

Avoid These Crucial Mistakes with Crucial Conversation Skills

How can we be the trusted and valued partner for life? How can we continue to build trust and engagement with our teams?

Managing your employee's performance with honesty and respect is key. Navigating performance conversations can be one of the toughest challenges for leaders. It's natural to feel nervous about giving constructive feedback, but without it our employee's growth and success will be deprived. Steve Vamos cautions leaders about the following common mistakes in sharing negative feedback:



Mistake #1: Delaying the Conversation

Tackle concerns promptly and give your team member a heads-up to avoid catching them off guard. For example, you could say, "I'd like to meet later this week to discuss the missed deadline and how we can avoid it in the future."

Mistake #2: Skipping Preparation (Share the Facts and Tell your Story)

Enter the discussion ready to cite specific examples of the issue, explain how it impacts the team, and recommend actionable next steps. Preparation shows professionalism and sets a focused tone.

Mistake #3: Not Asking the Right Questions/Failing to See Their Side of the Situation (Ask for Other's Paths)

Instead of starting the conversation by making conclusive statements like, "You're not fully focused on your work these days," ask open-ended questions such as, "Tell me what happened, and why you responded as you did." Or "What challenges are you facing?" Open-ended questions can reveal underlying causes such as personal struggles, unclear expectations, or skill gaps.

Mistake #4: Making it Personal and Supportive

This isn't a confrontation, so focus on the work, not the person. Instead of "You let me down," say, "The missed deadline led to XYZ. Let's figure out how to avoid that next time."

Mistake #5: Failing to Create a Roadmap (Outline Who Will Do What by When)

Collaborate on a clear plan with measurable milestones and check-ins. Document expectations and revisit them regularly to ensure progress and accountability.

Practice having these crucial conversations and outline your conversation in advance using this [Crucial Learning Guide!](#)

-Amy Lasater, Manager of Learning and Leadership Development

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