

HOW TO ADDRESS TOUGH TOPICS AND DIFFICULT CONVERSATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Most people avoid difficult conversations. They can justify that avoidance in many ways. In fact, research shows that many folks will even leave their positions and walk away rather than manage the interpersonal conflicts at work.

When sensitive issues go unaddressed, life at work can feel like walking in a minefield. Each step must be carefully taken. Even when hyper-vigilant, there is still the possibility of an unexpected "Ka-BOOM!" It is not surprising, then, that people prefer to stay away from these issues. But avoidance may create a false sense of safety. The mines are still there.

Good communication skills are like a metal detector in a minefield. They allow you to sweep the area looking for previously undetected danger zones. Once found, the operator can probe around the sensitive area to see how far it extends. Then, the object can be carefully exposed to reveal its true form and color. It may be simply an errant piece of shrapnel from a previous battle, or a real mine protecting personal or professional territory. By proceeding with great skill, no one will get hurt.

Good communication skills give you the confidence to walk in minefields unscathed. Good communication skills give you the confidence to have difficult conversations.

When Life Is Tense, Listen First

Most people long to be understood, to be seen, to be heard, to be recognized for who they are. This makes us feel connected. In tense times, we often become more concerned with protecting ourselves than with learning about others. The willingness to listen first and speak second demonstrates our maturity and self-control.

When discussing a tough topic, begin with a mutual agreement to stick with the conversation for at least as long as it takes each of you to understand the issue as the other sees it. Even if you cannot come to an agreement as to how to manage the issue in this first meeting, you have made headway and gained insights to consider before meeting again.

Know What You Think and the Result You Want

It is not unusual for "unskilled" people to go into a difficult conversation focused on how they want the other person to change. Unless you are the boss with the clout to fire, this approach is almost guaranteed to backfire.

When entering into a difficult conversation, take ownership of your part in the issue. In your preparation, look deeply into your own motives, words and actions. Be prepared to clarify your thinking, talk about your feelings and know the result you want.

Express and Demonstrate Willingness

If you are truly interested in finding a solution to a difficult situation, you demonstrate it by setting aside enough time to engage in conversation.

Quick exchanges tend to create surface fixes and result in little change over time. It may well take several meetings to arrive at a solution that will meet the needs of both parties and create lasting improvement.

It frequently happens that discomfort makes for brevity. Be willing to talk together in spite of the discomfort. Acknowledge it. Everyone knows this

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FRESNO CHAPTER MEETING

Word & Excel 2007 Overview

Learn the best ways to use the new Ribbon, get a handle on finding popular commands, and understand what the new file format does for you. Helping us get "up to speed" and providing tips and tricks to using Microsoft Word and Excel 2007.

Using Word – Basic Overview

Overview of Ribbons
Quick Access Toolbar

Working in Word – Example Report

Watermarks, Section Breaks
Headers & Footers (including page numbers), Insert photos & tables
Captions, Creating Table of Contents, Table of Figures, Table of Appendixes

Using Excel – Basic Overview

Overview of Ribbons
Quick Access Toolbar
Formatting
Basic formulas
Sorting & filtering data

Presentation submitted for **1** recertification point

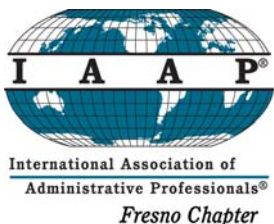
Speaker: Laurie Sales, Provost & Pritchard

When: Wednesday, October 21, 2009

Where: Provost & Pritchard Engineering Group, Inc.
2505 Alluvial Avenue
Clovis, CA 93611-9166

Time: 5:45 ~ Networking
6:00 ~ Dinner
6:30 ~ Presentation
7:45 ~ Business Meeting

Cost: \$ 15.00 (dinner to be provided by Boston Market)



RSVP by October 19th to
Lynn Rowe at lrowe@fresnoirrigation.com
559-233-7161 x311

Anniversaries

Margaret Jimenez
8 years (2002)



Happy Birthday

Margaret Dennis-Holley
September 19th



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California Division

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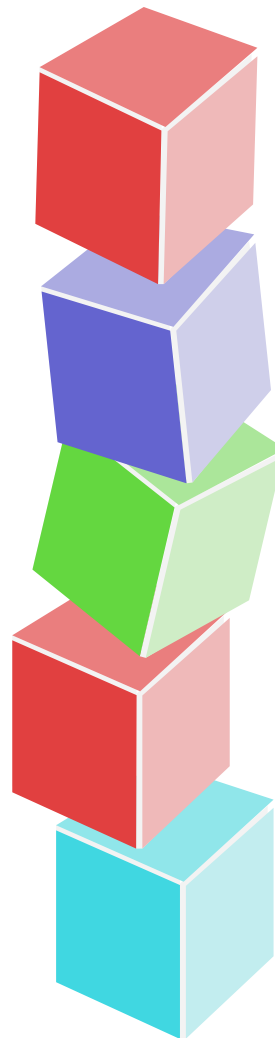
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Speaking of USB flash drives, PortableApps.com turns them into Swiss Army knives and you into a 21st century Boy Scout. It has an assortment of applications that can run off of any USB flash drive, making the program accessible on any computer you can stick the drive into.

While MS Office and the Adobe creative suite are not on the list, their open-source alternatives (Open Office, GIMP) are; combine it with any of the myriad of online storage sites (e.g. Mozy.com) you need never fear being unable to work on the fly just because your PC isn't with you.

CARROTS, EGGS, AND COFFEE!

A carrot, an egg, and a cup of coffee...You will never look at a cup of coffee the same way again.?

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up, she was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved, a new one arose.

Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to boil. In the first she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs, and in the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil; without saying a word.

In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it in a bowl. Turning to her daughter, she asked, 'Tell me what you see.?'

'Carrots, eggs, and coffee,' she replied. Her mother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. The mother then asked the daughter to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard boiled egg.

Finally, the mother asked the daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. The daughter then asked, 'What does it mean, mother'?

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity: boiling water. Each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water.

'Which are you?' she asked her daughter. **'When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean??'**

Think of this: Which am I?

- Am I the carrot that seems strong, but with pain and adversity do I wilt and become soft and lose my strength??
- Am I the egg that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a financial hardship or some other trial, have I become hardened and stiff? Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and hardened heart??
- Or am I like the coffee bean? The bean actually changes the hot water, the very circumstance that brings the pain. When the water gets hot, it releases the fragrance and flavor. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you get better and change the situation around you.
- When the hour is the darkest and trials are their greatest do you elevate yourself to another level? How do you handle adversity? **Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean??**

May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human and enough hope to make you happy.

The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything that comes along their way. The brightest future will always be based on a forgotten past; you can't go forward in life until you let go of your past failures and heartaches.

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situation is difficult. Let the other person know that you appreciate their willingness to handle the issue.

Agreeing to continue the dialogue until some process for managing the conflict is found allows you to take the time—and, perhaps, the baby steps—you need to maintain safety and sanity, even if it takes several sessions.

Maintain a Mutually Respectful Manner

Each person has the right to be treated respectfully. If you are feeling abused by the words of another, be sure to tell that person how you feel and how you would like to be spoken to. It is imperative that all words and actions are purposely respectful when broaching difficult topics. That includes your body language!

Remember, it is perfectly reasonable to call a halt to a conversation in which you are repeatedly feeling abused. (If you find "abused" to be a too strong word, substitute "belittled," "put down," "talked down to," or "insulted".)

Choose Appropriate Timing

Be sure to check with the other person to set a time to talk. Before you do that, make sure that you have suggested an optimum time, and that there will be sufficient time and a private space in which to converse.

Yes, you may have to bite your tongue just at the moment you would most like to speak. If you really want the relationship to move forward, though, choose your timing well to ensure the best result.

Remain Engaged

Set some guidelines for the conversation. Discuss what you will do if emotions rise or the conversation strays from the issue. When your goal is clear—to come to an understanding of the issues and of one another that is sufficient to proceeding productively and purposefully—thicken your skin and sharpen your mind. Stick with the issues. That is what needs resolution. It is not about personalities. Be clear about that.

Words to Be Wise

The attitudes the parties bring to a difficult conversation determine the outcomes. When you approach a situation believing it can be remedied, you are ahead of the game.

If you believe that an agreement can be reached and demonstrate your willingness to engage in the process of finding it, you are part of the solution. If you refuse to discuss the issue, you remain part of the problem.

Few people seek out confrontation for enjoyment. When you do want to work something out with another person, following these guidelines will help you to bring your best to the table, and, therefore, give your best to the conversation.

Sometimes you have to walk through minefields to reach your field of dreams. Use these points to ensure your safety and the safety of those around you while addressing tough topics in tense times.



ACCOUNTABILITY-TEA

For my actions I claim
responsibility.
I hold myself lovingly in that
accountability.
Every thought, word and deed has
a consequence.
It is all now, there is no past tense.
God is the now, God is all there is.
We are one right now.
Yesterday is gone.
Today I accept the good and
become the good.
I blame no one and give no one
charge over me.
I live in divine accountability.
All I reap, I shall sow.
All I think is all I know.
I know good, I do good, I am good.
In my power I proudly stand.
I walk tall with God, hand in hand;
heart to heart, soul to Spirit,
One with all.
I am not alone. One for all and
all for the One.
Knowing this, I live gratefully and
gracefully and I thank God
faithfully.
It rarely become too much for me.
In the now God shows me how.
I surrender, I give in.
I let go and let God begin;
again and again.
Amen

Whispers of Wisdom
~ Dharlene Fahl-Brittian
www.takeupthecup.com

NORTH VS. SOUTH -- IT'S ALL OUT WAR!

On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln stated, "Now we are engaged in a great civil war..." In that war, the North defeated the South and our country united as one. On August 15, 200, the North again challenged the South and the South accepted the challenge. We want you to be part of our glorious victory!

Last year, only six chapters and fifty members of California Division achieved the status of "Excellence." This number is very low, considering the size and quality of California Division.

Here's the challenge: How many members in the North are Members of Excellence vs. how many members in the South is the first challenge and the prize for this is bragging rights for a whole year! I can't emphasize enough how easy it is for every member to achieve the status of "Member of Excellence." Take a moment right now and check out the "Member of Excellence" worksheet. It lists eleven criteria and you only have to attain eight to become a "Member of Excellence." If you are an active chapter member, you almost can't avoid it!

The second challenge is how many chapters in the North are "Chapters of Excellence" vs. how many chapters in the South, and again, the prize is bragging rights. I am working with your chapter board on making your chapter one of the Few, the Proud, the Excellent!

If everyone works toward this, the North can once again be victorious in this war! Please contact your chapter board or your California Division board if you have any questions. Good luck!

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Debra Burruss CPS/CAP

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2009-2010 Power of Commitment -- the Power Within You!

MAKE YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

Companies, businesses and organizations come in all shapes and sizes. From massive corporations with international offices to medium-sized companies with a few hundred employees to small businesses with less than 25 people... the organizational structure, culture and philosophy is as important to success as the quality of products and services.

Though size was once considered a sign of prosperity and stability for an organization, today it has become a liability. Downsizing to a "lean and mean" model has become the necessity. We have seen giant corporations slashing thousands of jobs in an effort to be more competitive. Layers of middle management have been removed to bring decision-making closer to the worker

What does this mean to the employee? The people who do the work and deal with the customer every day is more involved in the day-to-day operation. Workers are taking more responsibility for their organization's success.

This may reap positive results because it allows employees to develop and stretch their abilities more fully. It can also be uncomfortable for the employee. If you work for a large organization and believe it is your "security blanket," you may have already found out that your blanket has been thrown off. Now is a good time to look at the big picture of your organization.

Prepare yourself by being actively involved in the operation and day-to-day decision-making. This kind of

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HEADQUARTERS REORGANIZATION AND STAFF TITLE CHANGES

In August, IAAP reorganized the internal reporting structure at its headquarters office and implemented staff title changes and responsibilities. This reorganization is in response to the outcomes of a recent IAAP action team that examined the work related duties of the executive director position.

These are the primary changes:

- Aaron Ensminger has assumed the role of senior manager of programs and services and will oversee the program areas of Certification, Education and Professional Development, Meetings, Corporate Relations and Communications and Publications in addition to web services oversight.
- Emily Allen is now manager of publications and communications.
- Joy Johnston has taken the position of senior manager of membership and distribution. Her oversight responsibilities will not change.

“Combining our programs, services and communications departments will allow us to more cohesively develop and market these areas,” said IAAP Executive Director Don Bretthauer CAE. “In addition, reducing the number of direct reporting contacts for my position will allow additional focus on the governance of IAAP including strategic planning and leadership development,” he said. “We continue to be blessed with experienced and talented staff at our headquarters office. I am confident these changes will make IAAP headquarters more effective in serving IAAP’s membership and volunteer leaders at all levels.”



MAKE YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE (CONT.)

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thinking may save your job when management decides to eliminate people who need too much supervision. Consider the following suggestions for creating greater job security in a large- or medium-sized organization.

- **Always be aware of the Big Picture.** How does your position fit into the overall operations of your organization? Is your function in the company's organizational chart? Is your job necessary? Can you see the direct impact of your job on the final product or income of the company? What is the history of your position? What happened to the person who had your job before you? Do you have the necessary skills to be promoted?
- **Know how necessary your job is to the Big Picture.** Does your position involve a level of responsibility that could easily be taken on by some other position? If so, begin to look for ways to increase the value and uniqueness of what you do.
- **Learn as much as you can about the positions around you, below you and above you.**
- **Explore ways to create a "new" position for yourself.** Learning new skills, discovering new services, creating new programs or products or finding new ways to solve old problems can lead to a whole new set of responsibilities.
- **Make yourself indispensable.** You may even receive a promotion!

Never "settle" or become complacent. That doesn't mean you should live in constant fear of losing your job. But you will be ensuring a much more secure future when you increase your value to the organization.