

How To Have The Difficult Conversations



Diana Crowe

*Regional Director, NACM
Southwest*



Agenda



- The importance of EFFECTIVE communication
- Guidelines for any situation
- WHY? Do we need to have difficult conversations
- HOW? Do you have the difficult conversation
- Difficult conversations with internal customers
- Managing stress in the difficult conversations
- Conclusion and Q&A

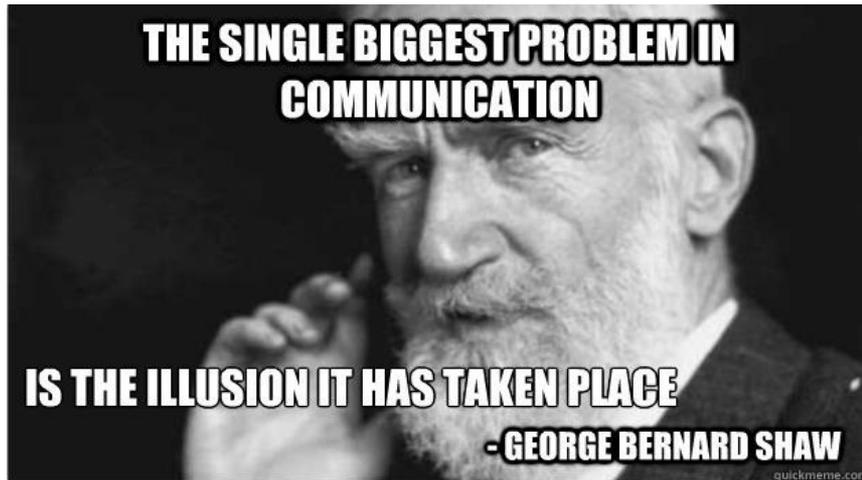
Communication in Conversations

Must be Effective!

- ▶ Builds trust
- ▶ Prevents or resolves problems
- ▶ Provides clarity and direction
- ▶ Creates better relationships
- ▶ Promotes team building

Effective Communication

Rules of Engagement



1. Think before speaking
 - a) Slow to speak, quick to listen
 - b) Speak to help the understanding (paraphrase)
 - c) Speak the truth in kindness
2. Use the RIGHT words at the RIGHT time

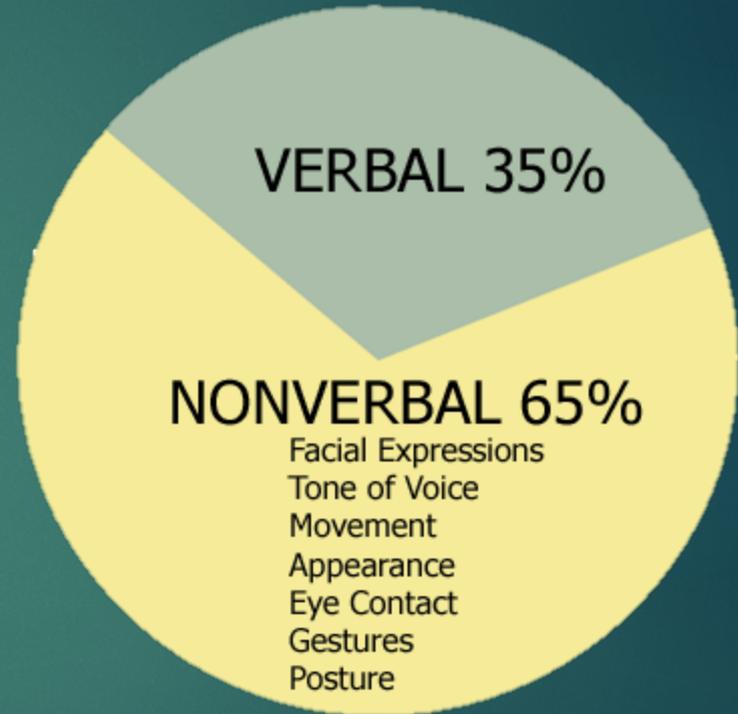
LISTENING

- ▶ A person's style of speaking offers clues to their underlying ability to listen deeply.
- ▶ During moments of genuine connection, what we say will be responsive to what the other feels, says, and does.
- ▶ Poor connection = verbal bullets that do more harm than good.

LISTENING MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Communication

- ✓ 70%-80% of our day results in some form of communication.
- ✓ Communication should be a two-way street.
- ✓ Anywhere from 7-35% of communication is verbal!
- ✓ We have to focus both on WHAT we say and HOW we say it.
- ✓ Sacred silence.





FACT

- ▶ Having good communication skills doesn't mean we never argue, it means having the tools, strength, and confidence to navigate tough situations when they arise!

GUIDELINES FOR ANY SITUATION

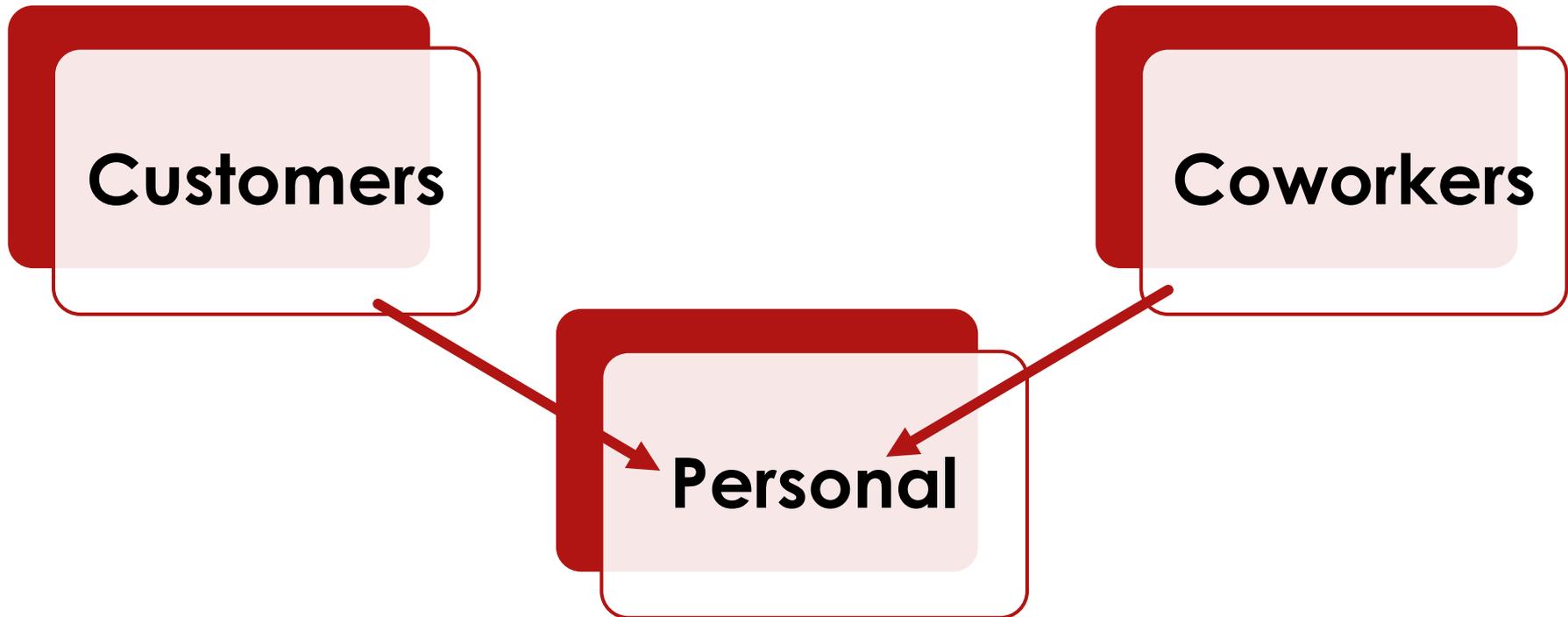
Know when to pause.

Be mindful of your judgments and interpretations.

Listen and express your deeper intentions.

Managing a difficult customer/conversation can make or break a business.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS



Difficult Customers

- ▶ Complainers
- ▶ Indecisives
- ▶ Know-it-alls
- ▶ Impatient
- ▶ Bullies

▶ **BOTTOM LINE:**

▶ **THEY HAVE A NEED THAT THEY FEEL ISN'T BEING MET!**

CUSTOMERS...

- ✓ Collections.
- ✓ Denied a line of credit or withdrawn.
- ✓ Salesmen left, and.....
- ✓ We made a mistake, or our system had an error.
- ✓ Phasing in new changes like credit card surcharges
- ✓ Others?



Tools for Dealing with Difficult Customers



Listen carefully



Stay calm



Practice Empathy



Maintain Right Tone of Voice



Don't take customer interaction personally



Give in to the customer accordingly



Stay true to all promises

The Steps

▶ Be Prepared

1. Get all your notes and details together BEFORE you call. Know where/if you and your customer already agree on any points.
 - * Have your documentation readily available and organized.
2. Anticipate objections – have answers ready.
3. Know what you will and won't accept for payment arrangements or other approvals you might need and get them BEFORE reaching out to the customer!
4. Practice ahead of time.

The Call

Start	Start with the pleasantries (if appropriate.)
Engage	If it feels right, engage in some small talk <ul style="list-style-type: none">•REMEMBER!! We are in the relationship business.•Use this as a segue into the more difficult portion.
Know	Know your customer and whether or not they will appreciate these efforts. If not, move straight to the point.
VM	If you have to leave a VM, be succinct. State (in as few words as possible the issue and provide a deadline for resolution or call to action!

THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

1

THE START - Make your "You owe me..." statement

2

THEIR TURN - Be prepared for "See what happened was..."

3

THE RESPONSE - Ask any clarifying or qualifying questions.

4

THE FINISH - Come to an agreement

- Test the waters by confirming understanding.

5

Close the deal.

THE START

- ▶ Stick to the Facts
 - ▶ Make your “You owe me...” statement
 - ▶ Concise and outlines/identifies the heart of the issue or conflict.
 - ▶ Be careful of your word choice.
 - ▶ Your statement should be no longer than one sentence.
 - ▶ Give your information **then be quiet.**

THEIR TURN

Be prepared for “See what happened was...”

- ▶ Take good notes (document, document, document)
- ▶ Let them talk as long as they're sharing information
- ▶ Listen for inconsistencies and contradictions
- ▶ Listen for any kind of agreement that the debt is owed or that you have any points in common



THE RESPONSE

Ask clarifying/qualifying questions.

- ▶ Don't be afraid to question the customer's story.
- ▶ Ask what you really want to know.
- ▶ Ask leading questions when relevant.
- ▶ If you doubt their truthfulness, ask the same question different ways and compare.

Finish:

How do you want to resolve this situation?



THE RESOLUTION

Come to an agreement.

Be creative. Be comfortable. Be yourself
– BUT...

GET AN AGREEMENT

...You agree that you want this situation resolved.

...You agree you owe the debt.

...To recap our understanding, you acknowledge...

...To be clear, you aren't disputing...



THE FINE PRINT

Test the waters by confirming understanding.

Do you have an agreement to pay?

If not, go back to THE RESOLUTION

Repeat as necessary 😊

- ✓ Get the customer to agree to specifics.
- ✓ Let the customer know you will be confirming the details in writing.



THE FINE PRINT

1. Once you have an agreement, **DOCUMENT** it!
2. Be sure to confirm, in writing, the understanding and go-forward commitment.
3. Follow-up in a timely manner and be as specific as possible.

Don't worry about being annoying...it's your job! 😊



THE FINISH

If the customer does NOT perform, you must call them on it (or know what your next steps are and act on them appropriately.)

When talking to the customer, use phrases like:

I thought...

My understanding was...

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG...



- ▶ Remain Calm
 - ▶ Take a deep breath. (and keep breathing!)
 - ▶ Listen to what the customer is saying. Ask the right questions.
 - ▶ Show empathy: I understand, however...
 - ▶ Remember – it's NOT personal!

CHANGES IN POLICY...

- ▶ 1) Be sure it's communicated in advance via all communication channels
- ▶ 2) Have a strategy and plan that is anchored on delivering on your brand promises without compromise.
- ▶ 3) Be transparent and uniform across all customers.
- ▶ 4) Analyze concerns from the customer's point of view and have viable alternative solutions available.
- ▶ 5) When challenges arise, refer to the difficult conversation outline to handle.

Coworkers - Personal

Who

What

Where

When

Why

How

Coworkers - Personal

WHO

When there is an underlying strain or issue between two people who work together.

- ▶ Misunderstandings
- ▶ Miscommunications
- ▶ Performance Issues (Team or Individual)
- ▶ Personality Differences (REALLY HARD!)





Coworkers - Employees

WHAT

According to a survey done by Gartner, 70% of business mistakes are due to poor communication

- ▶ Sometimes we ASSUME...which lands us straight in difficult conversation situations.
- ▶ Unclear expectations
- ▶ Personality challenges
- ▶ Changes within organization (resistance to change)

Coworkers - Personal

Where

**Choose a proper location
for the conversation.**

**Not a public
place**

**Respectful of
appearances**

Coworkers - Personal

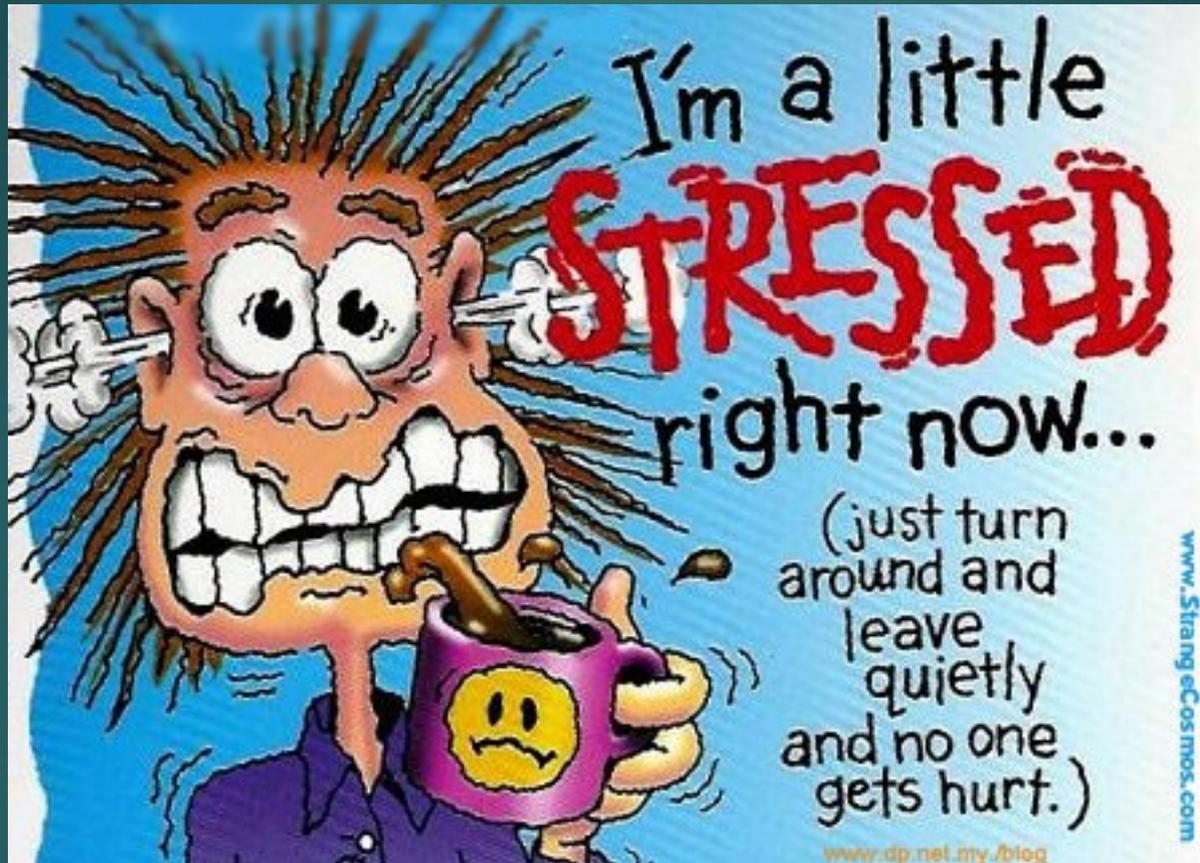
WHEN & WHY & HOW

- ▶ **Have the conversation as soon as possible and in the proper place.**
- ▶ **Determine the goals of the conversation.**
- ▶ **Use resolution-oriented thinking.**
- ▶ **Speak using first-person language.**
- ▶ **Ask questions and practice active listening.**
- ▶ **Listen with an open mind.**
- ▶ **Offer empathy.**
- ▶ **Manage your emotions.**

- ▶ **Know when to take a break.**



MANAGING STRESS IN THE MOMENT



MANAGING STRESS IN THE MOMENT

TIPS FOR STAYING CALM UNDER PRESSURE

Use stalling tactics – Ask for a question to be repeated.

Pause to collect your thoughts – Silence is golden.

Make one point

Deliver your words clearly

Wrap up with a summary



Guidelines to Follow

- ✓ Prepare for the worst – expect the best!
- ✓ Don't get sucked into a fight
- ✓ Be understanding, but don't disagree with yourself.
- ✓ Don't take it personally
- ✓ If you have to end the conversation...

IT'S NOT ME!

IT'S JUST...

- ✓ **No one initially likes people who are holding them accountable**
- ✓ **The situation.**
- ✓ **An attempt to bargain or negotiate**

Read the Room!

What do you need to signal?

When we need more credibility

- ▶ Powerful Posture
- ▶ All Seeing (Eye Contact)
- ▶ Excel at Explaining
 - ▶ (Move with intention = 60% increase in comprehension)
- ▶ Palm Power

Vocal Cues

- ▶ Make a memorable vocal first impression.
- ▶ Sound interesting, encouraging and inviting.
- ▶ Avoid the question inflection

Read the Room!

What do you need to signal?

Warmth Cues

When we need more collaboration and trust

- ▶ Avoid blocking behavior
- ▶ Time your tilts.
- ▶ Nod to Know
- ▶ A touch of trust
- ▶ Savor smiles
- ▶ Mirroring **



*Thank
you*

