

Conducting Productive Crucial Conversations

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Martin G. Heltai

Balanced, Nutty and Easygoing

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Managing projects would be much more successful if people were not involved

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Framework of today's talk

- Conversations with:
 - *People who are accountable to us*
 - *People who we are accountable to*
 - *Peers*

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What is a "Crucial Conversation"?

- Potentially adversarial situation where there are:
 - *Strong feelings leading to*
 - Strong emotions and
 - High stakes (perceived or real)

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Some Typical Crucial Conversations

- Performance evaluations
- Communicating bad news
- Communicating good news
- Major change
- Discipline/Firing/RIF
- ...other...

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Typical approach

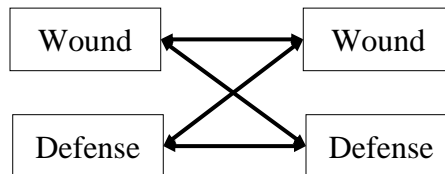
- Avoidance
- As brief as humanly possible
- Necessitates labeling or
- Placating

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Typical approach – Armored



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“...if you don’t know where you’re going you are going to get there”

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“...if you don’t know what to talk about any topic will do”

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Speaking "Ex Cathedra"



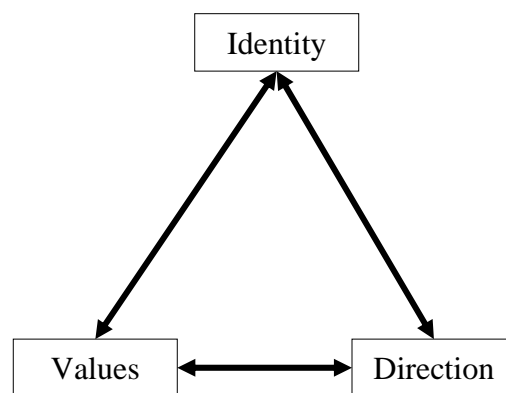
- You speak and are the voice of the organization
- You speak not as an individual but as a representative of your seat

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Foundation of crucial conversations

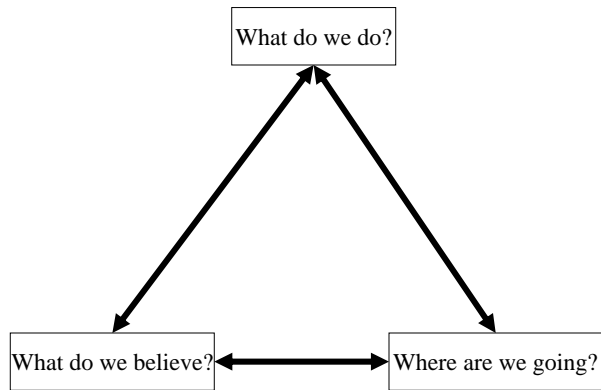


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Foundation of crucial conversations



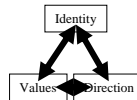
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Needs of an organization

- Fundamental needs
- Operational needs
 - *Structure*
 - *Money/Profit*
 - *Expression*
- Conversation about how *some* aspect of the above needs are/are not met



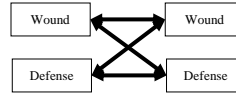
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Causes

- Causes of unproductive conversations



- *Negative Moralistic Judgment (labels)*
- *Advice giving*
 - "To every complex problem there is a solution that does not work"

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Needs of People

- Connection
- Honesty
- Respect
- Fun/Play
- Peace
- Physical well being
- Autonomy

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Meeting the needs of people at work

From:

- Do whatever you are told
- Your job does not matter
- Don't know how well you are doing
- Who you are does not add anything to the job
- Don't say anything
- No control over your work

To:


- Job belongs to you
- You are responsible
- Job counts for something
- You know where you stand
- Meaningful input
- Significant control over your work

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Decision making spectrum*

Increasing level of authority in decision 

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
DEVELOPMENT GOAL	DEVELOPMENT GOAL	DEVELOPMENT GOAL	DEVELOPMENT GOAL	DEVELOPMENT GOAL
To provide you with clear information to assist in developing understanding of the issue(s), alternatives opportunities and solutions.	To obtain feedback from you on alternatives and solutions to the problem.	To work with you directly throughout the process to ensure that your concerns ideas and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with you in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place the final solution and decision in your hands.
THE AGREEMENT	THE AGREEMENT	THE AGREEMENT	THE AGREEMENT	THE AGREEMENT
I will keep you informed.	I will keep you informed listen and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide you with feedback on how your input influenced the decision.	I will work with you to ensure that your concerns ideas and aspirations are directly reflected in solution/alternatives developed and to provide you with feedback on how your input influenced/shaped the decision.	I will look at you for expertise and direct advice in formulating the solution/decision and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.	What you decide will be implemented.

* Adapted from "Public participation spectrum", International Association of Public Participation.
www.iap2.org

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Framework for unproductive conversation

- Lack of clarity on organizational needs
- Lack of clarity on our own needs
- Lack of clarity of the other person's needs

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Needs vs. Strategy

- Needs are non-negotiable
- Strategies are negotiable
- Most conflicts occur because confusing needs and strategies to meet them

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Language of confusion

- I need for you to...
- You did good
- You did bad
- You are great
- She/he is a...

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Manipulative Parallel Monologues

- Convey information
- "Perfomative utterances"
- Persuade
- Impress
- Achieve solidarity

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Conducting effective crucial conversations

Intentional communications

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Eliminating confusion

- Personal motivation
 - *Attitude*
 - *Intention*
 - *Feelings*
 - State needs clearly
 - *Your own*
 - *Organization's*
1. Make observations rather than judgments
 2. State the consequences of observation
 3. Perhaps how you feel about the observed event
 4. *Negotiate* rather than *demand* strategies to meet both *individual* and *organizational* needs

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Three Basic Communications Modes

1. Competitive or Combative Communications
2. Passive or Attentive Communications
3. Active or Compassionate Communications

- Performance evaluations
- Communicating bad news
- Communicating good news
- Major change
- Discipline/Firing/RIF

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Competitive/Combative

- More interested in promoting our own point of view
 - *Listen for an opening*
 - *Weak point or flaw*

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Passive/Attentive

- We are genuinely interested in hearing and understanding the other person's point of view
 - *We are attentive and passively listen*
 - *We assume that we heard and understand correctly*
 - *To passive to verify*

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Active/Compassionate

- We are genuinely interested in understanding what the other person needs, is thinking feeling, wanting or what the message means
 - *Active in checking our understanding*
 - *We restate or paraphrase our understanding of the message*

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Communicating with compassion

- Tell your story
- Listen to other's stories
- Listen for *word* and *emotion*
- Express fear, anger, hopes, or dreams for the future
- Explain what you think
- Listen to what they think
- Reflect!!!
- Show genuine vulnerability
- Assume responsibility
- Seek understanding
- Find humanity/basic goodness in all people
- Express *empathy* not *sympathy*

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As a listener...

- Come ready to listen
- Suspend judgment and advice giving
- Ask strategic questions to draw out speaker
- Seeks clarification
- Compare their understanding with your intended message
- You don't have to agree, but you have to understand their words
- Hear both verbal and non-verbal cues
- Become aware of your own thoughts, feelings, reactions
- Remain open to what connects you to the other person
- Fight the temptation to interrupt and answer immediately
- Make request not demands
- Stop talking!

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10 guiding principles

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Guiding Principle 1

- The most important factor in interpersonal (team) communications is the *intention* and *attitude* beneath the communications

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Guiding Principle 2

- Communication is measured by the *results* not the *effort*

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Guiding Principle 3

- Communication is an exercise to connect *with* and not connect *to*
 - Empathetic vs.
 - Sympathetic

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Guiding Principle 4

- The genuine motivation of most individuals is to contribute productively and they always have something valuable to offer but are not necessarily skilled in their communications

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Guiding Principle 5

- About 30-50% of what is said is not heard

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Guiding Principle 6

- In communications the most important need people have is for empathy/understanding

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Guiding Principle 7

- Empathy before education increases your chances of being heard and understood

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Guiding Principle 8

- Sharing what you are feeling and what you need before making a request vastly increases the chance of having your request met

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Guiding Principle 9

- Ask the listener to reflect the message you sent

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Guiding Principle 10

- The fundamental ground of all successful conversations is based on:
 - Honesty
 - Empathy
 - Trust

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Building Cathedrals



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The result of successful crucial conversations

- Create the complex relationship of all elements that form a whole.
- Successful crucial conversations are essential for building cathedrals



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Resources

- Crucial Conversations by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler
- Non-violent Communications by Marshall Rosenberg

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Thank you

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