

Five Ways to Make Difficult Conversations at Work Easier



Facing conflict is unavoidable at work, but that doesn't mean you have to hide from it. It's important to have these critical conversations so your team and the business can continue to succeed. While not everyone will always get along, and there will be bound to be conflicts, it is essential to conduct yourself in a professional way. Here are five ways to face difficult conversations at work successfully.



Don't Avoid the Conversation

Having a difficult conversation at work is never fun, which is why it's so often avoided. You can keep putting it off, or you can find reasons not to have it at all; but if you do, you risk creating more problems later down the road. Let's say you've got an employee who misses deadlines too often. At first, you might have thought they were just under a lot of pressure. But now is the time to have that difficult conversation. It's better to do it sooner rather than later before it drags down your team's productivity or ruins your relationship with the employee.

It's best to have those tough conversations now so that they'll be easier and more natural the next time you'll need to have a critical conversation.

Have the Right Mindset

The right mindset can help you overcome your nerves of difficult conversations. It's easy to get bogged down by negative self-talk during tense situations: but it's more effective to change your mindset and focus on how you can be helpful or find common ground. With the right mindset and clear communication, you'll see better outcomes in your conversation and build stronger relationships with your team along the way.

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Get Comfortable with Uncomfortable Conversations

If you want to improve how you handle difficult conversations, work on getting comfortable with uncomfortable conversations. When you don't procrastinate or dance around the issue and clearly communicate the issue at hand, you'll build better relationships and improve your communication skills.

Having tough conversations forces companies to bring uncomfortable issues out into the open. And it can help your organization address them head-on, especially when it comes to critical matters like employee performance or employee misconduct.

Be Empathetic

One of the most effective ways to make someone more comfortable in a difficult conversation is to make sure they understand why you're having it and what outcome you're expecting. This clear communication will help the individual feel less defensive and more involved and supported.

Consider how the other person will feel during the conversation and give them time to process their emotions. Clearly explain why you're having the meeting to help them fully understand your perspective. If you see them struggling, pause for a minute so they can gather their thoughts. If they start to get emotional, appreciate how they feel and reassure them that you're providing this feedback because you care. If you spot a coworker being late on deadlines, start the conversation with something like, "Hey there, I just wanted to see if you're okay? I notice you've been missing some deadlines lately. Is there anything I can help with? How about we come up with a plan, so we get everything back on track?"

Find a Solution

When you're having a tough conversation, the main goal to keep in mind should be developing an actionable solution. For example, if you have an employee who keeps missing deadlines, tell them that you want to discuss a few ways they can improve their performance by finding the root of the issue. If it seems like they are late because of not being organized enough, suggest getting them an online calendar to log their tasks and appointments.

When a conflict arises, it pays to stay calm, respectful, and professional. These strategies will help you navigate difficult conversations at work by increasing your potential and strengthening relationships.

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