



## Language Aligned With the Five A's for Moving the Finishing Line

As you plan your approach to moving the finish line, consider the following sample language to use during the sequential Appreciate, Acknowledge, Ask, Apprehension, and Alternatives steps.

### 1—Appreciate

To show your appreciation for being asked to help, try:

- “Thank you for letting me talk through this with you.”
- “I appreciate your thinking about performance support in relation to this initiative.”
- “It is always a pleasure to explore needs with your team.”
- “Thank you for thinking of me to look at this with you.”
- “I am grateful for the advance notice on this project request—this doesn’t always happen.”
- “Thank you for your call.”

To develop an appreciation for the request as made, use broad questions such as these:

- “What can you tell me about why you want to do this now?”
- “What or who is the driving force behind this request?”
- “How did you arrive at this proposed course of action?”
- “Were there alternative approaches you considered or tried?”

### 2—Acknowledge

Acknowledge is about being supportive of the request (and the requestor) while maintaining neutrality on the ultimate direction the request will take. Try:

- “I understand how critical this is.”
- “I can see where you are coming from.”
- “Certainly, it makes sense that the staff/team/group will need support in the transition.”
- “Yes, I agree that time is precious and recognize the operational constraints your team works within.”
- “I can see you have given this a great deal of thought.”
- “I do see the path of events that brought you to this point.”
- “Yes, I can certainly appreciate the position you are in.”
- “This all makes sense as you have laid it out.”



### 3—Ask

Remembering to break down the stated desired outcome into its individual building blocks, the key question stem here is:

- “Am I hearing you correctly that...?”

### 4—Apprehension

Begin with your greatest concern:

- “Here is my one concern....”
- “We certainly could do that. I’m just thinking about \_\_\_\_\_ and contemplating how we can best avoid \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “We certainly could do that. I’m just worried that you’re not going to get the results you’re looking for.”

### 5—Alternatives

Consider moving into Alternatives using “starter language” such as:

- “When you suggested that we \_\_\_\_\_ it sparked an idea for me....”
- “I certainly hear where you’re coming from. Are you open to hearing how I see this and some slightly different approaches?”
- “Initially, this may sound radically different than what you’re asking for, but it has the same foundational elements, and I believe it will be a great way to get to your goal.”
- “I get the feeling that you are receptive to additional ideas. What would you think of...?”
- “I’d like to run a few ideas past you to see what your thoughts are on them.”

As you present your alternatives, the following language can be used to connect your ideas to their ideas and to the goal they want to achieve:

- “You suggested that we \_\_\_\_\_, and I agree that we should do that [or some specific part of it you agree with]. I would only add that we should also \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “What would you say if I suggested that we think about \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “Based on my experience on previous projects, I’m confident we’ll have greater success in reaching your goal if we consider....”
- “Based on prior projects’ experiences, I’d like to suggest a few alternatives for your consideration.”
- “Based on prior projects, I recommend \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “I’m thinking out loud here, but here is what is coming to mind for me—and I’d really like your input on this....”
- “So, what if we....”
- “What if, instead of X, we were to \_\_\_\_\_?”
- “Do you know what I think would really get you where you’re looking to be on this project? I suggest we should think about \_\_\_\_\_.”



If you meet resistance, the following phrases can allow you to remain persistent without being perceived as pushy:

- “Ultimately, the final decision will be yours; I would just like to strongly suggest you consider....”
- “I would like to suggest we stay open to the idea of \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “If you are still open to alternative ideas—which I think will get you greater results—I’m happy to put together some thoughts to show to you.”
- “I really want this project to be a success for you. Would it be okay for me to mock up some examples of what I am envisioning for your review? We can walk through the examples together and see what will work best.”