



# CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS IN THE AI ERA: LEADING THROUGH COMPLEXITY

WEBINAR TOOLKIT





## THIS SESSION EXPLAINED:

1. The Conflict Cycle and how our attitudes and behaviours influence the dynamics of a conversation.
2. How to manage emotions and stay in control during high-stakes or emotionally charged situations.
3. The role of mindset and preparation: clarifying your purpose, understanding the other person's perspective, and assessing emotional readiness before entering the conversation.
4. The 5-step Critical Conversations Model to shift interactions from tension or misunderstanding toward constructive collaboration.

# CONTENT

TAP NUMBER OR TITLE TO NAVIGATE TO PAGE

3

Key Notes & Takeaways

4

What is a Difficult Conversation or Situation?

5

The Critical Conversation Model

11

The Conflict Cycle

12

Find the Other Way



# KEY NOTES & TAKEAWAYS

- Difficult conversations arise when opinions differ, emotions run high, and the stakes are significant.
- Your attitude shapes the entire conflict cycle: influencing your behaviour, triggering the other person's behaviour and attitude, and ultimately determining the direction of the conversation.
- Preparation is critical. Clarifying your purpose, emotions, values, and understanding the other party's perception reduces the likelihood of escalating the problem.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Effective conversations begin by exploring the other person's views, needs, and concerns before sharing your own.
- Acknowledgement builds trust. Empathising with the other person and recognising the parts you agree and disagree with creates the conditions for constructive dialogue.
- Generating solutions requires creativity and openness. Look for possibilities before dismissing ideas and guide the conversation toward shared ownership of the solution.
- Resolution means aiming for win-win. Clearly agreeing on who will do what and by when ensures the conversation concludes with action and accountability.



# WHAT IS A **DIFFICULT** CONVERSATION OR SITUATION?

**OPINIONS  
VARY**

**EMOTION  
ARE STRONG**

**STAKES  
ARE HIGH**

## NOTES

# THE CRITICAL CONVERSATION MODEL

**This tool is designed to help you identify and consider a range of potentially difficult conversations and ways to navigate them.**

Based on a 5-step process, this worksheet will guide you through practical exercises to recognise the importance and benefits of dealing with challenging conversations, and practical ways to approach difficult conversations and conflict.





# PREPARE

## YOUR ATTITUDE AND APPROACH

The goal for any conversation is to avoid it from escalating to conflict.

The only thing you can control in this situation is **yourself**. Check in with yourself and commit to being calm and positive.

### PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE CONVERSATION BY CONSIDERING THESE QUESTIONS:

WHAT IS MY PURPOSE IN HAVING THIS CONVERSATION?

WHAT EMOTIONS AM I EXPERIENCING ABOUT THIS SITUATION?

WHAT ASSUMPTIONS AM I MAKING ABOUT THE OTHER PARTY'S INTENTION?



# CLARIFY

## YOUR VIEWS, NEEDS, RIGHTS & WISHES

You should seek out information about other party's views, needs, rights, and wishes.

Ask the questions, challenge your assumptions, and get the other party to help you understand.

Only then should you give information about your own views, needs, rights, and wishes.

### USE THESE 'I' STATEMENTS TO HELP COMMUNICATE YOUR POSITION:

AS I SEE IT...

BECAUSE...

MY EXPERIENCE IS...

I NEED TO BE MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT...

BEFORE...



# ACKNOWLEDGE

## YOUR VIEWS, NEEDS, RIGHTS & WISHES

The primary human need is to be understood. At this stage, that's exactly what we're doing: acknowledging that we understand needs of the other party.

### HERE'S YOUR CHECKLIST FOR THIS STAGE:

- Acknowledge the other party's viewpoint (**empathise**).
- State what you agree with and disagree with.
- If appropriate, flex your opinion in light of the new information.
- Check their acceptance of your viewpoint (return to **clarify** if not accepted).

Following this approach shows a willingness to collaborate. We don't always enter conversations or situations with 100% of the facts. Other considerations may be brought to our attention which may alter our perception of the issue. Remaining entrenched with the same viewpoint you entered the conversation with, regardless of emerging new information, will lead to conflict.



## GENERATE CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

This stage needs to be collaborative. You want to ask the other party for their suggestions and ideas, stay positive throughout, and ultimately strike an agreement to move forward.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK AT THIS STAGE:



Any suggestions for...?



What would be the result of X? How would that help Y?



How could we get around the lack of X?



How about trying...?

**ALL OF THE ABOVE SHOULD LEAD TO...**



# RESOLVE

## AGREE A SOLUTION AND TAKE ACTION

Collaboration is the most effective strategy in dealing with difficult situations. It's about both parties being willing to meet each other in the middle and agree upon a way forward that is mutually beneficial.

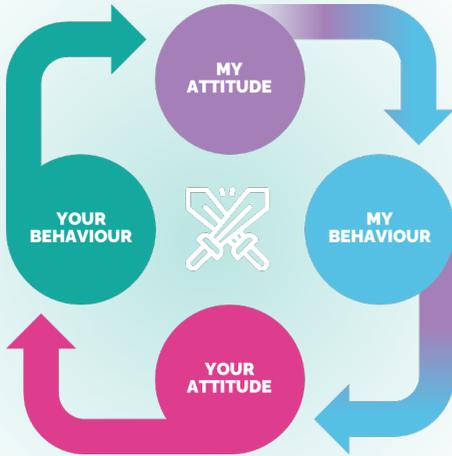
**AGREE WHO WILL DO WHAT AND WHEN AND RECIPROCATE WHERE POSSIBLE. COMPLETE THIS AGREEMENT STATEMENT TOGETHER:**

**I WILL FOCUS ON...**

**AND YOU WILL ARRANGE FOR...**

**TO COMPLETE...**

# THE CONFLICT CYCLE



**The conflict cycle explains how a person's attitude and behaviour can affect the people around them.**

Effectively resolving conflicts is only possible if people are able to change or adapt their own behaviour.

To change the behaviour of others, it's important to look at oneself. First, change your own behaviour, then the behaviour of others will naturally change as well.

## NOTES

At Alchemist, our purpose is to



# FIND THE OTHER WAY.



ALCHEMIST

Our tailored, multi-layered learning journeys are designed to challenge and excite, unlocking potential through immersive, practical and innovative solutions that activate real change.

## WE ARE SPECIALISTS IN...

### LEADERSHIP ENABLEMENT

Empower your people to lead with authenticity and confidence through future-focused skills development.

From the leaders of tomorrow in your Early Careers initiatives, all the way up to your most senior C-Suite populations, we are here to equip your leaders with the skills, behaviours, and mindset they need to thrive in the ever-changing landscape of the modern workplace.

### SALES ENABLEMENT

Revolutionise your approach to selling in a complex, contemporary landscape with strategic sales behaviours.

Our sales enablement experiences give your teams the tools to drive more customer-centric and consultative sales approaches. From your sales teams on the ground, to the leaders inspiring them to perform with vision and integrity, we can cater to all levels of experience and types of sales roles.

### LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

Transform your learners' experience by blending a human-centric approach with comprehensive digital support.

Our digital platform is designed to integrate into your business, adapting to your needs and evolving with you in real-time. With far-reaching capabilities, including diagnostic tools, engagement data and gamification, it is scalable to a global level, enabling you to keep employees engaged from every corner of the world.

### ASSESSMENTS

Simulate a standardised reality with our skilled assessment roleplay actors.

We partner with our clients to develop robust assessment infrastructures that require high-volume actor deployment across multiple locations. Our meticulously planned and executed assessments provide assessors with a comprehensive and authentic portrayal of each candidate's abilities.

## YOUR BLENDED JOURNEY

### DIAGNOSTICS

Unlocking potential starts with understanding the current reality. A diagnostics-led approach enables personalisation and benchmarking, supporting value creation narratives.

### TECH-ENABLED

Deliver learning cohesively through our Learning Journey Platform, and spark engagement, curiosity and play through gamification and visual assets via our Creative Studio.

### DESIGN & DELIVERY

Be it a one-off event or an eighteen-month, fully customised journey, we are here to scope, build and deliver a learning offering that meets your diverse needs and contexts.

### EVALUATION

Track and report learning impact and behavioural change through the utilisation and implementation of one of our ROI packages.

## TOPICS WE COVER:



CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION



LEADING THROUGH CHANGE



COMMUNICATION SKILLS



PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION



INNOVATION & PROBLEM SOLVING



FEEDBACK & COACHING CULTURES



LEARNING AS TALENT RETENTION



NEGOTIATION & INFLUENCING



ALCHEMIST

