

EBOOK

**CONVERSATIONAL CAPACITY—GETTING TO THE
SWEET SPOT OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

As our world grows more complex and unpredictable, the ability to work together effectively while under pressure is a pivotal competency. The more challenging the situation, the greater the need to communicate clearly and effectively.



But according to *Harvard Business Review*,
57% of employees report not being given clear directions, and 69% of managers are not comfortable communicating with employees.

And according to Gallup,
74% of people feel they are missing out on receiving important information at work.

Most communication weaknesses and failures in our organisations and teams can be linked to individuals lacking the skills to engage in open dialogue about difficult subjects.



One solution is increasing your organisation's conversational capacity. In his book, *Conversational Capacity: The Secret to Building Successful Teams That Perform When the Pressure Is On*, best-selling business author Craig Weber describes **conversational capacity** as the ability of an individual or a team to remain both candid and curious under pressure.



So how do we build our conversational capacity and that of our teams and organisations?
The process involves three areas of practice:

1. Awareness

2. Mindset

3. Skillset

Awareness

First, we must increase our personal and situational awareness so we're able to recognise the powerful defensive emotional reactions that so easily throw us and others off balance. This heightened awareness allows us to respond to challenging situations and conversations in a more intentional and disciplined way.

— Mindset

Second, we must cultivate a mindset that allows us to stay focused and grounded in tough circumstances that would distract and disorient people or teams that have less discipline.

— Skillset

Third, we must make the mindset active by learning two skills that build candor and two skills that build curiosity.

The candour skills:

State your position

- State where you currently stand on the issue
- Be direct and to the point
- Use one or two sentences

Explain your thinking

- Show others how you arrived at your position
- Share the evidence you're using and how you're interpreting that evidence

The curiosity skills:

Test your own view

- Treat your perspective like a hypothesis
- Open the door to contrasting perspectives
- Encourage disagreement

Inquire into the views of others

- Invite others to share their perspectives in the conversation
- Be genuinely curious
- Ask more than one question. Because inquiry is a process, asking multiple questions is often necessary to understand another person's views



The balanced use of these four skills holds us in the *sweet spot* even when we're dealing with tough, divisive, high-pressure issues and situations. In situations where our tendency is to water down, shrink away, cover up, or feign agreement, the candour skills allow us to remain open and engaged. In situations where our tendency is to argue, push our agenda, stop listening, or dismiss the views of others, the competent use of curiosity skills helps us remain learning-focused.

Conversational capacity is a game-changing competency that improves the performance of individuals, teams, and entire organisations.

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