

EFFECTIVE CONVERSATIONS TEMPLATE COLLECTION

STAKEHOLDER WILL NOT PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION FOR A CHANGE

Context

We've all had these stakeholders – ones who flat out refuse to provide a justification for a change they are requesting. As business analysts, we are trained to ask 'WHY' and always understand the business reason or goals behind any change, whether it's adding a field to a report or implementing a new off-the-shelf business application. And this is because there is always more than one possible solution to a business problem. Understanding why allows us to explore potential other solutions.

But in this case, the stakeholder mindset is that the team should make a change because they said so, and to stop asking them questions.

You want to realize there that there is another 'why' to get to the root of, and that's why the stakeholder doesn't want to provide justification. It might be because they don't actually know – perhaps their manager asked for this to happen and they don't know why and they don't want to look stupid. Perhaps they are pressed for time and simply don't want to answer any questions or slow the project down. Perhaps there is a pattern where they don't get what they want once they start answering questions. Perhaps this is a way that they see themselves exerting their authority.

So, the first why you really need to answer here is why they don't want to provide the justification. And then you want to describe how this information will help them achieve their goals.

Message

You can start with: I'm sensing some resistance to the questions I've been asking about why you want to make this particular change. I totally get it...it can be kind of annoying to have to provide all this background when you are crystal

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clear on what you want. But it really does help motivate the team and ensure we're implementing the right thing.

Can you tell me a little more about why you want me to stop asking you questions?

Then pause and wait.

I'm hearing that {reflect back what you heard}. Can you tell me more about that?

Keep the conversation going until you get to the root of it.

Then, see how you can appease their true concern.

For example:

- If it's that they don't know, you can propose a few ideas or give them some questions they can ask their manager.
- If they are pressed for time, you can help them see that the time they invest now will save them time later being frustrated with the wrong solution. If the team knows why they are making the change, they are more likely to get it right.
- If they are looking for a way to exert their authority, you can help them see this as an opportunity to motivate and inspire the team and showcase their leadership skills.