



# **DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

**Practical Tactics for  
Crucial Communication**

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## Introduction

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Conflict. Confrontation. Controversy. Disagreement. Tension. They happen in the workplace—and in life. Would you like to know how to talk effectively about touchy topics? Could you use some techniques for dealing with defensive or unpleasant co-workers, something you can use even before the conversation begins?

Difficult conversations are everywhere. They range from silly to scary and sometimes tragic. Have you ever found yourself facing one of these uncomfortable scenarios?

- *One of your co-workers frequently makes funny/sarcastic remarks about your appearance. It hurts your feelings, but instead of speaking up for yourself, you go along to get along.*
- *Your employee gripes and complains about everything from the weather to the workload. His negativity is bringing everyone down.*

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- *Your co-worker has just shared the third off-color joke this week, even though you've never even smiled at the "humor."*
- *The brightest star on your team blew a major client presentation yesterday and you need to find out what happened.*
- *Your controller has just informed you that two of your managers have been charging personal expenses on company credit cards and you need to discuss the issue with them.*

All of these scenarios represent potential conflict. No workplace is free from conflict and whether that conflict is minor or major—from petty gripes to embezzlement--it demands one thing: *initiating difficult conversations*. A misunderstanding between co-workers, or even something as simple as a disagreement in a meeting, happens regularly. For the sake of both personal and corporate well-being, it's worth speaking up and working it through.

Conflict has the potential to produce one of two outcomes:

- (1) either it will escalate and breed further conflict, or
- (2) it will be resolved and lead to greater understanding, teamwork, and productivity.

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Although not all conflicts will be resolved for a positive outcome, they can be managed in a way that will decrease the odds of creating major damage.

Conflict is defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. You want a raise. Your boss has his eye on the bottom line. You think your assistant is a mediocre performer. She thinks she's doing a great job.

Managing these and other conflicts successfully means learning how to have difficult conversations. It involves working through your fears, acquiring some special communication skills, and developing a customized strategy for dealing with the kinds of conflict unique to your business environment.

Before you jump feet first into the shark tank of conflict resolution, you first need to understand what conflict is and how its costs are impacting you and your organization. This book will take a look first at the psychology of conflict and why we as human beings react to it as we do. With that foundation, we'll provide you with a detailed communication strategy that can be adapted to virtually any situation. Then the book will go through a catalog of difficult conversations that every individual might face and help you create a virtual tool kit so you can manage these conversations for a productive outcome.

# Chapter 1

## The Costs of Conflict

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Disagreements and conflict in the workplace come at a very high price. Some of the costs are literal and obvious; some are subtle and hidden.

### Financial costs

According to the *Washington Business Journal* the typical manager spends between 25% and 40% of his or her time dealing with conflicts. That's one to two days of every work week devoted to unproductive activity. You can drop that straight to the bottom line.

Here are a few more statistics to drive the point home. In a workplace study conducted by CPP, Inc. more than 85% of workers reported experiencing conflict on the job. These employees spent an average of 2.8 hours each per week dealing with some kind of conflict, for a total annual cost of \$359 billion.

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Chronic and unresolved conflicts are a factor in more than 50% of employees' decisions to leave a company. When you learn that the cost to replace a lost employee can be up to 150% of his or her annual salary, you can begin to see the hard costs of conflict avoidance.

Productivity loss is a factor, even if an employee remains on the job. Tension and stress causes people to escape into non-work-related activities, such as gossiping about the situation with co-workers, playing computer games or disappearing from their desk or workspace. A study conducted by James Cram and Richard MacWilliams found that such activity can reduce the productive work week to fewer than 20 hours.

### **Physical and psychological costs**

Stress! Research had been conducted, books have been written and seminars have been presented on how stress affects our physical and emotional well-being. Workplace conflict and the resulting stress are among the top eight reasons why employees seek mental health counseling, studies show. High stress causes depression, back pain, and other physical ailments, which has a direct impact on worker health care costs. In fact, it increases these costs more than the usual suspects--obesity, smoking or high blood pressure. Health care costs are 46% higher for workers who feel they are under continual stress due to workplace conflicts.



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Conflict-related stress can cause workplace accidents, as well as being responsible for emotional or verbal abuse, road rage, bullying, harassment, and even assault. It's not a pretty picture, is it?

But here's the flip side: workplace conflicts also present an opportunity. Properly managed, conflict has an abundance of positive potential. If you learn to have the difficult conversations, you can stimulate performance improvement and promote creativity in ways that constant peace and harmony often do not. So before we think that eliminating conflict is the solution to all our problems, let's see why we avoid it and how we might instead use it to our advantage. Here's the possibility: when you engage another person in a conversation, no matter how difficult, you open up space for understanding. Even though you may disagree, you can begin to work together with less tension. Productivity goes up as collaboration improves. You don't have to waste energy thinking of ways to avoid the other person.

### **The Ostrich Syndrome**

You've probably seen the cartoons of a silly-looking long-necked bird with his head stuck deep in a sand dune. The human parallel is obvious. Whatever threatens the ostrich faces, he simply covers his eyes with sand and pretends they are not happening. When it comes to having difficult conversations, we often do the same. Unproductive as that may be, there are several rational reasons why we avoid these situations.

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Have you ever faced the prospect of a difficult conversation with thoughts like these?

- “Please, I just want you to like me.”
- “I don’t want to talk about it.”
- “This is going to be a disaster.”
- “I see revenge and retribution in my future.”

**“Please, I just want you to like me.”** We all want to be liked. It’s a natural human instinct. But when you need to have a difficult conversation, you’re seen as “the bearer of bad news” and we all know what happens to those people. They get rejected, sometimes permanently. You fear that rejection so instead of initiating the conversation, you opt to sit it out and hope someone else will deliver the bad news and leave you out of it. Or you hope the problem will go away by itself. That hardly ever happens and, left alone, the problem may get worse. Avoiding difficult conversations can be hazardous to your career. If you fail to act and take responsibility for the outcome, you’ll be seen as a weak and ineffective manager. This can interfere substantially with your upward mobility. Learn to live with the fact that not everyone is going to like you. Work to gain their respect instead.

**“I don’t want to talk about it.”** Confrontation is hard. It demands planning, clear thinking, and the guts to say what needs to be said. You may have one of those components, but not all of them at once. Perhaps you have a very clear idea of what you want to say, but you’re running short of the courage to express it. Or you may have the

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courage without the plan and you'll end up confronting someone about the wrong issue. Conflict, even constructive conflict, just isn't fun. Given the chance, you'll tend to settle for a fake peace rather than do what it takes to engage in conflict and create a positive outcome.

**“This is going to be a disaster.”** All of us are prone to catastrophic thinking at one time or another. In your mind, you've concocted a story of what's going to happen if you confront the person you are in conflict with: He will hate you forever. She will throw a temper tantrum and quit on the spot. You'll handle the situation so badly you'll get fired and never work again. When you catch yourself in this thought process, write down exactly what you're thinking. Make it as dramatic as possible—a tragedy of titanic proportions. When you see it on paper, you can begin to appreciate how ridiculous your fantasies are. And you can choose another ending to the stories you're telling yourself.

**“I see revenge and retribution in my future.”** When someone does you wrong, it's human nature to want to get even. Thus, when confronting a co-worker with a difficult conversation, we fear they will plot ways to retaliate. Retaliation can range anywhere from someone ignoring you in the coffee room to sabotaging your pet project or bad-mouthing you via email and copying your boss. The tools we're providing you later in this book can help you set up the conversation in ways that can stop retaliation before it starts.

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All these barriers to successful conflict resolution boil down to one essential fact: *it takes a significant level of communication skills to manage difficult conversations effectively*. Luckily, these skills can be learned through planning and practice. Use the template in the next section to prepare yourself to handle workplace conflicts—large and small—with greater effectiveness.

### **Take Action Now**

Schedule time this week to do the following:

1. Write a list of workplace conflicts or confrontations, past or present, that have affected you in your workplace.
2. Make notes about “ostrich syndrome” reactions you’ve had in the past.
3. Write down some ideas for handling difficult conversations differently in the future.

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## Chapter 2

# A Template for Communication

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Don't wait until a difficult situation surfaces to get prepared. Once something happens, you won't always have time to plan a strategy. You'll feel much more confident about difficult conversations in general if you have a plan in mind. To develop a plan, you can adapt the following template to almost any situation that might arise in your workplace.

For example, let's say that Barbara, one of your team's star performers, has just blown a major client presentation. You need to confront the situation immediately and provide coaching so that it doesn't happen again. Your communication process should have three components:

- Preparation
- Conversation
- Conclusion

## Difficult Conversations

### Preparation

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Before you have the conversation, be clear in your own mind about the issue. Spend whatever time you need to plan your interaction and make some notes for yourself.

Here's your outline:

**1. What is the problem?**

(Barbara blew the presentation. Be specific. What exactly did Barbara do that was wrong or that could have been done better?)

**2. What impact did Barbara's performance have?**

(You might lose the client. She made both you and the team look bad.)

**3. How do you feel about the situation?**

(Angry, let down, frustrated, puzzled.)

**4. How do you think Barbara perceives the situation?**

(She might be embarrassed or defensive. Or she could be unaware of her poor performance.)

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5. **What assumptions are you making about Barbara? Are you being objective or are you telling stories in your head?**

(Barbara is out to sabotage the team. Maybe she's having problems at home. Maybe she's ill.)

6. **What do you want to accomplish when you meet with Barbara?**

**Visualize the desired outcome. What is negotiable? What is not?**

(Barbara needs to see the situation from your perspective. She needs to be open to coaching. She should redo the presentation and schedule another meeting with the client.)

## The Conversation

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### Step 1: How to get started

Your #1 priority is to have the conversation promptly when a specific incident has occurred. The longer you put it off, the more challenging and uncomfortable it will become. It takes courage to initiate the conversation, but the sooner you do it, the quicker it will begin to heal.

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Before you schedule a meeting, decide on an appropriate location and a time limit, so you can let the other person know what to expect. What's appropriate depends on the situation, but to continue the Barbara scenario, you might want to choose a neutral location which would be less intimidating than your office or Barbara's workspace.

Here's a sample conversation starter:

*"Hi Barbara. I'd like to take half an hour or so to review yesterday's meeting with XYZ Company. I need your help to understand what happened and talk about what we should do next. Could we meet downstairs for coffee at 10?"*

Difficult conversations run the gamut from slightly uncomfortable to downright threatening. Here are some possible openers you could use for a variety of situations.

- **One of your co-workers is constantly making critical remarks about your work.**

You say:

*"Tim, I'd like to have a good working relationship with you, but I can't do it when you are constantly on my case with your critical remarks."*



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- **An employee's negative attitude is affecting her work and everyone else's mood.**

You say,

*"Carol, you seem really down about a lot of things lately. Is there something going on that we can discuss? I'd like to help you shift this attitude, if I can."*

- **Your supervisor just made a sexually explicit remark.**

You say:

*"Mark, I'm not comfortable with that kind of language. What can we do to make sure this doesn't happen again?"*

- **A client has just informed you that he suspects your accountant has been padding his invoices.**

You say:

*"Casey, I think we may have a problem with some of the recent invoices that have gone out to XYZ Company. I'd like to hear your explanation before we take any action."*

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- **One of your co-workers is constantly challenging you in public and seems to feel very competitive toward you.**

You say:

*"Lisa, I'd like to talk about some of the projects we're working on together. I think we have an opportunity to do some good work together and I'd like to get your input on how to make that happen."*

- **One of your colleagues in another department appears to be undermining your work on a joint project.**

You say:

*"Maria, I understand you had some comments about the XYZ project. Could you share some of your ideas and let's see if we can come up with a unified approach to the situation?"*

Once the other person has agreed to have the conversation, acknowledge his or her willingness to talk. Thank the person, both at the start of the conversation and at the end. A simple "I appreciate the chance to discuss this with you" is sufficient. This will make your discussion seem like a team effort.

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Difficult conversations are seldom held on a level playing field. Rather, they are often venting exercises by the person who's feeling the impact. The other person may not feel heard or understood at all. No matter how you introduce the discussion, all they may see is you, playing the blame game. Take time to show your understanding of the other person. In this way, you can make your partner feel free to participate and make a contribution. It will also make having the next difficult conversation easier because you've shown by your example what an open conversation looks like.

### Step 2: Begin the conversation by listening

No matter what the situation, your first priority is to understand where the other person is coming from. This means listening actively. If you're speaking with Barbara about yesterday's client presentation, stick to open-ended questions that will keep her talking about her viewpoint on the presentation. This is about what Barbara thinks, not about what you think. Focus on what the issues are for her and keep listening. If your listening makes her feel understood, she will be more receptive to hearing your feedback when it's your turn to talk. For example: "Barbara, tell me about the process you went through to prepare the presentation for XYZ."

Now you are listening to her response. Quiet your own internal dialog and don't plan what you're going to say next. Fully listening means giving up your agenda and point of view. When you've created this kind of listening, Barbara will sense that you're

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understanding her. When you are specifically acknowledging what Barbara has said, she feels heard and understood.

Active listening is about being open and non-judgmental. Put yourself in Barbara's shoes. Let go of your assumptions and really hear what's going on. Is she frustrated, angry at herself or someone else, worried, defensive? Listen to her talk until she is finished. Don't interrupt except to acknowledge her. You can do this by mirroring.

### Step 3: While listening, make sure you practice mirroring

Any time you find yourself at odds with someone, stop your judging and evaluating for a moment and simply reflect back the other person's argument as word-for-word or paraphrasing as you can. Then ask for confirmation as to whether you heard it right--and wait for their answer.

*"Wait, Barbara. Before we go any further I want to make sure I understand what you're saying. Please tell me if I've got this right: You think I'm being too picky about the details of the presentation, that it's your project to manage, and that even though I have concerns, the presentation itself went just fine. Is that what you're saying?"*

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Whenever you're using the mirroring technique, there are a few pitfalls to watch out for. Don't revert back to your "boss" mode. All you are trying to do is discover whether you heard Barbara correctly. Bite your tongue to keep from expressing your own opinion, and absolutely avoid anything argumentative, or any "There's where you're wrong" statements.

Don't quote Barbara verbatim because that's more of a phony act than real listening or mirroring. Don't make a mirroring statement just once and then quit. Make sure you and Barbara are tracking. Get her feedback and if she says, "No you're not getting what I'm saying," try mirroring again until the understanding is clear.

### Step 4: Continue the conversation by questioning

Continue the conversation by asking questions. Open-ended questions work best because they keep the conversation going and help you learn more about where Barbara is coming from. Avoid interrogating Barbara or contradicting her statements. Instead, use phrases like:

- ***I didn't realize you felt that way. Could you expand on that a bit?***
- ***I see your point, and I'd like to hear more.***
- ***How did you reach that conclusion?***

### Difficult Conversations

Come from a mindset of interest and discovery and keep the focus on Barbara, not on yourself. Try to learn as much as possible about her point of view.

#### **Step 5: After listening and mirroring, next comes validating.**

As Barbara talks, continue to validate her by questioning, getting more information, mirroring, or paraphrasing what she says. This will let her know whether or not you are “getting” both the information and her feelings accurately. When validation is done correctly, Barbara will feel understood even when her point of view is different than yours. Here are some sample talking points you can practice in advance:

*“I can understand that you feel criticized given that people’s feedback to you was only negative and no-one appreciated your hard work and weeks of preparation.”*

Whatever you hear Barbara saying at this point, stay focused on her reactions, not yours. It’s important to stay in a neutral mind-set during this kind of conversation.

#### **Step 6: Once you’ve validated, you’re ready to show empathy.**

Real empathy means that you feel (or have felt) what the other person is feeling. It suggests that, although you don’t necessarily agree with Barbara’s point of view in this

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situation, you do understand it. When you are being truly empathetic, Barbara will hear you saying, “I’ve done the same thing myself;” or “I’ve had similar ideas about this problem;” or “I understand where you’re coming from.” The benefit of developing your empathy skill is that you can be objective while still seeing the other person’s perspective clearly. This allows you to work together on solutions without getting involved in any emotional reaction Barbara might be having.

### Step 7: Now it’s your turn to talk.

Now it’s time to create a solution. Whenever you’re in a difficult conversation, use “I” statements. Statements that start with “You” sound like finger pointing rather than acceptance and understanding. For example say:

***“I could have worked with you to get some short-term help if you were getting behind,” not “You should have let me know you were overloaded.”***

***“I know what it’s like to get rushed and leave out important information, not “You obviously got rushed at the last minute and left out the statistics we talked about.”***

### **Difficult Conversations**

“You” statements will only put you back on the who-did-what-and-why merry-go-round and will not lead to any productive solutions.

### **Step 8: Concluding the conversation**

When you’re planning your conversation with Barbara, have an ending in mind. You need to reach closure, so that each of you feels satisfied with the outcome and knows what the next steps will be. Here’s what you both need to know:

- What is Barbara going to do next?
- What support will you provide?
- What might get in the way of Barbara staying on track?
- When and how will you follow up?
- How will you both know that the issue has been resolved?

### **Conclusion**

The key to a positive outcome of any difficult conversation is to make sure the incident or behavior is not repeated. Ask Barbara for her thoughts about what each of you might do differently to avoid a recurrence. Make sure you are on the same page about the steps each of you will take to resolve the issue with the client and avoid future problems.

This template and the dialog we’re suggesting can be adapted to almost any conversation. Use it as a guide and modify it as needed. If you’re anticipating a



### **Difficult Conversations**

particularly difficult or uncomfortable interaction, you might try role playing with a friend or family member to help you prepare.

### **Take Action Now**

Schedule time this week to do the following:

- 1. Choose a difficult situation you need to handle.**
- 2. Answer these six questions from the preparation section.**
  - a. *What is the problem?*
  - b. *What impact did this situation have?*
  - c. *How do you feel about the situation?*
  - d. *How do you think the person perceives the situation?*
  - e. *What assumptions are you making about the person? Are you being objective or are you telling stories in your head?*
  - f. *What do you want to accomplish when you meet with this person? Visualize the desired outcome. What is negotiable? What is not?*
- 3. Write down some talking points or a brief dialog.**
- 4. Schedule a time to talk with the other person.**

Start today. Difficult conversations don't get easier with time. You can turn a challenge into an opportunity. With the tools we've provided, you are on your way to having successful, productive conversations.

## Chapter 3

# A How-To Manual for Specific Issues

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Now that you have the basic tools, you can customize and apply them to almost any situation. This chapter will cover eight common workplace scenarios. We will use components of the communications template to create specific talking points that can produce consensus when having these difficult conversations.

### **I need to critique someone's poor performance**

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Poor performance by an employee can consume an excessive amount of your time and drag down the productivity and morale of your entire team.

Your employee, Jason, has missed several deadlines and is doing substandard work on major projects. You need to address it quickly. Don't wait for Jason's scheduled formal review three months or six months from now.

## Difficult Conversations

1 <sup>ST</sup> COMMON WORKPLACE SCENARIO	
<b>Specific Issue:</b>	I need to critique someone's poor performance
<b>The goal:</b>	Performance improvement
<b>The key:</b>	Sharing responsibility for change

When an employee stumbles, it's important to take action immediately. Often managers are tempted to avoid these difficult conversations by keeping a list that gets brought out at the next formal performance review. By that time, the incident has grown cold, maybe it has even been forgotten. For maximum impact, provide feedback—good and bad—as close to the occurrence as possible.

Here are your key action items for talking with Jason:

- **Be supportive.** Even though you've laid the groundwork and thanked Jason for taking time to talk with you, he probably feels ill at ease and defensive. Reassure him that you want to work *with* him to bring his performance up to par.

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- **Be specific.** State the problem exactly

*“Jason, I noticed that you missed your last two deadlines and there were a few key items missing from your reports.”*

- **Discover the why.** Employees perform poorly for a variety of reasons. Jason may not know exactly what you expect of him. He may need training in some aspect of his work. He could have a personal problem that is distracting him. Once you’ve stated the problem, use your active listening skills to really hear what’s going on with Jason.

Possible questions might include:

- (1) How do you feel about these last two reports?
- (2) Do you need some training or coaching to make your job easier?
- (3) What would we have to change in order for you to do better?
- (4) Is there something going on outside the office that’s bothering you?

- **Validate the answers.** Even though you may not agree with Jason’s point of view, continue to make him feel understood with positive feedback.

*“I hear you saying that you have too many competing priorities. How could we change that and still meet our department’s productivity goals?”*

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- **Show empathy.** Let Jason know that you understand where he's coming from, but do it without sharing responsibility for the breakdown in performance.

*"I understand your frustration, Jason. I'm sure you felt bad about missing these deadlines. I wish you had felt more comfortable asking for help."*

- **Outline next steps.** Ask Jason to state exactly what he plans to do. Commit your support to provide what he needs from you, and set a timeline for reevaluation.

*"So Jason, I understand that you'll redo those last three reports by next Friday. And over the next month we'll get you into a research and writing seminar to help you upgrade future reports. Let's get together the end of this month to see how things are going. Does that work for you?"*

Of course, conclude the conversation by thanking Jason for helping you work through the problem and assure him of your continuing support.

## Difficult Conversations

### I want to correct a misunderstanding

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Christy thought you were preparing case studies for the upcoming communications seminar. You were certain your boss had assigned that job to Christy.

2 <sup>ND</sup> COMMON WORKPLACE SCENARIO	
<b>Specific Issue:</b>	I want to correct a misunderstanding
<b>The goal:</b>	Getting the job done on time
<b>The key:</b>	Sharing responsibility

When misunderstandings happen at work, the secret is to focus on finding areas of agreement and common ground. Don't get hung up in trying to pick things apart and figure out where you got off track. Above all, skip the blame game. It doesn't matter who was at fault. What matters is getting to a point of agreement.

- **Take responsibility.** It is perfectly appropriate to acknowledge there is a miscommunication or misunderstanding without feeling the need to make someone else responsible. However, if it will facilitate the conversation, take responsibility for

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what you did that could have caused the misunderstanding. What is most important is the shared goal to figure out how to get the job done.

*"Christy, we seem to have had a misunderstanding about who was preparing the case studies and I am sorry this happened. Can we figure out the best way to move forward now and complete the project on-time for the seminar?"*

- **Listen actively.** In this situation, the desired outcome is to get the case studies done on time. Blaming Christy or making her wrong for the oversight won't accomplish anything. Hear her out first. She may need to vent. Reflect her feelings back to her so that she feels understood. Then ask her to suggest a possible solution. If she continues to be defensive or make excuses, continue to steer the conversation back to the goal.

*"I hear your frustration, Christy, and I get it. How can we work together to make this happen?"*

- **Reach consensus.** Once you have agreed on a solution, summarize your agreements. Who's going to do what and by when? It's usually a good idea to summarize these kinds of agreements in writing too. A quick email to Christy after the conversation is over should handle it.

## Difficult Conversations

### I've had my feelings hurt

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Your co-worker, Bill, consistently makes sarcastic remarks about you, making fun of everything from your hairstyle to your choice of coffee drinks. Lately his comments have been getting more and more insensitive.

3 <sup>RD</sup> COMMON WORKPLACE SCENARIO	
<b>Specific Issue:</b>	I've had my feelings hurt
<b>The goal:</b>	Stop the behavior
<b>The key:</b>	Understand the source

People like Bill say and do things because of who they are, not because of who you are. You can be understanding, but that doesn't mean you should ignore or excuse Bill's verbal jabs.



### Difficult Conversations

The direct approach works best in this situation. Let Bill know that what he said or did hurt your feelings. It's healthier for you to resolve your concern than to let it sit and eat away at you. Avoid self-pity—it won't affect Bill and it will affect your ability to resolve the issue.

Here are three things you can do to change the dynamic between the two of you:

- **Use “I” statements.** For example say,

*“I feel hurt when you make those kinds of comments about me, Bill, especially in front of other people.” Avoid any sentence that starts with “You,” such as “You hurt my feelings,” or “You shouldn’t speak to me like that.” “You” statements will put Bill on the defensive immediately.*

- **Ask for a change.** Simply and specifically, ask Bill to change his behavior.

*“Bill, I’d like you to stop speaking to me like that. What’s a good way for me to remind you if it happens again?”*

This lets Bill know that you’re aware of what he’s doing and you won’t tolerate it, but at the same time, it gives him a choice in how to handle future incidents. Once he becomes a participant in the solution, the two of you are on a more equal footing.

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- **Walk away.** It's entirely possible, actually probable, that Bill's behavior won't change overnight. Habits like sarcasm and verbal abuse are hard to break. If he ignores your efforts to be proactive about the problem, you may have to change your strategy and just ignore him. Above all, however, don't get defensive or acknowledge him in any way. That will only keep the conversation going and let him know that he's getting to you.

### I want to ask for a raise or a promotion

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In a Gallup poll, it states that more than 50% of workers today think they are underpaid. Yet they suffer in silence because they don't want to rock the boat with their boss, they don't want to appear greedy or risk losing a good job. If you think you deserve a raise or a promotion, you need to take the initiative and develop a strategy for a successful negotiation. Sound scary? It doesn't need to.

## Difficult Conversations

4 <sup>TH</sup> COMMON WORKPLACE SCENARIO	
<b>Specific Issue:</b>	I want to ask for a raise or a promotion
<b>The goal:</b>	Moving ahead
<b>The key:</b>	Be prepared

The foundation of a successful negotiation for a raise or promotion is to leave personalities out of the equation. When you enter the process objectively, you get rid of the emotional, take-things-personally mindset. (“She doesn’t respect my work.” Or “He is not being fair.”) Instead, use this template to gain the raise or promotion you deserve.

- **Create a positive mindset.** You need to be confident in yourself and believe that you are worth what you’re asking for. Be bold and willing to take a risk, not with an all-or-nothing attitude, (“I’ll quit if I don’t get what I want”) but from a position of quiet assurance. At the same time, be aware of your boss’s position and point of view. Is the down economy causing him stress? Is she under pressure from superiors to cut costs?

### Difficult Conversations

- **Quantify Your Worth.** You not only need to be confident in yourself, you need to quantify your worth with facts and figures. *Write down and be prepared to list for your boss exactly what you have accomplished in the last six to twelve months.*
  - Have you brought in a new client or customer?
  - Have you taken on new responsibilities or rescued a project that was in trouble?
  - Have you come up with ideas that have saved or made money for the company?

Whenever you can, attach real numbers to your accomplishments, such as “The Billingsley account is going to bring in at least \$2 million this year.”

- **Document Facts and Figures.** Know relevant facts and figures, such as the comparable salary range for your position in similar companies, and how your company is doing financially. If you’ve gotten kudos for a job well done from other managers, or from clients or customers, make a record of it. Compile all your information into a well-organized list and bring it with you to your meeting. You’ll still verbalize the facts in your conversation, but your boss will have a written record to refer to, in case she needs to discuss the matter with her boss or others in the company.

### Difficult Conversations

- **Role play the conversation.** Every good actor rehearses diligently before going on stage and so should you. Role playing will take a lot of the discomfort out of your conversation. Recruit a friend or family member and give them permission to ask tough questions and even to say “no.” If you can’t find a partner, sit in front of a mirror and go through your talking points until you feel relaxed and comfortable.
- **Look to the future.** When you’re in a negotiation, don’t just talk about what you have done—help your boss imagine what you can do. Relate your past and present accomplishments to the company’s future needs. Volunteer to take on a new responsibility or solve a problem that has direct impact on your boss’s success. Again, attach numbers to your proposals whenever you can. When your boss can see your future impact on the bottom line, a raise or promotion is much easier to justify.
- **Start at the top.** Don’t start by asking for the minimum acceptable amount, instead, ask for an over-the-top figure and be prepared to back off until you get to a number you can live with. It’s unlikely you’ll get an exceptional raise all at once anyway. So offer to accept a smaller amount now and schedule a reassessment in three to six months.

### Difficult Conversations

- **Use a fallback strategy.** Not all compensation is monetary, so be prepared to compromise and suggest some non-monetary benefits. If you know the company has some financial challenges, think about perks you would accept in lieu of a raise or promotion, such as additional time off, a telecommuting option, or a better office space.
- **Document the agreement.** Your conversation may have a lot of back and forth, so take responsibility for making sure you end the negotiation in total agreement. If it's customary in your company for the boss or human resources to document such an agreement, that's fine. Otherwise, be prepared to send a follow-up email to all concerned parties that summarizes exactly what was agreed to and a timeline for implementation.
- **Say “thank you!”** When the meeting is over, regardless of the outcome, thank your boss for taking time to talk with you and for considering your request. Thank him again in your follow-up email.

## Difficult Conversations

### I'd like to provide continuing and constructive feedback to my employees

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Constructive feedback, delivered on a somewhat informal and ongoing basis, is an important part of every manager's coaching and mentoring role.

5 <sup>TH</sup> COMMON WORKPLACE SCENARIO	
<b>Specific Issue:</b>	I'd like to provide continuing and constructive feedback to my employees
<b>The goal:</b>	Continuous improvement
<b>The key:</b>	Focus on issues

Some people rely on the “sandwich method” when giving feedback to your employees. Soften criticism with praise, before and after. However, the “sandwich method” is less than effective, because the praise is usually followed with a big “but,” and most employees know exactly what's coming. “Theresa, you're a great designer and I love some of the things you've been doing lately, **but. . .**” And Theresa knows the other shoe is about to drop with a bang. There is a more effective way.

## Difficult Conversations

- **Identify the issue immediately.** Provide the employee with specifics of what you want to discuss. Don't beat around the bush or try to make small talk before you get started.

*“Theresa, I noticed that the slide show for the Stanford report wasn't up to your usual creative standards. I'd like to talk about what happened.”*

- **Use “I” statements.** Start the conversation with “I” statements such as,
  - *“I've noticed,”*
  - *“I understand that,” or*
  - *“It's been reported to me.”*

Avoid accusatory statements like, “You dropped the ball on this,” or “You need to be more productive.” Provide clarity about exactly what occurred.

- **Ask for collaboration.** Include the employee in designing a solution, rather than dictating the outcome you'd like to see. People support what they help to create, so Theresa will produce the results you want if she participates in finding the solution. At the same time, let her know that you're going to share in the process.



### Difficult Conversations

*“Theresa, how could we work together to kick this slide show up a notch? Do we need to get some technical help or look for outside resources?”*

- **Listen, question and validate.** Focus on what Theresa tells you without any interruption or feedback until she has given you her input on the situation. Ask questions to help you clarify her statements.

*“So I hear you saying that you were in an overloaded situation. Were you reluctant to ask for help? How should we handle situations like this in the future?”*

Throughout the conversation, maintain a tone of sincere concern. At all costs, avoid expressing anger, frustration, or disappointment, and especially sarcasm. You’re giving feedback because you want to create awareness that produces improvement in performance. Don’t let the goal be sidetracked by feelings or opinions.

### I’ve got to break some bad news

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Surprise! Not everything’s coming up roses. It happens in every business. It may be a specific incident (a key employee quit in the middle of a major project). Or it may be an

### Difficult Conversations

ongoing problem (a continuing sales decline means your department will miss its profit target this quarter). We'll leave things like firings and layoffs—a different kind of bad news—for a later discussion.

When you have to deliver negative information, especially to your superiors, you need to control the timeline. Use the ASAR formula: As Soon As Ready. That means when *you're* ready and not before. Let's say you've just found out that your department's sales figures are pretty much in free fall. You need to inform your boss before he hears distorted or exaggerated numbers through the grapevine. Don't make a mad dash to the executive suite. You need time to regroup and get your thoughts in order before you deliver the negative news. That may mean delaying your report until tomorrow rather than right now. Tomorrow is still timely, and you'll use the time between to develop a constructive solution.

6 <sup>TH</sup> COMMON WORKPLACE SCENARIO	
<b>Specific Issue:</b>	I've got to break some bad news
<b>The goal:</b>	Create cooperation
<b>The key:</b>	Provide a solution

### Difficult Conversations

- **Plan ahead.** You're going to be delivering the disastrous sales figures to Jeremy, your boss tomorrow morning. Instead of fantasizing the worst possible outcome, visualize a desired outcome. Then, as you're designing your delivery, be sure you state the facts, the steps you're taking to resolve the issue, and what you need from him.
- **Practice.** As with just about every public appearance, practice makes perfect. Rehearse the conversation, either with a trusted colleague or in front of a mirror. You'll become more comfortable and confident about what needs to be said. And, when you deliver the news with confidence, Jeremy is much more likely to respect you, and also to accept the bad news and know that you're doing everything you can to turn the situation around.
- **Avoid sugarcoating.** Get straight to the point.

*"Jeremy, this quarter's sales in my department were 25% under our projections. I knew it was bad, although not that bad. I have a plan for getting us back on track, and I'd like to show you my ideas."*

Avoid unrelated chatter and any other topics that will cloud the issue. It's important for you to concisely explain the situation and the steps you plan to take. Don't try to sugar coat the message and don't make grandiose promises you can't keep.

### Difficult Conversations

- **Listen.** Jeremy will undoubtedly have some input and it may not be all pleasant.

Depending on his personality, he may fly off the handle, get eerily silent or otherwise express his frustration. Let him have his say without arguing, responding, or trying to change his mind. Validate his feelings by reflecting back to him, always with a positive comment to bring him back to solutions.

*“Jeremy, I hear your frustration and I share your feelings, believe me. These figures are bad, but if we start now and take the three steps I outlined, we should be in good shape by the time the next report comes out.”*

### I’m being harassed by a bully in my workplace

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You may have thought you got rid of this problem in the eighth grade. But you’re all grown up, and those school-yard tormenters are still around. However, the methods have changed. Unlike playground bullies who often resorted to intimidating with their fists, workplace bullies prefer using words and actions to intimidate their victims. Having said that, if you sense any kind of physical threat from a bully, contact your building security, human resources, or someone else in a position of authority.

### Difficult Conversations

The first thing you need to know is that it's not your fault. The second thing is that you will need to deal with the bully or he/she will never go away.

7 <sup>TH</sup> COMMON WORKPLACE SCENARIO	
<b>Specific Issue:</b>	I'm being harassed by a bully in my workplace
<b>The goal:</b>	Stop the behavior
<b>The key:</b>	Stand your ground

The reason a bully does what he or she does is that it's worked before and produced the results he wants. He may have even established a climate of fear and intimidation around the office. Here are several approaches to workplace bullies. You may need to use more than one.

- **Be assertive.** And start at once. The sooner you take action to stop the bullying, the more effective you will be. Be clear that you refuse to take it, but keep your conversation focused on what's best for the company, rather than on your needs or

### Difficult Conversations

emotions. Tell the bully that his or her behavior makes you less effective in your work, rather than showing that you're upset.

*“Julie, your constant verbal jabs are getting out of hand and taking my attention away from my work. It's hurting the whole team. I'd like you to stop speaking to me that way.”*

- **Go public.** Bullies often use the cover of a group to single out one member for their bullying activities. If you have someone who frequently tries to argue, embarrass, or humiliate you in staff meetings or other group situations, you may have tried to confront her one-on-one without success. So you may have to call her on it when it happens. Again, steer the conversation back to the business at hand, while essentially ignoring the bullying behavior.

*“Julie, we've all worked hard on this presentation. Rather than making fun of me, could you make some positive suggestions for ways we might improve it?”*

- **Keep emotion under wraps.** Bullies love nothing better than to have you take the bait, so don't. The bully will do all kinds of things to upset you or make you angry, from making fun of you publicly to excluding you from group activities or

### Difficult Conversations

gossiping behind your back. Don't let her know that you're upset, and don't resort to hostile behavior, as this is exactly what she wants you to do.

- **Ask for help.** There are anti-bullying laws in many states. Companies have anti-bullying policies as well. However, before you go to your manager or your HR department about the situation, you will need to document what's happening. Keep a log of bullying incidents. Make sure your written comments are straightforward, unemotional, and factual.

### I need to fire someone

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There are two basic categories of firing: one is for cause, such as embezzlement, failing a drug test, or any other direct violation of company policy. The other is a broader category which can be summarized as “Things just aren’t working out.” This book will deal with the second category. Unless you are Donald Trump, you want to handle a firing situation with three important components: speed, facts, and compassion.

**Difficult Conversations**

<b>8<sup>th</sup> COMMON WORKPLACE SCENARIO</b>	
<b>Specific Issue:</b>	I need to fire someone
<b>The goal:</b>	Termination
<b>The key:</b>	Just the facts

In most cases, the person you're firing is just not performing to your standards or is not fitting in with your company's culture or values. If you work for a large company you probably have a policy about the amount of notice and severance pay. If you work for a small company, use a firing situation to create a policy template that will make the process easier in the future. In either case, make these decisions in advance so your conversation with the employee is straightforward and non-negotiable.

- **Act quickly.** If things are not going well, the employee knows it, even if only subconsciously. The longer the situation drags on, the more uncomfortable it becomes. Once you have your notice and severance structure in order, write out a script for the conversation. Rehearse it with a colleague and keep a sheet of bullet points in front of you so that you won't forget any important points. Schedule a time with the employee and get straight to the point—no small talk.



## Difficult Conversations

*“Charlotte, things aren’t working out and I think it’s best that we terminate your employment.”*

- **State the facts.** Whatever the issues that led to the termination, you should have documentation in writing. You don’t need to recite an entire laundry list of failures, but you do need a written record in case Charlotte questions your decision now or in the future. An accusation of wrongful termination is a problem you don’t need.

*“As you know, we’ve spoken on several occasions about your tardiness and other attendance problems, and I’ve also pointed out ways in which you could improve the quality of your work but frankly, I haven’t noticed the improvement I was expecting.”*

- **Show compassion.** Charlotte undoubtedly has some positive qualities or you wouldn’t have hired her in the first place. Now is a good time to let her know the things you do value about her performance. Also, provide her with support that will enable her to move on to what’s next for her, once the initial shock has subsided.

*“Charlotte, we do value the contributions you’ve made to our customer service efforts. You have an excellent telephone manner and you are great with customers. I’m sure there are jobs where you can put these skills to use. I*

## Difficult Conversations

*know it's easier to find a job when you have a job, so we'll consider that you are still an employee for the next 30 days and HR will provide you with whatever references you need."*

- **Be a good listener.** Obviously, this is not going to be a one-way conversation. Charlotte may have reactions ranging from denial to rage, so be prepared to work through these emotions with her until she can begin to be open to new possibilities.

***Here are a few reactions and responses you might want to consider.***

### **Denial**

—Charlotte:

*"I have improved my work. You said yourself that my last reports looked better."*

—You:

*"There's been a bit of improvement in some areas, but you haven't hit the milestones we agreed on in your last review."*

## Difficult Conversations

### **Blame**

—Charlotte:

*“It’s not my fault, you know. The reason I’m late so much is that I carpool with Ken and he’s never on time either.”*

—You:

*“Everyone has to be responsible for making transportation arrangements that will get them to work on time.”*

### **Bargaining**

—Charlotte:

*“Couldn’t I just stay on in a customer service role? I love doing that job.”*

—You:

*“You are good at customer service but unfortunately we don’t have a full time position available in that area.”*

### **Anger**

—Charlotte:

*“You are so unfair. I can’t believe you would treat a loyal employee this way. You haven’t heard the last of this, I can promise you that.”*

## Difficult Conversations

—You:

*“I understand that you feel angry and upset now, and that’s natural. I hope when you’ve had a chance to think about it, you’ll see that you do have a lot to offer in the right situation.”*

Eventually Charlotte will probably accept your decision, although she may try to bargain or delay the action you’ve taken. You may or may not be open to other options, which is certainly your choice. However the conversation proceeds treat Charlotte with total respect. Take the high road and at all costs avoid dishing out empty platitudes such as, “When one door closes, another one always opens,” or “All things work together for good.”

The key to handling difficult conversations successfully is to avoid procrastination. The longer you delay taking action, the harder it becomes. Left alone, unpleasant situations flourish like mushrooms in a dark cave. When you first initiate a difficult interaction, it may feel awkward. Uneasy, even painful. But the end result can be better relationships and a more dynamic and productive work environment.

## Difficult Conversations

### **Take Action Now**

Schedule time this week to do the following:

1. Make a list of difficult conversations you've been avoiding
2. Develop talking points for each situation
3. Make appointments to meet with the people involved

## Chapter 4

# Tying it all together

---

It could be anything from asking a co-worker to clean up the coffee room to firing someone for misconduct. Difficult conversations are going to happen. The question is: how ready are you?

If you've completed any (or all) of the "Take action now" assignments in the preceding chapters, you have undoubtedly collected some good experiences which can serve as stepping stones for changing your difficult conversations from scary and awkward to opportunities for problem solving and growth.

### Difficult Conversations

## Overview of your learning

So let's take a little pop quiz. Score yourself on a scale of one to three on each of the following questions. (1 = hardly ever, 2 = sometimes, 3 = almost always).

### 1. Have you conquered the ostrich syndrome?

(Note: if you've still got your head in the sand, avoiding difficult conversations most of the time, ask yourself why. Are you imagining the worst? Fearing revenge? Wanting to be loved? Knowing why is the first step toward changing your behavior.)

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

### 2. Do you act in a timely manner? (In other words, do you avoid procrastinating when it comes to scheduling the conversation?)

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

### 3. Do you avoid acting out of anger or urgency?

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**Difficult Conversations**

**4. Do you spend some alone time getting prepared before the conversation takes place?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**5. Do you write down important talking points in advance?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**6. Are you clear about what you want? Do you visualize (and write down) the desired outcome?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**7. Do you remain objective and non-judgmental when you engage the other person?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always



**Difficult Conversations**

**8. When the other person is speaking, are you an active listener** (making eye contact, hearing what is being said rather than thinking about your response)?

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**9. Do you ask open ended questions to determine the other person's true meaning and feelings?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**10. Do you mirror the other person's statements to make sure you understand them?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**Difficult Conversations**

**11. Do you validate the other person even though you may not agree with their point of view?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**12. Do you express empathy where appropriate by letting the other person know you have had similar experiences?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**13. Do you reach agreement about next steps and a follow-up timeline?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

**14. Do you provide ongoing support after the conversation?**

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

## Difficult Conversations

### 15. Do you acknowledge and reward successful change?

1 = hardly ever

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

How to Score Yourself	
Total score	How Do You Rate?
<b>25 to 30</b>	<i>You're making difficult conversations look easy.</i>
<b>16 to 25</b>	<i>You're making progress so keep building on your successes.</i>
<b>15 or less</b>	<i>Review key points in Chapters 1-3 and keep "Taking Action Now."</i>

### Difficult Conversations

#### Staying On Track

In any difficult conversation, there's the potential to make a wrong turn. If this happens, you need to take immediate action to redirect your communication.

**Here are four things you can do to reach a constructive outcome, no matter how challenging things get:**

1. **Keep it neutral.** Don't turn the conversation into a battle where the other person has to lose in order for you to get what you want. In reality, you both lose if the discussion turns toxic. There's no openness to finding a solution when that happens.
2. **Take a deep breath.** Be prepared for reaction and resistance. Keep bringing the conversation back to center by restating simple facts. Keep breathing and speak slowly and calmly.
3. **Eliminate your "buts."** Used incorrectly, this one word can derail an otherwise productive conversation. "But" has the effect of totally contradicting whatever went before it. Just think about these phrases: "I love you, but. . ." "I agree, but. . ." "I'd like to help, but. . ." Now see how "and" can shift the whole

### Difficult Conversations

perspective: “I love you, and. . .” “I agree, and. . .” “I’d like to help, and. . .” You’ve just replaced rejection with acceptance.

4. **Don't follow a script.** We’ve encouraged you to make notes ahead of time and to visualize the result you want. But don’t get so committed to one way of thinking that you miss other opportunities. You’re having a conversation, not putting on a performance. Stay open to new ideas and be ready to listen and react.

## The Bottom Line

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As you conclude any difficult conversation, maintain a give-and-take mindset. Even though you have a desired outcome, remain flexible. There's usually more than one right answer to any question. Invite the other person to suggest alternative ways of achieving the desired result. Involvement generates buy-in.

And always say "thank you." The fact that the other person was willing to engage in the conversation deserves acknowledgement, no matter what the outcome.

Refining your communication strategies is an ongoing (and probably never-ending) process. Remember this: most people avoid difficult conversations altogether. So if you learn to take the initiative and confront these conversations head on, you'll become recognized as a skilled communicator, both on and off the job. You'll be perceived as a leader who has what it takes to get the job done. Your bosses, peers, and subordinates will learn to respect you for having the courage to say what matters.

## Difficult Conversations



**RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE BEST:** Acknowledged as one of the top 50 executive coaches in U.S. Global Gurus named Joel #14 on its list of top 30 global coaching experts.

**MASTER CERTIFIED COACH:** Only 2% of the 30,000 coaches worldwide achieve this distinction – the highest accreditation in the profession of coaching from the International Coach Federation.

**CLIENT LIST:** Google, Amazon, Starbucks, Procter & Gamble, Bank of America, Microsoft, Oracle, Deloitte, The Ritz-Carlton & many more.

**AUTHOR:** Written 7 books and over 300+ articles on leadership.

**YEARS OF EXPERIENCE:** 20 years of executive coaching and speaking experience.

## PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER

Joel is a sought-after keynote speaker and corporate trainer who is regularly called upon to address conferences across the country and around the world. He has delivered more than 1000 workshops, speeches and keynote addresses to groups such as the Commonwealth Club of California, the Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce, the Kentucky Society of Human Resource Management, Wells Fargo Bank, Haas School of Business, Financial Women's Association, the University of California Berkeley, Marriott Hotels, Gap Inc., Cisco Systems, Eli Lilly, Autodesk, Charles Schwab, Bank of America, Accenture, Sapient Corporation, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Kohl's and The Ritz-Carlton Hotels.

## AUTHOR

Joel has written seven books that are read in 25 countries. He also has contributed to the book *The Art and Practice of Leadership Coaching* (John Wiley and Sons), *Leader to Leader* – the award-winning quarterly journal launched by the Peter F. Drucker Foundation and *PHR/SPHR Professional in Human Resources Certification Exam Guide*. His seven books are:

- **Executive Presence:** 4 Ways to Convey Confidence and Command Respect as a Leader.
- **How to be a Great Boss:** Learn the 7 Traits of Great Bosses
- **Difficult Conversations:** Practical Tactics for Crucial Communication
- **Getting Ahead:** 3 Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level
- **Time Management Mastery:** Stress-Free Productivity in the 7 Key Areas of Life
- **Love Your Work:** Make the Job You Have the One You've Always Wanted
- **Get Paid What You're Worth:** How to Negotiate a Raise or Higher Starting Salary

## EXECUTIVE COACH

Joel Garfinkle serves companies throughout the United States and in countries around the world. Here is a partial list of clients who have benefited from his coaching knowledge:

- |             |                      |                          |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| • Google    | • Oracle             | • Wells Fargo Bank       |
| • Starbucks | • NBC Universal      | • Genentech              |
| • Deloitte  | • Procter & Gamble   | • Levi Strauss & Company |
| • Amazon    | • Charles Schwab     | • PricewaterhouseCooper  |
| • IBM       | • Cisco Systems      |                          |
| • Microsoft | • Visa International |                          |

**Difficult Conversations**

**SPEAKING TESTIMONIALS**

*"Thanks again for the outstanding training. Your insight and expertise regarding the leadership values of perception and influence is outstanding. We received a great deal of positive feedback."*

**ORACLE – Chris Grim, Group Vice-President – Enterprise Performance Management**

*"You stole the show! Registrants told us that they thoroughly enjoyed the program. In fact, one woman said, "I learned more in the 1st 15 min of Joel's presentation than I do at many conferences."*

**PENNSYLVANIA CHAMBER OF BUSINESS & INDUSTRY – Susan Smith, Dir. of Customer Learning**

*"Your enthusiasm, style and heart enabled the team to open up and really listen to the message. We hope to be able to bring you back every year to help us keep on track."*

**CISCO SYSTEMS, INC. – Kathy Weiner, Enterprise Marketing, Sr. Manager Strategic Alliances**

*"Over 96% of my employees said they would enjoy hearing him speak again!"*

**GENSLER – Karen Habegger, Human Resources Manager**

*"I thought your 'Unlock Gifts at Work' presentation was right on target for what we needed. I recommend that any organization needing to get the most out of its people use Joel Garfinkle."*

**WELLS FARGO BANK – Jim Keene, Regional Manager**

*"Joel is a phenomenal speaker and instructor who's able to capture the audience's attention while engaging each person on an individual basis. I highly recommend him as an instructor."*

**UCLA EXTENSION – Jeanna Trammell, Technical Management Program Manager**

**EXECUTIVE COACHING TESTIMONIALS**

*"His feedback and encouragement were instrumental in my quest to find the better leader in me. Joel should be a member of every executive's personal board of advisors!"*

**BROTHER INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION – Henry J. Sacco, Jr., VP and Chief Legal Officer**

*"As CEO of a media holding company that manages assets of US\$34 billion, Joel's executive coaching had a significant impact on developing the strategic capabilities of my 12 direct reports. They improved both their direction setting and their execution."*

**IPG MEDIABRANDS BENELUX – Diederik Breijer, Chief Executive Officer**

*"Joel Garfinkle is one of the most effective and innovative executive coaches I've worked with. Thanks to his guidance, I was able to push my limits and discover my true potential as a senior leader."*

**ORACLE – Amalia Sterescu – VP Oracle Customer Services**

*"What makes Joel an outstanding coach is his ability to get you to really think about your goals, identify what you need to change and help you execute on the changes."*

**NBC UNIVERSAL – Priya Swamy, Vice-President**

*"Joel's coaching delivered immediate results that impacted my company's bottom line. I increased my ability to direct and lead people which has amplified my influence."*

**CISCO SYSTEMS – Andrew Peters, Manager, Enterprise Marketing**

*"Because of Joel's coaching, my team has learned to have more respect for me as a leader."*

**ELI LILLY AND COMPANY – Eric A. Eilers, Director of Regional Managed Markets**



## Difficult Conversations

### FREE RESOURCES FOR YOU

#### Joel's Library of 2-Minute Videos

Joel provides 2-minute video clips that show him in action as a motivational speaker, providing valuable workplace insights to his audience.

→ **Subscribe to Joel's YouTube channel:**

<https://www.youtube.com/user/joelgarfinkle/>

#### FREE Articles

Free articles that provide practical, "how-to" information and insights to help you become an effective leader and boost your career success. These articles cover a variety of topics, including executive leadership, workplace issues and career advancement.

→ <https://garfinkleexecutivecoaching.com/executive-coaching-articles>

→ <https://joelinspirationalspeaker.com/articles/>

#### Sign-up for Free Newsletter and Blog

##### Fulfillment@Work Email Newsletter

This weekly report provides a one minute read full of best practice articles, famous leader's profiles and inspiring videos. Join a worldwide community of over 10,000 people.

→ **Sign up at** <https://garfinkleexecutivecoaching.com/fulfillment-at-work-newsletter/>

##### Career Advancement Blog

Joel's bi-monthly blog provides articles with action steps on common workplace issues.

→ **Sign up at** <https://careeradvancementblog.com/>

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## Difficult Conversations

# EXECUTIVE COACHING AND SPEAKING SERVICES

## **Executive Coaching Services** <https://garfinkleexecutivecoaching.com/>

Joel has 20 years of first-hand experience working with thousands of executives, senior managers, directors and employees at the world's leading companies.

- Executive presence coaching: Learn how to convey confidence as a business leader, be respected as an authority, and have a professional magnetism that influences others.
- Career advancement coaching: Learn how to take your career to the next level based on his book *Getting Ahead*.
- Lead through influence: Learn how to become an influential leader by adopting the five key traits all influential people have: (1) Solid reputation, (2) Enhanced skill-set, (3) Executive presence, (4) Superior likeability and (5) Power to persuade.

## **Speaking Services** <https://joelinspirationalspeaker.com/>

Joel Garfinkle is sought-after keynote speaker, corporate trainer and online webinar facilitator. Book Joel to energize and educate your keynotes, meetings, conventions, and seminars with his compelling and inspirational speaking style.

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| 1. EXECUTIVE PRESENCE: 4 Ways to Convey Confidence and Command Respect as a Leader | 5. POWER OF PERCEPTION: Reputations Are Built on Perception                                    |
| 2. CAREER ADVANCEMENT: Release Untapped Potential of Your Underutilized Leaders    | 6. MAKING TIME FOR THE WORK THAT MATTERS: Learn How to Prioritize Your Work for Maximum Impact |
| 3. THE INVISIBLE LEADERS: How to Find Them and Help Them Shine                     | 7. UNPLUG, DISENGAGE AND DISCONNECT: How to Create Balance in Your Work & Your Life            |
| 4. DEVELOPING INFLUENTIAL LEADERS: 5 Traits That Create High-Impact leadership     | 8. STOP AVOIDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: Practical Tactics for Crucial Communication          |