

Communication

Techniques to Manage Difficult Conversations



Communication is . . .



“You communicate not what you say, but what people hear.”

Lynn Scarlett

Undersecretary, U.S. Department of Interior

Three Components of Communication



Listening

- Not speaking, asking questions, paraphrasing
- (Initial) suspension of disbelief

Conveying

- Being clear, concise, constructive
- Not provocative, rhetorical, insulting
- Not holding back real concerns, or playing them outside the room

Attending to the situation

- Agenda, participation, time, emotion

Components and Means



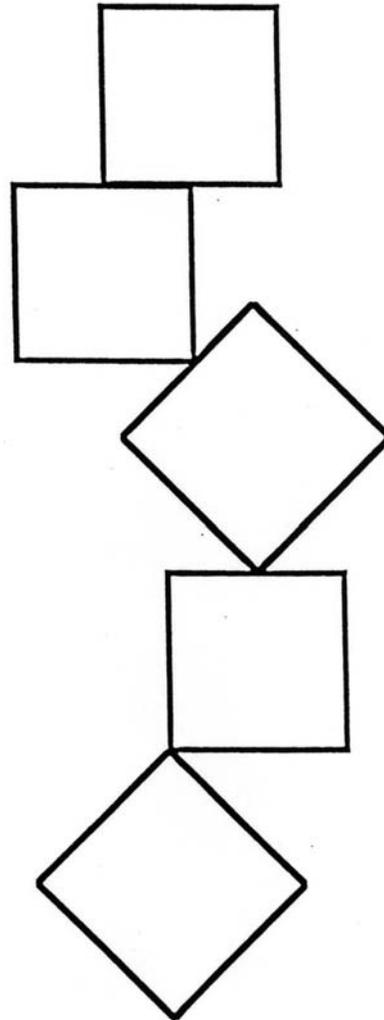
Activity	Conveying	Listening	Attending
In-Person	X	X	X
Phone	X	X	
Email	X		

Exercise: Drawing



- Please draw the image described by the leader
- First 2 minutes:
 - Only the leader can talk.
 - No peeking!

Exercise: Drawing



Clarity in Communication



- Provide the big picture
- Go fast by going slow
- Use different images
- Provoke feedback
- Look for *disconfirmation*
- Create a common language
- Foster group responsibility
- Promote active learning

Exercise: Bird's Eye View



- Write down a description of what you might see from a “birds-eye” view

A bird's eye view?



A bird's eye view?



A bird's eye view?



Fundamental Attribution Error



- **Fundamental Attribution Error:** When we are explaining the behavior of others, we take insufficient account of situational factors.

(Attribution is how we explain the behavior of others to ourselves.)

What do you mean?



Always? _____ %

Sometimes? _____ %

Frequently? _____ %

Occasionally? _____ %

Ask, don't assume



- Ask before you draw conclusions
- Ask open ended questions
- Listen and explore
- Don't grill and investigate
- Seek to learn more first, not to tell, educate, or admonish

COMMUNICATION



- LISTEN
 - DO: Use non-verbal cues: eye contact, open body posture, sitting/standing
 - DO: Have an open mind, be generous
 - DON'T: Interrupt, judge, explain or advise
- QUESTION
 - DO: Ask clarifying (“do you mean that . . .”) and open-ended questions (“what do you want to happen?”)
 - DON'T: Quiz or Interrogate, ask provocative or rhetorical questions

COMMUNICATION



- **EMPATHIZE**

- DO: acknowledge, express understanding (“It sounds like you feel cheated”)
- DON’T: necessarily agree or take sides (“That’s terrible. You’re right”)

- **RESTATE**

- DO: Use their own words and yours -- goal is to ensure you understand
- DON’T: Jump to conclusions based on your own perspective or seek to recraft the issue in your favor

COMMUNICATION



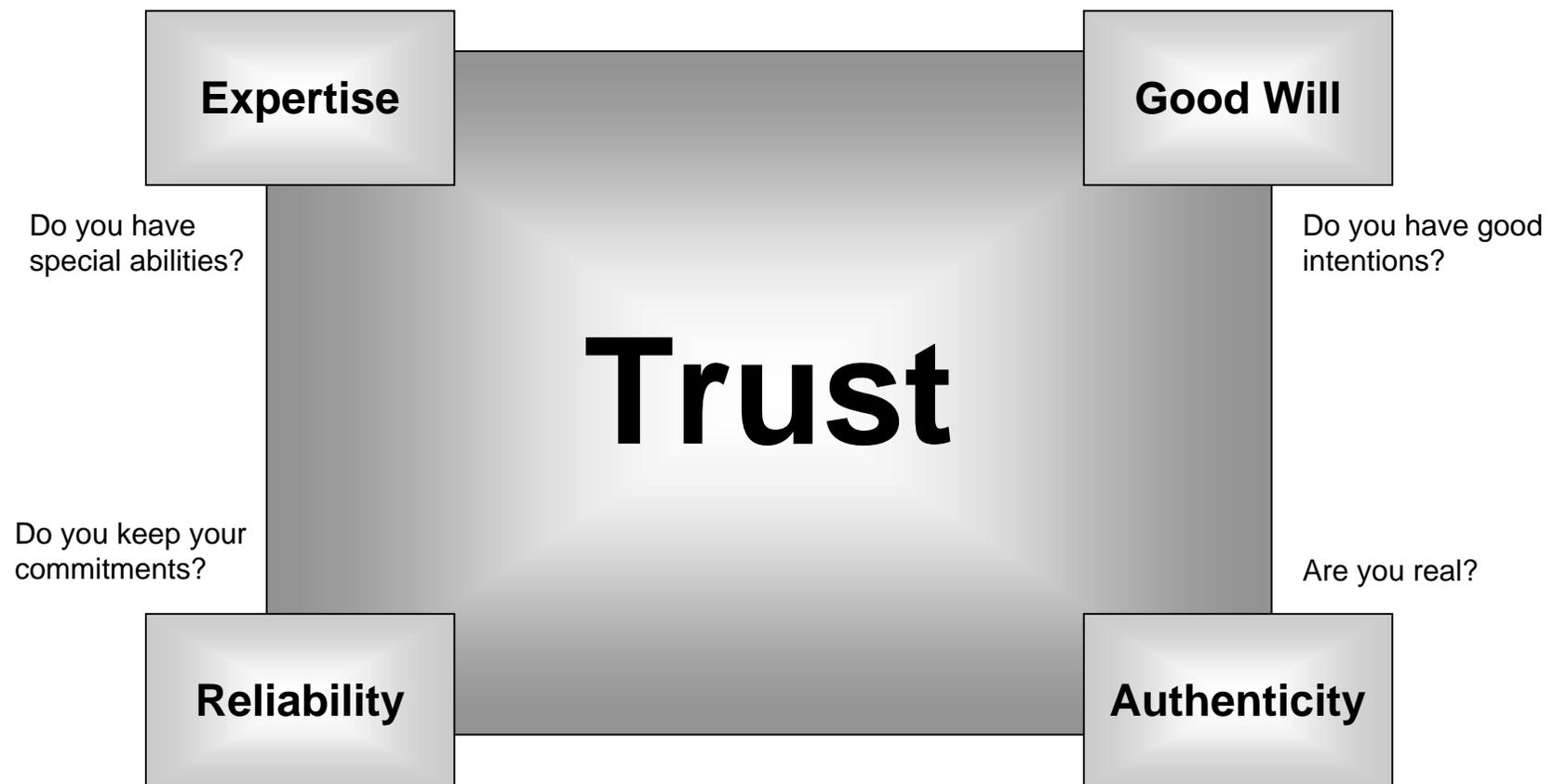
- **SUMMARIZE**
 - DO: Summarize in an organized & concise fashion
 - DON'T: Expound, evaluate, or analyze
- **REFRAME**
 - DO: Reframe to defuse, to allow others to hear, to highlight.
 - “Those cheats just want a fast buck” --> “So you are looking for a fair deal.”
 - DON'T: Restate in way that minimizes or distorts the speaker's tone or meaning.
 - “I want to kill him” -> “So you're irritated.”

COMMUNICATION



- **EXPLAIN**
 - DO: Ask to share your understanding; state your understanding --> “It’s my understanding that; share facts and information
 - DON’T: Expound; be defensive; seek to convince or correct; speculate
- **PROBLEM-SOLVE**
 - DO: Focus on interests and possible actions; consider and generate options; make suggestions; listen for ideas; focus on the future
 - DON’T: seek to “fix it” too soon; focus on what can’t be done; offer unrealistic options

The 4 cornerstones of Trust



The Leap of Faith



“The chief lesson I have learned in a long life is that the only way you can make a man trustworthy is to trust him.”

Henry L. Stimson
Secretary of War, 1940 to 1945

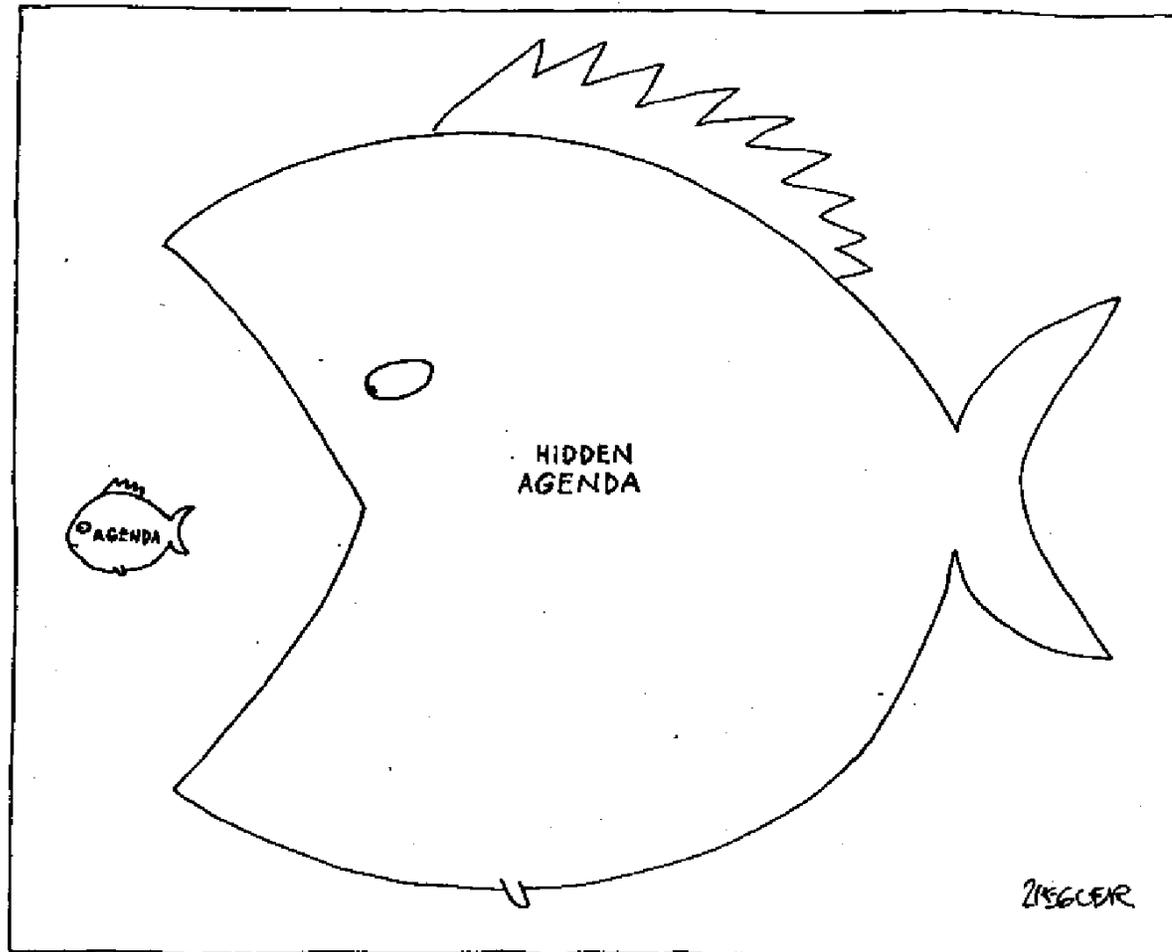
Building Trust



“Mean What You Say and Say What You Mean”

- Share information
- Share of yourself
- Follow through on promises and commitments
- Be clear and consistent
- Behave as you want them to behave
- People rarely think of themselves as untrustworthy

Undermining Trust



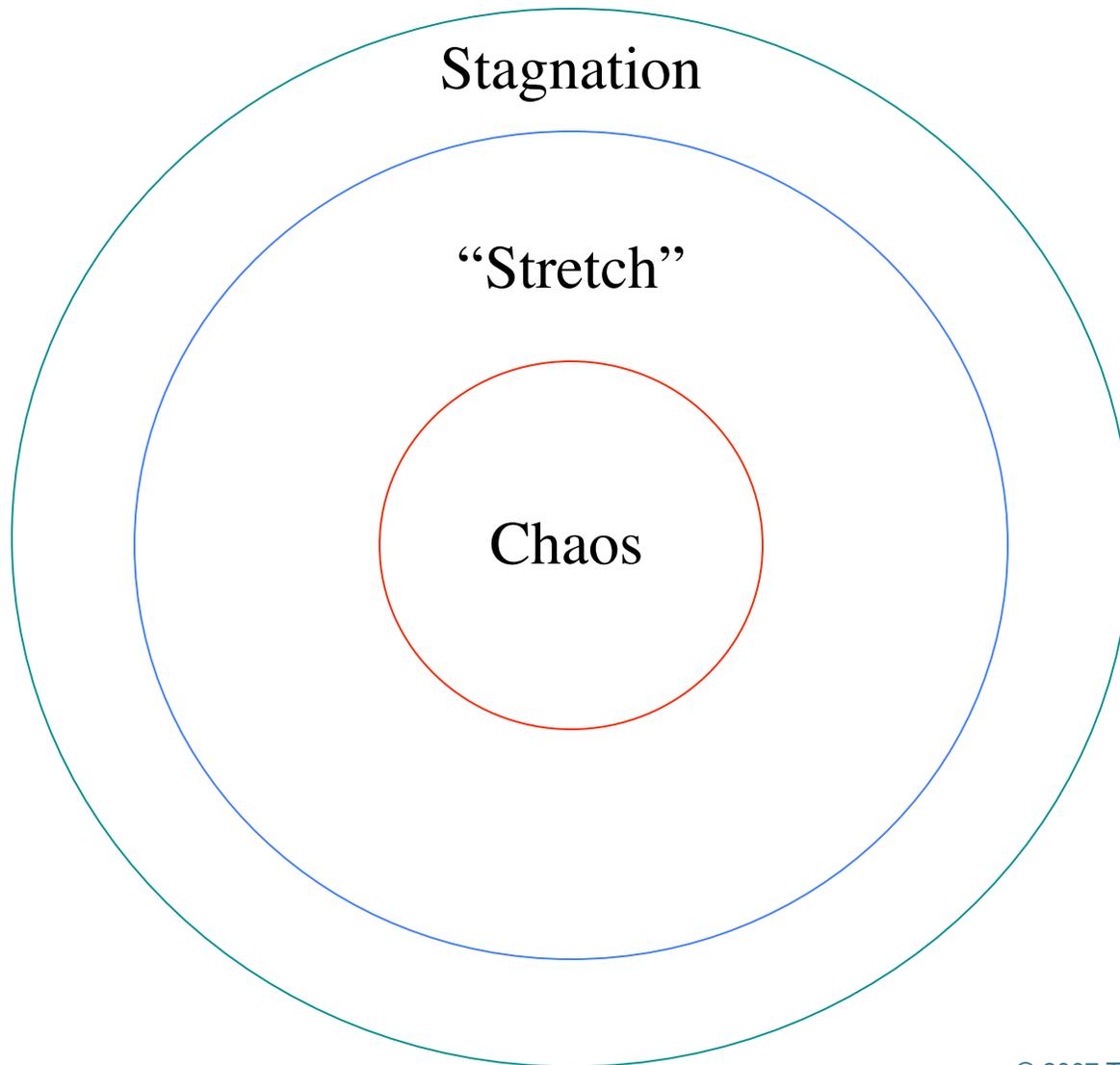
Speaking up



What remains unspoken can be more damaging than what is said

- If it matters, say it
 - As much as possible, without attacking
 - If not to the group, to the mediator to raise to the group
- If you can't say it here, don't say it at all
- If statements of others offend you, don't assume it was their intention

Comfort with the Tension



Reframing



Restating to the speaker what you hear underneath the layers, in neutral, positive terms, focusing on the underlying interest

Reframing - Steps



- Listen to the statement
- Work to understand the speaker's message
- Ignore/remove the “accusation,” “attack” or other “noise” from the statement
- Restate the message to the speaker including the real issue or interest in neutral, positive terms

Reframing - Steps



- “So, what’s important to is”
- “You’re concerned about...”

Reframing



- This is not about avoiding or minimizing conflict - often the differences need to come out

Approaches

- Name it
- Use examples
- Focus on the underlying interests
- Be willing to forgive and let it go