener is actually more likely to get defensive – now it’s about them and not the idea.

Instead, address the issue with an objective eye, and provide facts to support your position.

- **Provide a Solution**

Avoid bringing up an issue if you don't have a solution – even if the solution is as simple as giving them more time to solve the problem.

You could also schedule a time to collaborate on a better answer. This keeps the focus on the issue rather than on them.



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