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Clean CONVERSATIONS

THE ROLE OF DIRECT AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION



Remember a time at work when there was enormous stress or uncertainty? You had a conversation that may not have given you the answers you wanted to hear, but gave you some of what you needed to hear. In that moment, you were able to make more sense of your work environment. You were engaged in conversation. You felt heard. You left knowing more about the situation and your role in it. You just had a 'clean conversation.'

WHY DO WE NEED CLEAN CONVERSATIONS?

We need clean conversations at work. We define 'clean conversations,' as two-way conversations where someone is coming clean and clear - is being transparent - for the benefit of the other. In clean conversations, people say what they mean. A specific message is focused on the interests of the other. We may or may not be in agreement, but the conversation feels real. Everyone



feels heard. The greater the complexity of the issue being discussed, the more moving parts, the stronger the emotions present, and the more important ongoing clean conversations become.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A CLEAN CONVERSATION?

In short, clean conversations are dialogue that clearly express your intention, direction, or goal, address the needs of others, while giving the other person the maximum opportunity to respond

without the imposition of your metaphors and assumptions. Clean conversations differ from clean language used in therapeutic settings, as clean conversations happen in the 'real' world. The person giving the message has an intention and is not impartial. Clean conversations are emotionally and factually transparent. Clean conversations work toward mutual understanding and trust.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CLEAN CONVERSATIONS?

The most notable impact of clean conversations is increased transparency at work. Employees want transparency with their manager, and with company objectives. Even when the facts are not desirable, employee surveys show that transparency builds trust and is preferred over no information at all. Here are some of the positive impacts of clean conversations at work:

- Enhance mutual understanding
- Lower employee turnover
- Employees receive more feedback on their work
- Greater engagement of employees
- Improve communication
- Foster inclusiveness and collaboration; increases team productivity and innovation.

TOP TIPS FOR ENGAGING IN CLEAN CONVERSATIONS

1. Maintain a mindful position during the conversation.
2. Align your metaphors and perceptual space with theirs.
3. Recognize and reference background logic both in your and the receiver's statements.
4. Recognize and keep presumption at bay.
5. Choose face-to-face conversations or phone over email or chat.
6. Have clear distinctions between: Who is the message for? What is the message intended to do? What kind of information is needed to achieve success when delivering your message? What works for you?

Clean conversations often work on a continuum and they need practice as well as feedback to work. Have a look at the messages below and see which ones are the cleanest:

- I think you should work on it.
- Have you worked on it?
- I'd like you to work on it.
- I'd want you to work on it.
- Would you work on it?
- Could you work on it?
- Can you work on it?
- You should work on it.
- You must work on it.
- You have to work on it.

“The degree to which communication is clean always depends on the context and non-verbal messages such as the energy with which the message is delivered, eye contact, and hand gestures.”



- You need to work on it.
- You might work on it.
- You can work on it.
- If I were you, I would work on it.

Yousef would have needed to begin by saying something like:

Yousef: "I need the month end report completed today. Would you be able to do this?"

WHAT OUR CLIENTS TELL US

The degree to which communication is clean always depends on the context and non-verbal messages such as the energy with which the message is delivered, eye contact, and hand gestures. Of course, voice tone, facial expression and the like are not easy to describe in written communication, so, clean language is especially important in emails and social media messages. Initially, this approach may need bravery, especially in cultures where there is an unwritten rule that communication flows top down as opposed to bottom up and across the middle. Our research has shown that clean conversations can help relationships develop, not only in organizations but in family and social life too. Clean statements ignite discussion and intrigue.

WHAT WE WANT FOR YOU

What we want for you, is for you to play with adopting a cleaner approach to your conversations. We also want you to be aware of the impact of your efforts by personal reflection as well as by asking others how clean they feel your conversations are. We also want you to embed clean meetings into your organization, meetings where everyone can really state their thoughts and feeling, where all views are acknowledged and considered. Clear? If it's clear, it's clean! **BIG**



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