

It's time for positive

CHANGE

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Your Guide To Tough Conversations

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We've all been there, right? We've all encountered problem coworkers or an employee who just isn't performing like he or she should. Sometimes we know a simple conversation will help set things straight, and yet we hold back. We allow the problem behaviors to persist and slowly escalate. Why are we so afraid of tough conversations and how on earth do we approach them? Read on...











Avoidance Seems Easier

It is a natural human instinct to take the path of least resistance. When things aren't quite going as they should, we tend to grin and bear it rather than involve ourselves in a potential confrontation. The incertitude of the outcome of a tough conversation discourages us from having it, despite the knowledge that it is for the best. The first step to breaking the silence and addressing a tough issue is the acceptance that **ignoring a difficult conversation results in the continuance of detrimental behavior.** This behavior will continue to negatively affect your organization, your relationship with others, and restrict growth. By ignoring an issue, you are literally limiting the potential of others.

The Benefits of Tough Conversations

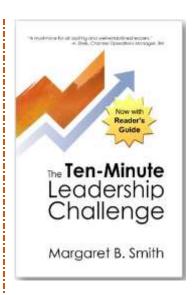
When you commit to having a necessary, albeit tough, conversation, you're committing to making positive change in your organization. Here are just a few of the benefits of initiating effective tough conversations:

- You promote a company culture where feedback is normal and expected
- Targets and expectations become clear and tangible
- Employees can engage in a work cultural of honesty and transparency
- Workflow becomes more efficient with everyone on the same page
- You develop an atmosphere of awareness in which employees are mindful of each other's perspectives

Tough Conversation How-Tos

As a career coach, I've accrued a number of techniques that help to ease the pain and nervousness of addressing touchy subjects. I've compiled a list of tips for making sure that you handle a tough situation in a manner that results in **strengthening relationships and achieving a positive outcome.**

- **Set the stage:** Make sure you allow time and space for a tough conversation. Choose someplace quiet and private *and* make sure you and your conversation partner have plenty of time for a meaningful discussion.
- Have the right mind frame: Don't approach your conversation from the "blame angle." Your intention should be to help the other person and help your workplace as a whole. No fingerpointing!
- Share your intentions: Let the other person know why you
 wanted to meet with them. For example, share with them
 your goal to create a more harmonious office environment.
- **Ask open-ended questions:** Discover information and gain the larger picture (avoid yes/no and leading questions).



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Find Your Inner Garden



- **Really listen:** Fight the urge to make assumptions or immediately pass judgment.
- Share best-practices: Offer constructive advice and focus on one or two areas of improvement.
- **Collaborate:** Brainstorm ideas <u>together</u> on how you might solve the issue.
- Wrap-Up With A Plan: Always end the conversation with a plan of action and specific follow-up goals. Don't forget to periodically check-in to see how the person is progressing.

When you begin to consider tough conversations as opportunities for improvement and growth they become less daunting. Make it clear that you're interested in the success of others and have faith in their ability. Doing this makes it more likely that you will leave the conversation with a sense of relief and hopefulness for positive change.

Get talking!

Margaret Smith

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UXL's mission is to create leaders, promote positive change, and enable businesses and individuals to transform their dreams into reality.

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Learn More about Margaret



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