

The Importance and Benefits Of Assertiveness Training

www.anants.org

Introduction

In 1975, the U.S. psychologist Robert P. Liberman introduced assertion or personal effectiveness training as a fundamental component of the clinical services offered by community health centers.¹ Since then, the evidence collected has established the effectiveness of structured learning and behavior modification that occurs within groups. Such training, which is broadly termed as Assertiveness Training, is an important part of any form of behavior therapy. The training is based on the assumption that when any overt expressions of emotions are learned, displayed and reinforced, the corresponding subjective feelings will be felt.² Today a plethora of training programmes conducted by numerous organizations round the world claim to effectively impart training in behavior modification. Such training is sought by people from diverse fields which include sportsmen, managers, students and many others who feel that they need to improve their personal effectiveness in some way. Many well-known books on effective communication highlight the positive correlation between communication effectiveness and assertiveness. In fact, the term assertive behavior has come to be viewed synonymously with communication effectiveness.

But what is Assertiveness?

The term assertiveness is generally used to denote confident behavior. Though this implication isn't incorrect, yet it fails to accurately depict what behaviourists mean by assertive behaviour. In fact, just acting in a confident way without understanding what assertiveness really means can do more harm than good. For example, when two 'confident' speakers debate an issue without the honest intention of empathetically listening to the other and thus being prepared to allow the other to influence the decision, poor interpersonal communication, or harmful conflict, is the usual outcome. Such behaviour creates more problems than it helps resolve.

Researchers postulate that assertive behavior is marked by **openness** and **receptiveness**. In contrast, passive behavior particularly lacks openness while aggressive behavior is mostly devoid of receptiveness.³ The mark of an assertive person is that she is open, stands up for her rights and communicates in a way

¹ Behaviour Therapy, Encyclopedia Britannica CD Rom 2005

² Behaviour Therapy, Encyclopedia Britannica CD Rom 2005

³ Stephen P. Robbins & Philip L. Hunsaker, Training in Interpersonal Skills, 4th ed., Pearson education, Inc. Delhi, 2007

that *facilitates* assertive behavior in others. Thus, assertiveness is a sort of attitude one possesses to oneself as well to others. In fact, it is a set of attitudes that governs the perceptions and cognitions which are manifested as one's general style of communication. What this in effect means is that an assertive person is predisposed to behaving in a way that facilitates effective communication, problem solving and teamwork. This does not, however, mean that an assertive person adopts a fixed or predetermined style of communication which is not responsive to the peculiarities of the situation or to the demands of the relationship. In fact, she is alert to the realities of the moment and can monitor herself as well as read other people's non-verbal cues. She is emphatic in putting her point of view across but her sole aim is to solve the problem rather than to dominate others. Therefore, she is particularly careful with her tone and body language; keeping the objectives of the interaction in mind. In other words, an assertive person communicates to achieve the situational objectives, keeping the relational objectives in mind.

This can be understood better with the help on an example. Let's visualize a situation where a manager strives hard to achieve objectives each day on the job. Most of us get very involved in attempting to achieve such targets as the corporate world tends to get more and more stressful with each passing year. With *performance* and *results* being our watchwords it is but natural to put pressure on our subordinates to achieve goals at any cost. Quite often we encounter situations where our subordinates disagree with us on the best possible course of action. We try to convince them but when we don't seem to succeed we sometimes end up dominating them and forcing our point of view. This often happens because of our involvement with situational objectives. If our subordinates choose to trust their own judgments, and fail, we might even severely chastise them for visible insubordination. Such situations are more often than not fraught by acrimony and everybody seems to be playing the blame game. Thus, an over involvement with situational objectives results in passive or aggressive behavior, as seen above.

On the other hand, if we bring our relationships into focus, in addition to the situational objectives, our perception of reality changes. For example, in the above-mentioned situation, if the manager also focuses on her relationship with her subordinates, namely, that of a mentor, trainer and guide, then, her style of communication may change. Since a key prerequisite of effective mentorship is mutual respect and liking, the manager might refrain from communicating in a way that undermines the relationship. Thus, while emphasizing that the situational objectives must be achieved the manager will now seek collaboration and 'ask' people how best it can be done rather than 'tell' them. Even if the situation requires that directives be issued, the manager may explain the whys because she would, in her mind, be performing the role of a guide or mentor. Thus, the tone of the communication will remain supportive or objective and not

acrimonious or confrontational. The manager will now be more likely to patiently listen to the people's apprehensions and actively engage them to dispel misgivings. This is how focusing on the relational aspects besides the situational and organizational objectives, may lead to assertive behavior.

How does assertiveness facilitate communication?

Those who swear by assertiveness subscribe, firstly, to the premise that openness fosters a climate of trust which facilitates honest feedback. Such open and frank exchanges are considered an effective method of personality development. For example, the Johri Window, a model of interpersonal communication, proposed by the researchers Joseph Luft and Harry Ingram suggests that mutual understanding improves perceptual accuracy and communication.⁴ They encourage a climate of openness where participants self-disclose freely so that equally honest feedback is received. It is postulated that people learn more about themselves from such open exchanges. This increased self-awareness eventually results in better exploitation of one's true potential. This may well be true; however, this viewpoint does come in for some valid criticism. For one, openness can not be adopted as a general style of communication for all cultures, relationships and in all situations. For example, Edward T. Hall postulated that the style of communication can vary from a high context culture where background information is implicit to a low context culture where much of the background information must be made explicit in an interaction.⁵ People from high context cultures often send more information implicitly, which means that openness is perhaps not the norm. Thus, in such settings an open style of communication may not be appreciated, especially when conformity is expected. But is conformity desirable? It is important to distinguish between obedience and conformity⁶. While little can be accomplished in an organization where people are not obedient to their seniors and question every directive, conformists are least likely to positively contribute to the evolution of thought processes within the organization. Group-think, a well-documented phenomenon, is the consequence of the pressures of conformity that exist within groups. It occurs when group pressures for conformity prevent the group from critically appraising unusual, minority or unpopular views. Robbins considers it to be a disease that attacks many groups and can

⁴ Stephen P. Robbins, OB, Prentice Hall, New Delhi, 1998 (primary article: J. Luft; Group processes, 3rd ed. (Palo Alto CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1984, pp 11-20

⁵ Hall, E.T. (1990). *Understanding cultural differences*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, p.179

⁵ Hall, E.T. & Mildred R. Hall, (1990). *Hidden Differences: Doing Business with the Japanese*, Anchor Press/ Doubleday, Garden City, NY, 1987, pp 16-18

⁶ Julie Winstanley, *Key Concepts in Psychology*, palgrave Macmillian, N.Y. 2006, pp. 64, 169

dramatically hinder performance.⁷ Thus, providing employees assertiveness training can prove particularly beneficial for organizations. Standing up for minority views, or at least drawing the group's attention toward the merits of seemingly different or even ridiculous views, is the mark of an assertive person.

Most research on openness and voluntary disclosure has been done in the west but in our culture too we have found that openness is perceived as a good thing. In our exploratory research on interpersonal communication, conducted within selected organizations in and around Chandigarh, we found a positive correlation between the perceived levels of openness in communication within the organization and the perceived quality of interpersonal relationships. We conducted an elaborate survey of 358 employees across different levels in their respective organizations, and investigated many variables, including openness. Our investigation seems to support what theories of interpersonal communication suggest: namely, that voluntary disclosure leads to the formation of strong interpersonal relationships. For example, the **Social Penetration Theory** states that relational closeness can progress from superficial to intimate and that closeness develops through self-disclosure, which means: sharing with someone information which helps him or her understand you.⁸ The theory highlights that satisfaction is derived from interpersonal communication and, in fact, seems to be one of its objectives. We found from our investigation that the quality of interpersonal communication perceived by an employee corresponded with the perceived levels of openness. Though this does not prove that higher levels of openness lead to the formation of better interpersonal relationships within the organization, what it does prove is that when higher openness is perceived there is a likelihood that higher levels of satisfaction will be drawn from the interpersonal exchange. Thus, openness is not such a bad thing after all; though, researchers themselves acknowledge that there are situations, like transitory relationships for example, where guarded communication is advised. Openness is least advised when the culture does not permit it or when a party has betrayed trust in the past.⁹

The second reason why assertiveness is considered an asset is that assertive people are very receptive; therefore, it is easier to communicate with them. They are good listeners; this means that they are ready to rationally evaluate what is presented and look for agreement. This seems paradoxical because though they are not conformists they seem to genuinely seek agreement and strive for consensus. This paradox is no less true than the proverbial yin and yang of the

⁷ Stephen P. Robbins, Timothy A. Judge & Seema Sanghi, OB, 12e, Pearson Prentice Hall, Delhi, 2007, pp 355

⁸ Altman, I., & Taylor, D., Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston (1973)

⁸ www.uky.edu

⁹ Stephen P. Robbins, OB, Prentice Hall, New Delhi, 1998

Tao,¹⁰ or than the numerous other paradoxes that are generally accepted to be true.

What are the roots of assertive behavior?

"A man is but the product of his thoughts; what he thinks, he becomes"
- **Mahatma Gandhi**

If assertive people behave differently it is imperative that they think differently. Let us delve a little into the probable thought processes that lead to assertive behavior. Since the process of communication begins in the mind it is necessary to understand what the psychology of thought processes is. The Oxford Talking Dictionary defines a thought as: "The action, the process or the product of thinking; mental activity; formation and arrangement of ideas in the mind."¹¹ The Encyclopedia Britannica defines thoughts as: "covert symbolic responses to intrinsic (arising from within) or extrinsic (arising from the environment) stimuli. Thought, or thinking, is considered to mediate between inner activity and external stimuli."¹²

There is considerable disagreement among psychologists about the processes involved in thinking. Some view thought to be a reflection on the awareness of external stimuli received from the environment while others view it as internal problem-solving behaviour.¹³ It is probably a bit of both, which means that both innate processes, as well as learned factors, have a bearing on the origin of thought processes that lead to behaviour. While the Psychoanalysts viewed behavior mainly as a function of sub-conscious processes resulting from suppressed desires¹⁴, the behaviourists consider learning to be the cause of our actions (including our style of communication).¹⁵ But the question here is: why do assertive people think and behave differently? I contend that they differ both in their manner of perceiving reality and in the cognitive processes that lead to simultaneous evaluation of perception, and the consequent formulation of response. Whether this difference emanates from inherent characteristics or learned ones is beside the point, and beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁰ Max Kaltenmark, Lao Tzu and Taoism (1969).

¹¹ Oxford Talking Dictionary, CDROM, Oxford University Press, India, 1998

¹² Thought, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. 2005, CDROM

¹³ W. Edgar Vinacke, Professor of Psychology, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1963–84; Thought, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. 2005 CDROM

¹⁴ Unconscious, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. 2005 CDROM

¹⁵ Jerome A. Schaffer, Professor and Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Connecticut, Storrs. Philosophy of Mind, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2005 CDROM

The main reason why assertive people think differently is that they have higher levels of **self-awareness**. It is important to note that openness and receptiveness are manifestations of deeper personality characteristics hidden from the untrained eye. For example, it is unlikely that a person with a low self-esteem will be very open in his interactions. A person with low self-esteem will either be too defensive and demonstrate passive behaviour or will try to camouflage his low esteem by distorting his perception. He may achieve this in numerous ways. For example, he may indulge in projection and perceive his own defensiveness or aggression in 'the other' or he may rationalize in order to explain his behaviour by holding 'the other' responsible for it.

Further, a high **self-esteem** is not the only reason why assertive people are different. If assertiveness were to flow mainly from a high self-esteem then an assertive person need not have been receptive. For assertion, or confidence, to be accompanied by a high level of receptiveness some other personality characteristics like self-monitoring and an **internal Locus of Control** are required.

Self-monitors are people who observe their own behaviour carefully and can alter or modify their style of communication to the situational requirements, keeping the situational and relational objectives in mind. They can read non-verbal cues and check whether their message is being understood as intended.

Those who have a high internal **Locus of Control** believe that they are the masters of their destiny and that whatever happens to them is a result of their own efforts; luck or destiny has little to do with it. They take responsibility for their failures and critically evaluate their own performance, since they do not ascribe the outcomes of their actions to external factors. Research shows that such people experience lower levels of stress than externals do, probably because they feel more 'in control' of their lives than the latter. This also explains why assertive people engage others positively, trying to solve problems rather than to dominate. Since they feel 'responsible' for the outcomes, they are keener to make them positive.

Assertive people also seem to be more inclined towards personality **Type B**. These people, as opposed to Type A, are more relaxed, seldom do more than one thing at a time, and are slow in doing things (e.g. reading, speaking, eating, etc.). This makes them more alert and patient listeners than Type A people who are generally eager to succeed and try to achieve more and more in less and less time. Research shows that such people are prone to accidents, experience higher levels of stress, and stress related medical disorders like heart attacks. Their impatient nature also makes them less effective listeners than Type B people.

In addition to the above-mentioned behavioural aspects that can be ascribed to assertive people, it is important to see how they differ in the perceptual and cognitive processes that govern behaviour. We mentioned, earlier in this paper, that assertiveness can be viewed as a set of attitudes that are manifested in the behaviours discussed above. But what are attitudes? And what specific attitudes are we talking about?

Attitudes

Attitudes are considered an evaluative predisposition to perception and behaviour.¹⁶ They are evaluative statements or judgments concerning objects, people or events.¹⁷ A more accurate and scientific description is that an attitude is an enduring system that includes a cognitive component, a feeling component, and an action tendency.¹⁸ It can be classified as positive, negative or neutral (which can also be viewed as a non-existent attitude). However, it is not possible to 'see' somebody's attitudes; they have to be guessed by observing behaviour. Attitudes are influenced by values and also by experience but, once they are formed, they are generally long lasting. There is a lack of clear terminology and distinctions between attitudes, values and beliefs. Therefore, in the absence of consensus, we will limit our explanation to what has already been understood. An interesting thing about attitudes is that though they are evaluative statements which influence behaviour, they are not always an accurate predictor of Behaviour. Researchers have provided numerous reasons for this.

Components of Attitude

An attitude has three components (as seen from the definition above); namely, cognitive, emotional and behavioural.¹⁹ The cognitive component is more like a value statement. It is the belief about the acceptability of a person, an object or

¹⁶ *Attitude, Encyclopedia Britannicalnc. 2005CDROM*

¹⁷ Stephen P Robbins OB, 1998

¹⁸ *Freedman & Carlsmith, Social Psychology, Chapter , liking, , Sears, Prentice-Hall, INC., New Jersey, USA , 1970, Pg 246, L 33-34*

¹⁹ Freedman, Carlsmith, Sears, Social Psychology, Chapter 8, Attitude Formation and Change – Theoretical Background, Prentice-Hall, INC., New Jersey, USA 1970

an event (or concept). For example one may believe that bigoted beliefs like the caste system in India are wrong. This would be the cognitive component of the attitude. This component may give rise to an emotional state which will be the emotional component. Emotions are intense feelings directed towards an object, a person, an event, or a concept.²⁰ Thus, one may 'not like' someone because he is bigoted in his beliefs. If this emotional component also leads to the desire to behave in a certain way then it becomes the behavioral component. For example, one may decide to avoid bigoted people because of his dislike of bigotry. Research shows that cognitive components of attitude do not always get translated into behaviour, though they logically should.²¹

Since attitude is an evaluative belief about something or someone it seems wrong to label people as entirely positive or negative personalities. Everybody holds a variety of beliefs ranging from extreme positive to extreme negative. Therefore, labeling a person as either positive or negative on the basis of an observed behaviour would be akin to committing a perceptual error like the 'Halo effect' (when we classify a target's entire personality on the basis of one perceived characteristic or behaviour). What this in effect means is that no person may be able to display 'assertive' behavior at all times because a person's assertiveness is dependent on his attitude to his 'self', his attitude to 'the other' and his perception of the situation. In addition, his emotional state too is likely to influence his perception. Further, as discussed earlier, group pressures and roles are also known to influence behavior. Thus, it is possible that a person may display a high level of assertiveness as a union leader but appear timid, in comparison, when promoted to the rank of manager. Let us further investigate the impact of attitudes on behaviour.

Cognitive Dissonance

Leon Festinger's theory of Cognitive Dissonance tried to explain the connections between attitude and behaviour. Cognitive dissonance is the mental conflict one experiences when one encounters information that contradicts one's beliefs.²² Since this dissonance is an uncomfortable experience one tries to reduce it by adopting certain defensive behaviours. One may even experience dissonance if two contradicting attitudes co-exist.²³ For example, a manager may eulogize

²⁰ Robbins Stephen P. 1998

²¹ Robbins, new ed.

²² Festinger, L., *A theory of cognitive dissonance*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,(1957).

²³ Freedman, Carlsmith & Sears, *Social Psychology, cognitive dissonance*, Prentice-Hall, INC., New Jersey, USA, 1970,

assertiveness and advise her subordinates to be assertive at all times but herself suffer occasional outbursts of anger. In this case, to reduce dissonance, she may react in any of the following ways:

- (1) She may refuse to admit that she tended to lose her cool.
- (2) She may provide some explanation which may sound acceptable. For example, she may say that since her subordinate repeatedly failed to listen to her, she was forced to yell.
- (3) She may shrug off the behaviour as an exception and point out that generally speaking she is a more responsible and careful communicator than most people in the world.

Thus, since the behaviour has already occurred and cannot be changed she will change the cognitive evaluation so that the behaviour can still be perceived as being consistent with her beliefs. Thus, she finds a way out of the uncomfortable experience so that her negative behaviour does not alter her generally positive perception of 'self'.

Self-Perception

Some researchers have gone ahead to see whether behaviour in turn influences attitudes and found positive correlations. Self-perception theory is one such example which states that attitudes are used after the behaviour has occurred to make sense of what has happened. For example, a voter might conclude that "since I voted for the Congress party, therefore I support their policies"

One's perception of the self also includes the extent to which one likes or dislikes oneself. In fact, Self-Esteem which is an important component of personality is a measure of the extent to which one likes oneself. Liking, which is a defining component of attitude plays an important role in interpersonal communication. People's liking of others is positively affected by a number of factors like Self-Esteem, Proximity, and also whether the interaction was a rewarding experience in some way. Thus, people who are associated with pleasant experiences are liked more than those who are not. **Since openness leads to higher levels of satisfaction, as discussed earlier, we can safely deduce that assertive people experience greater pleasant experiences than those who are passive or aggressive.**

Above all, the degree to which our interaction with someone confirms or validates our perception of 'Self', determines (to a large extent) the attitude that we form towards them. Not only this, "there is a strong tendency for people to like others who are similar to them"²⁴ It is possible then that aggressive and passive people might not like to affiliate with assertive ones and might even try

²⁴ Freedman, Carlsmith & Sears, *Social Psychology, Chapter 3, liking*, , Prentice-Hall, INC., New Jersey, USA, 1970, , Pg 85, L 18-19.

to undermine their efforts. They might even gang up and direct their politicking against them, especially when the organizational culture does not facilitate assertiveness. The situation might be particularly grim if the senior managers do not sufficiently demonstrate assertive behaviour nor encourage their subordinates to display it. In such situations behavioural training can be particularly useful but it must be imparted to the senior management first and then to other levels down the hierarchy. As a behaviour modification trainer with some of India's top corporate houses I have often been invited to conduct training programmes for middle and lower management while the top management assumes that they do not need training on such basic skills as *interpersonal communication*. From my doctoral research I found that an overwhelming majority of the respondents reported that, generally, managers do not appreciate disagreement from subordinates. Many even felt that by disagreeing with the boss one always invites trouble. These findings suggest that assertiveness training will be most useful if we begin with the top management.

Effects of Experience

Attitudes are also formed as a result of experience and therefore can also be learned. Theories of learning, therefore, are relevant to attitude formation as well. We learn many attitudes from our parents and from others, whom we are attracted to (for whatever reasons), during the formative years and probably throughout life. Our social, religious, ethical and even political attitudes are formed in this way.

Resistance to change

Whatever may be the reasons for the formation of attitudes about objects, people, events or concepts, it is generally believed that "...attitudes tend to be highly resistant to change, they do not generally respond to a few new facts..."²⁵ The point is that attitudes are very closely linked to the concept of 'self' and also influence 'Self-Perception. Though they seem to emanate from experiences, they are essentially deeply rooted in our psyche and affect almost every perception, cognition and emotion. Research from the field of anthropology suggests that certain attitudes may even be ingrained in our genes, influenced by experiences as old as the origin of our species and probably even before. For example, the discomfort that we experience on hearing certain screeching sounds (like those emanating from the friction between metal objects or the sound of a piece of chalk sliding over a blackboard in a classroom) is said to be triggered by simian reflexes which respond to similar sounds which signify danger to apes and monkeys. Higher cerebral functions, including thinking and speaking, are carried

²⁵ Freedman, Carlsmith, Sears, Social Psychology, Chapter 8, Attitude Formation and Change – Theoretical Background, 1970, Prentice-Hall, INC., New Jersey, USA , Pg 248, L 4-6

out in the cerebral cortex and are largely 'unconscious'.²⁶ Thus, attitudes are difficult to change and we even find them deeply ingrained in our genes.

A research carried out by Converse in 1964 indicated that contrary to expectations the cognitive component of an attitude does not necessarily determine affective feelings. Further the affective component is more durable and dominant than the cognitive component.²⁷ *The interesting thing is that the cognitive component is complex but the affective part is simple and, this simple part plays a more dominant role in the overall attitude.*²⁸

Role of attitudes in Communication

The most important aspect to be considered, for our understanding of interpersonal communications, is that since attitudes play a key role in perception, comprehension and even expression, we need to learn how they are formed and whether it is possible to change them. I am of the opinion that for any meaningful interpersonal relationship to develop the interactants must allow each other to influence and perhaps modify some attitudes. When people allow others to influence or alter their attitudes it is an **indication of true assertiveness** and of the prevalence of strong interpersonal relationships. *The strength of the relationship is positively correlated with the willingness to alter an attitude to accommodate the other.*

Key Formative years

Early attitudes formed in childhood, because of conditioning and reinforcement from parents, are particularly strong because of the strength of the early relationship between children and parents. Take for example the strong belief in the caste system prevalent in India which is mostly acquired in childhood, from parents, grand parents or other relatives. *The stronger the bond between the parents and the children the greater is the likelihood that many of the parents' attitudes will be passed on to the children (in childhood itself).* Generally speaking, there is a likelihood that these attitudes will persist throughout life. Even in the light of overwhelming information available about the incorrectness of the attitude, people resist all attempts of others to change them because for most people no 'other' can be as dear as the mother. And, rejecting an attitude

²⁶ Higher cerebral functions, from Nervous System Human, Encyclopaedia Britannica, CDROM, 2005

²⁷ Converse, P. E., 1964. *The nature of belief systems in mass publics.* In D. E. Apter (Ed.), *Ideology and discontent.* Durham, N. C.: Duke. Pp. 195-222.

²⁸ Converse, P. E., Clausen, A.R., and Miller, W. E., 1965. Electoral myth and reality: the 1964 election. *American Political Science Review*, 49, 321-336

acquired from her, even when such rejection is correct and is based on clear facts and rational thinking, produces guilt. One feels as if one is being unfaithful to a devoted and loving mother by rejecting an attitude acquired from her. Therefore, even though the cognitive component, of the new attitude to be adopted, is accepted in principle, there is stiff resistance from the affective component of the earlier attitude. Most people cannot bear to transcend the overbearing presence of the emotional component and therefore retain the earlier (though wrong) attitude. Then, they try to minimize the resultant elements of cognitive dissonance by rationalizing or refusing to accept the obvious 'correctness' of the new attitude. **This explains why even highly educated people who understand the harmful effects of the caste system and religious bigotry on society, find it difficult to reject these pathological attitudes.** Therefore, while communicating, it is important to consider the strength of the attitude and whether the relationship is strong enough to attempt to change it.²⁹ Keeping these facts about the formation and rigidity of attitudes it is important to impart assertiveness training during the formative years. Such training should, in fact, be imparted in some form to children of every age group. The International Business School (IBS), where I have been a visiting professor, has an excellent Soft Skills course, integrated with their management programme. This course contains the key elements of behavioural training directed towards enhancing assertiveness and improving the interpersonal skills of its management graduates.

Conclusion

To sum up, organizations need to impart assertiveness training to their employees across all levels. This will enhance the quality of interpersonal relationships within the organization. Consequently, managerial effectiveness will be enhanced and pathological stress diminished. Organizational efficiencies will increase dramatically because poor interpersonal communication is said to be the number one cause of managerial failure.³⁰ According to one survey, 64% of the employees do not generally believe what their managers say,³¹ and, over half of all conflicts are said to emanate from communication errors.³² Therefore, organizations must start providing assertiveness training to their personnel today!

²⁹ Robbins, OB, Changing Atitudes, 1998

³⁰ C. Hymowitz, "Five main reasons why managers fail", Wall Street Journal, May 2, 1988

³¹ Business Week , May 16, 1994, pg 8 (quoted by S. P. Robbins, OB, 1998)

³² Academy of Management Journal, June 1976, pg 317 (quoted by S. P. Robbins, OB, 1998)

