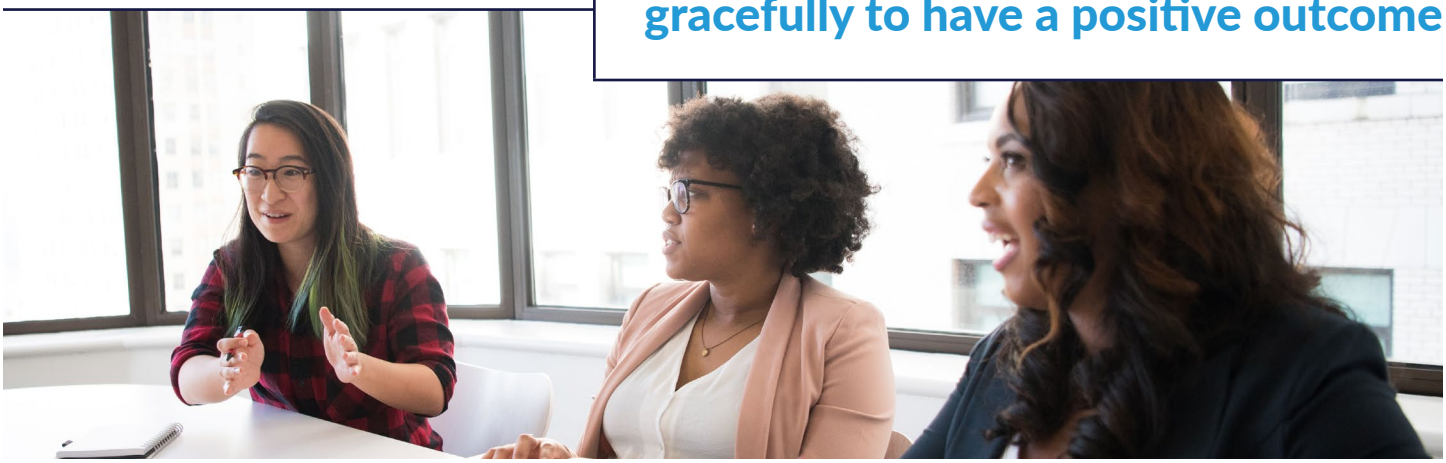
Tour de Force PARTNERS

Leading with Purpose... taking control of a conversation gracefully to have a positive outcome



Taking control of a conversation gracefully involves genuine listening, setting clear intentions, and using open-ended questions to guide the dialogue toward a positive and productive outcome. The goal is not to dominate, but to steer the discussion in a way that respects everyone's perspective.

Before the conversation

- **Define your purpose.** Before you even begin, know what a successful outcome looks like for you. This clarity is essential for staying focused, especially if the conversation becomes challenging.
- **Choose the right time and place.** Avoid blindsiding the other person. Schedule a meeting or find a private, neutral space to discuss important issues, so no one feels embarrassed or defensive. (Feel free to take an issue off-line to a different place to accomplish this.
- **Manage your mindset.** Prepare to stay calm and centered. If you are dealing with a difficult person, remind yourself not to take verbal attacks personally.

During the conversation
Build rapport and guide the discussion

- **Listen more than you speak.** Active listening builds trust and gives you an advantage by revealing the other person's motivations and priorities. Show you are listening with eye contact and nonverbal cues like nodding.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Questions that can't be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" put you in the driver's seat by directing the flow of the conversation. For example, instead of "Do you like this idea?", ask, "What are your thoughts on this idea?"
- **Validate, then redirect.** If the conversation goes off-topic, acknowledge the other person's point before pivoting back. For example, "That's an interesting point, but coming back to the agenda...". This shows respect while maintaining control.

Manage negative dynamics

- **Use "I" statements.** Frame perspectives around feelings and observations, not accusations, to make the other person less defensive. For instance, say, "I feel frustrated when the deadline isn't met," rather than "You are always late".
- **Reframe the narrative.** If a conversation turns negative, shift the focus toward a constructive, forward-looking path. If a team member says, "This project is a disaster," reframe it by saying, "This is a chance to reset how we approach it".
- **Set respectful boundaries.** If someone is speaking in circles or becoming heated, step in to set limits. Use a polite but firm statement like, "We seem to be repeating ourselves. Let's move on".

Closing the conversation

Summarize and plan next steps. End with a clear path forward. Briefly recap the main points and establish concrete next steps, including responsibilities and deadlines.

Schedule a 20-minute consultation to learn how TDF can create value for you and your organization.

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