

## Title:

Sticky Conversations

## Word Count:

988

## Summary:

Confronting people is a part of doing business and a part of life. It's not always fun, but sometimes necessary. With a little help and the right attitude, it can be done with grace and ease.

## Keywords:

conversations, difficult conversations, fighting, arguments, disagreements

## Article Body:

Can you just feel the sickness in your stomach right now? That feeling when you know that you have to have a conversation that you are NOT looking forward to, but know you need to have. It plagues you for days before you have to face the inevitable and then the moment arrives when you make contact with the person, and there they are.. waiting for you to initiate conversation.

Usually, the conversations start friendly. You talk about the weather or your weekend or something work oriented that you both can agree on. This is a great tactic.. to find something that you both agree on BEFORE you attack.

Okay, attacking is NOT a good word here. That is exactly what you don't WANT to do. But, it is going to be your natural instinct. You have probably been steaming on the inside thinking of everything wrong that your opponent has done. You've been thinking of what he or she is going to give you as a rebuttal and you have every clever answer ready to go.

But instead of attacking, you need to PRACTICE exactly WHAT you are going to say. And even though you can barely CONTAIN yourself and want to just blast the person, you MUST REMAIN CALM. You MUST remain in a place where an equal exchange of ideas can take place. You must tell yourself that you HAVE to stay calm, and agree to listen with out interrupting.

Visualizing being calm is helpful and visualizing yourself having a good conversation is even better. It can help pave the way for a fruitful conversation. Then, after you've finished the small talk, and that awkward silence takes place, then it's up to you, to ask a question: "so, perhaps we

should discuss this issue at stake?"

Remember at this point, whoever ASKS the questions controls the conversation. If you ask the question, "can you tell me what happened from your point of view?" then you are off to a good start. Then, follow up by taking notes and asking MORE questions. Do this so your opponent can see that you are really listening to him or her and value what you have to say. The most controlled person is going to want to JUMP in and add their two sense, but you MUST not! You must just listen, look them in the eyes with all of the sincerity you can muster up, and you must listen to his or her complaint about you.

When they are done with their 15 minute monologue that may or may not be salted with epiphanies about yourself that you were dying to know, then you HAVE to take a breath, a deep one and then... WAIT.

YES... WAIT. Let the clock tick. This is essential for letting your opponent know that you are giving serious thought to the assaults that you just endured. You are carefully considering the awful things that you instigated, and then you are thinking carefully about how to respond.

Then you do. You might want to throw in one or two more questions to gain clarity just for good measure, but more than likely, you'll have the major complaints listed and are now ready to respond.

But.. before you respond... do you need to apologize? Do you need to tell the person that you're sorry that you hurt their feelings, damaged their reputation, embarrassed them in front of others, or ANYTHING else. Apologizing is an EXCELLENT strategy for gaining respect from an opponent. If you don't have any apologizing to do... then FIND something to apologize for. It's VERY important that you take some of the blame.

Next, thank the opponent for opening up to you and sharing with you. Tell them that you want to gain their respect and trust and want to word everything as carefully as possible.

Then you start your rebuttal. Tell the person that you want to do a good job. You both have the same goal at stake of keeping the company growing and moving in the right direction. (or list a common goal that you both share) and it's obvious that you are both passionate about the topic.

Then start slow, and talk about how you arrived at your decision. Do NOT point fingers. Just talk about the goal of making your company great.. or how you arrived at your decision. If you are giving a rebuttal to a serious allegation

that is true, then confront your fears and tell the person that you are working on this issue and ask for them to be patient with you. Most people will understand human error and give you a break - if you admit it. If you defend yourself completely and take no responsibility, then you might as well hang up your gloves. You are going to lose respect and probably in the long run, you'll lose the game.

Sticky conversations are not fun to have, but they can further the action faster than anything else. Rather than people sitting around stewing all day long, gossiping in the halls about each other, then having those conversations can challenge people to come to the table with ideas, conversations and new solutions.

Each time you have a sticky conversation, you'll gain strength. You'll see that it's MUCH better to have the conversation than let it simmer underneath the surface. Facing the uncomfortable does more than just solve an issue, it can help you get comfortable with the person, and make them into your advocate.

There is no better solution to find than to transform from an enemy to an advocate. That is the ultimate and while it might not be easy, it is simple. Just prepare in advance, be prepared to humble yourself, and in the process you'll gain respect from your opponent, and even more respect for yourself.