

Redirecting Complaints

Managing Change Tool



Purpose

The purpose of this resource is to help a leader reframe a team member's complaint or concern to uncover deeper insights around them. Under every complaint is a request for something. This tool helps identify what is under the surface.

Step 1: Label your emotional response to the complaint or concern to respond objectively.

Objectively responding to a team member or colleague's complaint about change can be a challenge. Before responding, taking a moment to label your own emotional response. Acknowledging how that emotion may affect your response can help you look at the situation more objectively. Use the picklist below to label your emotion.

Common emotions when fielding complaints:

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personally attacked | <input type="checkbox"/> Offended | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Conscious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annoyed | <input type="checkbox"/> Stressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Distracted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helpless | <input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerable | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confused | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impatient | <input type="checkbox"/> Worried | |

Step 2: Listen first to validate your team member's concerns to ensure they feel heard.

Listening to your team member and acknowledging their feelings is a highly effective way to diffuse negative reactions and earn the team member's trust.

Sample scripting:

- Thank you for sharing.
- I understand your concern and it's on my radar. We're doing _____ to work on it.
- I see that's frustrating. I appreciate you bringing this to my attention.
- Rest assured I hear you. Thank you for letting me know.
- I know this is a challenge. We'll have a chance to talk about how to make it work at our next team meeting.
- Your input is important, and I want to hear it. I'm on my way to a meeting but let's find time to talk about it.
- Other: _____

Step 3: Learn from the complaint to uncover underlying insights

Understanding the rationale behind your team member's complaint (again, which often covers up a request for something) can help you surface underlying concerns. Use the below prompts to help surface insights.

Consider asking...

What about this makes you feel so frustrated?

- What is the most difficult part of the problem?
- I could see _____ reasons why that might be concerning for you. Do any of those capture your concern or is it something else I'm not seeing?
- Have you heard something that makes you particularly concerned?
- Other: _____

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Step 4: Keep the conversation open to uncover potential solutions and determine next steps.

Once you have a better understanding of the issue behind the complaint, start to shift the conversation to what constructive actions can be taken to move forward. Use the below prompts to help surface insights.

Considering asking...

- Do you have any solutions in mind?
- Are you aware of any tactics your team members are using that might address this problem?
- How can we work around these challenges to find a solution?
- I'm hearing you say ____, is that accurate?
- Other: _____

As the conversation unfolds and you recognize some energy around a particular action, confirm what the next step is and acknowledge the shift.

Sample scripting:

- What do you think your next step should be?
- I really like that idea. How can I support you?
- I hear some energy around _____ idea. That is great!
- This was a great conversation. Thank you for being open about how you're feeling.

Final Reminder

Behind every complaint is a request for something to support an emotional reaction to change. Taking the time to ask questions and truly understand a team member or colleague's "complaint" will help you uncover what is under the surface and be better able to redirect them to a more constructive path forward.