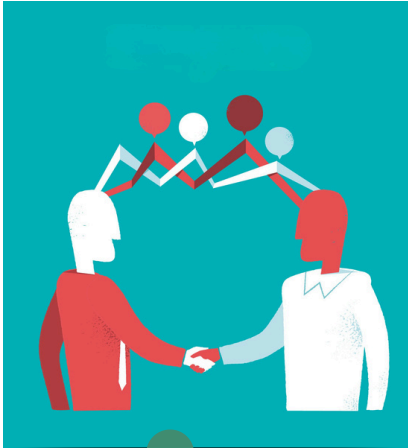


NAVIGATING TOUGH CONVERSATIONS:

SKILLS EVERY LEADER NEEDS



Difficult conversations are an inevitable part of leadership, yet many leaders struggle with them due to fear of conflict and emotional discomfort. Conflict is a natural element of all relationships. Some people might fear rejection, a tendency to avoid conflicts or a dilemma discussing certain topics due to differing power dynamics. These are common when it comes to difficult conversations.

As a leader, difficult conversations might feel intimidating as you can never foresee what responses or comments you will receive from the other parties. People can always hold an opposite point-of-view or a sudden outburst of emotions throughout the conversation. If you aren't ready for it, or not sure how to handle it, you're more likely to avoid than accept the challenge to navigate through the conversation.

Here are a few strategies to prepare for managing tough conversations:



Active Listening

Effective conversation always refers to two-way communication. Besides conveying the message clearly, active listening is also an important skill for navigating tough conversations. Nobody is born a good listener, in fact, it requires effort and practice to listen to others' needs, thoughts, and emotions. You can ask questions with non-judgemental curiosity to explore the other person's perspectives. You can also repeat the key summaries you understand from the conversation. It helps to build understanding and validate emotions throughout the conversation.

Managing Emotions



Be aware of your emotions. You might be triggered strongly by a certain situation, and it's worth finding out the reasons behind it and calming yourself down before proceeding into a conversation. There are techniques to soothe yourself and manage your emotions more effectively. Once you have calmed yourself down, take a few minutes to visualise the ideal outcomes of the upcoming conversation. It not only helps to shape the rational direction but also to foster a calm emotional state for the conversation to grow.

Navigating Tough Conversations

Communicate facts over opinions. Sometimes, our opinions can be biased, but facts are usually in neutral statements. Communicating facts not only refines your tone but also structures messages more constructively. Keep your message simple, clear, and direct giving no room for misinterpretation. The content of your feedback should focus more on the issue, not the person. People tend to take a conflict personally, and that's partly why the communication ended up ineffective.

Framing Feedback Constructively



Directness can be challenging to uphold, especially when it's in a situation where we need to keep empathy at the same time. When it comes to self-leadership, transparency is formed when everybody is informed of the current challenges and changes, leading to appropriate decisions. Curating your messages with a sense of empathy to navigate across the conversation. The key point is that the other person feels heard and respected.

Holding Accountability While Maintaining Trust



Difficult conversations can secure or break a deal, a connection at work, personal effectiveness, or the entire morale and team dynamics. Different leaders have different communication styles, and that's fine. Remember the above skills and use them in your communication, you might find it challenging to practice at first, but eventually, you will lay a foundation to initiate a tough conversation that leads to positive outcomes.

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