



Crucial Conversations.



OPEN OFFICE SECRETS

**WHY EMPLOYEES FEAR GIVING FEEDBACK TO THEIR MANAGER
& FOUR TIPS TO HELP PEOPLE AT EVERY LEVEL SPEAK UP**

WHAT ARE YOUR OPEN OFFICE SECRETS?

Crucial Learning research shows that across corporate America, performance discussions are one-sided.

When it comes to sharing critical performance feedback, managers can speak freely with their direct reports, but direct reports don't dare share feedback with their managers. And they have lots of it.

Researchers asked 1,335 employees to disclose their boss' significant weakness—one that everyone knows and discusses covertly to each other, but not directly with their manager. Asking the question was like opening the flood gates on managers behaving badly. ***Eight out of 10 participants responded with a colorful “open secret” about their boss’ behavior.***



Top 5 Manager Weaknesses

The top five weaknesses bosses have but don't know they have include the following, along with respondents' real-life stories illustrating this misbehavior:



#1: OVERWHELMED AND INADEQUATE

“For some reason, our management has protected an unqualified individual to be in a position of authority. They have sent her to Green Belt training and she cannot even get her presentations in order. Everyone rolls their eyes, but no one says anything.”

“He is stretched entirely too thin. Because of this, he delays decisions and doesn't respond to needs. It would be great if the organization (not him) would allow us more autonomy, but that is not the case, and getting his attention for decision making is very difficult. I worry about our ability to be nimble in an ever-changing environment.”



#2: POOR LISTENER

“Our vehicles break down constantly, even after just returning from maintenance. Our boss frequently says we are not to speak poorly of our vendor, so we no longer discuss problems in front of her. Now, no one speaks of any issues to her, since we are constantly told not to.”

“He multi-tasks instead of listens. He does this during important calls, and in one-on-ones.”



#3: BIASED AND UNFAIR

“We have a Director who comes in every day between 9:00 and 10:00 when we're supposed to be here at 8:00. Our boss, the Executive Director, did talk with this person but the tardiness continues. Because this Director is allowed to come in late every day it has affected morale within the department. No one says anything to our E.D. because we don't want a target on our back. Others have been pushed out by our E.D., so we don't speak up.”

“My boss dominates over female team members. He will blatantly talk over women when trying to make his own point.”





#4: DISTANT AND DISCONNECTED

“Our manager has a lack of connection, or desire to connect, with team members. There is also a complete disregard for the team’s work, work load, and energy. Because she is so disconnected to the daily work flow and details, she continually piles on extra work. We have multiple team members headed to burnout including one who has already had a medical episode brought on by work stress and tension.”

“The boss disappears all the time and no one ever knows where he is. He invents reasons to leave that involve the ‘business’ and everyone talks about this all the time. The running joke is ‘I need so-and-so and he’s probably not here—see ya!’”



#5: DISORGANIZED AND FORGETFUL

“The boss over-schedules appointments, cancels at the last minute, and shows up late. This behavior leads to frustration and helplessness with staff. We wait for her to show up to a meeting, make excuses to others who actually attended, and often have to reschedule. Talent is wasted, and staff feel as if we are assistants just chasing after the boss’ calendar.”

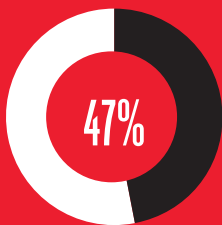
“We talk openly about the fact that we can have an extensive meeting and he’ll take few, if any, notes. Then, when he forgets and becomes upset about an outcome, he refuses to acknowledge he forgot. We talk constantly about how we have to cover our tracks with him by confirming everything in email—which he hates because we’re in a public organization—but it’s the only way we have of documenting that he’s been informed.”

TOP 5 REASONS EMPLOYEES STAY QUIET

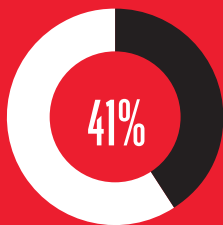


Clearly, people have intense and pervasive frustrations with their boss, and yet ***they don't feel safe or able to give their manager feedback***. Instead of speaking up, they vent to each other. Essentially, everyone is aware of and annoyed by the boss' shortcomings— everyone that is, except for the boss.

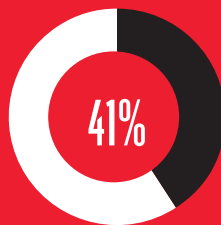
But why is feedback so one-sided? According to the study, the top five reasons people report for their office-wide silence of the boss' bad behavior run the gamut. ***Specifically, they say:***



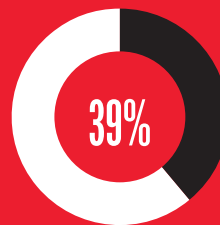
Speaking up
would offend
their manager



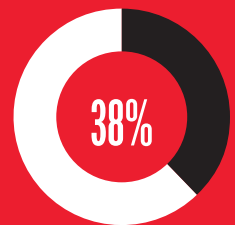
Speaking up
would cause
their boss to
retaliate



They don't
know how to
bring it up



Speaking up
would hurt
their career



The culture
doesn't support
people who
speak up

Creating a Culture of 360° Dialogue

This pattern of silence highlights a detrimental dialogue and accountability crisis across corporate America. ***It's important people understand that silence doesn't actually equate to harmony and results but quite the opposite.***

Employees may think that by choosing to remain silent about their boss' bad behavior, they are taking the high road or being the bigger person. However, they fail to realize that what they don't talk out, they will eventually act out. Likely, their silence is already taking a toll on engagement, satisfaction, performance, execution, etc.

“The health of any organization, team, or relationship is a function of the average lag time between when people identify and discuss problems. In healthy teams, when people see something they say something. In weak teams, performance problems, concerns, and errors remain unchecked and erode results and relationships.”

JOSEPH GRENNY



4 Skills for Speaking Up

The good news is, there are a handful of skills people can use to confront a misbehaving manager. ***These skills help people step up to accountability discussions while also preserving relationships and results.***



Number 1

WORK ON YOU FIRST, THE BOSS SECOND.

Get your emotions in check by looking for how you may be adding to the problem. It isn't that the boss doesn't have faults; **it's that most people tend to exaggerate their boss's problems and ignore how they may be contributing.**

Number 2

HOLD THE RIGHT CONVERSATION.

Most people think they are giving their boss feedback but fail to get to the real issue that concerns them. For example, if your fundamental concern is that your boss doesn't respect you or that you don't trust your boss – **you have to find a way to discuss that issue without skirting around it.**



Number 3

START WITH SAFETY.

It can be tough to tell your boss you don't trust him or her. But it is completely possible to do so without rupturing the relationship if you can help your boss feel safe. **People feel psychologically safe when they know you care about their interests and respect them.** Start with: "I have a concern I'd like to discuss. It's important to me, but it's also something I think will help me work more effectively. May I discuss it with you?"

Number 4

FACTS FIRST.

Don't start with your harsh judgments or vague conclusions. For example, "I don't trust you" or "You're a control freak."

Instead, **start with the facts.** Strip out any judgmental or provocative language and be specific. For example, "After you told me you brought me up for a promotion in the HR meeting, two people at that meeting e-mailed me and asked me why I wasn't recommended by you."



Build an Accountability Culture

The health of our teams, organizations, and communities can be measured by the quality and speed with which people speak up and engage in dialogue. The skills to achieve a culture of dialogue and

accountability are taught in these award-winning Crucial Learning courses. Learn more about building a workplace culture where people feel safe to speak up to anyone, regardless of role or responsibility.



Crucial Conversations. FOR MASTERING DIALOGUE

Turn disagreement into dialogue by speaking up candidly, respectfully, and quickly.



Crucial Conversations. FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Resolve problems of poor performance, broken commitments, and violated expectations.

Get Started

To help your organization build a culture of dialogue and accountability, 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 the areas of 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®, Crucial Accountability®, Influencer, The Power of Habit™, and Getting Things Done®.

CrucialLearning.com