

The Art and Skill of Engaging People

by Elizabeth Soltis

As more leaders recognize that working in silos does not achieve the extraordinary results that can come with cross-department, cross-discipline, cross-sectoral collaboration, the question then becomes: **“How do we engage people?”**

Humanity now seems to be shifting beyond me to we, beyond sales to service and beyond ambition to inspiration. Many people seek meaningful contribution—more than just a job. So the art and skill of engaging people becomes critical as people awaken to new opportunities to make a difference.

Consider these 15 tips to set the stage for effective engagement:

1. **Power.** Know that your power as a leader is in how you influence the network of conversations you are a part of. Engagement is implicit in all you do.
2. **Positivity.** Deepen self-awareness by reflecting on how can you expand your influence effectiveness by becoming fluent in positive self-talk.
3. **Clarity.** Reflect on who you want to attract to your vision or project by clearly defining the ideal audience. Who are the natural champions with a similar interest?
4. **Authenticity.** Rather than use the ‘sales’ paradigm in trying to get others to buy-in, speak authentically about what you care about. Resist the urge to manipulate, convince or cajole.
5. **Non-Attachment.** Be prepared to let go of the outcome you want and instead co-create what is mutually desirable. This way of co-constructing typically generates more ownership.
6. **Connection.** Two universal human needs are connection and creative expression. Frame your project as a way for others to get and receive support and a way to share their unique talents.
7. **Meaning.** Help people make meaning out of their situation by asking how they can be a part of creating something new. Transform complaints by generating action with a powerful ask.
8. **Value.** A principle of engagement is that people will take action if there is perceived value. So communicate from that place, meeting people where they are and speaking to what they desire.



9. **Trust.** People will take part in new ventures if they trust you. So practice trust-building by saying what you mean, doing what you say, listening with empathy and following through on promises.
10. **Motivation.** Understand the pain/pleasure principle as it relates to motivation. People will take action if there is sufficient angst and/or if there is an enticing vision.
11. **Vision.** When speaking about your vision, paint a vivid, compelling picture using words, images and metaphors to help people understand the fullness of what you are offering.
12. **Listen.** Notice the field of listening of your audience. Tune into the music between the notes or the message behind the words. Get curious as to their background conversation and interest.
13. **Possibility.** Do not be seduced with scarcity thinking in assuming that others will not be interested or be too busy. Explore what's possible by uncovering creative strategies to collaborate.
14. **Requests.** Get clear on your request and make it positive and do-able. Have a back-up request just in case you hear a decline. Be sure to make a promise as a sign of your commitment.
15. **Commitment.** What precedes action is commitment. If people have competing commitments, tease apart their needs hierarchy. Get clear on expectations and celebrate success.

Elizabeth Soltis is the founder and director of Bridges Global, a community and organizational development company that specializes in empowerment, leadership and collaboration services. As a bridge-builder in all regions of the world, Elizabeth has a passion for connecting people to their sense of purpose, to others and to the earth. She enjoys facilitating and coaching people as they expand their thinking, express their creativity and live their potential. Engaging people in a transformational process that is meaningful, liberating and uplifting is how Elizabeth defines success.

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