



Advanced Leadership Communication
Handling Hostility
February 29, 2016

Agenda

- Strategies for dealing with hostile audiences
- Fielding tough questions
- *Fast Food Fiasco*

Possible Goals in Handling Hostility

- Gain fuller understanding of the situation
- Diffuse hostility
- Remain calm/retain credibility
- Defend self/get facts out
- End interaction in controlled manner

Some Techniques for Handling Hostility



VERBAL
Best
Practices

- Acknowledge hostility
- Listen actively
- Show empathy
- Probe for better understanding
- Be appreciative

Some Techniques for Handling Hostility



NONVERBAL
Best
Practices

- Match words with body language
- Maintain steady eye contact
- Aim for consistency in style and tone
- Gesture in respectful manner

Fielding tough questions

**Hit the
“pause button”**

- Allow person time to finish asking question
- Hold advice and opinion
- Stay neutral, non-judgmental

**Best
Practices**

- Restate, paraphrase, clarify
- Empathize
- Remove anonymity
- Answer honestly
- Look at entire audience – not just questioner!

Cross-cultural aspects

- Level of assertiveness
- Impact of status
- Usefulness of direct and indirect messaging

The background of the slide features a faded, grayscale image of a compass rose with a needle pointing towards the right. To the left of the compass, a portion of a person's face is visible, showing the eye and nose area. A thick, dark red horizontal bar is positioned at the top of the slide, partially overlapping the compass image.

Leadership Communication **Handling Hostility**

Fast Food Fiasco

MIT OpenCourseWare
<https://ocw.mit.edu>

15.281 Advanced Communication for Leaders
Spring 2016

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <https://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.