

Handling Difficult Conversations



This programme, which runs over one or two days depending on the experience of the participants, provides managers with the confidence and skills to handle a range of difficult workplace conversations

Overview

One of the most daunting tasks for any manager is having to have a difficult conversation with a team member, whether that is to address a performance or attendance issue, to deal with an employee concern, or to tell someone their job is at risk. In these situations, there can be a strong urge to delay or avoid the conversation entirely for fear it will lead to an argument, it will damage the relationship, or it will result in criticism. Other reasons for delaying or avoiding difficult conversations include reluctance to deal with the emotional response of the other person, or embarrassment at having to deal with the subject matter. What we know is that delay rarely sees the problem disappear and is more likely to result in a worsening situation or one that becomes more difficult to deal with.

This programme provides participants with an approach and the tools for handling a variety of difficult situations, with the opportunity to practice in a safe environment with an actor/facilitator taking on the role of the team member with whom you will be having the conversation.

Format

This is a blended programme consisting of three elements:

- A pre-workshop assignment designed to stimulate your thoughts about having difficult conversations and providing you with the opportunity to identify a relevant scenario in which you have recently found yourself or are likely to face in the future. The pre-workshop assignment also includes an optional section covering communication skills.
- A series of highly practical virtual workshop sessions, using Zoom or MS Teams, including practical activities with an actor/facilitator.
- Inter-session activities to help you prepare for the next virtual workshop session.

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Registered in England and Wales No: 07221826

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Aims

The aims of the programme are to equip participants with the skills and confidence to handle a range of different conversations that some may find difficult, including:

- Addressing performance or attendance issues
- Tackling unacceptable behaviour
- Dealing with personal or welfare issues
- Telling someone their jobs are at risk
- Handling reports of bullying or harassment.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the programme, you will be able to:

- Explain why you may see some conversations as difficult
- Explain the possible consequences of not addressing issues in a timely and appropriate way
- Describe how to plan for success in both desired outcomes and approach
- Demonstrate key communication skills, including questioning, listening, developing rapport and keeping control during conversations
- Handle the emotional reaction of the other party appropriately
- Demonstrate the ability to reach an appropriate solution and put in place the appropriate follow-up actions and any necessary support

Workshop Content

Session 1

- Introductions and Course Contract
- Case Study Exercise
- Adopting the Right Mindset
- Deep or Good Listening

Inter-Session Activity 1

- What is Good Communication?
- Communication Skills Refresher
- Reading Conversation Scenarios and Making Selection

Session 2

- Communication Skills Refresher
- Structure of the Meeting
- Issues of Concern
- Preparation for Practical Sessions

Inter-Session Activity 2

- Preparation for Practical Sessions continued

Session 3 – Group A

- Briefing for the Practical Sessions
- Practical Sessions
- Review

Session 3 – Group B

- Briefing for the Practical Sessions
- Practical Sessions
- Review

Session 3 – Group C

- Briefing for the Practical Sessions
- Practical Sessions Review

Note: The programme described above is suitable for those who have already attended a basic communication skills programme. It can be extended to include more on communication skills for those who have not had that opportunity. Also, session 3 for groups A-C can be delivered sequentially or simultaneously depending on the number of actors we use.

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