



**MOTOR TRADERS'
ASSOCIATION OF NSW**

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

MTA Employment Relations Team

July 2024

The voice of the motor industry

HOUSEKEEPING



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microphone**



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your question
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contact us
directly**

What is a
difficult
conversation?

☐ Topics and issues you don't want to discuss



What is a difficult conversation?

☐ Situations you are not sure what to say



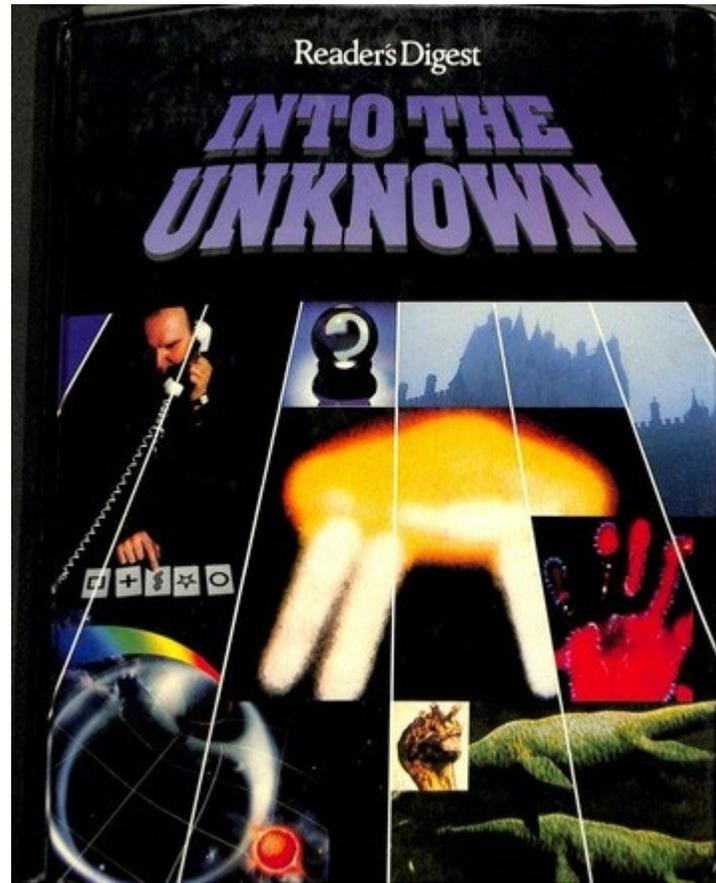
What is a
difficult
conversation?

□ Differing opinions



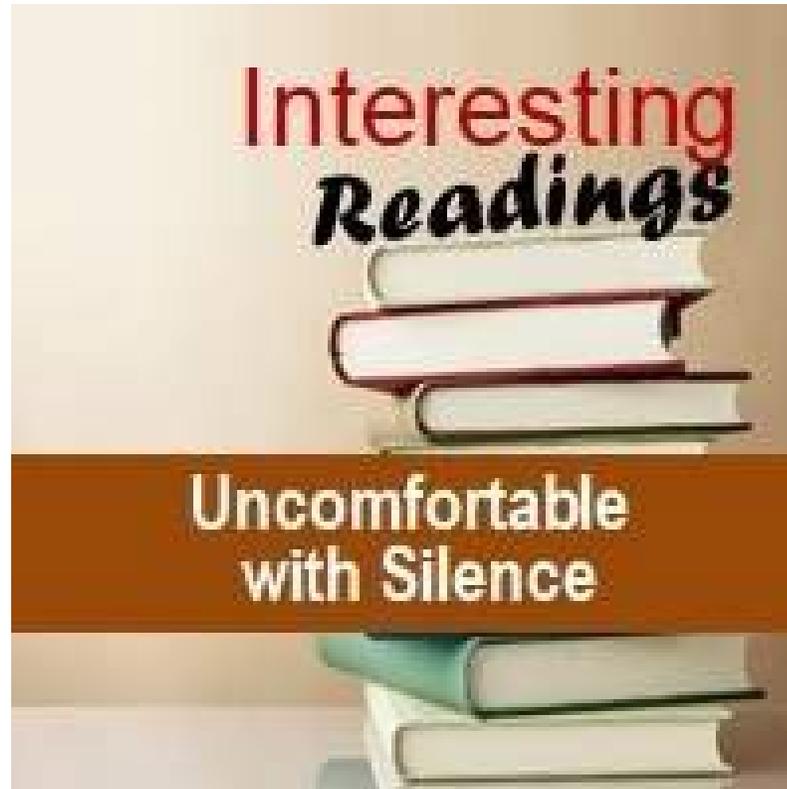
What is a
difficult
conversation?

❑ The outcome is not known



What is a
difficult
conversation?

❑ Just plain uncomfortable



The positive duty

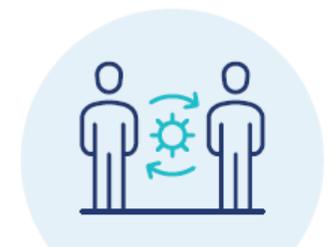
The law has changed and you are likely to have new obligations. Workplaces should ensure people are safe and treated respectfully and fairly



Decreased productivity



Increased absenteeism



Increased staff turnover



Risk of reputational damage



Increases to workers' compensation premiums



Significant legal costs

THE MOST COMMON EXCUSES!!

I don't want to hurt any feelings

Everyone makes mistakes

Now is not the time

What's the point. There is never a good outcome

I don't have time

It will fix itself

Prepare for the difficult conversation

1. Check your facts, policy, agreements, awards.
2. Purpose and goals
3. Do you need support? Another view of the issue?
4. Consider the logistics: Time and place.
5. Prepare what you are going to say.
6. Allow the employee time to prepare.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Active Listening:

I - Statements

Open – Ended Questions

Body Language



MANAGE THE CONVERSATION

Set the tone:

Focus on the issue - not Personalities

De-escalation Techniques

Collaborative Problem Solving

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES

Young apprentice is continually not completing tasks to a satisfactory level. Not checking nuts and bolts and not using a torque wrench as requested. He is rarely spoken to about this and continues to do what he does. A vehicle comes in for a standard tyre rotate and balance, the apprentice is tasked with putting the wheels back on. He does not tighten right steer wheel enough and some distance down the road the wheel comes off at speed and the vehicle collides with another vehicle causing considerable damage to both.

What disciplinary action can be taken against the apprentice?

NONE!!! He has not been corrected on numerous occasions and in his opinion and stated at his disciplinary meeting “no one ever told me to double check”.

The business has set the standard by its poor follow up and training.

The business is up for the bill to fix both vehicles and a subsequent SafeWork investigation.

CASE STUDIES

The admin assistant has gotten a mouthful from the Leading Hand Mechanic and reports to you. The mechanic is known for being a tad abrupt rude on occasion. You advise the admin assist that you will speak to him.

You put this conversation in the too hard basket and subsequently forget all about it.

Some weeks later your admin does not come in and calls to say she is seeing her doctor.

The next day you receive a CoC claiming verbal, physical and sexual abuse that has caused a subsequent mental health issue.

Subsequent investigation alleges that the Leading Hand over a month has been abusing the admin assist and she had been holding it all in until it affected her mental health.

The insurance company covers the claim, and the employee is off work for 12 months. The employee brings a claim against the company for not protecting her wellbeing whilst at work. The company receives a fine of \$10,000 and demerit points.

CASE STUDIES

Heavy duty workshop subcontracting to a local bus company, your employees are not used to all the paperwork and are continually not completing job cards. The company brings this up at an audit and you advise you will fix it.

Subsequent toolbox talk and unfortunately the issue does not get any better with multiple major fixes not being signed off correctly and you do not address the matter with any mechanic.

This bus company has the School Bus contract and one afternoon after a major service the brakes fail and the bus crashes fortunately with no serious injuries. NSW School Bus accidents are reportable and SafeWork investigates.

Resulting investigation shows major safety breaches not only with the bus company work but also significant breaches in other jobs and major issues in inhouse safety processes. The resultant court action takes months and senior lawyers.

The bill: \$50,000 in legal, \$100,000 in fines and reputational damages that cannot be calculated.

Wrap Up!

Key Takeaways

Let's briefly recap some of the key points we've discussed today:

1. **Understanding the Importance:**
2. **Preparation:**
3. **Effective Communication: Managing the Conversation:**
4. **Handling Tough Scenarios:**
5. **Overcoming Personal Discomfort:**

Moving Forward

As we move forward, I encourage you to integrate these strategies into your daily interactions. Remember that difficult conversations are not about winning or losing; they are about understanding, resolving issues, and building stronger relationships.

Final Thoughts

In closing, I want to leave you with a final thought: The way we handle difficult conversations can define our professional relationships and, ultimately, our success. By approaching these conversations with preparation, empathy, and a willingness to understand, we can transform challenges into opportunities for positive change.

Thank you once again for your participation. If you have any further questions or need additional support, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to help you succeed in every aspect of your professional journey.

Let's commit to having those important conversations and making our workplaces better for everyone. Have a great day, and I look forward to connecting with you again in future sessions.

Q and A

1. What if the conversation gets heated?
2. Can I record the conversation?
3. Should I take notes?