

How Assertive Are You?

Answer the following questions to determine how assertive you are. The questions are hypothetical, which means the situation posed may not exactly emulate situations you will come across at work. In that case, just answer the question as you think you might if you were actually in the situation.

1. A peer asks you to cover his shift tomorrow night, but you already have plans for dinner with your friends. The dinner is just a get together, there is no special occasion planned. Do you:
 - a) Explain that you would be happy to do it another time, but you already have plans.
 - b) Agree to do it, but ignore him for the next few weeks to send the message that you were upset about working for him.
 - c) Agree to cover his shift because it's easier than saying no.

2. Your aggressive boss asks you to complete a project. The instructions are not very clear, so you're not entirely sure how to complete the project. Do you:
 - a) Approach your boss with specific questions in order to gain the clarification you need to do the project right.
 - b) Ask a co-worker if they can give you additional information on the project.
 - c) Do the project as best you can and hope it is completed in the way your boss wanted.

3. An employee from another department comes into your department's work area to point out a mistake that someone in your department made. The employee is pretty angry because it's affected a customer account and caused her some extra work. You know it wasn't you who made the mistake. How do you handle the conversation?
 - a) You attempt to understand how the mistake happened and let her know you will talk to your co-workers so as to avoid the mistake in the future.
 - b) You tell the employee you know who it was and ask her to come back when that person returns from lunch.
 - c) You apologize for the mistake a few times.

4. When someone cuts in front of you in line in the workplace cafeteria, you:
 - a) Explain to him that he cut in front of you and acknowledge it was probably an accident.
 - b) Say nothing and shoot him glares whenever you think he might notice.
 - c) Say nothing.

5. You shared a great idea you have with your boss, who in turn asks you to discuss your idea during the company meeting on Friday. There will be 50 people there. What is your response?
 - a) Agree to make the presentation, prepare your notes in the days before the meeting, and present your idea.
 - b) Agree to make the presentation, prepare your notes in the days before the meeting, but also lose a lot of sleep in the days before the meeting.

- c) Respectfully tell your boss that you'd prefer not to, and ask him to share the idea on your behalf.
6. You generally like your fellow employees, but one of them tends to spend a lot of the workday talking. You and others in your department have even had conversations about how much he talks, and how it is distracting from your work. Moving forward, you will:
- a) Pull the employee into your office and politely let him know that sometimes he gets to talking a little too much, and it can be distracting.
 - b) Try to look busy when he approaches and hope he gets the hint that you're busy.
 - c) Stop what you're doing and listen when he talks because you don't want to be rude.
7. When you attend networking events for your industry, you tend to:
- a) Talk to people you have never met easily, and usually make a lot of contacts.
 - b) Hang out near the people you know already, but if someone you don't know approaches you, you will chat with them.
 - c) Avoid talking to anyone you don't already know.
8. You are a manager, and one of your employees, who is usually on time, has started to come in late. You:
- a) Pull him into your office after the third time to let the employee know you've noticed and to find out why the employee is late.
 - b) Pull him into your office after the seventh or eighth time—after all, he'd never been late before so you thought he'd just go back to being on time on his own.
 - c) Don't say anything at all. After a full three weeks of being late, you just let him go.
9. You already have a lot of work to complete before your day is over, and your aggressive boss has just shown up with another job for you to complete before you leave. Your boss demands the job be completed, as well as everything else, before you call it a night. You:
- a) Describe to your boss that you don't think it can all be done before the day is over. It's already 3:00 pm, and she's just added four more hours to your workload, so you ask which of your projects can be completed the following day.
 - b) You take on the work and ask a co-worker to help you out to be sure it's completed.
 - c) You take on the work, and work pretty much all night to make sure it's complete before morning.
10. You make a mistake at work, and your boss comes barreling down the hall yelling at you at the top of her lungs and in front of all of your co-workers. You:
- a) Stand up out of your chair, tell your boss that you realize you made a mistake, and offer three solutions that you can provide in order to rectify it.
 - b) Apologize to your boss for the mistake and tell her it will never happen again.
 - c) Provide your boss with an excuse for the mistake and remind her that everyone makes them.

11. During a staff meeting, your manager sparks a discussion about an issue. You speak up with an idea about how to resolve it. Several staff members and the boss respond by dismissing the idea quickly, without letting you explain. You:
 - a) Say, “Hey wait a minute! Hear me out!” and then go on to provide more details about your idea and why it might work.
 - b) Laugh at yourself and agree it was a silly idea but you were just trying to think outside of the box.
 - c) Say nothing and just keep quiet for the rest of the discussion.

12. You have vacation planned for next week, and are looking forward to some well-deserved and greatly needed time off with your family. The company gets a new client so they ask you to push your vacation back by three days in order to get the client account moving before you’re gone for a week. You:
 - a) Let them know you’ll leave clear instructions with your co-workers about how to move forward, and you will be happy to call in on the first couple days so you don’t leave them hanging.
 - b) Let them know to call you anytime, and then “forget” to answer your phone and “have computer problems” so you can’t check your email. When you return, you tell your co-workers you didn’t know you’d be so out of range.
 - c) Postpone your vacation, as requested.

13. When you are in an argument, you prefer to:
 - a) Work through the conflict until it is resolved. By offering up several solutions and ideas for resolution, as well as listening carefully to the other person, you’re bound to work through it.
 - b) Agree to whatever the other person wants—it’s easier and less time consuming.
 - c) Avoid the conflict as much as you can; you’re sure eventually it will be forgotten.

14. You heard from one co-worker that another co-worker has been telling everyone lies about you. The co-worker has spread rumors that you are going through a divorce and management thinks it’s really affecting your performance and thinking about firing you. This rumor is nowhere near the truth. You:
 - a) Ask the co-worker to meet with you, at which time you explain that you don’t know if it’s true or not, but this was the rumor you heard about, and you wanted to talk about it and make sure you set the record straight.
 - b) You start spreading rumors about the co-worker yourself. Maybe people will stop thinking and talking about your rumor and start thinking and talking about the one you spread.
 - c) Do nothing—after all, you can’t verify the rumor is being spread, and who cares anyway.

15. You are a manager and have set appointments with each of your employees to discuss performance and future goals. One employee shows up 45 minutes late to the meeting without any real explanation. You:
 - a) Mention to the employee, politely, that this is not a good way to start off a goal-setting meeting with the boss.
 - b) You don’t say anything at the start of the meeting, but during the discussion make an under-the-radar kind of comment about the slip-up.
 - c) Don’t say anything at all—the employee is usually at meetings anyway.

16. Your co-worker pokes fun at you sometimes in front of others, making sarcastic comments and calling you names. It's supposedly all in fun, and it's nothing too derogatory or offensive, but it still bothers you. You:
- a) Ask the co-worker politely to stop doing that because it's unprofessional and you find it offensive.
 - b) Start poking fun at them back. When they make a snide comment, you retort with something equally sarcastic.
 - c) Say nothing. It's not that big of a deal anyway because it's not like sexual harassment or hostility; it's just all in fun.

SCORE:

Now tally up how many A's, B's and C's you marked.

If you marked mostly A's:

You are assertive. You're good at speaking up for yourself, and you understand how important it is to do so with professionalism. Assertiveness is a positive communication skill. When you speak up for yourself in a polite and overt way, it results in building self-esteem and maintaining a positive relationship with others.

If you marked mostly B's:

You are passive-aggressive. This means that you choose to stand up for yourself in a manner that is covert, or "under-the-radar." You try to let people know you are bothered by their actions, but you attempt to do so in a way that some might consider sneaky or unprofessional. This is dangerous because people will begin to believe you cannot be trusted. It might be time to reconsider how you go about taking action. It is better to be clear and concise with others by stating what you need, rather than playing tricks or doing things that can be misconstrued. How can your needs be met if you're not being clear about what they are?

If you marked mostly C's:

You are avoidant of standing up for yourself. It's easier for you to just let things go and try to move past them without talking them over. You are being unfair to yourself because you are not getting your needs met, and you are likely seen as someone who allows others to "walk all over them." Eventually, you will begin to become very frustrated with the fact that people take advantage of you, and your self-esteem will be severely affected, if it hasn't been already. Consider using the tips provided in this book to become more assertive. If you are seen as assertive, it becomes more unlikely that you will be bullied.

***Please email Catherine Mattice at Catherine@CivilityPartners.com with any questions -
I am happy to help.***

Reprinted with permission from the book, BACK OFF! Your Kick-Ass Guide to Ending Bullying at Work

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