Navigating Difficult Conversations
The Many Elements of Success

- Emergenetics
- Navigating Difficult Conversations
- Effective Communication
- Crucial Conversations
- Internal Controls
- IRR
- AIC
- Trust
- Audit Documentation
- Audit Evidence
- Quality Assurance
- Crucial Conversations
- Effective Communication
- Audit
- Documentation
- IRR
- AIC
- Trust
- Quality Assurance
Is it possible...
Navigating Difficult Conversations

Learning Objectives - Participants will learn:

- What are difficult conversations and how they differ from everyday conversation.
- The main obstacles that prevent people from engaging in difficult conversation.
- How the quality of conversation impacts employee engagement and results.
- Actionable strategies to navigating difficult conversations.

Course length: 50 minutes
Navigating Difficult Conversations

- The Arc of Engagement
- The Results Equation
- What is a difficult conversation?
- Exercise 1
- Obstacles that block feedback (Exercise 2)
- The Arc of Engagement
- Exercise 3
- Models and resources
The Results Equation

Task + People = Result

Competent people working on tasks who engage, collaborate, and do their best work = optimal performance/results

How does how we talk to each other impact this equation?

Source: The Trust Advantage Course
What Are We Talking About?

What is a difficult conversation?
Feedback Definition

**feed·back (noun)**

/ˈfēd bak/ Clear and specific information that’s sought or extended with the sole intention of helping people or groups improve, grow, or advance.
Exercise 1 - Difficult Feedback Conversations?

- Confronting disrespectful or offensive behavior?
- A colleague violates your trust?
- Critiquing a colleague’s work?
- Talking with a teammate who isn’t keeping commitments?
- Disagreeing with team consensus?
- Giving a critical performance review?
- Confronting dishonesty?
Exercise 1 - Difficult Feedback Conversations? (Cont.)

• Differences in opinion about promotions?
• A colleague “talks down” to you?
• Pointing out that work doesn’t meet standards?
• A colleague takes an inappropriate tone with the auditee?
• You suspect that someone isn’t being transparent?
• Any other topics we could add to the list?
What makes them different?

Opinions vary, stakes are high, and strong emotions.

They can have a huge impact on your life.
How they differ – The Canoe Metaphor
How We Normally Handle These Conversations

The quality of these conversations have a profound impact on individual and team performance.

1. **Avoid them** and development, growth, engagement, and performance suffer.

2. **Handle them poorly** and development, growth, engagement, and performance suffer.

3. **Handle them well** and people develop and grow, engagement rises, and teams and organizations operate at optimum performance levels.
Effective Communication Definition

“Communication between two or more people where the intended message is successfully delivered, received, and understood.”

Source: Effective Communication Course
Obstacles that Block Feedback

Intended Outcome: Learn, improve, grow.
Obstacles that Block Feedback

All feedback is colored by the relationship between the giver and receiver.

Something about the giver – their (lack of) credibility, (un)trustworthiness, or (questionable) motives.

Do they appreciate you? Are they being respectful?

What happens? We reject, defend, or counterattack.

Does learning occur? Do people improve or grow?
Quotes about Feedback

“Feedback is next to useless when it comes from someone we don’t trust.”

“When you lose someone’s trust, it’s like losing your voice. You lose your influence.”

“I can’t hear this feedback from you.”

Source: The Trust Advantage Course
Obstacles that Block Feedback

Truth:
The substance is somehow off, unhelpful, or untrue. It may seem ridiculous or just plain wrong.
The advice is bad; the evaluation is unjust; or someone’s perspective is different.

What happens? We reject, defend, or counterattack.

Does learning occur? Do people improve or grow?
Exercise 2 - Perspective

How many bars do you see?

Audit Manager
QA Professional

Who’s right?

Staff Auditor
Executive Team
Exercise 2 - Perspective

“We argue for our view, we often fail to question one crucial assumption upon which our whole stance in the conversation is built: I’m right, and you’re wrong.

This simple assumption causes endless grief.”

Source: Harvard Negotiation Project
Exercise 2 - Perspective

“Stop arguing about who’s right: explore each other’s stories.”

Source: Harvard Negotiation Project
Firing Cannonballs in a Vacuum
Obstacles that Block Feedback

Identity:

What does this feedback say about “me” – my sense of who I am.

Does this feedback make me wonder if I’m really the person (or auditor, or leader) I think I am?

What happens? We reject, defend, or counterattack.

Does learning occur? Do people improve or grow?
The Arc of Engagement

- Offensive/Hurtful
- Critical/harsh
- Judgmental
- Shortcomings
- Focused on past
- Vague

Engagement Meter:

- Low
- Meh
- High

Abused
Harassed
Slighted
Advocate
Ignored
Tolerated
The Arc of Engagement

Engagement Meter:

- Low
- Meh
- High

- Timely
- Clear and specific
- Growth-oriented
- Actionable
- Open to feedback
- Learning occurs
“Excessive fear, judgement, and criticism renders peak performance neurologically impossible.”

- Sean Pettersen -
Exercise 3 - Feedback Examples

“Our words, and how we choose to use them can debilitate, discourage, or destroy people.”

Source: The Trust Advantage Course
Exercise 3 - Feedback Exercise

What do you think? Clear and Specific? Actionable?

- You rub people the wrong way.
- Your workpapers are clear and concise.
- You’re not good enough.
- Your presentation is boring.
- You’re too introverted.
- Everyone thinks you talk to much.
- You don’t talk enough in meetings.
- Thank you for the hard work on this project…I appreciate you.
- This audit really benefitted from your ideas about the best way to answer the objective.
- You’re not assertive enough.
- Your presentation was engaging and persuasive. Here’s what I liked about it…and here are ways to make it better.

Time Check
Exercise 3 - Feedback Exercise

How would you feel in you were on the receiving end of this feedback?

I saw that you learned how to use Excel pivot tables and it really helped display the data and it made it easier for me to understand.

I appreciate you taking the initiative to learn how to do that, and it shows that you are a great learner and hungry to do the best job possible. Thank you!

The way you gave that “Results of Audit” presentation today really shows me you listened to what I said last month about how we can make these presentations better and more informative for our senior leaders.

I appreciate your mindful application of feedback. We constantly improve because of people like you. Thank you!
Feedback Examples

Walt Disney

At age 22, he was fired from a newspaper for “not being creative enough.”

MGM told him that his idea to put a giant mouse on the screen would “terrify women.”
Feedback Examples
Feedback Examples

Oprah Winfrey

She was fired from a local news station for being “too emotionally invested” in her stories. Her boss said, “she was unfit for tv.”
Feedback Examples

Elvis Presley

The manager of the *Grand Ole Opry* told him that: “you ain’t going nowhere” and “you should go back to driving a truck.”
Early in their career, a record producer turned them away and said, “We don’t like their sound and guitar music is on the way out. They have no future in show business.”
Coaching Analysis – What is influencing behavior?

Identify behavior discrepancy

Is it worth your time and effort?

Do they know performance is unsatisfactory?

Do they know what they are supposed to do?

Do they know how to do it?

The Coaching Discussion to change behavior choices

Agree on the problem

Train them or give them practice

Don’t waste your time.

Give them feedback.

Tell them.

And the list goes on…
Situation-Behavior-Impact

SITUATION
Describe the situation with specifics.

BEHAVIOR
Describe the behavior observed; do not try to guess at motives or causes of the behavior.

IMPACT
Describe the impact the observed behavior had.
Simple Questions
Do you know that…

…you’re going too fast?
…you frequently interrupt your colleagues during team meetings?
…this approach isn’t working for me. Can we explore other options?
…the tone you had with the auditee in that meeting as disrespectful?
…your feedback isn’t clear and specific and I confused about what to do?
…your meetings are really long and people need a break.
“Feedback is one of the most critical requirements for sustained high-level performance of any human act. Without frequent and specific feedback, performance varies and often fails”
Resources for Navigating Difficult Conversations (Cont.)
The “Engaged Feedback Checklist” – Brené Brown

I know I’m ready to give you feedback when:

- I’m ready to listen, ask questions, and accept that I may not fully understand the issue.
- I’m open to owning my part.
- I can model the openness that I expect to see from you.
Parting thoughts...

“Be brave enough to have a conversation that matters.”
- Heather Dugan -
A recommendation...
The Coaching Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Get agreement that problem exists.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Mutually discuss alternative solutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Mutually agree on action to solve problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Follow up to measure results.</td>
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<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Reinforce any achievement when it occurs.</td>
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</tbody>
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The Coaching Analysis

Identify performance discrepancy

Is it worth your time and effort? Yes → Don’t waste your time.
No → Do they know what they’re supposed to do?

Do they know what they’re supposed to do? Yes → Do they know how to do it?
No → Teach them.

Do they know how to do it? Yes → Do they know why they should do it?
No → Teach and give them practice.

Do they know why they should do it? Yes → Are there obstacles beyond their control?
No → Teach them.

Are there obstacles beyond their control? Yes → Remove obstacles.
No → Do they think your way will not work?

Do they think your way will not work? Yes → Convince them.
No → Do they think their way is better?

Do they think their way is better? Yes → Convince them.
No → Are personal problems interfering?

Are personal problems interfering? Yes → Accommodate get the employee to solve your problem.
No → Could they do it if they choose to?

Could they do it if they choose to? Yes → Use the coaching discussion to change the behavior choices.
No → Transfer, demote, or terminate.
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Questions?