Coaching Scenario: Dale

Context

The small software company where Dale worked had been hitting some speed-bumps lately. Several products had been released late in spite of frenzied overtime work. The main cause, in Dale's mind, was that the process by which Product sent design specs to Engineering and QA was broken. These units felt that the specs they received from Product were often late and of poor quality. Dale attributed this largely to the relative inexperience of those in the Product department.

Dale correctly assessed that the three units were not aligned and that there was no collective ownership of the process. Instead, there was a lot of mistrust, finger-pointing, and poor communication. For example, after Product got feedback that their specs were not up to par, they came to Dale's direct reports and asked them to get the specs in working order – all without consulting Dale.

In response to the latest episode of product delay, the company's executive team set up a cross-functional team to solve the problem. Dale had been tapped as one of the team members. He wanted to use his upcoming coaching session to prepare for the team's next meeting. He felt this would be a good opportunity to practice Achiever stakeholder agility, trying to foster better collaboration between all three units in solving the problem.

Coach: Sounds like a great thing to focus on. Maybe we could start with this: What would be your desired outcome for the meeting?

Dale: What would I really like? That we figure how to improve or replace the process for completing design specs and handing them off to Engineering and QA. That would include clarifying the roles of all three units in the hand-off process. What should who do when? That's what I'd like to advocate to the group.

Coach: What do you foresee as some of the challenges you might have in trying to persuade the group to get behind your framing of the problem?

Dale: Well, there's the feedback I got in my 360 that I've apparently alienated some of these people in the past by being too negative, too judgmental. I really don't want to embarrass anyone in a meeting as public as this one. So, I need to find a constructive way to put this out there. Also, I guess it's possible that some people may not think the process is broken enough to take time to fix it. I mean, when I've raised issues in the past, I've gotten some defensive reactions. I know some people in the group don't feel the same urgency about this that I feel. Plus, there's the general feeling of mistrust between all three units. I guess there's a lot to think through here.

Coach:

Reflection Questions

Imagine that you are Dale's coach. Review the chart on **page 4** of your workbook, which captures the "building blocks" for coaching Dale in moving from Expert to Achiever Stakeholder Agility. Please answer the following two questions in the space on the next page:

- In general, how could you coach Dale using these building blocks?

- What are some specific questions you could ask or suggestions you could make that might help Dale approach the group meeting like a well-developed Achiever?