

Having Powerful Conversations (Part II.)

1.) Quick Quote To Consider

“You don’t succeed for very long by kicking people around. You’ve got to know how to talk to them, plain and simple.” Lee Iacocca

2. Having Powerful Conversations: Part 2

In our last issue, we introduced the following 5-step process for preparing for important conversations that helps you avoid misunderstandings, frustration, and disappointment yet achieve clear communication with other others.

- Identify the Purpose of the Conversation
- What Concerns May the Person Have?
- What Mood Do You Want to Create?
- What Specific Outcome Do You Want From the Conversation?
- Identify Potential Breakdowns

Now we’re going to cover having the conversation, getting closure and following up.

Opening Your Conversation

Start by introducing the purpose of the conversation. This focuses the other person and helps you manage his or her expectations. Instead of he or she being distracted by worrying or wondering what this is about, you have the person’s full attention.

Throughout the conversation, listen for the person’s mood and openness. As you were preparing for the conversation, you thought about the mood you wanted to create. Is this person hearing the message in the spirit you intended? Were you successful in anticipating his or her potential concerns and addressing them early in the conversation?

Keep the conversation focused and on track. If the person starts to get bogged down in explanations or justifications, refocus the conversation by reminding the person of the purpose of the conversation that you stated at the beginning of the conversation. You can always suggest scheduling another time to discuss other issues that are of concern.

Closing the Conversation

At the end of the conversation, state your understanding of the outcome and confirm that the other person agrees with your understanding of it. Review the actions each participant plans to take and get agreement on who is responsible and a timeframe for completion of the agreed actions.

For example, you could say: "It's my understanding that after this conversation you agree to deliver the weekly operations report to me no later than 5:00 p.m. Friday and in the revised format that I provided you. If you think you can't meet the deadline, you will alert me before Friday noon."

If the person doesn't agree, then you need to ask more questions to try to understand where the breakdown is occurring.

Plan how you are going to follow up with one another. How are you going to know that the conversation was successful and that you both mutually understood the same thing? Should you schedule another meeting? Is a written memo sufficient?

Before you part, remember to thank the person and acknowledge the person's contribution.

Reviewing the Conversation

- Take the time after the conversation to review it. Ask yourself the following questions:
- Did I achieve my purpose for having the conversation? If not, what is missing?
- What ideas, approaches or solutions resulted from talking together?
- Did I achieve the specific outcomes I identified in my preparation?
- What actions do I need to take to fulfill these outcomes?

Remember to put any follow-up dates on your calendar and make any pertinent notes from the conversation, such as promises you made, pertinent data to the subject, or insights you gained.

Keeping Your Commitments

Following up on your promises and commitments is just as vital as having the conversation. Don't negate all the hard work you did in preparing and having the conversation by not following through.

How do you think the person will regard your future conversations if you don't follow through? If you don't live up to your agreements, will they?

If you have an important conversation coming up, call Karen at 301.990.6331 for some quick on-the-spot coaching about having a powerful and successful conversation!