



Crucial Conversations.
FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



LEADERSHIP CONFESSIONS

ACCOUNTABILITY SKILLS TO SET NEW LEADERS UP FOR SUCCESS



IN A RECENT SURVEY,

2 out of 3

**NEW MANAGERS SAY
LEADING PEOPLE IS
MORE DIFFICULT
THAN THEY EXPECTED.**

And no wonder—most people find themselves in a leadership role because they performed well in their previous position or had strong technical skills, not because they were experienced leaders or even exemplified traditional leadership traits.

Stepping into their roles with little to no leadership training or experience, new leaders are often suffering silently as they attempt to manage their teams. The friends and co-workers they once collaborated and joked with are now their direct reports. And they may know their way around a spreadsheet or a sales call, but how do these new leaders handle an underperforming employee, bickering team members, or harassment claims?

While leadership may not be inherent, it's absolutely possible for new leaders to develop confidence, find joy in their work, manage performance, and effectively hold others accountable. In this ebook, we'll share how new and seasoned managers alike can respectfully and effectively solve problems and build relationships.



LONELY AT THE TOP

In a January 2023 poll of 1,100 people, more than **1 IN 3 MANAGERS (38.1%)** believe they were promoted to a leadership role for reasons other than their leadership qualities. Only **28.7%** believe they were promoted because they came into the job with extensive leadership experience.

Compounded with their lack of experience, more than half of respondents (**52.1%**) said their organization provided little or no training to prepare them to become a leader. And when asked if leading people met their expectations, **63.3%** of managers surveyed admitted leading people was more difficult than they expected, with only **4.5%** saying it was easier than expected.

But while they are suffering, it seems they are doing so silently. According to leaders, while **63.3%** say they are personally struggling, **68.5%** of direct reports say their manager seems confident and **59.6%** say their manager even seems to enjoy their responsibilities.

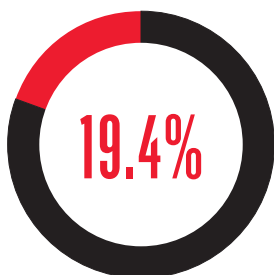
These disparate results indicate that managers are faking it—making it hard to get the training and support they need.

Before stepping into their new role, these employees excelled as individual contributors, focused on completing their to-do list of assignments. Now they're tasked with solving complex interpersonal challenges and holding people accountable. Without the proper skills and training, these new leaders not only struggle to help their teams, but they are also more likely to be frustrated and unhappy themselves.

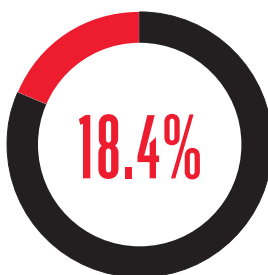


LACKING IN LEADERSHIP

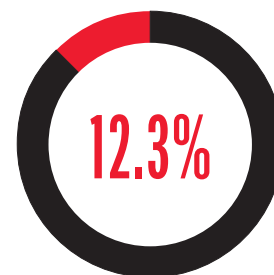
Leading people requires a whole new set of skills—some of which are easier to come by than others. As a new manager, you're suddenly responsible to not just manage your own performance, but others' performance too. And often, when results go awry and situations get sticky, people look to you for solutions. When asked which interpersonal situations managers found the most challenging, top answers included:



HOLDING PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE FOR BAD BEHAVIOR



ADDRESSING POOR PERFORMANCE



RESOLVING CONFLICTS

And employees agree. When asked for the top interpersonal situations that are most challenging for their managers to respond to, respondents top three choices were the exact same—easily summed up as **ACCOUNTABILITY**.

Holding people accountable is hard.

Just because you're given a leadership title doesn't mean it's any easier to tell someone they need to improve their performance or change their behavior. When confronted with conflict, the common human response is to find the easiest way out. We're looking for an exit and we'll take it anywhere we can find it.

Yet kicking the can down the road doesn't get rid of the can. Soon enough you'll find yourself facing the same conflict.

So how can you hold people accountable and resolve conflicts confidently and effectively? Here's how!



ACCOUNTABILITY IN ACTION

*How can we candidly and respectfully
hold people accountable?*

Here are six steps from our bestselling book *Crucial Accountability* and its companion course, *Crucial Conversations® for Accountability*, that people managers can implement today to effectively address and resolve poor performance, bad behavior, and conflicts. With these skills, leaders can not only build a culture of accountability, but do so in a way that improves relationships and builds trust.



1. CONFRONT THE RIGHT PROBLEM



A common mistake leaders make when it comes to Crucial Conversations is choosing the wrong conversation.

When determining what problem you really want to resolve, it helps to use the acronym CPR.

C STANDS FOR CONTENT and is the immediate challenge. For example, “You turned in the project proposal on Wednesday, when I asked to see it by end of day Monday.”

P STANDS FOR PATTERN and addresses a history of challenges. For example, “The last three assignments I asked you to complete were turned in late.”

R STANDS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP, referring to what the bad behavior seems to indicate about how the other person sees you or values your relationship. For example, “I’m beginning to feel like you don’t take me seriously when I give you a deadline.”

So often we start with the most painful or immediate issue – the content – and not the one that will get us the results we really need. Before speaking up, stop and ask yourself, “What do I really want here? What problem do I want to resolve?”



2. REIN-IN EMOTIONS



When high stakes issues arise, we often tell ourselves a story about others' real intent.

These stories determine our emotional response. When others let us down, common stories we tell ourselves are that they are lazy, disrespectful, or incompetent. Master communicators manage their emotions by examining, questioning, and rewriting their story before speaking. Is it possible the other person is lacking resources to be successful, is pulled in too many directions, or has an extenuating circumstance that you're unaware of? You won't be able to diagnose the real problem if you've already held court in your head.

3. MASTER THE FIRST 30 SECONDS



Most people do everything wrong in the first “hazardous half-minute” of a Crucial Conversation, such as diving into the content and attacking the other person.

Instead, start the conversation by showing you care about the other person and their development, namely that you want to see them succeed and would like to discuss a challenge that may be hindering their success. Doing so will disarm their defensiveness and open them up to dialogue. Remember, respect is like air: as soon as it appears to be absent, it's all anyone can think about.

4. DESCRIBE THE GAP



After you've reined in your emotions and conveyed positive intent, it's time to describe the gap—to point out the discrepancy between expectation and performance.

How you do so makes all the difference in whether the conversation continues effectively. So, stick with the facts—things you can see, hear, observe, and measure. When you stick to the facts, your stories, assumptions, and interpretations stay out of the picture. Here's how:

STAY EXTERNAL

Describe what's happening outside your head, not your conclusions or feelings going on inside. Explain what, not why. Facts tell us what's going on; conclusions tell us why you think it's important.

GATHER FACTS

Don't rely on hearsay conclusions. Do your homework and gather the facts before holding an accountability discussion.

AVOID "HOT" WORDS AND EMOTIONALLY LOADED DESCRIPTIONS

For example, "You're using a hostile tone of voice," or "You carelessly left out three slides." Instead, describe the observable details of the behavioral gap. Cut out the guesswork.



5. REVEAL NATURAL CONSEQUENCES



The best way to get someone's attention is to change their perspective.

In a safe and non-threatening manner, give the other party a complete view of the consequences their behavior is creating. Maybe they're not aware of how their behavior affects you or their teammates. Maybe they can't see the downstream consequences of turning in work late. Make those consequences clear so they are motivated to do things differently in the future.

6. INVOLVE THEM IN THE SOLUTION



Ask the other person for their ideas – but, most importantly, take their concerns and solutions seriously.

Perhaps you'll learn about barriers that are preventing them from meeting expectations, such as a lack of tools and resources, competing priorities, etc. And if you do, find ways to remove those barriers. As a leader, your job is to both support and enable strong performance. If you can make it easier for someone to do their work, do it. Ultimately, people are far more likely to act when they've had a role in developing the action plan.

CLOSING THE GAP

You can largely measure the health of a relationship, team, or entire organization by looking at one simple thing: the average lag time between the moment people on your team see it and when they say it.

Specifically, this lag time is the amount of time it takes for you, as the manager, to recognize a problem and get it out on the table. Or the time between a conflict emerging, and when the conflict is surfaced and discussed – not necessarily resolved— in a candid and forthright way.

This size of this gap is the central measure of your effectiveness as a leader. If the gap is small, you and your team are effective at quickly identifying and addressing challenges – leading to quick solutions and results. The larger the gap, the more your team is suffering from a culture of silence where people do not feel safe to surface concerns and challenges. As a leader, your job is to create a team where things are identified and resolved as quickly as possible, and that tends to not be the norm in organizations across the planet.

The reason this lag time is important is because if you don't talk it out, you are acting it out. Instead of speaking up and speaking out, you and your employees will instead draw back and keep it in. That's when the gossip, burnout, sabotage, and many other negative behaviors begin.

Your job is to shrink lag time, not carry it around. It's to find a way to help everyone talk through problems as quickly as possible.

Your job isn't just to hold Crucial Conversations, it's to create an environment where others hold their own as well.



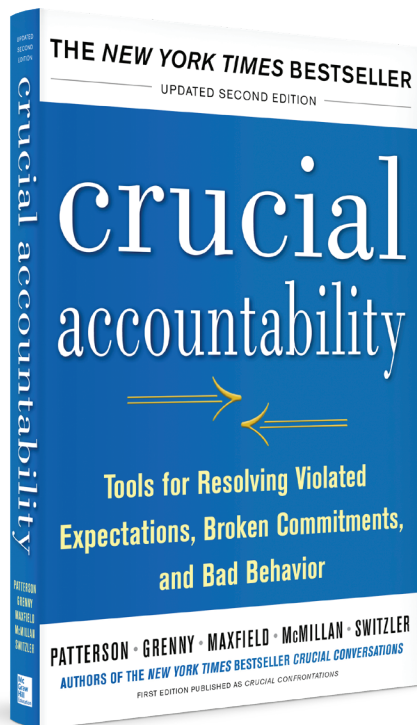
EXPECTATION



BEHAVIORAL GAP

PERFORMANCE





We invite you to take the next step.

Why? Because in addition to all we've learned about organizational behavior and performance in our decades of research and service, we've continually rediscovered this beacon of insight: While everyone understands new thinking can shift behavior, few consider the converse: new behavior shifts thinking. We learn by *doing*.

Learn more at www.cruciallearning.com/crucial-conversations-for-accountability

Get Started

To bring Crucial Conversations skills to your organization for increased productivity and performance, contact us to learn more.

Call **1-800-449-5989** or visit us at **CrucialLearning.com**.





ABOUT CRUCIAL LEARNING

Crucial Learning improves the world by helping people improve themselves. We offer courses in communication, performance, and leadership, focusing on behaviors that have a disproportionate impact on outcomes, called crucial skills. Our award-winning courses and accompanying bestselling books include Crucial Conversations® for Mastering Dialogue, Crucial Conversations® for Accountability, Influencer Training®, The Power of Habit™, and Getting Things Done®.

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