



LEADERSHIP insights

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You tend more towards advocacy in style?

Intentionally try out the inquiry examples in your conversations with employees. You might be rewarded with ideas you hadn't considered.

You're more comfortable using an inquiry approach?

Then try on the advocacy examples with others. You may find employees better understand what you expect.

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ADVOCACY AND INQUIRY- a Tale of Two Approaches

You can improve your communication (and most of us want or need to) by first identifying your own communication wiring. One lens to look through is whether you use more **Advocacy or Inquiry**. In a nutshell:

A-ADVOCACY is communicating to state your position.

Some advocacy examples:

1. I think it's important for you to try (x).
2. Here is why this matters:
3. This is what I need to see:
4. I will do (x) for you:
5. I believe (x) because:

I-INQUIRY is communicating in a manner that nudges others to reveal their thinking.

Some inquiry examples:

1. Can you walk me through how you came to your decision?
2. What's the best possible outcome you can imagine in this situation?
3. How can we make this happen?
4. How can I help?
5. How do you see your role in this project?

We all use a mix of A & I but most have a comfort zone more in one than the other. If you aren't sure how you come across, seek some feedback from someone you work with regularly. Ask them to read the examples

included here and identify which way you are *more likely* to come across in your communication style.

It's easy to see how both styles have their strengths. Strong advocates are more likely to let you know where they stand and are more definitive, removing uncertainty. Those skilled in inquiry elicit more ideas than they can come up with alone and leave people feeling important for being asked.

Like any strength though, either approach can create problems when you over-rely on it. Too much advocacy may make others feel like their ideas don't matter or that it is not ok to disagree or discuss. Too much inquiry can feel like an interrogation, or lead to endless options never landing on a decision.

Clear communication is achieved through a **balance** of advocacy and inquiry...fancy words for *reveal your thinking* and *probe thoughtfully*, with a good dose of "**listen well**" added in.

TIPS FOR THE A'S:

- After advocating your point, ask for others to challenge your thinking and keep an open mind. The best results come from lively dialogue.
- If it feels like using inquiry slows things down, make using inquiry a "task." It's worth a few extra minutes to get the other person's best thinking.

TIPS FOR THE I'S:

- Remember, stating your point clearly doesn't mean you are being "bossy."
- Advocating doesn't close doors to additional dialogue. Others want to know what you think too.

