

HOW TO HAVE DIFFICULT CONVERSATION WITH STAFF



INTRODUCTION

Lets face it, as leaders, we need to have difficult conversations with our team at some point in time. Maybe its a conversation around promotions, areas of improvement, or sometimes even letting someone go.

While it is never easy to have such conversations, there are steps we can take to ensure that these conversations, although difficult, are as effective and as pain-free as possible.

BE DIRECT

First and foremost, you need to be direct. Get to the point quickly. Difficult conversations become even more difficult if you turn it into a long, drawn out process. A lot of times, the person we are speaking to already knows what is coming, so rather than doing a song and dance about it, get to the point.

BE SPECIFIC

You also need to be specific. Fully explain why the conversation is happening and be honest and thorough about it.

Provide examples so the other person clearly understands that you are not making things up. The more specific and clear you are, the better the critiques will be received.

PLAN OUT THE CONVERSATION

Next, plan out the conversation. You want to consider what you are going to say and how the other person might take it. Think of the questions that may be asked and prepare answers in advance. The more prepared you are, the better the conversation will be.

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE AND YOUR TONE

You also need to watch your language and your tone. The tone and words that you use during the conversation matter a lot.

Nobody takes critique well when delivered in a bad tone, so respect your staff and watch your tone. You will also want to talk about the outcome you want to see from them. If the issue is with a staff's discipline, explain it to them and talk about the benefits of having a disciplined team. Focusing on the positive outcome provides something solid for the staff to work towards and helps them realise why they are having the conversation with you in the first place.

BE EMPATHETIC

Next, be empathetic. Remember, the conversation isn't just di cult for you, it is just as di cult or even more di cult for the other party! Think about how your staff will feel during the conversation and give them space to process their thoughts and emotions. If you see them struggling with it, give them even more space and time to collect themselves.

TURN NEGATIVE ATTITUDES INTO POSITIVE

Explain the reasons behind why the conversation is happening to help them fully understand where you are coming from and let them know the conversation is happening because you want them to succeed.

ALLOW THE OTHER PERSON TO ASK QUESTIONS

Next, make sure to allow the other person to ask questions.

Asking questions allows the other party to process what is happening during the conversation. It also allows you to know what they are thinking and how to move the process forward. Whenever you find that the other person is confused, ask clarifying questions to check understanding.

OFFER A SOLUTION

Finally, you need to offer a solution. The conversation can't only be around what's gone wrong, it needs to also have a conclusion and next steps. If the conversation is around them not getting a raise, don't only explain why they aren't getting a raise, explain what needs to happen for them to get a raise in the future.

If the conversation is to fire an employee, explain why they're being let go and what would help them improve for future roles at different companies.

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