



Designed Alliance Tips

You are actually using Designed alliance all the time! Every time you ask someone, "Would you like me to give that to you in print or by email?" or you say "What's the best time for me to come to you with questions?" you are designing your alliance.

Like any good practice, small steps on a regular basis are most important. Imagine that your relationship with someone is a boat. Anyone who has ever owned a boat knows that they need consistent tending and care. That way, when a storm comes, the boat won't sink.

If you tend to the relationship on a regular basis, you'll have something solid to lean into when the relationship gets stormy. In all relationships, there is bound to be some point of friction or disagreement, something that needs to be navigated or worked out. So it's good to put your attention on the relationship on a regular basis.

When we get very busy or stressed at work, we tend to forget about the other person and focus on the problem or the thing we are trying to get done. This is understandable and very human.

However, the cost of this is actually quite high. We are actually LESS effective and get LESS done when we focus in this way.

Tips for having a Designed Alliance "moment":

1. LOOK at the other person. I know this sounds obvious and in the day to day, I catch myself ALL THE TIME, looking at the piece of paper, or my computer screen or some other place than at THE PERSON.
2. Smile at the other person. Again, completely obvious and in the stress of solving a problem, I often forget this.
3. Take a breath and connect. Whatever the issue or the problem, it will be there 30 seconds after you have taken a moment to breath and connect.
4. Ask a QUESTION that is about the person or the relationship, not about how to solve the problem at hand or what needs to be done (SEE BELOW). Remember, the attention is on the relationship, not on the role, so it's important that these questions come from both sides.

When to have a Designed Alliance moment.

When you are trying to solve a problem or get something accomplished:

You might ask:

- What's the most effective way for us to work together on this?

- What's the most important thing about X (the problem)?
- What is the outcome we both want?

* What does "solved" or "great" look like?

At the beginning of any one-on-one, meeting, etc.

You might ask something like:

- What skills do we want to practice together in this meeting?
- What are the outcomes we are focusing on?
- What can I do to make your job easier?
- What would you like me to do differently?
- What's working really well in our relationship? What's one thing that needs improvement?
- What's one thing I can do to make your job easier?
- I often begin a one-on-one conversation by asking "What would you like to get out of this conversation?" or, "What's most important to you in this conversation?"

Note: You don't have to ask ALL these questions; Pick one you like or make up your own.

When you are in a conversation and it's getting tense or frustrating

You might say "Can we pause for a moment and design our alliance a little?"

You might ask:

- Where is the miscommunication happening?
- What does "great" look like in this situation?
- What do you need from me to have this conversation go more smoothly?
- What would 100%/100% look like here?

When you are losing the point of what someone is saying:

You might ask

- I really want to understand what you are saying. Could you say that in a different way?
- What I hear you saying is (restate the communication in your own words). Do I have that right?

When you are in a meeting and the conversation is starting to wander:

You might ask:

- What's the most important thing about this meeting?
- What are the outcomes we want to accomplish together?

When is it a good time to have a longer Designed Alliance conversation?

- At the start of any relationship
- At the start of any new project or initiative
- When you notice you are complaining a lot about someone. If you ask for what you want and need, you will have a much better chance of getting it.