

The Art of Having Difficult Conversations

What Tends to Drain our Mental and Physical Energy?

- Conflict management
- Crisis management
- Interdepartmental problem solving
- Coaching and developing people
- Resolving performance issues
- Getting along with different personalities
- Resolving people issues of any kind

Definition...

- Critical
- Fierce
- Difficult Conversations...

Beth called them “Courageous Conversations”

Critical Conversations

Conversations where there are strong emotions,
where there's a lot at stake,
and
where there are opposing opinions

Difficult Conversations*

- Conversations that address issues or provide feedback that may be sensitive or unwelcome
- Conversations that address tension resulting from misunderstanding or differences in opinions and beliefs
- Conversations that focus on uncovering and understanding truths and may involve strong emotions

*Difficult Conversations Handout, taken from the book "Fierce Conversations"
Stacy Alldredge, Independent Consultant

A Sample Critical Conversation...





EMPOWERING · LEADING · CONNECTING

RTR RISING
THROUGH
THE RANKS



EMPOWERING · LEADING · CONNECTING

RTR RISING
THROUGH
THE RANKS

EMPOWERING · LEADING · CONNECTING

RTR RISING
THROUGH
THE RANKS

Two Buckets...for Conversations

The What: Your Business Objective

Everything can be made objective when put in terms of meeting business goals and maintaining high standards (behavior, activities, attitude can all add or detract from a business objective). Align the issue with meeting business goals. (It's not personal)

The How:

You have great impact on how conversations go, even if you don't have complete control.

Consideration / Preparation...

- What is the issue to address?
- What are behaviors and examples?
- Why is it important?
- How do you feel about the issue?
- How have you contributed to the issue?
- What is your intention?

What exactly will you say?

- Name the issue
- Share a specific example
- Describe your emotions
- Clarify what is at stake
- Identify how you contributed
- Indicate your wish to resolve
- Invite response

Example...a specific issue

You have been grumbling about your position assignments as you leave the dugout. Yesterday when I assigned you right field in the 5th inning you said, “Ugh, not outfield again.” I feel disrespected when you do this and also worry that it is having a negative impact on the team and your performance. I really want you to have a great season and I realized I haven’t talked to you about what I need to see in order for you to get more infield time. I’d really like to get this cleared up tonight so we can be clear about expectations. Can we talk about this now?

Example...important but not critical

An otherwise effective AE continues to ignore important processes.

Name the issue and share a specific example:

- I wanted to talk with you because the last couple of times you've needed to secure a talent for an endorsement, you may be missing important steps in the process. We talked about this when you wanted Bill for the Heineken endorsement. I want to make sure that you know what the steps are so that this kind of brand integration on the station will occur smoothly and all departments can do a great job for this important client.

AE...

- My intentions are to support you and the other departments so these high standards occur. The added benefit is when the other departments are included and feel good about the client, about sales, and the promotion, good work gets done.
- I want to make sure I understand from you what happened and what you want to accomplish. I also want to know if you have any suggestions, ideas, or concerns about how we fulfill this or anything else related to this here at the station.

AE...What's at Stake

We're all on the same team. Everyone wants to do a good job. Everyone is compensated on our collective success in one way or another. And our ability to work well together is critical to us getting our jobs done. Communication among us must be effective. I feel like this particular situation of not going through the set channels, unless I'm not understanding something, is causing an unintended ripple effect in several departments that's unproductive.

AE...Identify How You Contributed...

I'm not sure if I or someone else may have caused any confusion, but again, I'm open to hearing your thoughts on it.

Indicate your wish to resolve and invite response...

- The reason why I want to make sure I'm understanding your approach to this is that I would like this to be resolved.
- I'd like for us to be on the same page, for you to understand the steps and why they're important, and to follow them so that everyone can be as efficient as possible.
- I want us to be Heineken's favorite/best marketing partner.
- That will pay dividends for years to come.
- Does this make sense?

Groucho Marx said...

"It's the cracked ones who let in the light." They stretch you, make you feel uncomfortable and sometimes make you mad, but they are the ones who bring imagination and ingenuity into your culture. They are the people who can invent and re-invent any job they are doing. You can't innovate without them. They are the ones who set you apart in a sea of sameness. Do you have the guts to run with them?"

"Innovate or Perish"

Kevin & Jackie Freiberg/Dain Dunston

“Listening, not imitation, may be the sincerest form of flattery.”

- Dr. Joyce Brothers

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.”

- Steven Covey

List the difficult conversation you need to have with someone. Write down the name of the person and a sentence or two about the topic.

- Identify your most pressing issue.
- Clarify the issue. What's going on? How long? How bad is it?
- Determine the current impact. How is this impacting me? How is it impacting others?
- Determine the future implications/risks.
- Examine your personal contribution to this issue.
- Describe the ideal outcome.
- Commit to action. **What exactly will you say?** When do I start?

What exactly will you say?

- Name the issue
- Share a specific example
- Describe your emotions
- Clarify what is at stake
- Identify how you contributed
- Indicate your wish to resolve
- Invite response

Common Mistakes in One-to-One Conversations

- Doing most of the talking
- Taking the problem away from someone
- Not inquiring about feelings
- Delivering unclear messages, coaching, instructions
- Canceling the meeting
- Allowing interruptions
- Running out of time
- Assuming your meetings are effective

Kindness...quiet

"Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle." - unknown

"Never mistake kindness for weakness."

Links to Cliff Notes

“Fierce Conversations; Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time”,
by Susan Scott

<http://www.davidmays.org/BN/ScoFier.html>

“Crucial Conversations” by K. Patterson...

<http://www.chaosmanagement.com/images/stories/pdfs/NotesCrucialConversationsbook1-07.pdf>

“Critical Conversations for Dummies” by Christine Tangora Schlachter

<http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/critical-conversations-for-dummies-cheat-sheet.html>