

**Soft-Train**



*At Soft-Train  
Technology Works*

# Mastering Challenging Management Conversations (2 Days) ST00065

**COURSE GOAL:** Improve communication and conversation skills to deliver difficult and challenging messages.

**PREREQUISITES:** None.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

- Identify strategies for hurdling challenging conversations
- Project clarity, confidence and assuredness
- Flex communication style to improve rapport and results
- Exhibit empathy while maintaining a leader's demeanor
- Gain support from senior management in implementing change or initiatives.

**KEY TOPICS:**

**I. The Basics**

**A. Why We Stink at Difficult Conversation—And How We Can Change**

1. Context is Everything
2. Why Ineffective Dialogues are in Your Genes
3. From “Difficult People” to New Relationships

**B. How to Have Painless Conversations: The CANDID Approach**

1. Candid Approach in Detail
  - a) Compartmentalize
  - b) Ask Questions
  - c) Normalize
  - d) Discuss
  - e) Incentivize
  - f) Disengage
  - g) Importance of Being Candid

**II. The CANDID Approach in Detail**

**A. Compartmentalize Your Message: The Neutral Zone**

1. Unpacking the Dialogue
2. Creating a Neutral Opening
3. Have the Other Person Describe What Happened

4. Ask the Other Person How He or She is Doing
5. Make a Neutral Observation
6. Use the “I” Technique
7. Finding the Neutral Zone Take Practice

**B. Ask Questions: From Furious to Curious**

1. Why the Right Questions Work
2. The Anatomy of a Good Question
3. Good Questions are Relevant and On Topic
4. Good Questions are Empathetic
5. Good Questions Open Rather than Close Dialogue
6. Good Questions Paraphrase the Other Person
7. Questions to Avoid
8. Irrelevant Questions
9. The Question That Isn't a Question
10. Why Ask, “Why?”
11. Help Me Understand
12. Inquiring Minds Want to Know

**C. Normalize: It's OK, Really**

1. Why Everyone Hates Normalizing – and Why You Must Do It Anyway
2. How to Normalize Feelings in Three Easy Steps
  - a) Acknowledgement

- b) Validation
- c) Identification

3. Normalization – The Benefits are More Than Skin Deep

**D. Discuss the Issue: Just the Facts**

1. Take the Emotion Out of the Issue
2. Engage the Other Person in Solving the Issue
3. Empathize with Each and Every Response
4. Do Emotions have a Place in the Dialogue?

**E. Incentive: It's All About Them**

1. The Ladder of Incentive
2. The Ladder of Incentives
3. Dressing Someone Up Without Dressing Them Down
4. The Treasure Hunt: Finding The Benefit
5. Likes and Dislikes
6. Hopes and Aspirations
7. Things They Value
8. Negative Benefits: The Carrot Versus the Two-by-Four
9. The “Uh=Oh” Moment

**F. Disengage from the Discussion: Making a Good Last Impression**

1. Why Disengaging From the Discussion is Important
2. Closing That Work Well

3. Closings to Avoid
4. The Best Closing of All

### **III. The Advanced Course**

#### **A. Reframing: Making Difficult Messages Painless**

1. We Don't Reframe – And Why We Should
2. Reframing Common Assumptions About People
3. How to Reframe Specific Situations
4. Getting People Onboard with Reframing

#### **B. Managing the Dialogue: Response and Counter-Response**

1. Becoming "Indefensible"
2. Managing Specific Responses
3. The Graduate Course: Dealing with Specific Personalities

#### **C. You Don't Say: Phrases to Avoid**

1. The Psychology of the Catch Phrase
2. Brutal Honesty
3. Catch-Phrase Me if You Can
4. Avoid Making Your "No" as Negative as Possible
5. Waving Red Flags in Front of Bulls

#### **D. How to Receive Feedback**

1. Blinders and Hidden Biases
2. Responding to Difficult Conversations
3. Putting the Plan into Action

### **IV. Putting it into Practice**

**A. Case Studies: Creating Painless Discussions in Real Life**

**B. Troubleshooting the Mechanics**

**C. Epilogue: Summing it All Up**