Breakout Session #5: Crucial Conversations
Presenter: Richard Brynteson, PhD

Session Outcomes:

- Describe how to have a difficult conversation decently.
- Describe the techniques for understanding “the other” in the midst of a heated conversation.
- Describe how to avoid silence and harsh words.

Presenter’s materials attached.
It is critical to be aware that the intent of an individual’s behavior may not match the impact of that behavior on another individual. We tend to judge others by their behaviors and ourselves by our intentions.
Sources of Conflict

- Unclear roles
- Differing goals
- Differing job orientation
- Competitive vs. collaborative attitudes
- Poor communication; misperception
- Different past experience
- Personality style differences

Most researchers have found that the ability to manage conflict effectively is related to leadership success, and some conflict is beneficial to the health of a group or organization.

Listening

- Do you listen or just hear?
- Does listening take muscles?
- Do you hear words or nuances?
- How about a Listening team instead of a debate team?
What's the Difference?

- **Conversation:** Sharing information and ideas in order to express one’s views without any intended impact on the listener.
- **Discussion:** Sharing information and ideas in order to accomplish a specific task.
- **Debate:** Sharing information and ideas in an effort to bring others into agreement or alignment with one’s position or belief.
- **Dialogue:** Sharing ideas, information, experiences and assumptions for the purposes of personal and collective learning.

Dialogue

The primary key to more informed decisions and effective solutions lies in a group’s ability to think together.

- Linda Ellinor, Author

Dialogue Assumptions

- Dialogue is a learning process, not simply a communication tool.
- Taken together, intellect and experience help people to construct a larger truth or a broader, deeper understanding of reality.
- People who participate in dialogue are willing to engage in exploration, inquiry, and discovery about themselves and others for the purposes of learning.
- The process of dialogue assumes that it is possible for two different perspectives to be right at the same time.
- The process of dialogue requires participants to establish, protect and maintain a culture of mutual trust.
Keys to Managing Conflict

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes

- **Avoid**
- **Accommodate**
- **Compete**
- **Collaborate**
- **Compromise**

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“It is about attitude”
Competing – Assertive & Uncooperative

- Pursue own concerns (at expense of other)
- Standing up for your own rights
- Defending position feel strongly about
- Simply trying to win

Competing – Assertive and Uncooperative

When to use:
- When quick, decisive action is vital
- On important issues
- On issues vital to company welfare when you know you’re right

Accommodating – Unassertive and Cooperative

- Neglect his/her own concerns – satisfy other person(s)
- Self-sacrifice; generosity; charity
- Following an order (you’d rather not)
- Yielding to another’s view
Accommodating – Unassertive and Cooperative

When to use:
- When you realize you are wrong ... to allow a better position to be heard, to show you are reasonable
- When the issue is much more important to the other
- To aid in the development of others by allowing them to experiment and learn from their own mistakes

Compromising – Intermediate Assertiveness & Cooperativeness

When to use:
- When goals are moderately important, but not worth the effort or potential disruption
- When two opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals ... as in labor-management bargaining
- To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues
- To arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure
- As a backup mode
Organizations need lifelong learners.

Collaborating -- Assertive & Cooperative

- Work with other person (department) to find a solution
- Digs into issue; underlying concerns
- Determine alternatives to satisfy concerns of both

Collaborating -- Assertive & Cooperative

When to use:
- To find an integrative solution
- When your objective is to learn
- To merge insights
- To gain commitment
- To work through hard feelings
Avoiding – Unassertive & Uncooperative

- Do not pursue own concerns – or concerns of other person
- Do not address the conflict
  - Sidestep the issue
  - Postpone until a better time
- Withdraw; threatening situation

Avoiding – Unassertive & Uncooperative

When to use:
- When an issue is trivial
- To let people cool down ... to reduce tensions
- When gathering more information outweighs the advantages of an immediate decision
- When others can resolve the conflict more effectively
- When issue seems tangential or symptomatic of another more basic issue

Assertive Communication & Behavior Continuum

Communication and behaving assertively are key skills for healthy conflict management and productive interpersonal relationships.
The Five-Step Conflict Resolution Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Process Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the Issue</td>
<td>To clarify the problem or concern</td>
<td>• What are the issues/concerns? • What is the conflict?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define the Goal</td>
<td>To gain agreement on the desired outcomes</td>
<td>• What do we want to happen? • What is the desired norm? • What does win-win look like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify Needs and Wants</td>
<td>To identify stakeholders and their high priority needs and desires</td>
<td>• Who is involved? • What are their needs? • What are the team’s needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Solutions (Tools)</td>
<td>To create solution options and determine which option(s) best meet the needs of all parties</td>
<td>• What are alternative solutions? • How do they meet our needs? • Which best meets our collective needs? • Which are we willing to try?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Plan (including Implementation &amp; Follow-up)</td>
<td>To identify and implement the key actions necessary to resolve the issue</td>
<td>• What actions should be taken? • What will be done, by whom, by when?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of difficult people
- The negative critic
- The angry bully
- The gossip
- The control freak
- The guilt tripper
- The moody type
- The know-it-all

Crucial Conversations
Three Parts of a Conversation

- Content:
  - What happened?
- Identity:
  - Do I still have a place at the table?
- Emotional:
  - the feelings beneath the thoughts

Start With Heart

1. Focus on what you really want.
   - refocus your brain
   - find your bearings
2. Avoid the Sucker's Choice.
   - Silence or Violence
   - Clarify what you don't want.

Violence and Silence

- Violence
  - Controlling
  - Labeling
  - Attacking
- Silence
  - Masking
  - Avoiding
  - Withdrawing
• We see/hear.
• We tell a story.
• We have feelings.
• We act in a certain way.

**What We Do**

• Victim Stories: “It’s not my fault.”
• Villain Stories: “It’s all your fault.”
• Helpless Stories: “There’s nothing else I can do.”

**Watch for these stories!**

“the gift of acting in each other’s dramas”
State My Story

- Share your facts.
- Tell your story.
- Ask for others’ paths.
- Talk tentatively.
- Encourage testing.

Explore Others’ Paths

- Ask.
- Mirror.
- Paraphrase.
- Prime.
- Agree.
- Build.
- Compare.

Thank you
Very much