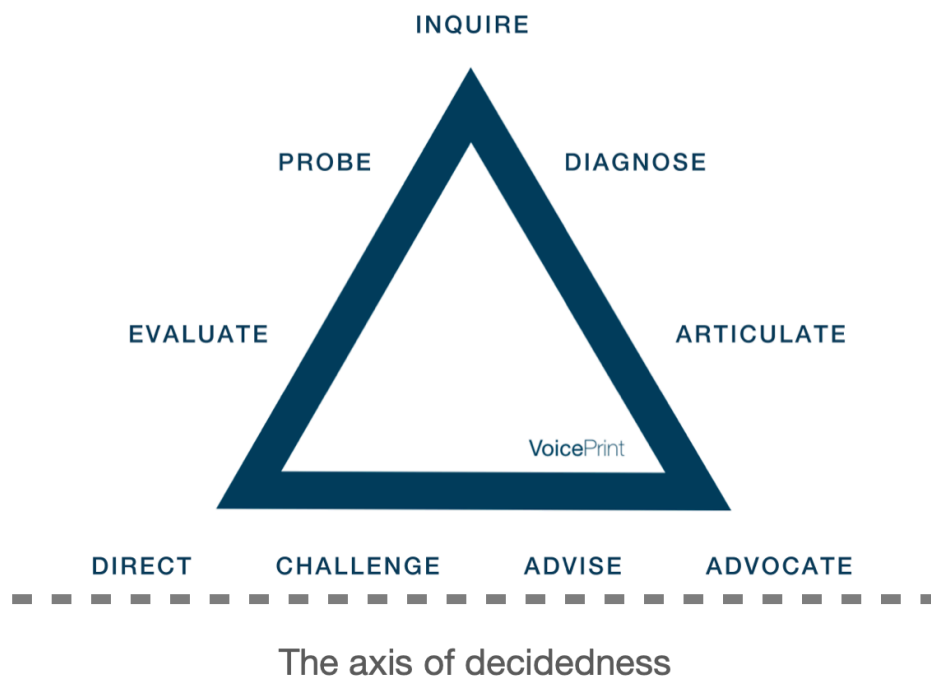


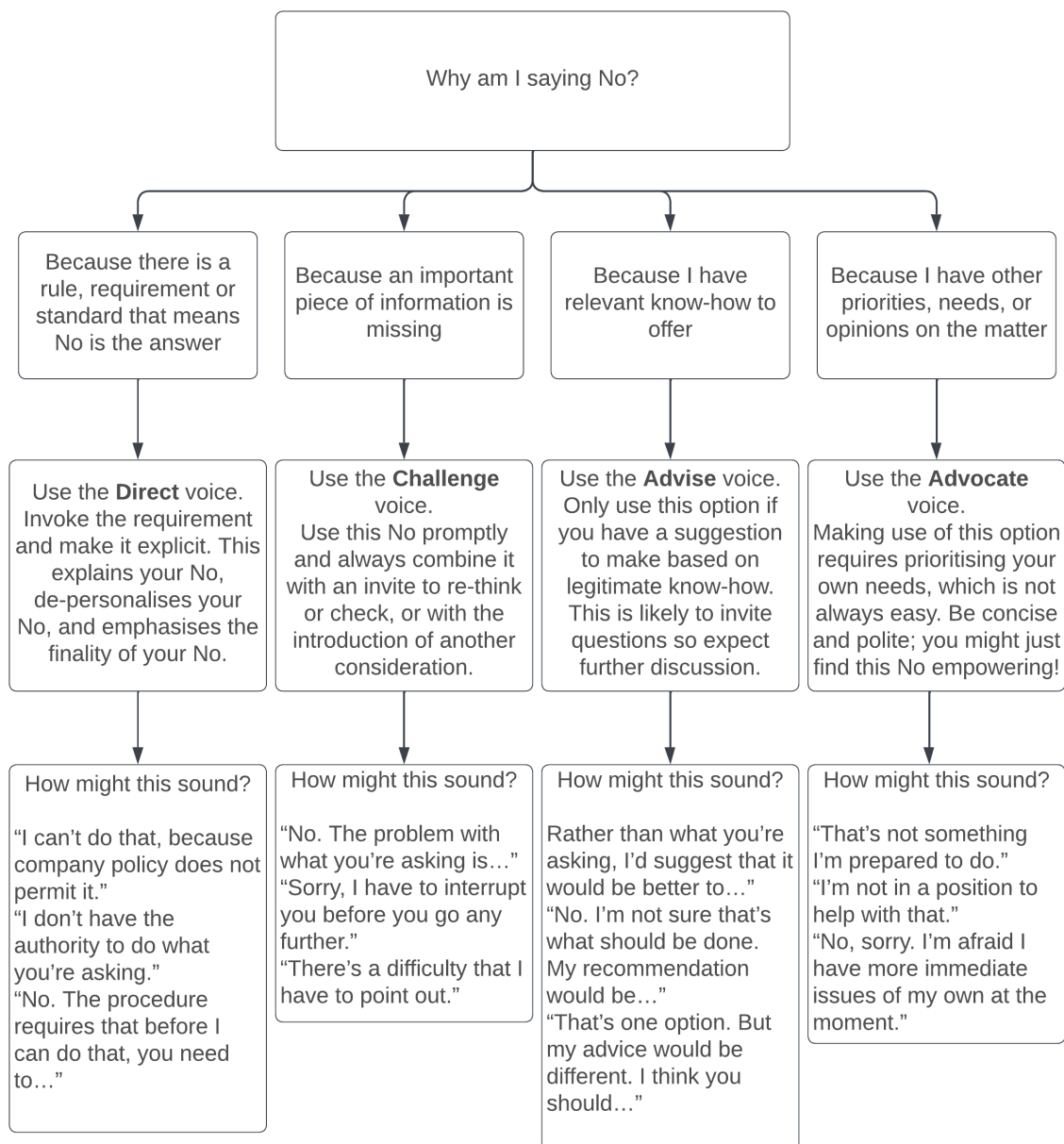
Saying No is something that many of us find difficult. We may be worried about putting a relationship at risk, or being a poor team player, or speaking up about our own needs and priorities. Or maybe we just like to be helpful and demonstrate a positive can-do attitude. But sometimes it's necessary to say No. Otherwise we can end up over-stretched, resentful towards others and irritated with ourselves, neglecting our own responsibilities or simply doing the wrong thing.

The VoicePrint model can help us identify four thoughtful ways of saying No. Each of these Nos uses a different voice: either Direct, Challenge, Advise or Advocate. These are the relatively closed voices that range along VoicePrint's 'axis of decidedness.' That's useful for saying No, because rather than inviting an opening up or expansion of any discussion, they tend either to control or fix a position in it.



The four forms of No still need to be used with skill. Without that, you won't manage the boundary between being Direct and sounding too bossy, or keep your Challenge from sounding aggressive, your Advice from sounding condescending and your Advocacy from sounding too forceful.

Work through the flowchart below to explore the four ways of saying No.



The following reflection exercises are designed to help you prepare for the next time you need to say No.

1. Reflect on past episodes where you wish in retrospect that you had said No. Which would have been the best way of saying it in each of those instances?
2. You probably already know the people who are most likely to interrupt you with unreasonable requests. Before it happens again, think about the most appropriate way to respond.
3. Prepare exactly what you will say to deal with any unreasonable interruptions next time you have an important piece of your own work to do. Choose your words now so that you're comfortable uttering them when the moment comes .