



Effective Communication by Choice

Based on the Authentic Partnership™ Model

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Introduction

What is Authentic Partnership™, and how can it be helpful in improving communication? This section provides an overview of the Authentic Partnership™ approach and a rationale for its use.

When we talk with others, why do our best intentions sometime result in misunderstanding and failure? When we try to be helpful, why do people sometimes resist our efforts? Why do conversations with some people usually turn out poorly?

Authentic Partnership™ provides answers to these and other questions about difficulties in communication. Authentic Partnership™ offers practical ways to handle both ordinary and challenging communication more effectively. The Authentic Partnership™ approach increases the chances that our efforts in communication will be successful, and that our helpful intentions will translate into good relationships that make future communication more likely to be effective.



The Authentic Partnership™ approach to effective communication is based on two key values: *maximum understanding* and *maximum choice*. These two values apply in two realms, which for shorthand we will refer to as the *internal realm* and the *external realm*. The *internal realm* refers to the thoughts in our own minds, including the choices we make about how we communicate with others. The *external realm* refers to actions we take in the world and includes the people with whom we interact.

Internal Realm

In the internal realm, the Authentic Partnership™ approach provides tools that help us gain *understanding* of the *choices* open to us in three related ways:

- *understanding* of the underlying motivation behind our present communication *choices* (**what motivates us**);
- *understanding* of a wider range of communication *choices* available to us than at first may be apparent (**what choices we have**);
- *understanding* of strategies for making effective communication *choices* among those options (**what strategies can help**).

The ways that *understanding* and *choice* apply in the internal realm are explained in the sections below on *Motivating Beliefs* and *Split Page Examples*.

External Realm

In the external realm, which includes all our communication partners, the Authentic Partnership™ approach provides tools and strategies. The tools and strategies help us ensure as much *understanding* as possible for our

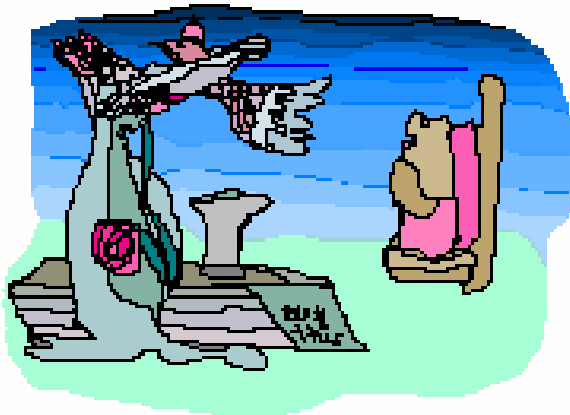
communication partners. They also help us ensure as much *choice* as possible for our communication partners. These *choices* for them are about the way we communicate with them and about the substance of what we wish to communicate to them. The ways that *understanding* and *choice* apply in the external realm are explained in the section below on the Authentic Partnership™ model.

In sum, then, Authentic Partnership™ is about providing *understanding* and *choice* for ourselves as a basis for providing *understanding* and *choice* for others. Taken together, these applications of *understanding* and *choice* combine to increase the effectiveness of our communication in a wide range of specific situations.

Motivating Beliefs

What motivates us when we make the millions of split-second, barely conscious decisions about what to say and how to say it? This section begins the work of explaining how increased understanding in the internal realm of our own motivations and actions opens up choices that lead to increased communication effectiveness.

We all operate from a set of *motivating beliefs* about how we can be most effective in communicating with others. These motivating beliefs guide our decisions about what to say (or not say) and how to say it. Gaining increased understanding about the motivating beliefs behind our communication choices



is a useful first step in understanding how to communicate more effectively. In particular, it is helpful to consider how accumulated communication habits based on unexamined beliefs often work against the very effectiveness we desire.

Because these motivating beliefs usually are not highly conscious, understanding our own thinking requires conscious effort and

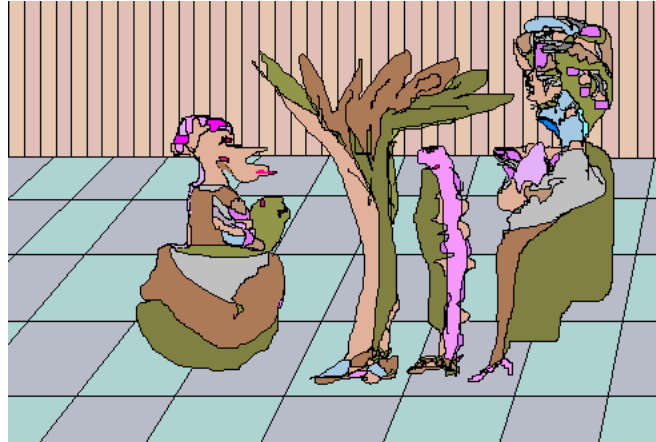
analysis. Until we take the time to look at and think about how we communicate, we are often unclear about the true nature of our motivating beliefs and how they affect our communications.

We introduce here, as a tool for analysis, three contrasting sets of motivating beliefs. One set of beliefs is consistent with communication in a *control mode*. The second set is consistent with communication in a *partnership mode*. The third set is consistent with communication in a *compliant mode*. In its simplest

formulation, *control mode* and *compliant mode* are about limiting choice, while *partnership mode* is about expanding choice.

There is an ironic element in our thinking about choice. Most of us want others to give us as much choice as possible, but we also want to be in control, which means that often we want to limit the choices we provide to others. Another way of putting it is that we want others to be in *partnership mode* with us as much as possible, but we often find reasons to be more in *control mode* with others.

The box below presents a contrast between motivating beliefs in control mode, partnership mode, and compliant mode.



MOTIVATING BELIEFS

CONTROL MODE	PARTNERSHIP MODE	COMPLIANT MODE
<p><u>Basic Belief:</u></p> <p>I need to control the conversation at all times because I know best what needs to be done.</p>	<p><u>Basic Belief:</u></p> <p>I need to share what I know and be open to what others know so that together we can find effective strategies.</p>	<p><u>Basic Belief:</u></p> <p>Others need to be in control because they know best what needs to be done.</p>
<p><u>Belief about Goals:</u></p> <p>It is important to achieve my goals as I understand them.</p>	<p><u>Belief about Goals:</u></p> <p>It is important to achieve goals that are jointly designed and jointly agreed upon.</p>	<p><u>Belief about Goals:</u></p> <p>It is important to achieve goals as others define them.</p>
<p><u>Belief about Knowledge:</u></p> <p>I understand, others do not.</p>	<p><u>Belief about Knowledge:</u></p> <p>Everyone has useful information and perspectives.</p>	<p><u>Belief about Knowledge:</u></p> <p>Others understand, I do not.</p>
<p><u>Belief about Intentions:</u></p> <p>I have pure intentions; others have questionable intentions.</p>	<p><u>Belief about Intentions:</u></p> <p>People try to act with integrity.</p>	<p><u>Belief about Intentions:</u></p> <p>Everyone has questionable intentions.</p>

To locate our own beliefs we do a little detective work. We look at what we actually say in a particular exchange. We take that as initial evidence. Then we work back from what we say to what those statements or questions tell us about the beliefs behind them. The way this works, and how it helps with effective communication, will become clearer below in the section on Split Page Examples.

Unrecognized control mode beliefs (and, less commonly, compliant mode beliefs) and the actions based on them create many of the difficulties we

experience in communication. This is so because we live in a culture that is dominated to such an extent by control mode beliefs that they often go unrecognized. Because communication in the compliant mode is less common, this work focuses more on the contrast between control and partnership modes.

Most of us have been brought up, educated, and trained in ways consistent with control mode beliefs. Think about all the positive meanings associated with the phrase “being in control.” Our usual habits tend to be consistent with control mode beliefs, and we tend to revert to control mode when under stress. That is, control mode is the typical default. We tend to revert to control mode even though we truly value a partnership approach, even though we often say that we hold partnership mode beliefs, and even though we often believe we are communicating in ways that are consistent with partnership mode beliefs.

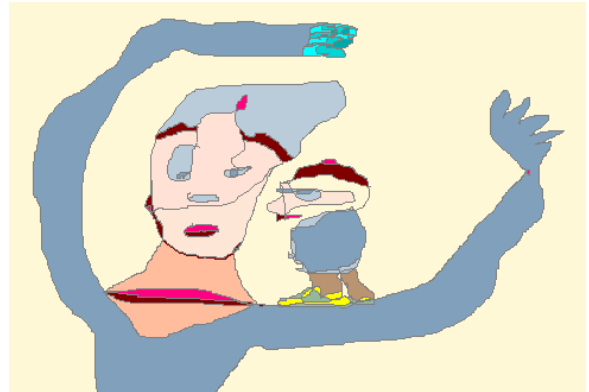


By looking at what we say in particular situations, and what that tells us about our motivating beliefs, we can understand more clearly what presently motivates our communication choices. Then we can identify options for increased communication effectiveness. Split page examples are the primary tool for performing this analysis.

Split Page Examples

*What is an easy way to analyze our present communication choices?
This section continues the work of explaining how increased
understanding in the internal realm of our own motivations and actions
opens up choices that lead to increased communication effectiveness.*

Split page examples are a key tool for analyzing our own motivating beliefs and gaining a better understanding of how those beliefs affect our communication choices. Any interaction can be charted as a split page example. The simplest examples are a dialogue between two people. Two short examples are presented below. In the first, Maria has been asked by a principal to help Pat, a classroom teacher. The second example is an interaction between Jim, a business owner, and Mac, his employee. The examples display the words of both speakers in the right-hand column and the thoughts of the primary speaker in the left-hand column. To read an example, first read the dialogue in the right-hand column, then read the thoughts in the left-hand column that accompany the words in the right-hand column.



Maria and Pat

Maria's thoughts

Maria's and Pat's words

<p><i>Ms. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading – lowest scores in the building. I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.</i></p> <p><i>She looks a little taken aback – she's frowning. Maybe Ms. Mainstay didn't tell Pat what she told me. Still, she says she's glad to get help, so here we go.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers hate lesson plans but it will give me a place to start.</i></p>	<p><u>Maria</u>: Hello Pat. I'm Maria Dorigt. As I believe Ms. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lessons. How has it been going so far?</p> <p><u>Pat</u>: Oh, pretty well, I guess. Ms. Mainstay said she thinks I'm doing pretty well, but I'm always glad to get any help I can get.</p> <p><u>Maria</u>: Great. Let's start by looking at your lesson plan for today.</p>
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Jim and Mac

Jim's thoughts

Jim's and Mac's words

<p><i>I'd like to sound Mac out about implementing the new format before I talk with others about it. He's thought of as level-headed by the other employees.</i></p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: Thanks for meeting with me, Mac. I have a few ideas I'd like to share with you and get your reactions.</p>
<p><i>I like his positive attitude.</i></p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: Great. I always like to think about new ideas.</p>
<p><i>I'll lead into this by asking him how he views our present approach, which hasn't been as effective as it could be.</i></p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: I've been thinking about our approach to customer inquiries. How well do you think that's working?</p>
<p><i>He's level-headed, but he's also careful, and maybe a bit defensive.</i></p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: I think it's pretty good. I know I haven't heard any complaints about it.</p>
<p><i>Just because there are no complaints doesn't mean it's working as well as it could.</i></p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: Right, no complaints, but I've been thinking about ways to improve what we do, and I think this could use improvement.</p>
<p><i>Okay. Now we can get down to the real question.</i></p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: Okay. What do you have in mind?</p>

Split page examples based on our own experience give us a way to look at what we said in a specific situation and compare those words with the thoughts we were having when we spoke. Then we use that comparison to form an understanding of the motivating beliefs that are most likely behind our communication choices, and to form an understanding of the way those beliefs influence our interactions. Work on the examples often reveals gaps between our thoughts and our words. The examples help us understand our current habits, consider their possible limitations, and identify alternatives that might be more effective. Split page examples move us from abstract or theoretical notions about communication to a practical, concrete, and direct focus on what we actually say.

One way to help develop your understanding of the Authentic Partnership™ model and how the model applies to your experience is to create your own split page example to supplement the examples provided here. To create a split page example, record on the right side of a two-column page what you and the

other person **said** in an interaction. On the left side record your **thoughts** when you and the other person spoke. Here is an empty format for your split page example.

Split Page Format

Your thoughts

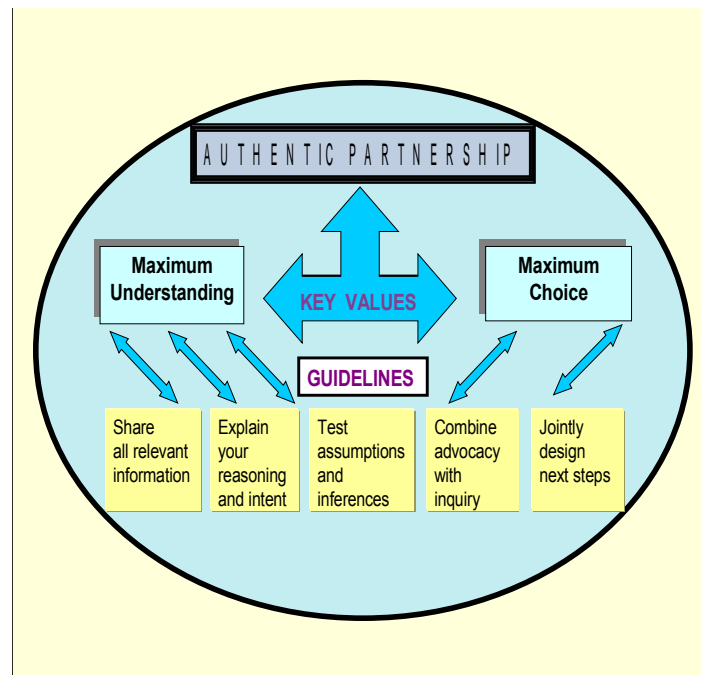
Your words and another's words

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The Authentic Partnership™ Model

How do we put our beliefs into practice? This section begins the explanation about how to provide understanding and choice to our communication partners.

The elements of the Authentic Partnership™ model assist with the analysis of the contents of our split page examples. The model includes two key values and five guidelines that are consistent with partnership mode motivating beliefs. The graphic below illustrates the Authentic Partnership™ model and the relationship among its parts.



Maximum Understanding and **Maximum Choice** are the key values that are consistent with partnership mode beliefs. The Authentic Partnership™ approach assumes that effective communication depends on two equal conditions: that people understand as much as possible about a situation, and that they have as much choice as possible about what to do and not do in relation to that situation.

The **Guidelines** provide specific, concrete ways to think about the two key values and put them into practice. While the guidelines are not sequential, the three on the left relate most directly to **Maximum Understanding** and the two on the right relate most directly to **Maximum Choice**.

The Two Key Values

Maximum Understanding

Effective communication depends on as much understanding as possible about a particular situation. This seems obvious. Who is opposed to understanding? Yet consider the two short split page examples we have introduced.

Maria's thoughts

Maria's and Pat's words

<p><i>Ms. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading – lowest scores in the building. I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.</i></p> <p><i>She looks a little taken aback – she's frowning. Maybe Ms. Mainstay didn't tell Pat what she told me. Still, she says she's glad to get help, so here we go.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers hate lesson plans but it will give me a place to start.</i></p>	<p><u>Maria</u>: Hello Pat. I'm Maria Dorigth. As I believe Ms. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lessons. How has it been going so far?</p> <p><u>Pat</u>: Oh, pretty well, I guess. Ms. Mainstay said she thinks I'm doing pretty well, but I'm always glad to get any help I can get.</p> <p><u>Maria</u>: Great. Let's start by looking at your lesson plan for today.</p>
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As the thoughts behind Maria's words in this example indicate, she understands much about the situation that she is not sharing. For example, Maria does not tell Pat what she knows about test scores, nor does she tell Pat that Mrs. Mainstay thinks that Pat needs help with reading and is not doing "pretty well."

Jim's thoughts

Jim's and Mac's words

<p><i>I'd like to sound Mac out about implementing the new format before I talk with others about it. He's thought of as level-headed by the other employees.</i></p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: Thanks for meeting with me, Mac. I have a few ideas I'd like to share with you and get your reactions.</p>
<p><i>I like his positive attitude.</i></p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: Great. I always like to think about new ideas.</p>
<p><i>I'll lead into this by asking him how he views our present approach, which hasn't been as effective as it could be.</i></p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: I've been thinking about our approach to customer inquiries. How well do you think that's working?</p>
<p><i>He's level-headed, but he's also careful, and maybe a bit defensive.</i></p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: I think it's pretty good. I know I haven't heard any complaints about it.</p>
<p><i>Just because there are no complaints doesn't mean it's working as well as it could.</i></p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: Right, no complaints, but I've been thinking about ways to improve what we do, and I think this could use improvement.</p>
<p><i>Okay. Now we can get down to the real question.</i></p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: Okay. What do you have in mind?</p>

As the thoughts behind Jim's words in this example indicate, much of what Jim understands about the situation, but does not share with Mac, is positive. Jim believes other employees view Mac as level-headed, and Jim likes Mac's attitude. On the potentially more problematic side, Jim initially does not tell Mac that he believes their present approach to customer inquiries is not working well.

Applying the Authentic Partnership™ value of *Maximum Understanding* to specific split page examples of our own like those above helps us to do the following:

- identify information that we are not sharing;
- identify our reasons for not sharing;
- understand whether our reasons for not sharing reflect basic beliefs that are more in a control mode, a partnership mode, or a compliant mode;
- understand whether those reasons are as valid as we first think they are;
- understand what the results of withholding or sharing information might be;

- identify alternatives that might be more effective;
- make choices among those alternatives to improve our communication effectiveness.

Maximum Choice

Choice is a somewhat more complex notion than *understanding*. We provide here a way to think about the notion of *choice* and how it functions in communication.

We begin our consideration of choice with the assertion that we always have complete choice about what we do, every one of us, all the time. In practice that means that no one can make us do anything, and we cannot make anyone else do anything. This may seem to contradict our usual experience of the world, where we feel that we often have no choice about what to do, or that we can make others do what we want them to do.

One way to think about choice is that when we say, “I have no choice,” we mean that some of the choices before us are so bad that the remaining choice seems to be the only possible one. To take an extreme example, if I have a gun



to your head and tell you to lie down or I will shoot you, there is an extreme condition that influences your choice. But even in this extreme situation, you have a choice. I cannot make you lie down.

To take a more pedestrian example, if I am your boss and tell you that you must have a report done by Thursday or I will fire you,

you can choose to get the report in or you can choose to be fired. But I cannot make you get the report in on Thursday.

Another way to say the same thing is that all choice is conditional. If I have a gun to your head and you want to live, you will lie down as I tell you to do. If you want to keep your job, you will get the report in on Thursday.

When applied to the internal realm of the self, the Authentic Partnership™ value of maximum choice means recognizing that we always have choice, and being clear about the full range of options open to us as we make a choice among them.

When applied to the external realm of communication with others, the Authentic Partnership™ value of maximum choice means that we work to eliminate or reduce as much as possible the conditions that limit the choice someone else must make. When we do the opposite and set conditions that

aim to force a particular choice, we are employing a strategy to impose or maintain control.

Attempts to limit choice are based in control mode beliefs. If articulated, they sound something like this: “I know better than you what should be done, so I need to control the interaction to assure my desired outcome.” Attempts to limit choice are often based on negative assumptions about the other person’s competence or motivation. Attempts to limit choice are often based on the assumption that I will get better outcomes if I exercise more control. The Authentic Partnership™ approach, on the contrary, identifies alternatives to control that are as effective or more effective in a particular situation and can lead to better overall outcomes.

Depending on what role we play in relation to the other, we are in a position to set more or fewer conditions aimed at limiting choice. Consider three roles: people who have more authority, people who have less authority, and people who have the same level of authority.

For example, if I am your boss I have more authority. Because I am responsible for your work, I have the power to set more conditions, including the power to fire you. On the other hand, if I work for you, I have less authority than you and less power to set conditions for you, though my ability to choose to quit provides a certain amount of power in some situations.

In a peer relationship, you and I have no formal power over each other. There are no differences in authority and responsibility. Nonetheless, even in a peer relationship we can choose to set conditions that attempt to restrict the other’s choices.

We often set conditions that limit choice because we believe that is the best way to ensure that we will achieve the outcomes we desire. The Authentic Partnership™ approach to effective communication suggests rather that it is important to have clear outcomes in mind, to articulate them clearly, but not be attached to them, so that we provide as much choice as possible for others.

Consider our two examples once again.

Maria's thoughts

Maria's and Pat's words

Ms. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading – lowest scores in the building. I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.

She looks a little taken aback – she's frowning. Maybe Ms. Mainstay didn't tell Pat what she told me. Still, she says she's glad to get help, so here we go.

Teachers hate lesson plans but it will give me a place to start.

Maria: Hello Pat. I'm Maria Doright. As I believe Ms. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lessons. How has it been going so far?

Pat: Oh, pretty well, I guess. Ms. Mainstay said she thinks I'm doing pretty well, but I'm always glad to get any help I can get.

Maria: Great. Let's start by looking at your lesson plan for today.

Maria does not offer Pat a choice about how to start their work together. Rather, she decides on her own how to start, perhaps because she believes that since "Teachers hate lesson plans" Pat will be resistant, and she wants to avoid that resistance.

Jim's thoughts

Jim's and Mac's words

<i>I'd like to sound Mac out about implementing the new format before I talk with others about it. He's thought of as level-headed by the other employees.</i>	<u>Jim</u> : Thanks for meeting with me, Mac. I have a few ideas I'd like to share with you and get your reactions.
<i>I like his positive attitude.</i>	<u>Mac</u> : Great. I always like to think about new ideas.
<i>I'll lead into this by asking him how he views our present approach, which hasn't been as effective as it could be.</i>	<u>Jim</u> : I've been thinking about our approach to customer inquiries. How well do you think that's working?
<i>He's level-headed, but he's also careful, and maybe a bit defensive.</i>	<u>Mac</u> : I think it's pretty good. I know I haven't heard any complaints about it.
<i>Just because there are no complaints doesn't mean it's working as well as it could.</i>	<u>Jim</u> : Right, no complaints, but I've been thinking about ways to improve what we do, and I think this could use improvement.
<i>Okay. Now we can get down to the real question.</i>	<u>Mac</u> : Okay. What do you have in mind?

Jim offers Mac choice at the beginning of the conversation by explaining why he has asked Mac to talk with him, but in the rest of the conversation he maintains control by not revealing his complete agenda.

Applying the Authentic Partnership™ value of *Maximum Choice* to specific examples like those above helps us do the following:

- identify choices that we are not offering;
- identify our reasons for not offering those choices;
- understand whether our reasons for not offering choices reflect basic beliefs that are more in a control mode, a partnership mode, or a compliant mode;
- understand whether those reasons are as valid as we first think they are;
- understand what the results of withholding choice might be;
- identify alternatives that might be more effective
- make choices among those alternatives to improve our communication effectiveness.

Maximum Understanding and Maximum Choice Together

While both key values are important in pointing to options that are in a partnership mode, neither by itself is sufficient for Authentic Partnership™. All the *understanding* in the world will not result in partnership if we are not able to make choices based on that understanding. All the *choice* in the world will not result in partnership if we have an inadequate, incomplete or misleading understanding about the basis for the choices we are making.

The Five Guidelines

Share all relevant information

Explain your reasoning and intent

Test assumptions and inferences

Combine advocacy with inquiry

Jointly design next steps

The five guidelines are a set of practical-level guides for understanding what aspects of our communication are consistent with the key values of maximum understanding and maximum choice. The guidelines expand on the underlying notions of understanding and choice contained in the key values and put those notions in practical terms. They also offer a more concrete way to understand the key values and to seek possible agreements about ways to work together to increase partnership conditions.

The five guidelines are not a set of abstract rules that tell us what to do. They are useful only when we apply them to our own experience. When applied to our own experience, they increase our understanding so that we can make better choices that lead to increased communication effectiveness.

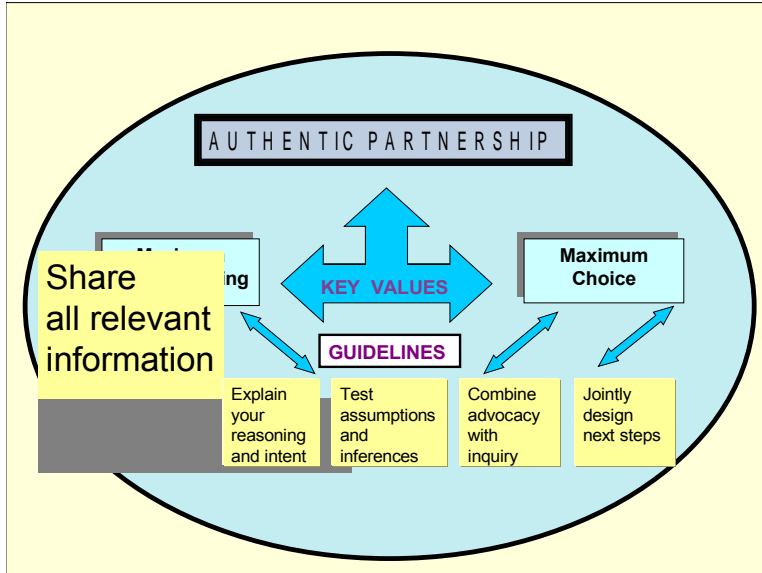
Though the guidelines appear in an order because they have to be in some order on the page, they are not necessarily used in a linear way. That is, a conversation may start with joint design, then test an assumption, then provide an explanation of intent, and then have more joint design, or it may proceed in an entirely different sequence.



The five guidelines are derived from many sources, but most directly from the list of nine ground rules contained in Schwarz's [The Skilled Facilitator \(Revised Edition, 2002\)](#). We have chosen those that we think most directly and easily apply to general communication and modified them as needed to be consistent with the Authentic Partnership™ model.

The following pages provide more detail about each of the five guidelines.

Share all relevant information



Since there is always more information than we can convey easily and simply, what information is relevant is always a judgment. So we must choose what information to share. Typically we would choose to share any information that is potentially useful in advancing the conversation or making a decision about a proposed change. If we think of the person we are working with as a partner, then our choice of what to share is guided by what will promote maximum understanding and maximum choice, and thus will enable the other person to be an effective partner.

Examples of types of relevant information:

- Why I am here
- What I know about the situation
- What I think our conversation is about

In many situations, following this guideline is easy and straightforward. But there are also situations where it is not so easy to follow, such as these:

- I feel that I have insufficient time to share what I know;
- I feel that you are likely to be upset or offended if I tell you what I know;
- I feel that if I share information you will use it to work against my interests, or to penalize me in some way.

When we work to follow this guideline, an implicit question guides our communication choices:

What do I know that will be helpful to the other person in thinking about the issue at hand?

Returning to our examples, here are some options (added in **bold**) for sharing more information that would produce more effective communication.

Maria's thoughts

Maria's and Pat's words

Ms. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading – lowest scores in the building. I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.

She looks a little taken aback – she's frowning. Maybe Ms. Mainstay didn't tell Pat what she told me. Still, she says she's glad to get help, so here we go.

Teachers hate lesson plans but it will give me a place to start.

Maria: Hello Pat. I'm Maria Dorigt. As I believe Ms. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lessons. **She has told me that your class has the lowest reading scores in the building. I'd like to start by letting you tell me what problems, if any, you have been having.** How has it been going so far?

Pat: Oh, pretty well, I guess. Ms. Mainstay said she thinks I'm doing pretty well, but I'm always glad to get any help I can get.

Maria: Great. Let's start by looking at your lesson plan for today.

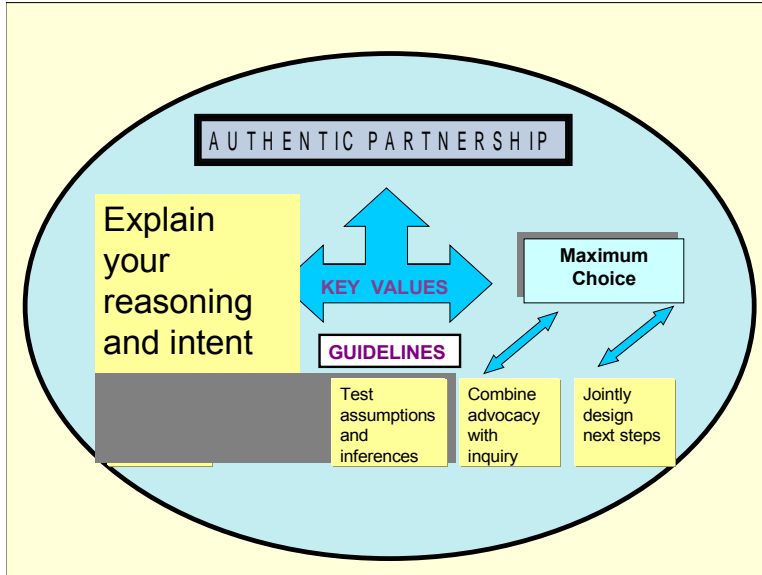
Jim's thoughts

Jim's and Mac's words

<p><i>I'd like to sound Mac out about implementing the new format before I talk with others about it. He's thought of as level-headed by the other employees.</i></p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: Thanks for meeting with me, Mac. I have a few ideas about a new format for customer inquiries I'd like to share with you and get your reactions. I'm starting with you because I believe the other employees see you as level-headed.</p>
<p><i>I like his positive attitude.</i></p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: Great. I always like to think about new ideas.</p>
<p><i>I'll lead into this by asking him how he views our present approach, which hasn't been as effective as it could be.</i></p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: I've been thinking about our approach to customer inquiries. I don't think it is as effective as it could be. How well do you think that's working?</p>
<p><i>He's level-headed, but he's also careful, and maybe a bit defensive.</i></p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: I think it's pretty good. I know I haven't heard any complaints about it.</p>
<p><i>Just because there are no complaints doesn't mean it's working as well as it could.</i></p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: Right, no complaints, but I've been thinking about ways to improve what we do, and I think this could use improvement.</p>
<p><i>Okay. Now we can get down to the real question.</i></p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: Okay. What do you have in mind?</p>

It is important to note that the guideline does not mean that any and all information that is in our thoughts (in the left-hand column) must be shared with the other person. Rather, we use the guideline to help us assess what information our thoughts reveal, and whether sharing that information advances the conversation. Guidelines provide understanding but never dictate choice.

Explain your reasoning and intent



This guideline expands on the kind of information to be shared, and moves toward fuller disclosure. Examples of types of explanations:

- Why I have X preference (or no preference)
- Why I am making X suggestion or asking Y question
- Why I think X is important
- Why I think X will work (or not work)
-

This guideline is a special case of the first guideline, *share all relevant information*. When we explain our reasoning or intent we provide more information for the other person about our view of the conversation and situation. This helps the other person understand more about the context and the direction of the conversation, and equips the other person to be more of a full partner in the conversation.

When we work to follow this guideline, an implicit question guides our communication choices:

What is the thinking behind what I am proposing, and what is motivating me to make this proposal?

Returning to our examples, here are some options (added in **bold**) for explaining reasoning and intent.

Maria's thoughts

Maria's and Pat's words

Ms. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading – lowest scores in the building. I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.

She looks a little taken aback – she's frowning. Maybe Ms. Mainstay didn't tell Pat what she told me. Still, she says she's glad to get help, so here we go.

Teachers hate lesson plans but it will give me a place to start.

Maria: Hello Pat. I'm Maria Dorigt. As I believe Ms. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lessons. **In thinking how I can be most helpful it would be useful for me to hear first from you about any problems you may be experiencing. Then I would have some understanding of your perspective and a better understanding of how we might begin to work together.** How has it been going so far?

Pat: Oh, pretty well, I guess. Ms. Mainstay said she thinks I'm doing pretty well, but I'm always glad to get any help I can get.

Maria: Great. **Since I need some way to begin to understand what you have been doing,** let's start by looking at your lesson plan for today.

Jim's thoughts

Jim's and Mac's words

I'd like to sound Mac out about implementing the new format before I talk with others about it. He's thought of as level-headed by the other employees.

Jim: Thanks for meeting with me, Mac. I have a few ideas I'd like to share with you and get your reactions. **I'm starting with you because your reactions are important to me, and will help me understand better whether I'm on the right track and how to present these ideas to the other employees.**

I like his positive attitude.

Mac: Great. I always like to think about new ideas.

I'll lead into this by asking him how he views our present approach, which hasn't been as effective as it could be.

Jim: I've been thinking about our approach to customer inquiries. **I have some notions myself, but I don't want them to influence your response, so I'd like to get your views first.** How well do you think that's working?

He's level-headed, but he's also careful, and maybe a bit defensive.

Mac: I think it's pretty good. I know I haven't heard any complaints about it.

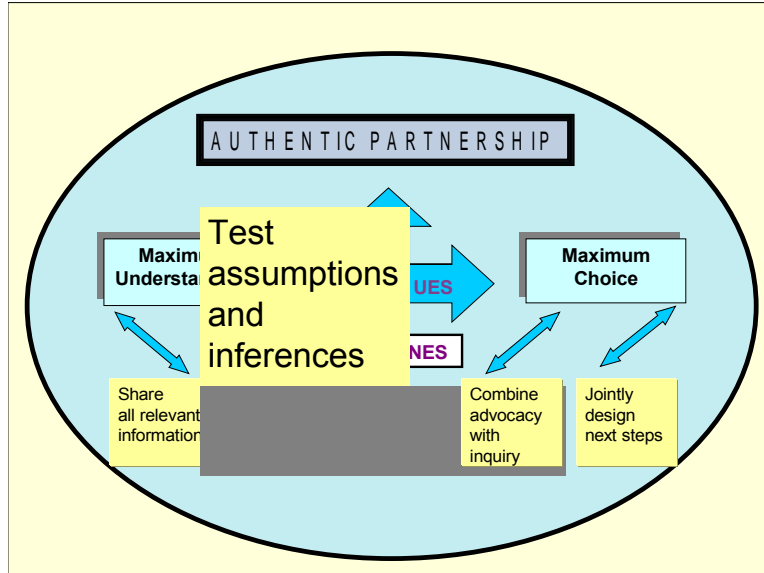
Just because there are no complaints doesn't mean it's working as well as it could.

Jim: Right, no complaints, but I've been thinking about ways to improve what we do, and I think this could use improvement.

Okay. Now we can get down to the real question.

Mac: Okay. What do you have in mind?

Test assumptions and inferences



When we enter a situation we carry into it assumptions about what we are about to experience. When we assume something, by definition we believe it is likely to be true. We all also draw inferences from what we are experiencing, and we tend to believe that those inferences are correct. Most often we do not notice when we make assumptions or draw inferences. Following this guideline means that we raise our level of awareness about when we are making assumptions and inferences, and that we check out assumptions and inferences that could materially affect the direction, tone, and effectiveness of our interaction.

This guideline involves an internal process, followed by a two-part verbal process.

1. The internal part of the process is to notice we are making an assumption or an inference that might be important to check out.
2. Then the first part of the verbal process is to say what we think is going on. For example:
 - “The picture I am getting is....”
 - “I saw/heard/felt/noticed X and I assumed...”
 - “The story I am making up in my head about X is....”
3. The second part of the verbal process is to check for accuracy. For example:
 - “How well am I understanding....?”
 - “Am I right?”
 - “Do you see it differently?”

Notice that the first part of what we say (Step 2.) is clearly identified as tentative, and as our view, subject to revision.

When we work to follow this guideline, a set of implicit questions guide our communication choices:

Am I making either an assumption or an inference here?
If I am, could it reduce the effectiveness of my communication?
If so, how can I test whether the assumption or inference is valid or warranted?

Returning to our examples, here are some options (added in **bold**) for testing assumptions and inferences.

Maria's thoughts

Maria's and Pat's words

<p><i>Ms. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading – lowest scores in the building. I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.</i></p> <p><i>She looks a little taken aback – she's frowning. Maybe Ms. Mainstay didn't tell Pat what she told me. Still, she says she's glad to get help, so here we go.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers hate lesson plans but it will give me a place to start.</i></p>	<p><u>Maria</u>: Hello Pat. I'm Maria Dorigt. As I believe Ms. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lessons. I am assuming that Mrs. Mainstay spoke to you about my visit? Is that right?</p> <p><u>Pat</u>: Yes she has. Ms. Mainstay said she thinks I'm doing pretty well, but I'm always glad to get any help I can get.</p> <p><u>Maria</u>: I notice that you seem a little surprised. I'm wondering if you are surprised, and if Mrs. Mainstay has shared with you the information she shared with me?</p>
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Jim's thoughts

Jim's and Mac's words

I'd like to sound Mac out about implementing the new format before I talk with others about it. He's thought of as level-headed by the other employees.

I like his positive attitude.

I'll lead into this by asking his how he views our present approach, which hasn't been as effective as it could be.

He's level-headed, but he's also careful, and maybe a bit defensive.

Just because there are no complaints doesn't mean it's working as well as it could.

Okay. Now we can get down to the real question.

Jim: Thanks for meeting with me, Mac. I have a few ideas I'd like to share with you and get your reactions.

Mac: Great. I always like to think about new ideas.

Jim: I've been thinking about our approach to customer inquiries. How well do you think that's working?

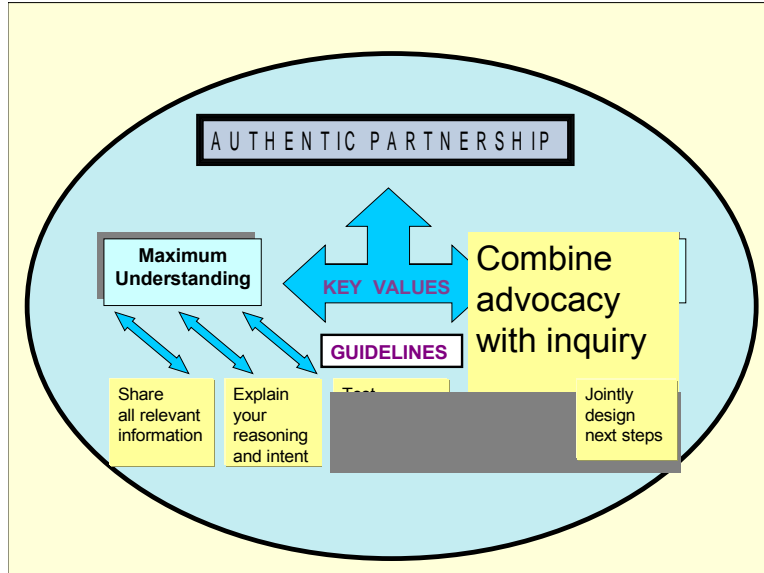
Mac: I think it's pretty good. I know I haven't heard any complaints about it.

Jim: **I'm assuming that you believe that our approach is okay as long as there are no complaints Am I off-base here?**

(Right, no complaints, but I've been thinking about ways to improve what we do, and I think this could use improvement.)

(Mac: Okay. What do you have in mind?)

Combine advocacy with inquiry



This guideline is crucial for maximum choice. The “advocacy” part happens when we explain all the reasons why we see something a particular way or believe that something needs to be done. The “inquiry” part happens when we seek to understand how the other person views the situation. The two together create partnership. This is a two step process.

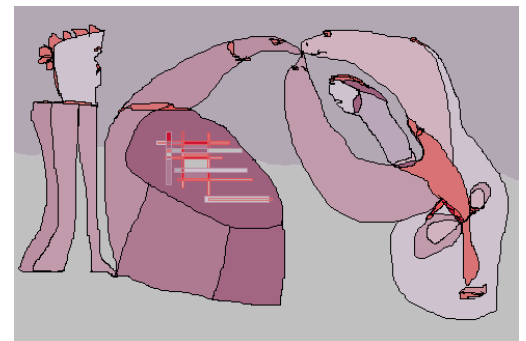
1. ADVOCATE:

- Lay out the facts as I see them, including all the “givens.”
- Explain the reasons behind conclusions I reach.
- Describe relevant supporting information, if any.

2. THEN INQUIRE:

- What do you think needs to happen?
- How does that seem to you?
- What else would you need to know in order to decide?

One way to think about the guideline is that *Advocacy* includes the three previous guidelines and is about the value of *Maximum Understanding*, while *Inquiry* is about having the attitude and the interest to provide *Maximum Choice*. Inquiry includes curiosity and openness about the information, intention, and assumptions of the other person. While the form of inquiry is usually a question, it is the spirit of inquiry that is most



important. Sometimes a question is rhetorical, or leading, or even intimidating, and not true inquiry.

When we work to follow this guideline, an implicit question guides our communication choices:

Am I making the best case I can, and am I at the same time truly open to hearing what the other person has to say?

Returning to our examples, here are some options (added in **bold**) for combining advocacy with inquiry.

Maria's thoughts

Maria's and Pat's words

<p><i>Ms. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading – lowest scores in the building. I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.</i></p> <p><i>She looks a little taken aback – she's frowning. Maybe Ms. Mainstay didn't tell Pat what she told me. Still, she says she's glad to get help, so here we go.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers hate lesson plans but it will give me a place to start.</i></p>	<p><u>Maria</u>: Hello Pat. I'm Maria Dorigt. As I believe Ms. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lessons. How has it been going so far?</p> <p><u>Pat</u>: Oh, pretty well, I guess. Ms. Mainstay said she thinks I'm doing pretty well, but I'm always glad to get any help I can get.</p> <p><u>Maria</u>: Great. I think lesson plans offer the best starting place for working together, since they provide the clearest information about your teaching practice. Does that seem like a good starting place to you?</p>
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Jim's thoughts

Jim's and Mac's words

I'd like to sound Mac out about implementing the new format before I talk with others about it. He's thought of as level-headed by the other employees.

Jim: Thanks for meeting with me, Mac. I have a few ideas I'd like to share with you and get your reactions.

I like his positive attitude.

Mac: Great. I always like to think about new ideas.

I'll lead into this by asking his how he views our present approach, which hasn't been as effective as it could be.

Jim: I've been thinking about our approach to customer inquiries. **I believe we should improve both the system for routing calls and the information retrieval system in our data base. Do you see it differently?** (How well do you think that's working?)

He's level-headed, but he's also careful, and maybe a bit defensive.

Mac: I think it's pretty good. I know I haven't heard any complaints about it.

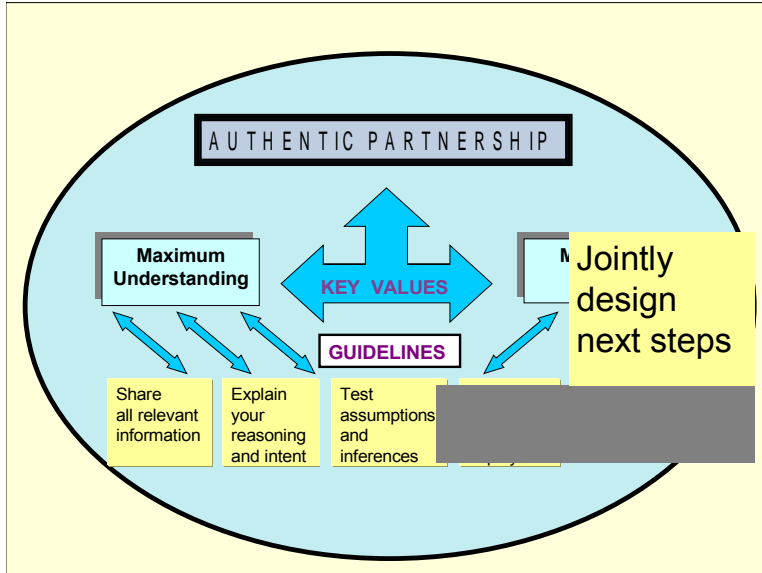
Just because there are no complaints doesn't mean it's working as well as it could.

Jim: Right, no complaints, but I've been thinking about ways to improve what we do, and I think this could use improvement.

Okay. Now we can get down to the real question.

Mac: Okay. What do you have in mind?

Jointly design next steps



We are all familiar with making decisions at the end of a conversation or meeting (whether with one person or with a group) about what to do next to move a project forward and to plan for the next meeting. This guideline applies to those situations, and also includes the many small decisions that we make about the *ongoing process during* a conversation or meeting. This guideline applies the previous guideline -- *combine advocacy with inquiry* -- to decisions about how we will work together. It brings in choice at each stage of a conversation.

Some ways to jointly design next steps:

- Ask what the other person (or group) would like to do next.
- Propose a next step and ask whether it will work. (Be open to “No.”)
- Offer a “menu” of options for what to do at the next meeting or in the next minute and check for the preference of the other person (or group).
- Ask what is most important to address next (during this meeting, for example, or this year).

It is easy to assume that a next step is obvious and then fail to consult with the other person. Joint design is an important way to emphasize and reinforce the partnership nature of the work.

When we work to follow this guideline, an implicit question guides our actions:

Am I including the other person in decisions about the use of our time, about the content of our conversation, and about how we will proceed?

Returning to our examples, here are some options (added in **bold**) for joint design of next steps.

Maria's thoughts

Maria's and Pat's words

Ms. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading – lowest scores in the building. I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.

She looks a little taken aback – she's frowning. Maybe Ms. Mainstay didn't tell Pat what she told me. Still, she says she's glad to get help, so here we go.

Teachers hate lesson plans but it will give me a place to start.

Maria: Hello Pat. I'm Maria Doright. As I believe Ms. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lessons. **I'd like to spend about fifteen minutes discussing how your work is going and how I might be able to help. How does that sound to you?**

Pat: Oh, pretty well, I guess. Ms. Mainstay said she thinks I'm doing pretty well, but I'm always glad to get any help I can get.

Maria: Great. **I'm thinking that looking at your lesson plans would be a good place to start. What do you think would be a good starting place?**

Jim's thoughts

Jim's and Mac's words

I'd like to sound Mac out about implementing the new format before I talk with others about it. He's thought of as level-headed by the other employees.

I like his positive attitude.

I'll lead into this by asking him how he views our present approach, which hasn't been as effective as it could be.

He's level-headed, but he's also careful, and maybe a bit defensive.

Just because there are no complaints doesn't mean it's working as well as it could.

Okay. Now we can get down to the real question.

Jim: Thanks for meeting with me, Mac. I have a few ideas I'd like to share with you and get your reactions. **How does that sound to you?**

Mac: Great. I always like to think about new ideas.

Jim: I've been thinking about our approach to customer inquiries. How well do you think that's working?

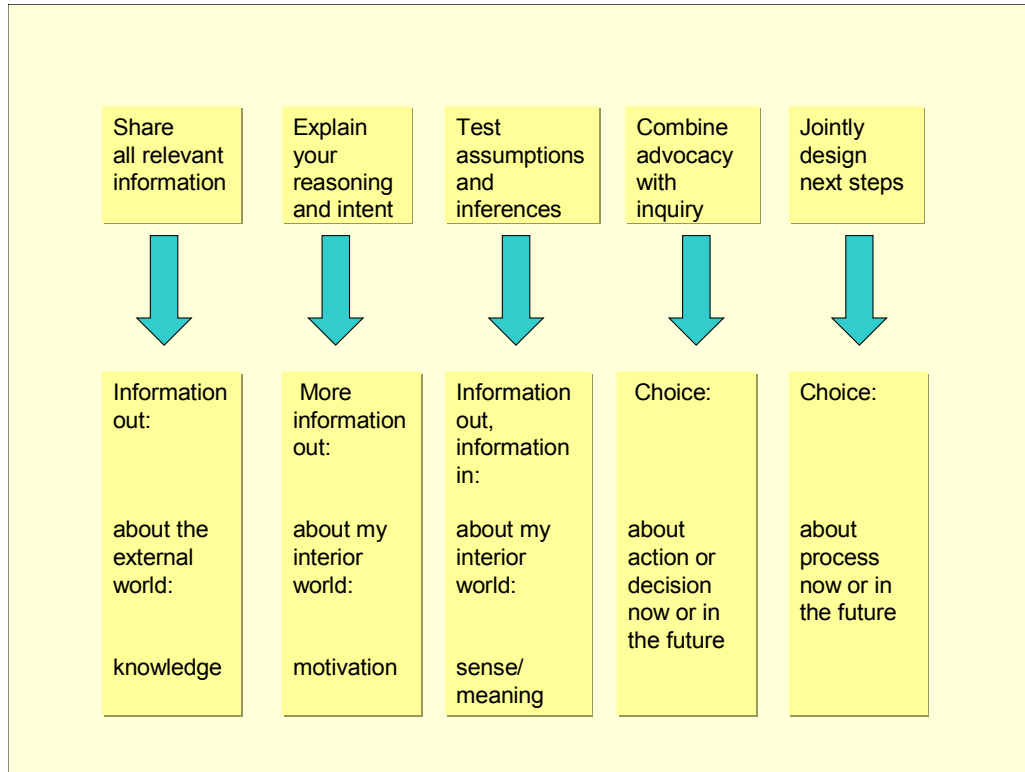
Mac: I think it's pretty good. I know I haven't heard any complaints about it.

Jim: Right, no complaints, but I've been thinking about ways to improve what we do, and I think this could use improvement. **I'd like to start by laying out some of my ideas and getting your reaction to them. Does that seem like a good way to proceed?**

Mac: Okay. What do you have in mind?

Another way to think about the five guidelines

The diagram below provides another way to think about how the five guidelines work.



Application

To improve our communication effectiveness, we use split page examples to compare the words we spoke in a particular situation with the thoughts behind our words. This comparison allows us to see if we have missed opportunities to use a partnership approach that might have been more effective. We might ask ourselves one or more of the following questions:

- Given what I was thinking, did my words reflect a partnership approach to the interaction?
- Are there ways I might have improved the interaction by relying more on either of the two key values?
- Are there ways I might have improved the interaction by relying more on one or more of the five guidelines?
- What would be the likely difference in outcome if I had operated more in a partnership mode?
- Does this interaction suggest a pattern of communication that could be improved?
- Do I want to make a change in how I approach this kind of interaction?

Returning to our examples, here is one possible way that all the guidelines could be used to modify these interactions. For these examples, the relevant guidelines are indicated in the far left column.

Guidelines	<i>Maria's thoughts</i>	Maria's and Pat's words
<p>Share all relevant information</p> <p>Test assumptions and inferences</p> <p>Explain your reasoning and intent</p> <p>Jointly design next steps</p>	<p>Ms. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading – lowest scores in the building. I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.</p>	<p><u>Maria</u>: Hello Pat. I'm Maria Doright. As I believe Ms. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lessons. Has she told you about my visit?</p> <p><u>Pat</u>: Yes she has.</p> <p><u>Maria</u>: I'd like to spend about fifteen minutes discussing how your work is going and how I might be able to help. How does that sound to you?</p>
<p>Test assumptions and inferences</p> <p>Explain your reasoning and intent</p> <p>Share all relevant information</p> <p>Test assumptions and inferences</p>	<p>She looks a little taken aback – she's frowning. Maybe Ms. Mainstay didn't tell Pat what she told me. Still, she says she's glad to get help, so here we go.</p>	<p><u>Pat</u>: Oh, pretty well, I guess. Ms. Mainstay said she thinks I'm doing pretty well, but I'm always glad to get any help I can get.</p> <p><u>Maria</u>: You seem a little surprised. Are you?</p> <p><u>Pat</u>: Perhaps a little, but that's okay.</p> <p><u>Maria</u>: To be sure we are on the same page, my understanding from Mrs. Mainstay is that your class has the lowest reading scores in the building. Is that your understanding?</p>

<p>Explain your reasoning and intent</p> <p>Jointly design next steps</p> <p>Combine advocacy with inquiry</p> <p>Explain your reasoning and intent</p> <p>Jointly design next steps</p>	<p>Teachers hate lesson plans but it will give me a place to start.</p>	<p><u>Pat</u>: Yes, that's true, but there are many reasons for that.</p> <p><u>Maria</u>: I expect that is true, and that we will want to talk about all of those reasons as we work together to help you get those scores up. In thinking how I can be most helpful it would be useful for me to hear first from you about any problems you may be experiencing. Then I would have some understanding of your perspective and a better understanding of how we might begin to work together. Does that sound reasonable to you?</p> <p><u>Pat</u>: Yes it does, but I also want to hear what you think.</p> <p><u>Maria</u>: Great. I know many teachers don't like lesson plans, but I think they offer a good starting place for working together, since they provide clear information about your teaching practice. Does that seem like a good starting place to you?</p>
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Guidelines	<i>Jim's thoughts</i>	Jim's and Mac's words
<p>Share all relevant information</p> <p>Explain your reasoning and intent</p> <p>Jointly design next steps</p>	<p>I'd like to sound Mac out about implementing the new format before I talk with others about it. He's thought of as level-headed by the other employees.</p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: Thanks for meeting with me, Mac. I have a few ideas about a new format for customer inquiries I'd like to share with you and get your reactions. I'm starting with you because I believe the other employees see you as level-headed. Your reactions are important to me, and will help me understand better whether I'm on the right track and how to present these ideas to the other employees. How does that sound to you?</p>
<p>Share all relevant information</p> <p>Jointly design next steps</p>	<p>I like his positive attitude.</p> <p>I'll lead into this by asking him how he views our present approach, which hasn't been as effective as it could be.</p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: Great. I always like to think about new ideas.</p> <p><u>Jim</u>: That's good. I like your positive attitude. I'd like to start by laying out some of my ideas and get your reaction to them. Does that seem like a good way to proceed?</p> <p><u>Mac</u>: Sure.</p>
<p>Combine advocacy with inquiry</p>	<p>He's level-headed, but he's also careful, and maybe a bit defensive.</p>	<p><u>Jim</u>: Okay. I've been thinking about our approach to customer inquiries. I think it is not as effective as it could be. How well do you think that's working?</p>
<p>Test assumptions and inferences</p>		<p><u>Mac</u>: I think it's pretty good. I know I haven't heard any complaints about it.</p> <p><u>Jim</u>: A part of what I think I'm hearing in your response is your inclination to be careful, and also that you believe that our approach is okay as long as there are no complaints. Am I off-base here?</p>

<p>Combine advocacy with inquiry</p>	<p>Just because there are no complaints doesn't mean it's working as well as it could.</p> <p>Okay. Now we can get down to the real question.</p>	<p><u>Mac</u>: I agree that I try to be careful, but as I said, I haven't heard any complaints</p> <p>Jim: I haven't heard any complaints either, but a lack of complaints does not necessarily mean its working as well as it could. Does that make sense to you?</p> <p><u>Mac</u>: I guess so. What do you have in mind?</p>
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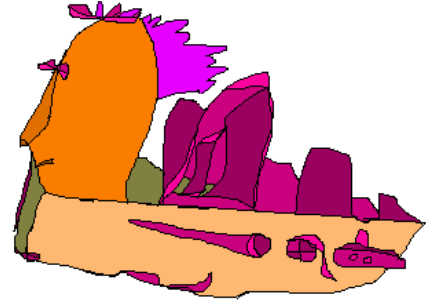
Use of the Guidelines

We can use the guidelines in three different ways, depending on the particular context. We can use them as implicit guides, as explicit guides, and as the basis for agreements.

At the simplest level we can use the guidelines as *implicit*, internal guides for our own communication choices. When we do so, we use them to guide and clarify our communications without necessarily explaining to others that we are using them. Short or one-time interactions are the most obvious examples of this simplest use of the guidelines.

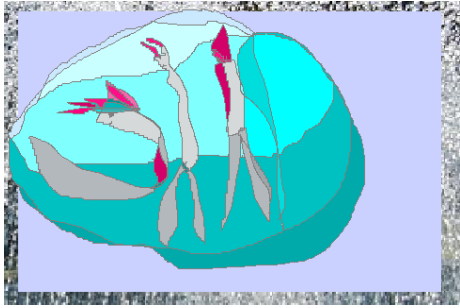
At a slightly more complex level, we can use the guidelines as *explicit* guides for our own communication choices. When we do so, we explain to others one or more of the particular guidelines that we are using. This second level is usually most appropriate when we are working with people on an ongoing basis, and they have an interest in working on improved communication.

At the most complex level, we can form agreements with others about jointly using the guidelines to support our mutual work. At this level, those with whom we are working become partners in improving communications as we do our work together.



**SPLIT PAGE EXAMPLE, EXPANDED:
AN ENHANCED AWARENESS TOOL**

Now that we have introduced the five guidelines and split page examples, we are ready to consider an enlarged and more complex version of the split page. It is meant to provide a more sophisticated tool for thinking about our own



communication choices, and to help deepen our understanding of our own communication practices. The more extensive analysis in this version provides a way to understand more about what are often the deeper thoughts behind the communication choices we make.

The next page presents a five-column format with guiding questions for each of the columns. Starting at the right, columns 1 and 2 are the same as in the split page examples above. Columns 3, 4, and 5 have been added. The page after that presents the “Maria” split page example expanded into five columns.

Authentic Partnership™ Analysis Grid: Guiding Questions for Practice

<p>5. Your Deepest Thoughts</p> <p>(About Motivating Beliefs: Basic: Goals: Knowledge: Intentions:)</p>	<p>4. Your Even Deeper Thoughts</p> <p>(About assumptions)</p>	<p>3. Your Deeper Thoughts</p> <p>(About intentions or strategies)</p>	<p>2. Your Thoughts</p> <p>(About the conversation)</p> <p>(Values and Guidelines)</p>	<p>1. Your Words</p>
<p>Where do the strategies and assumptions fall, on the spectrum from Control to Partnership, with regard to Basic Beliefs, or Beliefs about Goals, Knowledge, or Intentions?</p> <p>What does this suggest about possible communication choices that are more in the Partnership Mode?</p>	<p>What assumptions have I made that affect the strategy I employed?</p> <p>Am I willing to share those assumptions with the other person?</p> <p>What does this suggest about possible communication choices that are more in the Partnership Mode?</p>	<p>What strategy did I employ in deciding what to say, given my thoughts?</p> <p>Am I willing to share that strategy with the other person?</p> <p>What does this suggest about possible communication choices that are more in the Partnership Mode?</p>	<p>What does the comparison of words and thoughts suggest about my use of the guidelines, or possible missed opportunities?</p> <p>What does this suggest about possible communication choices that are more in the Partnership Mode?</p>	

Authentic Partnership™ Analysis Grid: Maria's Example

5. Maria's Deepest Thoughts (Motivating Beliefs: Basic: Goals: Knowledge: Intentions:)	4. Maria's Even Deeper Thoughts (Assumptions)	3. Maria's Deeper Thoughts (Intentions or strategies)	2. Maria's Thoughts (About the conversation) (Values and Guidelines)	1. Maria's Words
<p>I need to control the conversation at all times because I know best what needs to be done.</p> <p>It is important to achieve my goals as I understand them.</p> <p>I understand; she does not.</p>	<p>Pat will react negatively if I start with the reading scores. That will hinder our work together.</p> <p>I can get to what I need to say more easily by giving her a chance to tell me how she sees it.</p>	<p>I will refer to Mrs. Mainstay, but I won't tell Pat what Mrs. Mainstay told me. I want to avoid having Pat get upset or defensive.</p> <p>If she identifies the problems, I won't have to. I'd like to have her take the lead, so she feels like we're meeting her needs.</p>	<p>Mrs. Mainstay says that Pat needs help with reading. Lowest scores in the building.</p> <p>I'll start by giving her a chance to tell me what problems she's having.</p>	<p>Hello Pat. I'm Maria Doright.</p> <p>As I believe Mrs. Mainstay told you, I'm here to help you with your reading lesson.</p> <p>How has it been going so far?</p>

Note that both intentions (in column 3) and assumptions (in column 4) are included in these levels of analysis. Here they are used to further analyze our own thoughts, and thus to provide more insight into our patterns of thought, and then into our motivating beliefs. Often behind our first thoughts we have implicit thoughts about our intentions, and about the strategies we will use to further those intentions. And often behind those thoughts we have implicit

thoughts about the assumptions we are making. Finally, at the deepest level, we come to motivating beliefs, which often are at odds with how we say we would like to communicate.

At times, challenges or difficulties persist even though we think we are adhering to partnership values. Deeper analysis often reveals that we are operating more in a control mode than we realize, and more in control mode than we want. As the bottom question in each column of the analysis grid indicates, the analysis is important only for revealing possible options that might be more consistent with the partnership mode and thus might open up more choice and lead to more effective communication.

CONCLUSION

Authentic Partnership™ provides a model of effective communication and an approach to effective communication that rely on our own ability to analyze and understand the communication choices we now make in specific situations, and the options available to us for making more effective choices. Authentic Partnership™ encourages us to consider the usefulness of providing maximum understanding and maximum choice to *others*. In the same way, and for the same reasons, Authentic Partnership™ also encourages us to provide maximum understanding and maximum choice to *ourselves*: understanding about our communication practices and habits, and about possible alternatives to them, and then maximum choice about whether to adopt changes in those practices and habits that will lead us toward increased communication effectiveness.



