



OCTOBER 16, 2019 ICCFO LEADERSHIP SESSION

The background features several flowing, wavy bands of color. At the top, a thick band of red and orange flows from left to right. At the bottom, there are more complex, layered waves in shades of red, orange, and yellow, creating a sense of movement and depth. The central text is set against a plain white background.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

BAD COMMUNICATION!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhe0KSGoUgc>





EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS A CORE COMPETENCY FOR LEADERS

- Constructing clear and concise messages, tailoring to differing audiences
- Interacting well with a team
- Public speaking
- Receiving feedback
- Giving feedback
- Participating respectfully in conversations to resolve conflict

The most challenging communications are conversations that between two or more people where there are important consequences, opinions vary, or emotions run strong.

3 typical ways we handle these situations:

1. Avoid them altogether  hope the problem will go away
2. Face them but handle them poorly – not comfortable in delivering negative messages
3. Face them and handle them well





**SO, WHY IS COMMUNICATION SO
CHALLENGING?**

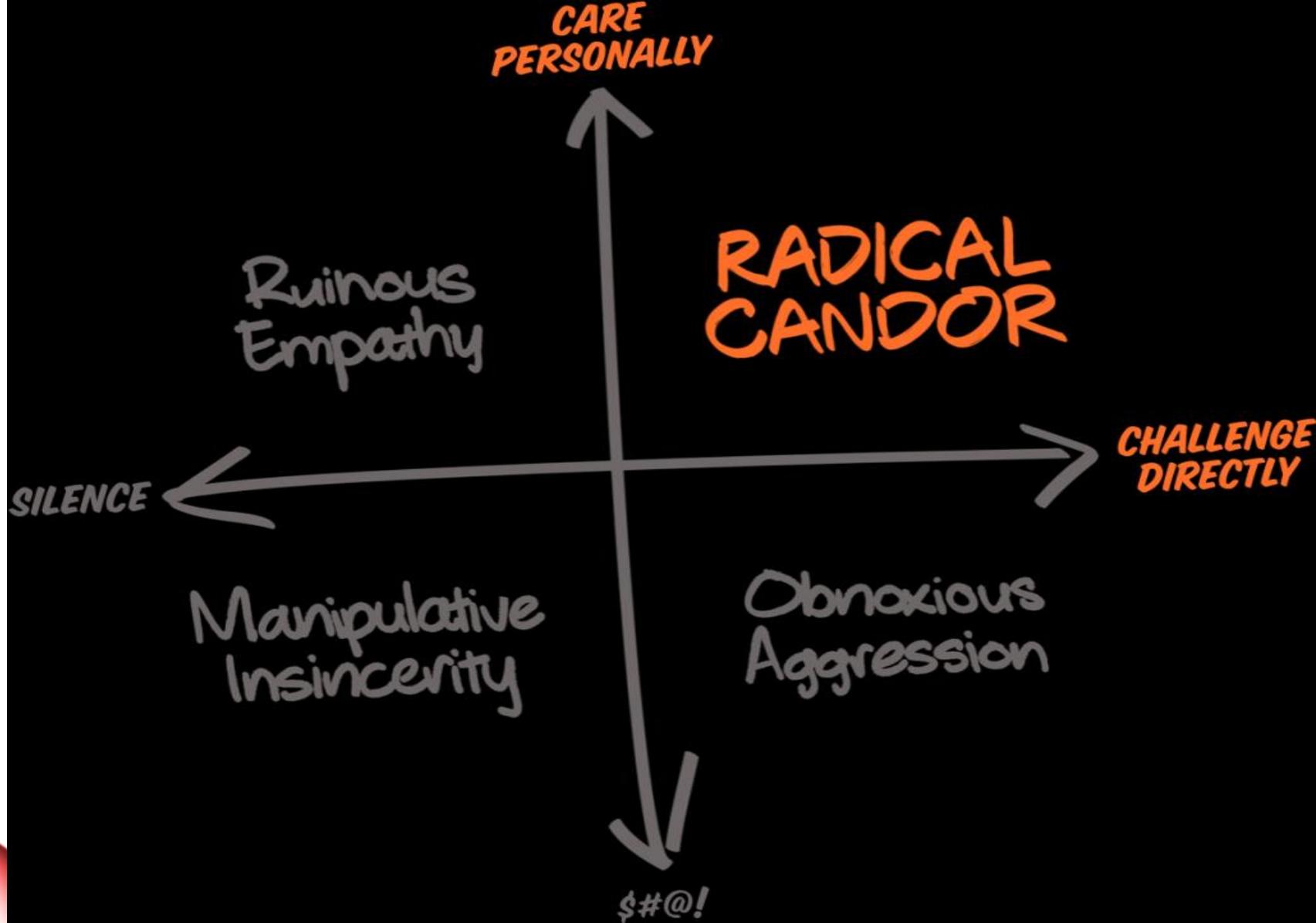


Not all leaders are comfortable with challenging or difficult communications. What holds us back?

- How we were raised- if you don't have anything nice to say...
- Trained in technical skills – not so much in “soft skills”
- Biology – adrenaline and fight or flight
- The situation catches us by surprise - we are not prepared
- We don't have enough practice - we say/do the wrong thing and make it worse
- Fear of confrontation
- Fear of hurting people's feelings
- Fear and loathing of dealing with potential drama and retribution

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RADICAL CANDOR...



Source: Kim Scott, Radical Candor



Radical Candor is about more than just “being professional.”
It’s about caring about the people you work with.

Begin with the right motives and stay focused no matter what happens. Keep these in mind:

- What do I really want for myself?
- What do I really want for others?
- What do I really want for the relationship?
- How would I behave if I really wanted these results?
- Move from an “either/or” mentality to an “and” mentality



Without this, we may approach the situation as wanting to win, seek revenge or hope to remain safe.

- If people feel threatened = defensive and protect themselves...
 - avoid embarrassment - winning/being right –
 - saving face – punishing or embarrassing others –
 - accusations being thrown around
- Or, they may have their own hidden agenda

RADICAL CANDOR

- It is possible to **Care Personally and Challenge Directly at the same time.**
- We don't have to choose between being a jerk or being ineffective.

If you really care personally about somebody, you will tell them if you think they are making a mistake — and when they are doing something great.

- **Radical Candor** is kind and helpful.



Ruinous Empathy seems “nice” but really is unhelpful or even damaging.

Ruinous Empathy is what happens when you want to spare someone's short-term feelings, so you don't tell them something they need to know. You Care Personally, but fail to Challenge Directly. It's praise that isn't specific enough to help the person understand what was good, or criticism that is sugar-coated and unclear. Or simply silence.

Manipulative Insincerity is backstabbing...It's praise that is non-specific and insincere, or criticism that is neither clear nor kind.

It's political or passive aggressive behavior – someone gives praise or criticism when they are too focused on being liked or they think they can gain some sort of political advantage by being fake, or when they are too tired to care or argue any more.



Obnoxious Aggression is what happens when you challenge someone directly, but don't care about them personally.

It's being clear, but not kind - praise that doesn't feel sincere or criticism that isn't delivered kindly.

Obnoxious Aggression is also called "brutal honesty" or "front stabbing."

<https://youtu.be/yaDhSO2j898>



Challenge Directly means that you share your perspective and invite the other person to do the same

What Challenging Directly is NOT

- Challenging Directly does NOT mean you can assume that whatever you think is “the truth” and should be shoved down people’s throats.
- Challenging Directly does NOT mean you are right. You may be wrong. In fact, you should expect and welcome a reciprocal challenge.
- The “direct” in “Challenge Directly” does NOT mean to be brutal. It means to share your (humble) opinions directly, rather than talking badly about people behind their backs.



What Caring Personally *IS*

- You don't have to have a deep personal relationship - but if you work closely with somebody — if, for example, you are somebody's boss — you need to begin to develop a positive human relationship with that person.
- Caring Personally is about thinking of others, putting their success and needs ahead of your own.
- Care Personally means that you care about the other person, not about whether you are winning a popularity contest.



When skilled in this area

- Steps up to conflicts – sees them as opportunities
- Reads situations quickly
- Good at focused and active listening
- Deal with problem direct reports firmly and in a timely manner
- Gains trust and support of peers
- Can find common ground and solve problems for the good of all
- Don't allow problems to fester
- Regularly reviews performance and holds timely discussions
- Can make difficult decisions when all other efforts fail
- Deals effectively with troublemakers



ACTIVE LISTENING IS CRITICAL TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

- Listening shows respect
- Listening builds relationships
- Listening increases knowledge
- Listening generates ideas
- Listening builds loyalty

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- Human communication is complex with many factors in play during any interaction.
 - Our emotions, ideas, and beliefs come into play - both verbally and nonverbally.
 - We need to understand or be aware of the “rules of engagement”
 - In all this – the consistent foundations to skillful communication are - presence, intention, and attention.

ACTIVE AND FOCUSED LISTENING

Focus on the listening fundamentals:

- Be prepared
- Drop everything – undivided attention
- Mouth closed (when your mouth is open your ears automatically close)
- Maintain eye contact
- Take notes (careful)
- Don't frown or fidget
- Lean in and arms uncrossed (body language)
- Don't interrupt before they've finished and avoid finishing sentences

ACTIVE AND FOCUSED LISTENING

- Paraphrase what they have said so they know they've been heard/understood
- Ask more questions –
 - ✓ Clarifying
 - ✓ Probing
 - ✓ Confirming
- Allow silence - not as a weapon
- Hear it all before you respond
- Acknowledge feelings



“EAAR” LISTENING METHOD

Follow this sequence...

E: Explore

A: Acknowledge

A: Apply

R: Response

ACTIVE AND FOCUSED LISTENING

- Tuning some people out?
 - ✓ Avoid selective listening.
 - ✓ Challenge yourself to practice listening to those who you don't usually listen to. Listen for content and separate content from the person.
- Don't stop listening when it turns negative.
 - ✓ Keep calm – keep steady breathing!
 - ✓ Shift your thinking – accurately try to understand what the person is trying to tell you (not necessarily accept or refute) – *verbal Aikido*

ACTIVE AND FOCUSED LISTENING

- Judging instead of listening?
- Need to take the lead?
 - Guide conversations....
 - ✓ Are they disorganized?
 - ✓ Do they want to unload a problem?
 - ✓ Chronic complainer?
 - ✓ Picking an argument?



WHEN YOU'VE GOT TO DELIVER FEEDBACK

Tip 1: Start by asking for feedback.

Tip 2: Focus on the good stuff.

Tip 3: Be helpful.

Tip 4: Don't make it about personality or attributes.

HIP Feedback is:

Helpful

Humble

ImmEDIATE

In Person

Public Praise / Private Criticism

Not About Personality

GENERAL COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Pay attention to how the other person is reacting and adjust as needed
- Maintain mutual respect – you don't have to agree with the other person's behavior to maintain respect for them as a person.
 - Apologize if you make a mistake. Give up your need to save face or win the argument
 - Confirm your respect and clarify your purpose
 - Flip the “stories” in your head:

GENERAL COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Share your facts versus starting right out with stating our desired outcomes...less controversial, more persuasive and less insulting than conclusions
- Tell your story - explain how you got to your conclusion based on the facts
- Ask for others to share their views, what they know, their facts and intentions – what do they really want?
- Actively listen
- Help them move from emotions to observations
- Point out where you agree with them – identify if something is left out – compare your two views when you do differ significantly

GENERAL COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Rehearse mentally before a risky or high-stake communication
- Come up with your own scripts that you can tailor to each situation
- Use your skills in real life situations
- Take notes
- Learn from your encounters



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

SMALL GROUP EXERCISES

Scenario 1

You have two direct reports – Christina and Samuel - who are at war. They work side by side but not together. When you are meeting with each in your 1:1's, they'll both make snipey comments about the other. Until now, you've hoped they could work things out together – they are adults after all. Today one of your other team members came to you and said that she's finding it very difficult to work in the department with Christina and Samuel, the ongoing negative undercurrent is really affecting the overall team. She is starting to dread coming to work.

What do you do? Discuss with your group the approach you'd take. If you'd plan to meet with Christina and Samuel, how would you start the discussion and what would you ask, discuss, etc.?

SMALL GROUP EXERCISES

Scenario 2

You are part of your president's senior management team. The members of the team all lead different functional areas of the college. One of the other members of the senior management team, Sandra, is notoriously difficult to work with – she seems to “change the rules” of her processes on the fly and she doesn't make decisions until the 11th hour, among other things. The president seems to be unaware of Sandra's reputation, though the other members of the senior management team seem to be very familiar as they make comments about Sandra and how difficult it is to work with her. While Sandra is frustrating to work with, you feel there is nothing you can do about it but just deal with Sandra as little as possible. However, delays caused by Sandra have now caused you to miss a key deadline on a project. Sandra's sabotage of your success has got to stop.

What do you do? Do you meet with Sandra? Do you meet with the president? How would you start a discussion and what would you ask, discuss, etc.?

SMALL GROUP EXERCISES

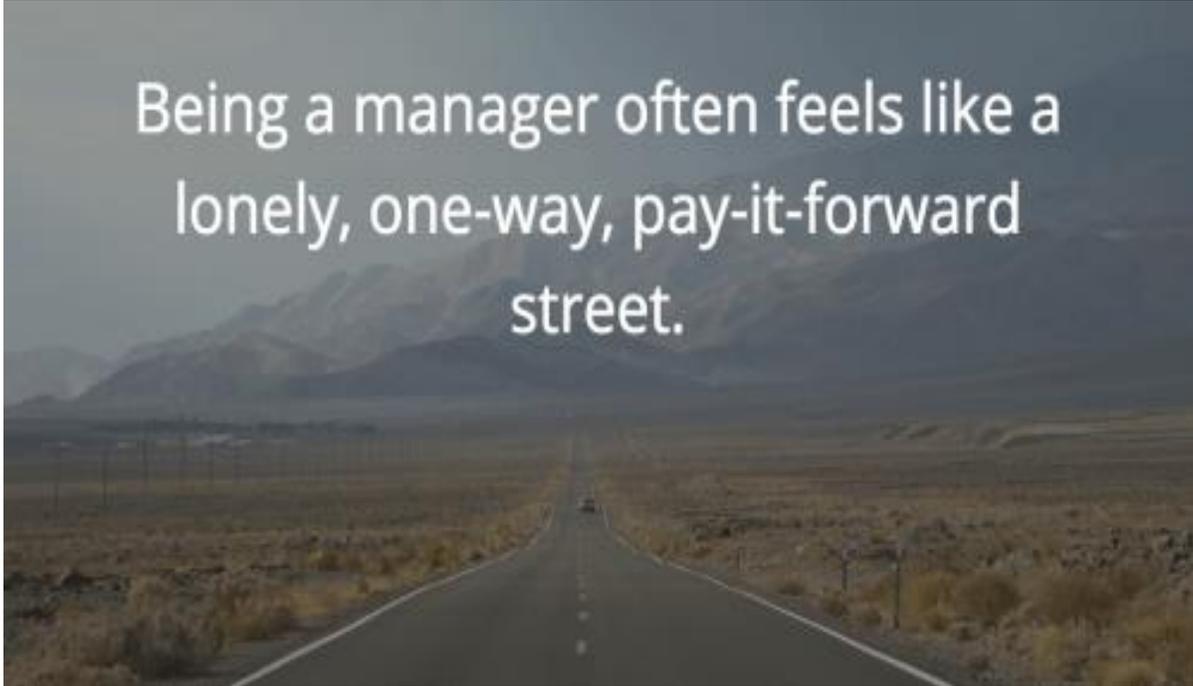
Scenario 3

Your employee, James, is a “talker”. He likes to visit with all his coworkers throughout the day, mostly about non-work items. Some of your team members seem to get frustrated and it certainly makes them less efficient. You’ve encouraged some on your team to discourage conversations with James if he was interrupting them, but the “visiting” continues. James also tends to stir the pot on the team – the latest was James sharing with each of his coworkers about the latest he’s heard - an employee in another department was reclassified and got a pay increase. James said this was unfair since they’ve been at the college much longer and worked harder than this other employee. You’ve now had two members of your team ask to speak to you about an unfair situation.

What do you do? Who do you meet with first and how do you approach the communication?

NEXT STEPS

- First – be open to learning, be “teachable”
- Figure out what is critically important to performance in your job or success your career.
- Get specific - get more detailed feedback on the need.
- Create the action plan
- Learn from others
- Read about it - learn from others – take a course (continual learning)
- Try some “stretching” tasks –but start small
- Track your progress
- Get periodic feedback – especially with those who haven’t known you for long.



Being a manager often feels like a
lonely, one-way, pay-it-forward
street.

Anyone who helps somebody influences a lot of bodies. What you give to one person overflows into the lives of all the people that person impacts. The nature of influence is to multiply.

Becoming a Person Of Influence - John C. Maxwell and Jim Dornan



Questions?

Additional Reading:

- Radical Candor by Kim Scot (check out the podcast of the same name as well)
- Say What You Mean: A Mindful Approach to Nonviolent Communication by Oren Jay Sofer (a practical guidebook for having more effective, satisfying conversations)
- Crucial Conversations by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler