



# Critical Conversations Workshop

**Objective:** Prepare managers for effectively coaching their direct reports, including delivering feedback, understanding needs and ongoing teaching. Effective upward communication with top leadership is also covered.

**Deliverables:** mindset tips, communication skills and emotional intelligence savvy to keep the team energy high, deliver critical feedback on a consistent basis and develop both critical and creative thinking.

## Outline

### 1. Understand the Communication Process

- a. Introductions:
  - i. Preview content.
  - ii. Giving feedback is the most stressful and important managerial task.
  - iii. Share best practices from past experience.
  - iv. Ice breaker: the “Yes, and” mentality (tool #1)
- b. How the brain processes messages.
  - i. 3 layers of processing in the brain.
  - ii. These correspond with Ethos, Pathos, Logos.
- c. Dealing with pre-formed biases.
  - i. Confirmation bias. (5-min video)
  - ii. Negativity bias.
  - iii. Halos.
- d. What’s more important than words (the secret sauce.)
  - i. Making emotional connection.
  - ii. Each message has information content and emotional content.

### 2. Set up the conversation for success

- a. Communication fundamental: growth vs. fixed mindset with 10-min video (tool #2).
- b. The tool that expands your team’s concept of what is possible for them with exercise. (tool #3) Small group discussion.
- c. Questions for alignment with organizational goals.
  - i. What do you want to be known for?
  - ii. What matters most to you?
- d. Constantly communicate expectations.
  - i. Communicating expectations begins with hiring process.

- ii. Systemize your communication of expectations on multiple channels.
- e. Reframing feedback from coaching perspective.
  - i. Everyone has room for improvement; keeps everyone engaged, focused & motivated.
  - ii. Prepare “the audience” to receive the message: feedforward. (tool #4)
    - 1. Frequently express sincere and specific gratitude for high performance.
    - 2. Focus on the future, ask about motivations and goals.
    - 3. Reminder of alignment of personal and organizational goals.
- f. Specific is terrific: your perennial homework is to find details and examples.
- g. Case studies for small groups.

### **3. Active listening, especially to what is not being said.**

- a. Early on address universal but unspoken fears.
- b. Identify the emotional content of any message with exercise.
- c. Your secret weapon to mutual understanding: the Swiss-Army knife communication (tool #5)
- d. Listening and paraphrasing exercise in pairs.

### **4. Creative feedback conversations.**

- a. Sales coaching video (5 minutes).
- b. Earning the right to deliver to the message: you have to go there.
- c. Avoid binary/narrow thinking using “help me understand” approach.
- d. Describe behaviors not personal traits (similar to features vs. benefits) with exercise.
- e. Personalize your coaching question template (tool #6) for consistency.
  - i. What is going well?
  - ii. What is not going well?
  - iii. What do you need to do differently?
  - iv. How can I support you?
  - v. How can we measure progress?
- f. Top 5 tools of persuasion.
- g. Case studies in small groups.
- h. Close with next steps and success measures.

### **5. Upward and outward communication**

- a. Act as your own career manager.
- b. Set up any “ask” for success.
- c. Network with imagination and experience less stress.
- d. Build and fortify your network.