Mastering Crucial Conversations

Presenter
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“The art of communication is the language of leadership”

David Hume - philosopher, historian, economist, and essayist


Why is Effective Communication Important?

- It is the MOST important skill in leadership and management.
- According to employee surveys across the country, employees put communication at the top of their frustration list.
- To create a productive environment that includes trust and respect, effective communication must be a high priority.

Source: Supervisory Training, Washington State University
Communication Defined

- The process of sharing an idea with someone in a fashion that generates understanding.

Transmission

Sender
Message (Frame of reference, interpretations)
Receiver
Feedback

Source: Supervisory Training. Washington State University

How does communication breakdown?

- Two common sources of "noise"
- Frame of reference issues
- Focus on activity rather than outcome

Source: Supervisory Training. Washington State University

Communication Breakdown

The most common factors causing a breakdown in communication are context issues and "noise".

Frame of Reference

- Frame of reference is defined as “the cognitive and emotional viewpoint from which an individual perceives and interprets reality.”
- Three common issues in frame of reference:
  - Cultural
  - Personal
  - Situational: Consider the sender/receiver relationship
- For communication to be effective, there must be overlapping frames of reference on the part of the sender and receiver.

Example of Communication Breakdown Context or Frame of Reference

Focus on Activity versus Outcome

- Communicators need to focus on “how” they communicate and less on “what” they intend to communicate.
- Communicators should ask the following questions:
  - What is my desired outcome with this communication?
  - What do I want others to think, feel, and do after receiving this message?
- Feedback is critical to ensuring understanding.

Source: Supervisory Training, Washington State University
Three Critical Components of Effective Communication

- A clearly stated message
- A common frame of reference
- A two-way exchange

Source: Supervisory Training, Washington State University

Keys to Effective Communication

- Build trust
- Share knowledge
- Provide feedback
- Walk the talk
- Ensure verbal and non-verbal communication is in “sync”
- Effective listening is critical to effective communication

Source: Supervisory Training, Washington State University

To Summarize

In addition to ensuring the communication process is effective, successful communication also includes:

- Building trust
- Sharing knowledge
- Providing feedback
- Actively Listening

Introduction to Crucial Conversations

According to Stephen Covey in the foreword of this book:

- Defining moments come from “crucial” or “breakthrough” conversations.
- Nothing fails like success!
- The stresses and pressures we all experience have increased exponentially.
- Solutions must be synergistic – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Crucial conversations create bonding.
- They show how to effectively blend intellectual and emotional intelligence.
- To know and not to do, is really not to know!

What is a Crucial Conversation?

- A crucial conversation is defined as “a discussion between two or more people where 1) stakes are high, 2) opinions vary, and 3) emotions run strong.”

How Do We Typically Handle Crucial Conversations?

- We avoid them
- We face them and handle them poorly
- We face them and handle them well

Source: Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler
Dialogue – The Core of Crucial Conversations

- Get all relevant information out into the open
- Dialogue: The free flow of meaning between two or more people
- How do we get to dialogue?
  - Personal pools of meaning – our own opinions, feelings, theories, and experiences about the topic at hand.
  - Dialogue leads to a pool of “shared meaning”.
  - The Pool of Shared meaning is the birthplace of synergy.

What is your communication style under stress?

Interpreting your Style Under Stress Score

Your “Style Under Stress” score indicates how likely you are to move toward Silence (masking, avoiding, or withdrawing) OR Violence (controlling, labeling, or attacking).

- Both Silence and Violence had six statements and your score in each can range from 0-6. The lower the score, the better. The higher the score in each, the more likely you are to move to either Silence or Violence.
- Now look at your score in using the Crucial Conversations skills. Each of the Crucial Conversations principles has three responses, so you can score between 0-3 in each category. The higher the score the better.
**Crucial Conversations Process**

- Start with the heart
- Learn to look
- Make it safe
- Master your stories
- State YOUR path
- Explore other's paths
- Move to action

*Source: Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler*

**Let's hear from one of the authors of Crucial Conversations......**

**Start with the Heart**

- Work on “me” first
- Focus on what you really want
- Refuse the Sucker’s Choice

*Source: Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler*
Learn to Look
- Learn to look at content and conditions
- Look for when things become crucial
- Learn to watch for safety problems
- Look to see if others are moving toward silence or violence
- Look for outbreaks of your Style Under Stress

Source: Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler

Make It Safe - Tools to Help Restore Safety
- Determine which aspect of safety is at risk... Mutual Respect or Mutual Purpose.
- Apologize when appropriate
- Contrast to fix misunderstanding
  - Address others' concerns that you don't respect them or that you have malicious purpose (the don't part)
  - Confirm your respect or clarify your real purpose (the do part)
- CRIB to look for Mutual Purpose
  - Commit to seek Mutual Purpose
  - Recognize the purpose behind the strategy
  - Invent a Mutual Purpose
  - Brainstorm new strategies

Source: Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler

Master your Stories
- What story are you telling to yourself?
- How can you be aware of your own bias?
- Are strong emotions keeping you from getting to the real issue?
  - Reduce your path (notice your behavior, identify your actual feelings, analyze your narrative, check your own facts)
  - Tell the rest of the story (go back to the heart, look at what you really want, and examine your own role in the problem)

Source: Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler
**STATE YOUR Path**

- Share your facts
- Tell your story
- Ask for other’s paths
- Talk tentatively
- Encourage testing

**Explore Other’s Paths**

Use listening techniques when others are having difficulty communicating.

- Ask
- Mirror
- Paraphrase
- Prime

If your paths are different...

- Agree
- Build
- Compare

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Source: Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler
Move to Action-Making Decisions and Planning Results

- Decide how to decide
  - Command - decisions made by one person
  - Consult - input gathered, but a subset or supervisor decides
  - Vote - Agreed upon percentage makes a decision
  - Consensus - everyone must agree and support final decision

- Finish cleanly
  - Who, what and by when
  - Set follow-ups

Putting it All Together

Paired Practice

- Find a partner
- Discuss the subject of the crucial conversation we’ve been working with today.
- Discuss/practice what you need to say using Crucial Conversations principles
  - Begin with knowing what you really want from the conversation
  - Try having the crucial conversation
  - Give/Listen to feedback
“Pick a relationship. Pick a conversation. Let others know you are trying to improve. When you blow it, admit it. Don’t expect perfection; aim for progress. And when you succeed, celebrate your success!”

Source: Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzer
Tips for Effective Online Business Communications

Presented by
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Types of Online Business Communication

• E-mail
• Social Media – Facebook, Snap Chat, etc.
• LinkedIn
• Skype
• Online Meeting Software

Online Communication Etiquette

• Always keep in mind that your online image speaks volumes!
• Bear in mind these tips when doing business communications online:
  • Stay Neutral
  • Follow grammar and punctuation rules
  • Know how to use communication tools
  • Always consider your virtual recipients
  • Take care choosing your professional username
  • Pick up the phone when necessary
Meeting the Demands of Online Business Communication

- "Continuous Partial Attention"
- "Information Addiction"
- Managing expectations of online business communication