

# ALTA

## **in** SIGHTS

REAL TIME | ON-DEMAND



## Managing Difficult Workplace Conversations



STEVE RUDOLPH COACHING  
Training managers to coach more, manage less

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***"If you don't talk  
it out you will act  
it out."***

-Crucial Conversations



**POLL:** Every unaddressed workplace conflict costs an organization \$\_\_\_\_\_?

- \$10,000
- \$25,000
- \$50,000
- All the above

# More sobering **costs** of unresolved conflict.

- **65% of employees** reported experiencing workplace conflict
- Average U.S. employee spends **2.8 hours per week** dealing with work related conflict, which translates to...
- Approximately **\$359 billion** in paid hours annually.
- **25% of employees** who experience workplace conflict reported taking time off from work due to the conflict, resulting in an average of **2.6 days of lost productivity** per employee per year
- **Job-related stress** costs U.S. businesses an estimated **\$300 billion annually**

# POLL: How do managers contribute to poor performance dynamics in the workplace?

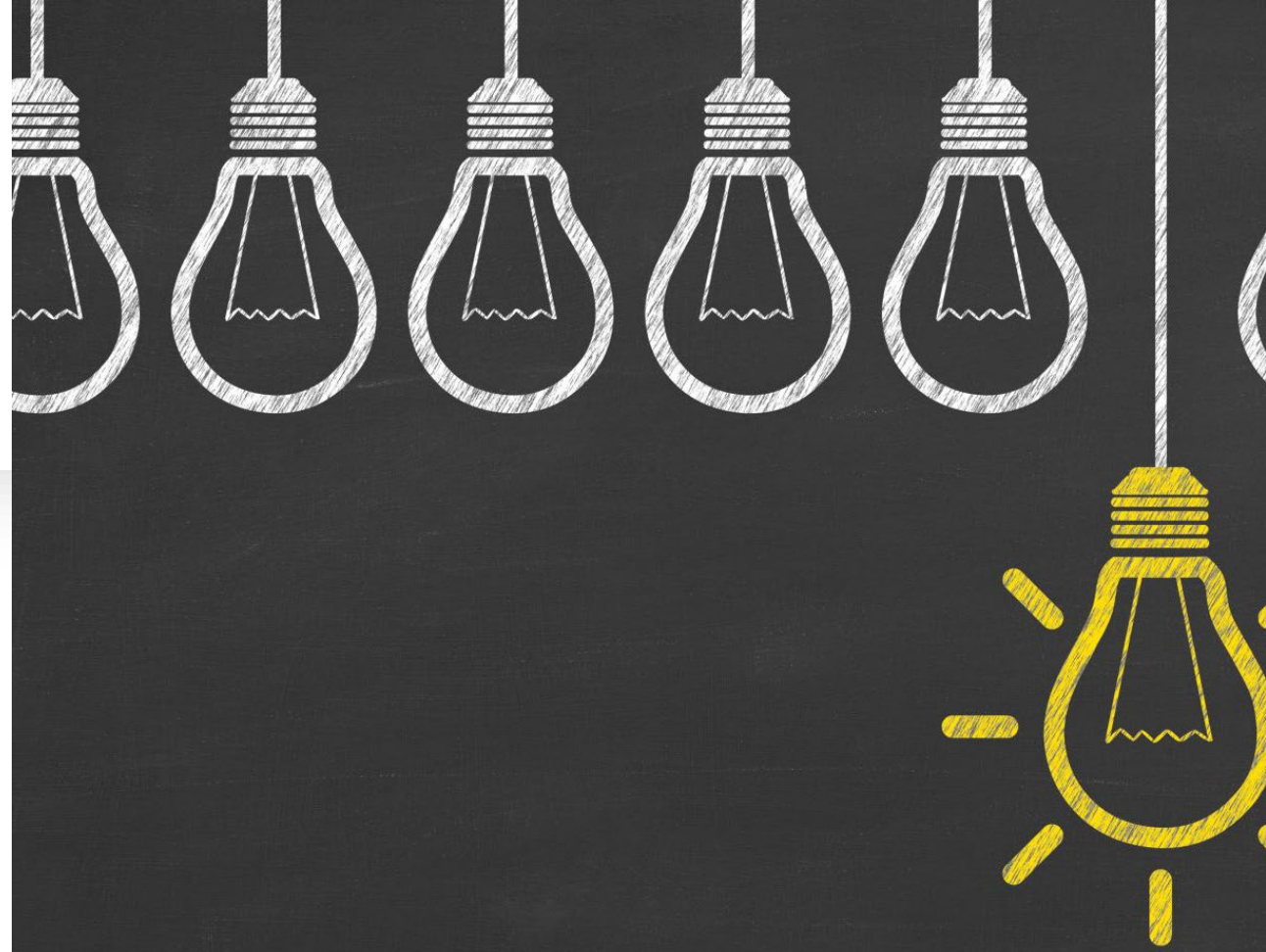
- Avoiding or minimizing issues
- Failing to give regular praise and recognition
- Failing to set clear performance expectations
- Failing to provide frequent, substantive feedback
- Having the conversation as a 'last resort'
- All the above


Failure to effectively  
address workplace conflict  
and manage difficult  
conversations is a **failure  
of leadership.**



# Our Learning Goals

- Understand the sobering, and staggering, cost of unresolved workplace conflict
- Learn workplace conflict resolution strategies to improve morale, trust, and employee engagement, while minimizing legal exposure
- Understand your 'go to' communication style
- Learn the key skills for effectively Managing Difficult Conversations
- Commit to strengthening your leadership communication skills





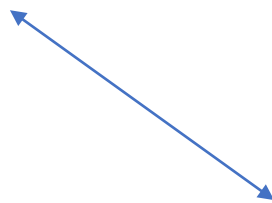
**“Only 12% of businesses have a formal process for resolving conflicts that involve legal claims.”**

(American Bar Association)

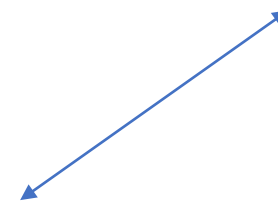
- Develop policies and procedures for handling conflict
- Create core values that emphasizes timely, honest, and respectful communications
- Expect and inspect leaders to model and reinforce core values
- Provide conflict resolution training for employees and managers
- Upskill managers **Managing Difficult Conversations** capabilities

# Your 'Go To' Communication Style?

← **Passive** ----- **Assertive** ----- **Aggressive** →



**Passive - Aggressive**



# Your 'Go To' Communication Style?

- **Passive Communication**

- Avoid conflict; not expressing feelings or needs; people pleaser; defer tough decisions
- Often leads to misunderstanding, built-up anger, or resentment

- **Aggressive Communication**

- Expressing feelings, needs, and ideas at *the expense of others*; ignoring others' rights
- Defensive or hostile when confronted by others; often alienates and hurts others

- **Passive-Aggressive Communication**

- Appearing passive on the surface, but subtly acting out anger
- Exerting control over others by using sarcasm, manipulation, and indirect communication, or avoiding the conversation
- Limited consideration for the rights, needs, or feelings of others

- **Assertive Communication**

- Direct, honest communication of thoughts and feelings, while respecting the feelings, ideas, and needs of others
- People often misinterpret assertive behavior as aggressive – Americans and women often mislabeled as a result

# POLL: Your “Go To” Communication Style?

- Passive
- Aggressive
- Passive-Aggressive
- Assertive



# Create a **Feedback-Rich Culture** by Creating a Cadence of Quality Communications

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- Smaller, sooner conversations are better than bigger, later conversations
- Provide 3:1 ratio of positive to critical feedback
- Daily / weekly recognition and reward
- Conduct quality, weekly/bi-weekly 1-on-1's
- Implement weekly/monthly team / department meetings
- QTP's (quarterly touch points)  
Performance Reviews



***"Say what you mean,  
mean what you say,  
but don't say it mean."***

# Addressing Poor Performance **Example 1:** Passive? Assertive? Aggressive?

*“Hi Maria, how are you doing?  
How were your days off?  
Is your mom feeling better?  
So, how’s work going?”*



# Addressing Poor Performance **Example 2:** Passive? Assertive? Aggressive?

*“Maria, I can’t believe how sloppy your work has been lately! Your TPS reports are filled with errors. You need to step up your efforts or your job will be in jeopardy.”*

## Addressing Poor Performance **Example 3:** Passive? Assertive? Aggressive?

*"Maria, thanks for meeting. I have quality concerns regarding your last few TPS reports, which I have here to review.*

***Before I share my concerns, is everything going ok for you?** Good to hear.*

***Before we dive into the conversation, I want to say that 90% of your work is of a very high quality, it just seems to be these TPS reports that are falling short.***

*I'm confident we can align on expectations and brainstorm a path forward, how's that sound?"*

A study found that training Fortune 100 executives to *begin difficult work conversations with empathy* reduced the time it took to resolve issues by as much as **80 percent.**

**Inc.**

# Managing Difficult Conversation Skills

- **Preparation:**

- Reframe “difficult” with a positive intention- “I’m committed to strengthening this relationship and our communications”
- Be clear on outcomes
- EQ – clear your emotions, smile, breathe

- **Be direct** / specific; be kind / positive (w/o sugarcoating)
- **Have specific examples** – facts are your friends
- **Be empathetic** – seek to understand
- **Be a great listener**- paraphrase, summarize, clarify
- **Reset expectations** (values, standards, policies etc.)
- **Close:** make request, agree on next steps
- **Express appreciation** for having a tough conversation

# **Empathy and...**How to Disagree without being Disagreeable

- I understand your viewpoint, but I see it another way.
- I hear you, though I have a different opinion.
- I am trying to see it your way, but ultimately I think differently about this situation.
- I can see your perspective, and I have a different viewpoint.
- I understand how you've reached your conclusion, however, based on the facts, I'm drawing a different conclusion.

## Difficult Conversation Scenario- Poor Customer Service

- **You-** Blake, I called this meeting with you to have an honest conversation about an area of your job performance that has me concerned- specifically your customer service. I'll share a few customer interaction examples of why I'm concerned, then I'd like to hear your perspective. Then, together, we can brainstorm solutions, and together let's craft a plan to get you back on track. How's that sound to you? "
- **Blake's Reply** (gets defensive, wants to know who said what, or trivializes facts) **You-** I hear you Blake that this is "no big deal," however, I see it differently. Our high customer service standards are a non-negotiable for working here."

- **You- Give Blake feedback-** Blake, when you started with us 6 months ago, your energy and positivity to serve and satisfy our customers was contagious to the team. However, lately I'm sensing a totally different Blake, someone whose positive energy has diminished, someone who's not smiling much on the phone and quite frankly, appears disengaged from work. That's my perception of things, please share your side of things. Is everything ok?
- **Blake...**
- **You-**Thank you for your honesty and sharing with me what's going on, that sounds very challenging. I'm wondering are you still able and willing to show up at work committed to our customer service expectations and values?
- **Blake-**Yes, I really like my job. I will be more focused about showing up with more positive energy and bring a smile to all of our customers.
- **You-** That's great. To ensure I've gotten your attention to this critical area consider this a verbal warning, which will go into your file as written documentation, which you will sign. Thanks Blake for this honest conversation and your willingness to turn things around. When you're at your best you bring so much positive energy to the team and our guests. Hopefully, you view this written notice as an opportunity to turn things around and live up to your best professional self.

“40% of employees think their manager won’t have honest conversations about work topics.”

-BetterUp



Under *Stress* 99% of  
us fall to what...?

“...our Level of Training.”

“1% daily basis  
improvements for 1  
year = 37 x better!”

*Atomic Habits*, James Clear



# Thank You ALTA Members!



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