Tips for Managers | Ideas from Human Resources

Measuring Assertiveness
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Sometimes assertiveness gets a bad name because people confuse it with aggressiveness. But if there were a yardstick to measure human behavior, assertiveness would be right in the middle, with passiveness at one end and aggressiveness at the other. Here are some of the ways passive, aggressive, and assertive people come across to others.

**Passive People:**
- Have trouble saying “no” to others.
- Talk softly and don’t stand up for their rights (often they are not sure if they even have rights).
- Do whatever others ask—even if it is unwise (i.e. too compliant and appeasing).
- Get “stepped on” a lot.
- Rarely initiate and fully participate.
- Fear being open and honest.
- Are often too quiet and closed.
- Do anything to avoid conflict.

**Aggressive People:**
- Don’t care about feelings.
- Tend to be controlling.
- Get their way, no matter what.
- Are pushy, loud, and bossy.
- Are determined, forceful, and often overly ambitious.
- Are reactive and often quick to fight with others.
- Like to get even.
- Believe that “winning is everything.”

**Assertive People:**
- Are firm and direct—but kind.
- Don’t blame others, but take full responsibility for their own feelings and behaviors.
- Concentrate on the “here and now.”
- Express their needs and feelings calmly and easily.
- Are confident about who they are, without being arrogant or pushy.
- Speak firmly and make eye contact.
- Are sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others.
- Respect others’ rights.