



### ***Handling Special Needs with E.A.S.E.***

Whether you are in Leadership, Sales or Customer Service you have to know how to get along with people. Teddy Roosevelt said, "The single most important ingredient to the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people." Every business depends on people. In actual studies of leadership in American business, it has been proven that the average executive spends three-fourths of his/her working day dealing with people. The largest single cost in most businesses is people. The biggest, most valuable asset in any company is its people. All executive plans are carried out, or fail to be carried out by people. So how do you work with others to produce the greatest performance, coaching results, sales and service to their advantage? As a distributor and trainer with Inscape Publishing, I use a technique they developed called the E.A.S.E. skill. You, too, can learn to handle special needs with E.A.S.E.

**E** – Explore people's Needs. Everyone has needs. Your job is to find out what they are through asking very good questions. In Sales you become an investigator. Remember the 1970's television series, "Columbo?" Peter Falk played a disheveled detective who always annoyed his adversaries by asking questions...lots of questions. Most of the episodes consisted of Columbo driving the suspect "nuts" by asking repeated, unnerving questions. And just when you thought the detective had given up, he had one more question – the zinger – that always brought out the confession. People love talking about themselves. A good coach, leader or sales person is great at asking people to tell their story and bring out their goals or needs.

You can best Explore people's Needs by:

1. Actively listen to their needs. Acknowledge what is being said. Active listening involves: keeping eye contact; body language that says, "I'm concerned and I'm listening." It also involves giving people your undivided attention. Try this exercise. Get someone to tell you what they had for breakfast while you look away the entire time. Notice how frustrated they will become as you pay no attention to what they are saying.
2. Restate the understanding on their needs. Learn how to paraphrase back what they just told you. This helps you clarify your understanding and helps the other person know you heard them.
3. Gain agreement on your understanding of the needs. Make sure the two of you agree on what was just stated. Ask questions like: "Is that correct?" "Did I hear you correctly?" or "Did I state that as you understand the situation?"

**A** – Assess possible alternatives. What are your options? Everyone loves options. That's why there are so many different restaurants in your town. Some people like steak, some seafood, some a vegetarian menu, some ethnic cuisine, etc. That's also why there are so many different makes and models of automobiles. We love to have a choice in life. What alternatives are available to meet other's needs? In sales, what options can you give to help your customer find the best deal for the best money? In leadership what alternatives exist to help your people achieve their best productivity level?

You can best Assess Alternatives by:

1. Questioning for additional details. Again asking questions is the best way to find out what people want. Often we tend to rush to judgment and come up with a solution before we have heard the entire situation. Coming on too strong with a remedy often doesn't meet the correct need.

2. Identify possible alternatives. I had a customer service problem with my cable television provider that took weeks to resolve. Finally, they put me in touch with the proper person in Technical Support. Right away he began asking me what the problem was and what he could do to solve it. Within a short time he had a remedy with several options I could choose from, depending on how much time I wanted to take to resolve the problem. That was three years ago and to this day I remember his name because he solved my problem by hearing me out and offering several viable alternatives.

**S** – Select an Alternative. This may sound elementary, but you'd be surprised as to how many people don't know how to narrow a search down to the right solution. Often, your customers don't know what is the best solution and you have to guide them to make the right decision for their own good. Remember, manipulation is getting someone to do something for your benefit. Motivation is getting them to do something for theirs or the organization's benefit.

You can best Select an Alternative by gaining agreement on the selected alternative. Make sure you both know what you have agreed on. Never assume that the other person understands the same thing you do. Many a tragic mistake has resulted from wrong assumptions. When the Duke of Wellington defeated Napoleon, the story goes that the message was sent by signal to England, but only part of the message was delivered. A heavy fog rolled in and blocked the last part of the signal, so everyone thought "Wellington defeated..." meant the he had lost to Napoleon. This is why all important messages in the military are repeated back to verify accuracy.

**E** – Execute the Decision. Just do it. Many organizations are crippled by what is known as "Analysis Paralysis." They analyze a situation to death while failing to act. It's like looking down the site of your weapon and saying, "Ready. Aim, Aim, Aim, Aim, etc." A great way to find out if your organization has this reputation is to wander around and ask your people what decisions they feel are being put off. They will tell you the truth if you ask with the right spirit.

You can best Execute the decision by:

1. Explaining what is going to happen. State exactly what you are going to do, referring back to the alternative you selected. This way there can be no doubt as to what action will be taken.
2. Follow up after the fact. More leaders fail to follow up and this causes communication breakdown. In service it causes the customer to feel a lack of concern. Get back in contact with your people and ask them how well the need was met.

Now that you know how to meet people's special needs, why not try it out? Begin by asking questions of your people. Actively listen as they tell their stories. Look for alternatives they can choose. Select the one that is best for everyone concerned. Execute the decision in a timely manner and follow up immediately. Look for ways to meet needs that no one else is doing and you will win your followers, customers and clients over.

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