

## To Be Heard, Focus on the Positive

In my book [“Show Up. Step Up. Step Out. Leadership Through a New Lens.”](#) the “Show Up” section is about clarifying what you want others to understand about your leadership and identifying where you can have the biggest impact on the business. Communication can play a big role in how much others notice the value you bring. Specifically, when your communication style has a negative edge to it, it can get in your way. It can change how others view or engage you, ultimately diminishing your impact.

So, let’s take a quick look at how you typically frame your ideas. How often do you take an optimistic approach, emphasizing the positive and conveying your confidence in others and future success? Or do you usually take a more pessimistic approach, focusing on what doesn’t work or could go wrong.

Most people who frame things pessimistically don’t do so to simply complain or be negative. They may just want to raise a red flag about possible risks and how to plan for them – which offers tremendous value. However, that value may get lost in the negative delivery. So, instead of listening, colleagues tune them out.

This highlights the importance of how you Show Up and the everyday language you use. To help you reframe and emphasize the positive, let’s look at some examples.

**Scenario 1:** Your boss asks you to complete a task in an unrealistic timeframe. Compare these two responses:

Pessimistic framing: “I can’t meet the deadline because of reasons X, Y and Z.”

Optimistic framing: “I understand the urgency, and I’d like to be able to get it done in that time frame. Here are the challenges...”

Both say essentially the same thing. But the first one sounds like a No with no room for discussion, while the second one communicates a desire to help.

**Scenario 2:** You approach your boss because your progress on a project is being held up by another team member who is not getting her work to you.

Pessimistic framing: “Julia isn’t doing what she’s supposed to do.”

Optimistic framing: “To finalize the deliverable for this project by the deadline, I need X from Julia by the following date.

The first approach makes you seem like a tattletale; the second approach confirms your focus on deadlines and results.

**Scenario 3:** Finally, let’s consider how you react when someone presents an idea that needs some development.

Pessimistic framing: “There’s a lot that could go wrong with this idea.”

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Optimistic framing: “I really like Points A, B and C of this idea. And let’s also consider these other aspects...”

The first approach makes you seem like someone who enjoys shooting down ideas. The second conveys that you take a balanced approach, considering the pros and cons, and in a way that doesn’t sound so negative.

I challenge you to focus on how you will Show Up. Practice pausing before you speak so you can frame your responses in a positive way – especially in situations where you will say no, push back, or raise concerns. This small step can make all the difference in how others respond to your ideas and view your leadership.

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