



Business Management Institute

Difficult Conversations

Conflict Resolution & Accountability
Leading conversations that strengthen trust and follow-through

CHECK-IN POINT

- Point your phone's camera at the QR code
- or*
- Navigate to <https://wacubo.cnf.io>
- Tap session matching this room
- Keep browser window open to check out at session's end

WACUBO 2026

Business Management Institute



Who We Are



Who You Are

Years in higher ed

Function (team)

Formal leadership role

What do you want to learn?



You'll leave ready to act

- **RECOGNIZE:** when it's time to speak up
- **PREPARE:** for a productive exchange
- **RESPOND:** with clarity, curiosity, and care



Think about the last
conversation you delayed.
What made you wait?





Difficult $\neq$ Bad





Difficult = Important

Important conversations strengthen the system.

Shift from “this is hard” to “this is important.”





Why Leaders Avoid Conversations

ASSUMPTION: PROTECT RELATIONSHIP

- Fear of conflict
- Fear of damaging trust
- Fear of response

ASSUMPTION: PROTECT YOURSELF

- Uncertainty about what to say
- Hope it resolves itself
- “Protect” from a potential response



Hidden Organizational Costs

PEOPLE

Morale dips, frustration builds, burnout follows

CULTURE

Expectations get uneven and trust erodes

WORK

Deadlines slip and the same errors repeat

SAFETY

People quietly stop naming problems



What is the real cost of avoiding a difficult conversation in your organization?

Name the impact, not the intention.





Patterns = Time to Talk

- Results are slipping
- Relationships are strained
- The pattern keeps returning
- Fairness is at risk
- The issue is growing

The 4 Ps: A Framework for Every Leadership Conversation

STEP 01



PAUSE

Stop, breathe, and create intentional space before speaking

STEP 02



PURPOSE

Get clear on WHY you are having this conversation

STEP 03



PREPARE

Know what you want to say and how you want to listen

STEP 04



PARTICIPATE

Stay fully engaged — listen more than you speak

Dr. Sara Reed

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Conducting the Conversation



The COIN Feedback Method

A structured approach to giving feedback that lands well.



C

CONTEXT

"When you were managing the morning bus dispatch on Tuesday..."

Set the scene. Anchor the conversation in a specific, observable moment — not a pattern or generalization.



O

OBSERVATION

"I observed that three routes departed 12 minutes late..."

State only what you saw or measured. No interpretation — just facts. Specific data builds credibility.



I

IMPACT

"This created confusion for 6 classroom teachers and disrupted the school start..."

Connect the behavior to real consequences. Impact makes feedback matter — it's not personal, it's operational.



N

NEXT

"Going forward, I'd like us to build in a 5-minute buffer for pre-route check-ins."

Always end with a clear, forward-looking action. This is what makes COIN generative — not punitive.

A horizontal row of eleven white dots of varying sizes, with the largest dots at the ends and smaller ones in the middle.

Curiosity creates room for the truth

Listen to understand, not to respond.

- **“Help me understand...”**
- **“What am I missing?”**
- **“Tell me more...”**



Words Matter

INSTEAD OF...

- “You always...”
- “Why did you do that?”
- “That’s unacceptable.”

TRY...

- “I’ve noticed...”
- “Help me understand...”
- “Let’s talk about what needs to change.”



Trust grows when both are high

HIGH SUPPORT

- Respect the person.
- Listen with curiosity.
- Assume positive intent.

HIGH ACCOUNTABILITY

- Name the behavior.
- Clarify the expectation.
- Follow through consistently.

Case Study

THE SITUATION

A staff member has missed three reporting deadlines over the last two months. Other team members are frustrated because they've had to cover the work. The employee is knowledgeable but often says they're overwhelmed with competing priorities.

APPLY COIN & PRACTICE

- Would you address it?
- How would you open the conversation?
- What questions would you ask?
- What outcome would you seek?



Start sooner. Prepare. Stay human.

- **AVOIDANCE IS COSTLY**
 - Small issues compound
- **PREPARATION BUILDS CONFIDENCE**
 - Facts and purpose create clarity
- **TRUST + ACCOUNTABILITY**
 - They** can & should coexist



What's one thing you'll do
differently after today's
session?





Questions?

Find us on LinkedIn



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Strategic, Disruptive, Curious & People-
Centered Global Leader: my purpose is to e...



Megan Glide Villasenor
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Looking to Obtain CPEs?

**Don't forget to
Check-Out from
the system!**

