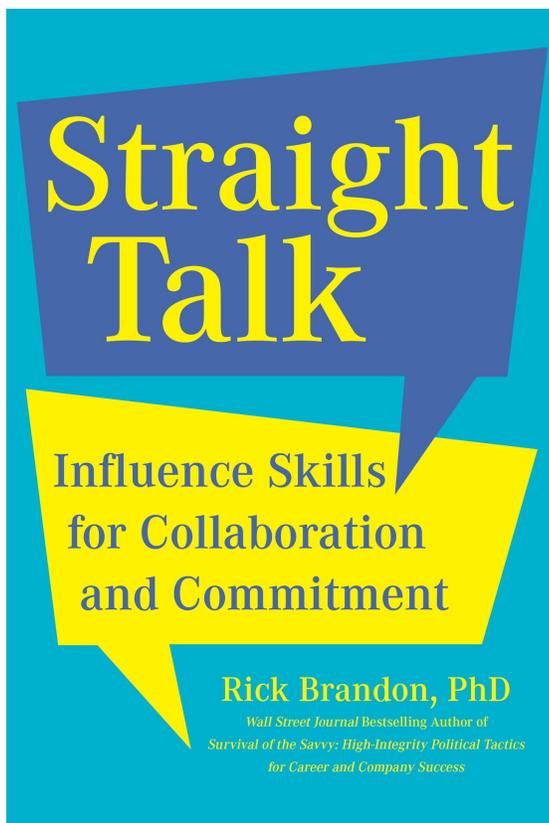


# *Straight Talk* Action Planning and Manager Debriefing Booklet





## *STRAIGHT TALK* Action Planning & Debriefing

Greetings! Now that you've read *Straight Talk: Influence Skills for Collaboration and Commitment*, there's some further time to invest if you want to obtain maximum impact from your deepened understanding and skills. In order to "fight the fadeout factor" after first learning about *Straight Talk's* positive interpersonal influence skills, this *Reinforcement Booklet* offers you these resources:

- 1) Action Planning Tips (pp. 3-4):** These helpful ideas will point you in the right direction as you plot constructive steps for applying your honed communication skills.
- 2) Action Planning Worksheets (pp. 5-11):** Here is where you can flip through each corresponding chapter in the book in order to jot down your Key Insights and resulting Possible Changes to make. Then, at the bottom of each page, you can funnel this thinking into actual Action Plans by writing a specific Goals and Action Steps for improvement.
- 3) Manager Debriefing Conversation Template (pp. 12-13):** Many readers and workshop participants find it helpful to discuss the book (or workshop) with their boss. Such a conversation can increase your own accountability, cultivate your manager's respect for your attitude of continuous improvement, and enrich your communication. Check out these pages to see a sample script for this "Debriefing Discussion" as well as a blank planning template.

Congratulations on your commitment to your professional and leadership development!

Check out other Reinforcement Tools to fuel your *Straight Talk* skills implementation at [www.BrandonPartners.com/StraightTalkBook](http://www.BrandonPartners.com/StraightTalkBook).

Warm regards, Rick Brandon





# Action Planning Tips

## An Opportunity to Improve

If you are honest with yourself in your Action Planning notes (see pages 5-11) about possible needed changes, as well as in your Self-Ratings and study of feedback results from the *Straight Talk Self-Assessment*, you will have an accurate idea about the areas where you may require action plans to improve your skills. But changing behavior on a sustained basis demands a focus on two dimensions:— the Can/Can't Do dimension and the Will/Won't Do dimension.

*Can/Can't Do*- This refers to developing new skills. Each of the items in the *Straight Talk Self-Assessment* is an attitude, action, or behavior that you can improve, change, and develop. On the next page, you will receive some tips for improving these skills.

*Will/Won't Do*- This refers to your motivation to improve –thoughts like, “So What? With all the priorities competing for my time, why should I develop the skill?” Without improving on the Will/Won't Do factor, people won't make the effort required in order to learn, practice, and sustain a new behavior. If you are clear about the areas in which you need to improve, take some time now to ensure that you want to improve. Ideally, your attendance in the workshop and processing of your Assessment results have motivated you to seek even greater success in navigating organizational politics. Now take a moment to consider:

- • Why is this change important?
- • What are the consequences for your team, organization, and career??
- • How does this behavioral change fit in with your personal growth goals??
- • What are the possible consequences if you don't improve??

## Pinpoint Problem Areas

Take time to peruse your Skill Set scores and individual item ratings, and target places where you might want to improve. This might entail items or Skill Sets on the *Self-Assessment* where your performance rating was "Vulnerable or low end of Capable." You might even target a "Proficient" Skill Set if the related behaviors are essential in your organization and you discovered ways to further polish your effectiveness. Any items scored below 3.0 deserve immediate attention through some sort of Action Plan.

## Make a Conscious Choice

We respect your time constraints. Changing too much at once will cause you stress and raise eyebrows. Carefully consider whether it's worth your effort to improve a particular *Straight Talk* skill. First, identify the specific skill. Next, remind yourself of the positive consequences of improving for your team, the organization, and/or your career goals. Consider consequences of not improving. Finally, deliberate and consciously decide if a behavior change in this area fits with your professional and personal growth goals.

# Action Planning Tips (continued)

## Set Goals

Use all you know about action planning to make your plans specific, behavioral, realistic, time-bound, and aligned with your career goals. The more precise your change goals are, the easier it will be to succeed and be noticed. Instead of a goal like "Stop dominating in staff meetings...", a more useful plan is: "Bring out the ideas of my team with open-ended questions and give my ideas later in meetings."

## Take Small, Meaningful Steps

Sometimes, in your enthusiasm to improve, you may think you need to make dramatic changes. If you are damaging yourself or others, this might be true. However, it's probably best to begin with small, noticeable steps in a desired direction. If you tackle too great a change, it is harder to achieve, tougher to sustain, and may even be viewed suspiciously by those around you.

## Observe Exemplars

Most of what we learn in life is the result of watching others, not studying in a classroom or reading a book. Observation is an excellent way to improve your skill level. Pick a *Straight Talk* skill you want to hone and choose someone who excels in that area. Pay attention to what he or she does. Perhaps the person would be willing to be your coach or mentor in improving the skill.

## Seek Stretch Assignments

To stay focused on improving an area, take on an assignment that forces you to develop the targeted skills. For example, if you've been in a hierarchical role with lots of position power, you may be underdeveloped in the G.A.I.N. Commitment win-win agreement skills needed for true commitment with people as opposed to only obtaining forced compliance by giving orders in a command-and-control manner. Therefore, it might be useful to serve on a cross-functional task force where you are not the leader or ranking member, and to practice forging agreements with those people over whom you do NOT have position power. Strengthen that capability!

## Mix It Up

Always working on a "weakness" can be draining or demotivating. If so, plan ways to compensate for the deficit, making it irrelevant by using other skill strengths to reduce the negative impact of the challenging area. For instance, if you know you are not strong at reading interpersonal dynamics during online meetings and video-based gatherings, delegate to a person on your team the task of serving as facilitator in order to monitor the group process and keep the communication on track and constructive. Or, if you are uncomfortable networking at large social events, gain visibility through structured business events like briefings or inter-team meetings.

## Go For It!

Hopefully, these Action Planning pointers will jump start your reflection on the next pages or improve it as you review your notes. Best wishes for your continued growth as you "Take the *Straight Talk* Challenge!"





Module 2 Wrap-Up, pg. 37-38

## Action Planning: *Straight Talk* Mindset

### *STRAIGHT TALK* MINDSET (F.I.T.)

- Foster the Business Goals
  - Identify Your Communication Patterns (Assertive, Passive, Aggressive)
  - Take the *Straight Talk* Challenge
- 

#### **Key Insights:**

#### **Possible Ways to Change:**

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#### **Resulting Action Plans:**

**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**

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**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**



## Module 3 Wrap-Up, pg. 64

# Action Planning: Assertive Speaking

### ASSERTIVE SPEAKING SKILLS (A.B.C.)

- Assertive Delivery
- Behavioral Language
- Checking Reactions Key Learnings

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#### Key Insights:

#### Possible Ways to Change:

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#### Resulting Action Plans:

##### GOAL:

##### ACTIONS:

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##### GOAL:

##### ACTIONS:



Modules 4-5 Wrap-Up, pg. 89 and pg. 108

## Action Planning Journal: Active Listening

### ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS (F.E.E.)

- Focusing: Your Mind, Your Environment, Your Body
- Exploring: Acknowledgements, Open Questions, Encouragements
- Empathizing: Validating and Paraphrasing

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**Key Insights:**

**Possible Ways to Change:**

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**Resulting Action Plans:**

**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**

---

**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**



Modules 4-5 Wrap-Up, pg. 89 and pg. 108

# Action Planning Journal: Advising and Guiding

## ADVISING AND GUIDING

### UNDERSTANDING

- Questioning Cycle (Position Question-Ask Open Question-Paraphrase-Repeat)
- L.P.G.A. Agenda
  - Landscape
  - Problem
  - Goal
  - Actions Tried or Considered
- Avoiding Short-Circuit Responses

### SOLVING/SUPPORTING

- Checking Readiness
- Dialogue Cycle (Speak-Check-Paraphrase-Repeat)
- Decide Levels of Directiveness

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### Key Insights:

### Possible Ways to Change:

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### Resulting Action Plans:

**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**

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**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**



Module 7 Wrap-Up, pg. 133

## Action Planning: G.A.I.N.-ing Commitment

### G.A.I.N.-ing COMMITMENT

- Dialogue Cycle (Speak-Check-Paraphrase-Repeat)
  - G.A.I.N. Agenda
    - Goal
    - Advantages
    - Impediments
    - Next Steps
  - Inspect What You Expect
    - Recognizing
    - Reminding
- 

**Key Insights:**

**Possible Ways to Change:**

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**Resulting Action Plans:**

**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**

**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**



Module 10 Wrap-Up, pg. 225

## Action Planning: Confronting

### CONFRONTING

- Confrontation Message (“When you... I feel...because...”)
  - Defuse with the Dialogue Cycle
    - State Your Confrontation Message
    - Stay Calm and Use *Focusing* Skills
    - Use *Active Listening* to De-Escalate the Defensive Reaction
    - Refocus Back to Your *Confronting* Message (Address or Set Aside the Defense)
  - Close with Accountability
- 

#### Key Insights:

#### Possible Ways to Change:

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#### Resulting Action Plans:

##### GOAL:

##### ACTIONS:

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##### GOAL:

##### ACTIONS:



## Module 11 Wrap-Up, pg. 234

# Action Planning: Disagreeing Agreeably

## DISAGREEING AGREEABLY

- Dialogue Cycle (Speak-Check-Paraphrase-Repeat)
  - Conversation Agenda
    - Listen Nonjudgmentally and Empathically
    - State Merits of the Idea or Request
    - Surface Concerns Tactfully
    - Give Your Conclusion
- 

### Key Insights:

### Possible Ways to Change:

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### Resulting Action Plans:

**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**

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**GOAL:**

**ACTIONS:**

# Post-Course Manager Meeting

## Example

Discussion Phase	Purposes Sample	Lead-in Cues
Preview Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask for the Time Needed</li> <li>• State Meeting Agenda</li> <li>• Ask for Support in Your Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I’d appreciate about 15 minutes of time to debrief the <i>Straight Talk</i> course I book I read.”</li> <li>• “I’d like to discuss my reactions to the book, what I learned, and share my action goals, getting your input.”</li> <li>• “I’m hoping you can partner with me as I apply my learning.”</li> </ul>
Big Picture Learning and Overall Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Book's Purpose and Targeted Outcomes</li> <li>• Tell Your Reasons for Reading the Book</li> <li>• Share Your Insights and Major Learning</li> <li>• Check Boss’ Reactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Here are the learning goals and skills taught in the book...”</li> <li>• “In my last performance review, you said you thought I’d benefit from getting Donna and Joelle more engaged through providing more positive recognition.</li> <li>• “Since reading the book, I realize I can also model better active listening skills with my team...”</li> <li>• “I’d like your ideas on that and a few other growth areas I’ve targeted..”</li> </ul>
Action Plans and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Skills (May Require Added Time Commitment)</li> <li>• Doing Some Existing Tasks Differently (No Extra Time)</li> <li>• Show Specific Action Plans</li> <li>• Invite Reactions and Added</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “To improve my active listening, my team will give me feedback at the end of team meetings...”</li> <li>• “When I present an idea to top management, I can be less passive by eliminating tentative language, such as ‘I think’ and ‘you might disagree’...”</li> <li>• “You can see here in my Action Plans that I intend to...”</li> <li>• “I’m serious about these steps... do you see gaps in my plan?”</li> </ul>

# Post-Course Manager Meeting

## Your Planning Sheet

### Discussion Phase

### Purposes

### Your Preparation Notes

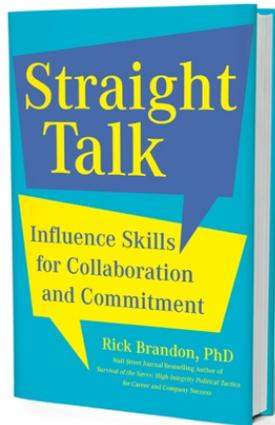
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# BRANDON PARTNERS

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## Human Capital Development

Helping Business Leaders and Professionals  
Maximize Effectiveness Through Influence Skills

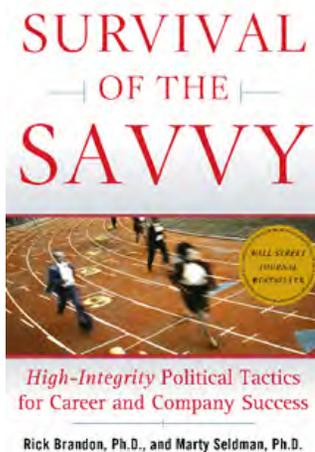


Brandon Partners is a global training firm that cultivates the mission-critical workplace competencies of Interpersonal Savvy and Organizational/Political Savvy.

We offer worldwide classroom delivery, webinars, trainer certification, online assessments, and two textbooks: *Straight Talk: Influence Skills for Collaboration and Commitment* (BenBella Books, 2022) and the Wall Street Journal bestseller, *Survival of the Savvy* (Simon & Schuster's Free Press, 2004).

**Interpersonal Savvy.** Our *Interpersonal Savvy* courses transcend “touchy-feely charm school” training. We convert soft skills into hard results — by honing world-class communication and self-management skills to maximize influence.

**Organizational Savvy.** Our *Organizational Savvy* courses teach skills for navigating company politics and power dynamics with integrity. Since few proven development programs exist that address organizational politics and ethical power, we made high-integrity politics and strategic influence part of our core business. Since 1998, Brandon Partners has been the preeminent thought leader on transforming organizational politics from a taboo topic to an ethical, intriguing and inspiring force for influence, impact, career development, and company success.



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