
OBJECTIVE

Difficult conversations are essential for managers, addressing issues like underperformance or organizational changes with empathy, clarity, and respect.

This guide is flexible and aimed to effectively navigate these discussions, adaptable to various contexts and individual needs.

Preparation

- **Clarify Goals:** Identify the specific issues to discuss and what you hope to achieve.
- **Gather Facts:** Have all necessary information and examples ready to illustrate your points.
- **Assess Impact:** Understand how the issue affects the team or company.
- **Plan Support:** Consider ways to help the employee improve.
- **Include** Human Resources in preparing for the discussion.

Setting up the environment

- In-person: find a private space.
- Virtual: Ensure a quiet setting, minimizing interruptions.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Express care: "I value your work and success; let's discuss a growth opportunity."

State the reason: "Our goal is mutual problem-solving, not blame."

DISCUSSING THE ISSUE

Behavior Focus: Use specific examples, stating "**I observed...**" to ensure that the employee understands the behavior you are trying to address.

Empathy & Understanding: Listen actively, valuing the employee's perspective.

Empathy means getting how someone else feels and showing them, you understand and care. It's about listening well and responding in a way that makes them feel supported.

Sharing examples: Present examples of the behavior or issue you are trying to solve for with the employee.

Communicate Impact: Share with the employee how the behavior affects team dynamics, or work productivity.

WORKING TOWARDS A SOLUTION

Ask for their thoughts: "How do you see us moving forward?"

Action Plan: Collaboratively set clear, measurable improvement steps.

Support Offer: Discuss available resources or support for their growth. Leverage tools and resources on [Beacon University](#).

Follow-up Schedule: Set dates for progress reviews.

CLOSING THE CONVERSATION

Recap: Summarize key points, agreed actions, and next steps.

Positive Closure: "I'm confident in your ability to advance and make impactful contributions."

Documentation: Note the discussion points, decisions, and commitments post-meeting.

POST-CONVERSATION

Regular Follow-Up: Adhere to the review schedule, acknowledging progress.

Adapt Support: Adjust support levels as necessary based on advancements.

Progress Tracking: Maintain detailed records of discussions and progress.

Sample Talk track:

Thank you for meeting with me today. I want to talk about something important to help us move forward effectively. It's essential we have an open and honest conversation. My goal here is to support your growth and our team's success. This isn't about criticism but about finding ways to overcome challenges together.

I've noticed some challenges. For instance, the last three projects were submitted beyond the due dates, which impacted our team's workflow. This has led to delays in other departments that rely on our work, affecting our team's reputation for reliability.

Can you share your perspective on these challenges? Is there anything that's been hindering your ability to complete projects on time? Let's discuss how we can address this.

Are there resources or support you might need to improve your time management? For example, would training or delegating some tasks be helpful?

Moving forward, it's crucial that we adhere to project deadlines. However, I want to ensure you have what you need to succeed. Let's outline some specific steps we can take.

Based on our discussion, let's identify two or three actions you can start immediately to manage your time more effectively. We can re-assess progress in a month. I'll provide access to a time management course and schedule weekly check-ins for the next month to offer guidance and support.

I believe in your ability to overcome this challenge, and I'm here to support you. Together, we can make the necessary adjustments to improve.