

# Tackling Tough Conversations

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*“What we have here is a failure  
to communicate.”*

- from the movie **Cool Hand Luke**

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*Striving – Performing – Achieving*

# Business Coaching and Consulting

We help our clients implement sustainable change and achieve greater results. We help **companies** to become more profitable, **teams** to work better together, and **individuals** to reach more of their potential.

Frequently our work focuses on:

- **Organizational and personal excellence**
- Improving productivity, reducing costs
- **Leadership development**
- Acquisitions and strategic partnerships
- Increasing customer loyalty
- Developing and operationalizing strategic plans
- Marketing, Increasing sales,

and other areas that impact a company's bottom line or a person's level of success.

# Overview of IABC

## Our members hold positions in:

- Public relations/Media relations
- Corporate communications
- Public affairs
- Investor relations
- Government relations
- Marketing communication
- Community relations
- Writing
- Editing
- Training
- Advertising
- Photography and video production
- Graphic design
- Human resources
- Teaching

# Today's Objective

To provide you with a methodology by which you can achieve better results when dealing with *tough conversations*.

*Via:* Presentation of relevant information  
Interactive discussion & role play  
Q & A  
Challenge; Next Steps

# What is Communication?

A 2-way exchange of ideas (sent and received).

Q: Whose responsibility is it to make sure what is received is what was intended?

A: Yours – both as a sender and as a receiver.

# Purpose of Communication?

***To elicit some sort of behavioral response (a call to action).***

An exchange of communication that does not prompt a specific action, an emotional response, increased knowledge, or a better understanding is not effective communication.

√ Check for UNDERSTANDING

√ Check for IMPACT

# What Drives Effective Communication?

Understanding the importance of *non-verbal* communication.

## 1. Words (*what you say*)

“As soon as possible”

“As soon as you have time”

“Right now”

“When you can fit it into your schedule”

## 2. Tone of Voice (*how you say it*)

Angry, Bored, Frustrated vs. Upbeat, Warm, Clear, Under Control, Caring

## 3. Body Language (*who you are*)

Concern (eye contact, open position)

Fear (hunched shoulders, poor eye contact)

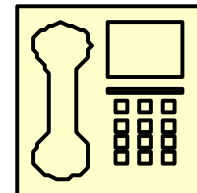
Confidence (head high, shoulders back)

Rejection (crossed arms/legs)

# What Drives Effective Communication?

Understanding the importance of *non-verbal* communication.

|               | <u>Face to Face</u> | <u>On the Phone</u> |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Words         | 7%                  | 16%                 |
| Tone of Voice | 38%                 | 84%                 |
| Body Language | 55%                 | N/A                 |



# What is a “Tough Conversation”?

Crucial Conversation: A discussion between two or more people where (1) stakes are high, (2) opinions vary, and (3) emotions run high.

Source: “Crucial Conversations” by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler

Difficult Conversation: Anything you find it hard to talk about.

Source: “Difficult Conversations” by Stone, Patton & Heen

Also: “Fierce Conversations” by Susan Scott

# We Are Masters at Avoiding Tough Conversations

**Politics**      *Schooling; Grades*      **HEALTH**  
*Parenting*      **Equality**  
*Upset customer*  
**Money**      *Missed deadline*      *Over budget*  
*Relationships*      **ECONOMY**      *Job*      *Vendor issue*  
**In-Laws**      *Religion*      *Problem employee*  
**Chores**      **Performance Reviews**      *Kids*

# Tough Conversations

Almost never about getting the facts right.

- Conflicting perceptions, interpretations and values
- Not about what is *true* but what is *important* !
  - *E.g., not about what a contract states but what a contract means*

# Tough Conversations: How to Achieve a Better Outcome?

- Begin with the right motives and start with the positives
- Focus on what we really want (and don't want) to get out of this tough conversation (motives, motivations, desires, needs)
- Leverage the common ground (chip away at the differences)
- Evaluate all possibilities. Refuse to be limited to these two ugly options: 1) attacking someone in the name of honesty or 2) withholding the truth in the name of being kind

People thrive best when the feedback they receive is in ratios around 5 positive for each 1 negative.

# Tough Conversations: How to Achieve a Better Outcome?

- Ask open-ended questions
- Confirm understanding; ask for clarification
- Maintain mutual trust and respect
- Speak “peer to peer”
- Learn to notice when someone is no longer feeling comfortable and help get them back to a place of “safety”, so they can talk about almost anything

People speak more openly and freely when they're not attacked or overpowered...in other words, when they **feel safe.**

## Some Useful Questions

- ⇒ “Can you give an example of this?”
- ⇒ “Tell me more about that...”
- ⇒ “Why is that important to you?”
- ⇒ “Why haven’t you been able to address this?”
- ⇒ “So your point is that...”
- ⇒ “I appreciate your position. Can we discuss...?”
- ⇒ “What is your greatest fear about this situation?”

# What You Must Understand About the Other Party

- What brought them to where they are now
- That they likely feel just as strongly about their position as you feel about yours
- That they are uncomfortable too
- What they want/need from this conversation
- That they prefer to reach an outcome (and a “satisfactory” one)

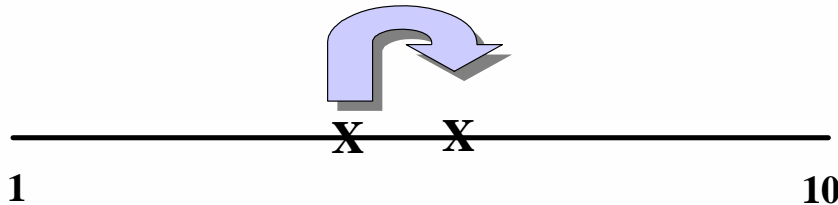
# A Methodology

1. Write Goal or Desired Result
2. List Rewards or Benefits
3. List Consequences
4. Identify Obstacles
5. Identify Potential Solutions
6. Detailed Action Steps

# A Challenge For You

On a Scale of 1-10 for Effective Communication

Where are you on the line?



What would it mean if you  
could move 2 points?

Where are you on this line?

What would it mean if you  
move two points in the  
positive direction?

What would it mean to you  
personally, professionally?  
What would it mean to your  
team or organization?

What action will you take to  
move 2 points?

The results could have a huge impact on the quality of your life!