Turning Tough Talks into Productive Conversations

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Rite Software
- Goals for this presentation
- Before the conversation: Preparation steps
- In the conversation: Strategies – 4 C's / 4 D's
- What to do when the conversation is derailed
- What not to say
- Specific Examples
    - Correcting Behavior
    - Requesting a raise, promotions, recognition
    - Addressing your own mistakes / asking forgiveness
    - Client conflicts
- Summary
- Q&A

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About the Speaker – Susan Behn

- Oracle Ace Director
- Rite Software – ERP Strategy and Transformation
- 32+ years E-Business Suite experience from R9 - R12.2.x
- OATUG Women in Technology Award 2022
- OATUG Star Presenter of the year, 2015
- Passionate speaker for over 100 presentations on functional and technical topics
- Co-author for multiple books on E-Business Suite
  - The ABCs of Workflow for E-Business Suite
  - Release 12 and The Release 12 Primer – Shining a Light on the Release 12 World

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Rite Overview

19+
Years of Evolutionary expertise in ERP

350+
Oracle Experts

150+
Customers

10+
Products/ Solutions

Expert Implementation

Managed Services

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Data Extraction & Synchronization Solution

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Oracle Cloud Query Solution

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Goals for this presentation

- Provide strategies for navigating difficult conversations effectively
- Provide practical tools for approaching sensitive topics
  - Focus on clarity, empathy, respect and understanding
- Balance communication of difficult topics with active listening, managing emotions, and fostering constructive dialogue
- Work toward positive outcomes
- Provide techniques to address conflict, provide feedback, and handle disagreements

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Before the Conversation: Preparation Steps

- Create an outline
- Identify/evaluate the purpose of the conversation
  - Education, providing information, problem solving, requests (salary increase) – good
  - Proving a point – may not be good; There is no value in "I told you so."
- Consider assumptions (both your own assumptions and the other party's assumptions)
  - Create a side-by-side chart and plan to validate assumptions
- Consider how you have contributed (either positively or negatively)
  - Have your actions contributed to the problem? i.e. Did you overwork people or over promise to a client?
  - What actions have you taken to solve the problem?
- Identify outcomes and alternatives
- Consider approach
  - Start from the third person i.e. "The expectation is" rather then "I expect"
  - Share your purpose then listen without interrupting
- Plan for emotional triggers

In the Conversation: Conversation Strategies: 4 C's / 4 D's

- Clarify/Define
  - Clearly state the issue <u>sticking to the facts</u> and without placing blame
- Connect/Discover
  - Listen to the other person's point of view
    - ✓ Practice active listening
    - ✓ Validate their feelings establishing empathy (might apply more to a conversation with a peer or subordinate)
- Confront/Discuss
  - Address the root cause of the issue
  - Get agreement on the facts and assumptions
  - Keep the conversion open by discussing any discrepancies and misunderstandings
- Commit/Decide
  - Agree on a resolution/action plan including accountability measures and follow up dates
    - ✓ Remember to come to the table with suggested resolutions/actions

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Derailment

- Denial – The person rejects the facts or shuts down
  - Get agreement on the facts and steer toward discussion of the facts
  - Look for documented facts in advance such as meeting minutes
- Deflection – The person changes the subject
  - Stay focused and stick to the plan for the conversation
  - Avoid responding to other subjects
    - ✓ "Let's white board that topic for a later time."
- Disruption – The person shouts, swears, cries or storms out
  - Stay calm and compassionate
  - Keep tissues handy
  - Take a deep breath and pause to let the person calm down
  - Try not to react – you cannot control others' reactions, but you can control your own
  - Reschedule for no more than a day later, if possible, to give the person time to think
    - ✓ Have open times on your calendar identified in advance
- Dumping on others – the person blames others
  - Refocus the conversation on the facts
  - Role play/practice in advance when anticipating derailment

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Actions/Phrases to Avoid

- Don't assume your viewpoint is obvious. ...
- Don't exaggerate. ...
- Don't blame others for your feelings. ...
- Don't challenge someone's character or integrity. ...
- Don't say "It's not personal"

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Examples

Example - Correcting Behavior

- Clarify/Define: (planned in advance)
  - "Can we talk for a moment about your recent performance on [project name]?"
  - "I've noticed that you've been consistently missing deadlines for [specific task], which is impacting the overall project timeline."
  - Explain the impact:
    - ✓ "When these deadlines aren't met, it puts extra pressure on other team members to catch up, which can lead to delays and frustration."
- Connect/Discover
  - Ask for their perspective: "Do you have any insights into why you've been experiencing these challenges with meeting deadlines?"
- Confront/Discuss Solutions (planned in advance)
  - "To address this, let's try [specific suggestion, like using a project management tool, setting reminders, or discussing workload adjustments]."
- Commit/Decide
  - "Moving forward, deadlines should be consistently met. If issues are anticipated, escalate immediately."
  - Positive close: "I'm confident you can make these adjustments, and I'm here to support you if needed."
  - Schedule follow up: "Let's follow up on progress in 3 weeks."

Example - Requesting a raise, promotions, recognition

- Clarify/Define: (planned in advance)
  - "Thank you for taking this meeting. I'm excited to share some of my recent accomplishments with you and discuss my salary."
- Connect/Discover
  - "Over the last year/months, I have…[discuss accomplishments]"
  - "Over the last [time period], I've worked on several initiatives that have added significant value to the company."
- Confront/Discuss Solutions (planned in advance)
  - "From my research, I've learned that X% is a reasonable increase and in line with what I've contributed."
  - If raise is rejected…
    - ✓ "Are there skills or accomplishments you'd like to see from me before increasing my compensation?"
    - ✓ "Are you satisfied with my performance overall?"
- Commit/Decide
  - You may need to negotiate the amount or schedule a time for a future discussion if rejected.
  - Express appreciation and set a plan for the next year.

- Tips – Sticking to the facts
  - Quantify where possible (worked x hours, completed x proposal, won x deals, saved x hours with new process, increased revenue by x, decreased cost by x)
  - Keep a running list throughout the year
    - ✓ Set a monthly reminder to update

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Example - Addressing your own mistakes / asking forgiveness

- Plan at the beginning of a project for a "lessons learned" activity
  - This helps the team practice transparent factual discussions focused on improving
- Other conversation starter examples:
  - To a manager:
    - ✓ "I want to let you know that I made a mistake on the [task] by [describe the error]. I understand the importance of accuracy and am working on revising the information to ensure it's correct."
  - To a team member:
    - ✓ "I apologize for not communicating clearly about the [task] earlier, which led to some confusion. I'll be more proactive in sharing updates going forward."
  - To a client:
    - ✓ "We are aware of the issue with the [product/service] and sincerely apologize for the inconvenience it has caused. We are taking immediate steps to resolve this and will keep you updated on the progress."

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Example - Client conflicts

- Clarify/Define:
  - "I understand you're experiencing issues with [specific problem]. This must be frustrating, let's look into this together."
- Connect/Discover
  - "Can you tell me more about what's happening so we can find the best way to resolve it?"
- Confront/Discuss Solutions (planned in advance)
  - "I recommend we…."
- Commit/Decide
  - "The action plan is…"
  - "We will follow up on [date] to confirm actions are completed."

- Tips – Sticking to the facts
  - Use the project plan, contract and other documentation as a guide
  - Deliver regular status reports whether you have a meeting or not
  - Review the contract with the entire team (often missed step)
  - Know who is responsible/accountable
    - ✓ Should be defined in RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Contributor, Influencer) matrix or similar document

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Summary

- Plan in advance
  - Using planning tools and conversation strategies when you can prepare in advance will help you react better when caught off guard

- Stick to the facts!

- Utilize AI where applicable
  - AI can really help with wording
    - ✓ Caution: Do not put detailed names, or anything that would violate copyright or privacy laws in public AI tools

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Thank You

Susan Behn

Q&A