

# Challenging Conversations

**Blanchard**  
INTERNATIONAL  
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*The Leadership Difference.*

With organisations scrambling to adapt to a changing world, the capacity to effectively have challenging conversations has become a key competency in Ireland. Whether the topic of your conversation is delivering a difficult message, giving tough performance feedback, or confronting insensitive behavior, the reticence most of us feel about having challenging conversations is common, whether in Ireland or beyond.

Some of us have a hard time dealing with anger; some of us can't deal with silence, or tears. Challenging Conversations covers all of the most challenging, intense, and emotionally charged types of conversations. Using a flexible five-step model, participants use work examples to practice new skills and have ample time for personal reflection with issues that they face in their daily life. These include speaking up without alienating the other person, and being able to listen even if you are "triggered" by what you are hearing.

There are five interconnected steps to having a challenging conversation. They are:

- S** State your concerns directly
- P** Probe for information to gain deeper understanding
- E** Engage each other through whole-hearted listening
- A** Attend to body language
- K** Keep forward focused when possible

All of these steps are important, though steps **S**, **P**, and **E** are the starting points. Depending on the situation, pick one as a conversation opener. Step **A** should be used throughout the entire conversation. Step **K** concludes the conversation whenever possible.

## Audience

Individuals in a supervisory or management role; all employees within the organisation

## Program Format

This program provides opportunities to build competence and commitment in preparing for and conducting challenging conversations. In an energizing, interactive, and safe environment participants practice the types of challenging conversations that have become so much a part of daily life. Workplace situations are the key focus, but these skills are equally useful in managing difficult conversations with family or with others outside of work.

## Outcomes

- A culture change that sets preferences for approaching difficult or conflict-ridden conversations
- A common language and approach for successfully managing challenging conversation
- Increased competence, motivation, and confidence to the organisation's outcomes
- Improved interpersonal communication skills through behaviour modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching
- A deepening of managers' competence and commitment to manage challenging conversations

*"The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, is to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment."*

—Dorothy Newell

# Data Sheet