THE PARTNERSHIP EXPERIENCE:

Strategies For Better Relationships And Greater Teamwork

August 4, 2014

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Biographical Sketch of
Dr. Alan R. Zimmerman, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame

- Started selling door-to-door in second grade, everything from greeting cards to operating a small international import business by age 14.
- Worked his way through college and graduate school as a retail salesperson, radio broadcaster, recreation manager, and prison therapist.
- Listed in “Who’s Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities.”
- Earned Bachelor’s degree from U of WI in Speech and Political Science. Master’s degree from U of MN in Communication and Sociology. Doctorate from U of MN in Interpersonal Communication and Psychology. Graduated with Summa Cum Laude honors each time.
- Has 15 years of experience as a university professor at the University of Minnesota (Twin Cities and Mankato), Emporia State University, and University of St. Thomas.
- Selected as “Outstanding Faculty Member” by two different universities.
- Founded Zimmerman CommuniCare Network, Inc., a speaking, training, and consulting company. Provides 90+ programs a year across the United States and around the world.
- Spoken to more than a million people, in 48 states and 22 countries, maintaining a 92% repeat and referral business.
- Awarded the CSP (Certified Speaking Professional Designation of Achievement). Of the 4,000 members of the National Speakers Association, only 5% have received this award.
- Given the “Distinguished Faculty Award” by the Institute of Management Studies on two occasions, an award that has been given to fewer than 10 of its 2000 speakers in its 50+ years of business across the world.
- Inducted into the CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame, an honor reserved for only a small handful of people in the last 30 years, including Ronald Reagan, Colin Powell, Ken Blanchard, and Zig Ziglar.
- Publisher of the “Tuesday Tip,” a weekly internet newsletter that focuses on maximizing human performance, increasing leadership effectiveness, and developing communication competence.
- Author of several audio and video programs as well as books and training manuals, that help people and organizations develop skills for peak performance.
- Personal interests include active church participation, refinishing antique furniture, biking, hiking, and international adventures as diverse as tribal treks in Southeast Asia and hunting in the Arctic.
Ingredients of a Brave Question

1. **Open-ended**
   
a. Closed questions elicit one-word or one-phrase responses such as “yes,” “no,” and “we’ll see.” They’re good for getting the facts or getting to the point. And if that’s all you want or need to know, that’s okay.

b. Closed questions are not good for building relationships, however. They do not elicit the other person’s opinions or feelings. And they do not deepen the understanding between you and the other person.

c. By contrast, open-ended questions start with the five “W’s” or one “H:” who, what, when where, why, or how. They require more than a single-word or single-phrase response, at least most of the time. They call for additional detail, explanation, or depth. And you almost always get more clarity.

2. **Specific**

a. General questions don’t work very well. In fact, they often block communication rather than facilitate it. People don’t know what to say when you ask too broad of a question, so they may not give much of an answer.

b. By contrast, brave questions are specific. They ask for specific thoughts, feelings, and experiences. That makes them easier to answer as well as more fun to answer.
c. Let’s say you just finished a major project at work. One of your colleagues asks you about it. He asks the general question, “How was the project?” You’d probably think, “Ugh.” It’d be too much work to fully answer that question. So you might say, “Fine,” and leave it at that.

d. But let’s say another colleague asks you a specific question. She asks, “What was the most challenging part of that project?” Her question would give you some focus. You would know exactly what to say, and you’d probably answer it more comfortably.

e. So ask fairly specific questions.

3. **Courageous**

a. Good questions take a little thought, but brave questions also take a little courage. After all, you’re asking questions you don’t normally ask in everyday communication. So you can expect to feel a mite uncomfortable asking questions that are so much out of the ordinary. That’s okay. Just recognize the fact that brave questions require more courage than “normal” questions.

b. It also takes more courage to answer brave questions. You will feel somewhat vulnerable sharing more of yourself than you usually do. You can’t hide behind superficial answers or trite discussions about the weather.

c. And finally, it takes courage to hear the answers you’re going to hear. You might not always like what you hear or agree with what you hear. But you will learn more truths in a short, healthy discussion than you might have learned in years of unfocused conversation. Those truths will become the basis for greater acceptance and teamwork in the future.

4. **Honest**
a. However, a lot of questions aren’t questions at all. They’re false questions. They make no attempt whatsoever to understand what the other person is thinking or feeling. They’re disguised attempts to control or punish another person.

b. When a father asks his son why he can’t keep his room clean, he’s not looking for information. He’s not asking a brave question. He’s indirectly ordering his kid to clean up his room.

c. Make sure your brave questions are honest. Make sure you really want to know the answer. Any other hidden motivation is unacceptable.

5. Constructive

a. As you ask and answer brave questions, you’ll talk about a lot of challenging issues, thoughts, and feelings. Some of the things you share will concern tough times, bad choices, and negative consequences.

b. You may not agree with some of the things your partner says or some of the things your partner has done. However, a good discussion is about respect and acceptance, not agreement and approval.

c. That means your questions must be motivated by a desire to learn more about the other person and build a better relationship with him or her. Your questions cannot be motivated by a desire to tear down the other person. That’s destructive.

d. Let me give two examples. Let’s say you ask someone, “When will you stop being so disrespectful of my feelings?” I don’t think you want a full discussion of the possibilities. You’re simply hiding behind a question as you tear the other person down.
e. Or you ask someone, “What’s wrong with you anyway?” That’s not a brave question either. It’s not constructive. It doesn’t try to build anything. It’s simply an act of destruction.

f. As you create your own brave questions, take a moment to think. Ask yourself if your questions are constructive. Are you trying to gain some understanding? Are you trying to improve your communication? Are you trying to build a relationship? If that’s your motivation, you’re probably asking some very good brave questions.
The Cooperation Principle

1. The principle: "To the degree that you give others what they need, they will give you what you need.

2. Implications
   a. The first implication
      1) You must know what other people need.
      2) If you don't know what they need, you obviously can't give them what they need.
   b. The second implication
      1) Notice the sequence. First you give them what they need, and then they give you what you need.
      2) Most people have that twisted around.

3. The wrong path
   a. With the path to cooperation so simple, why do so many people fail in their attempts at cooperation?
   b. because people are so blinded by their own personal wants that they give very little thought to filling the needs of others.
   c. Then, when people don't get what they want, they punish people for not cooperating, which is exactly what people don't want.
### STRATEGY #2: COOPERATION

**Work Languages and Engagement Strategies**

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<th>Now</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Work to be Done</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
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#### 1. RESPECT

- a. Keeping promises
- b. Doing things to make the other person feel important

#### 2. BELONGING

- a. Making the other person feel welcome
- b. Showing genuine interest in the other person

#### 3. COMMUNICATION

- a. Make the other person feel understood
- b. Keep other person informed
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<td>Being playful enthusiasm</td>
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<td>5. <strong>TANGIBLES</strong></td>
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<td>a.</td>
<td>Doing unexpected acts of service</td>
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<td>b.</td>
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STRATEGY #3:
APPRECIATION

Quick, Easy & Effective Ways To Appreciate

It seems that no one ever seems to get too much praise or recognition. That’s why the number 1 job complaint is “you can do a hundred things right and not hear a darn thing about it.”

If you’re going to build a partnership with others, you’ve got to do two things. You’ve got to value the person and acknowledge the contributions. Here are several ways you can do that.

1. Value the person

2. Attach something tangible to the communication.

3. Put it in writing.

4. Use the language of validation.

5. Comment on improvement.

6. Make sure you give the recognition.

7. Make sure the other person accepts the recognition.
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