

# Leadership by Design: Scenarios for Tough Conversations

*(Choose three most relevant or write new scenarios to fit a particular issue or organisation. Print and cut selected scenarios prior to workshop)*

Scenario One – Late to meetings (attitude)

Scenario Two – Rude emails to other departments

Scenario Three – Negative gossip

Scenario Four – Late to work (personal issues)

Scenario Five – Inappropriate sense of humour

Scenario Six – “Us and Them” mentality

Scenario Seven – Rudeness to colleagues

Scenario Eight – Breaking chain of command

Scenario Nine – Breaking confidentiality

## **SCENARIO 1      MANAGER**

A team member who has historically been relatively reliable has in the last few months developed an issue with punctuality; arriving late for meetings on more than a few occasions, and twice has not turned up at all. The issue seems to be worsening, with other team members now making comments to you.

You have raised individual instances of the issue to the team member a few times now, hoping they would rectify their behaviour, but they have not seemed to take the issue seriously, and always have an excuse.

You decide you need to meet with the staff member and discuss the issue thoroughly. Plan your approach for the interaction, then call the staff member to a meeting.

## **SCENARIO 1      STAFF MEMBER**

You are a long term and loyal employee and enjoy your job, particularly the flexibility it provides. You've probably pushed the flexibility aspect a little far lately, but you know that you work hard and add lots of value, so what's the harm if you miss the odd meeting here and there? It's not like other people don't do the same!

## **SCENARIO 2      MANAGER**

You have a very knowledgeable, passionate senior member of your team whom you respect and value. However, this team member at times can struggle to know how to effectively deal with frustrations, and you now have three instances in the last month of where they have sent inappropriate and unprofessional emails to colleagues in other parts of the organisation as a result. The emails are very direct and bordering on personal attacks.

You have asked the team member before to be mindful of how they present themselves in email communications, but now you have complaints from managers in other departments. You decide you need to invite the team member to a meeting and address the matter with them.

## **SCENARIO 2      STAFF MEMBER**

You are a senior member of staff with significant expertise and experience, and you are passionate about your organisation. Unfortunately, not everyone shares your hard-working, intelligent approach and at times it seems that people in other parts of the organisation just don't know what they're doing! This is a major area of frustration for you. When mistakes are made, you feel these should be brought to the attention of the person making them directly, and you have no problem in doing this. Your Manager has raised the issue of you sometimes being too blunt in emails a while back, but really, people just need to harden up!

### **SCENARIO 3      MANAGER**

You have recently promoted a team member into a new role in your department which has given you much more insight as to how this team member conducts themselves throughout the day.

While the person is doing an excellent job with the responsibilities of the new role, you have become increasingly concerned about the constant negativity displayed toward certain other members of the team, and aspects of the organisation in general. You often hear this team member sharing their negative thoughts with other team members at length and you are worried about the effect this is having on the overall morale of the team. You also do not consider this person's comments to be constructive or professional, and decide you need to invite them to a meeting to discuss your concerns.

### **SCENARIO 3      STAFF MEMBER**

You have recently been promoted into a new role in the department and are really enjoying the new challenges. Also the new role puts you in contact with other team members more often and you do like a good natter! It's fascinating how many people share your views on things, especially the stuff that's constantly going wrong around here. There are some people in the department that really rub you up the wrong way, and you're not the only one!

## **SCENARIO 4      MANAGER**

An employee who has historically been a solid and reliable team member has in the last month developed an issue with punctuality, arriving late for work on more than a few occasions. The issue seems to be worsening, with the staff member arriving late for work three times this week.

You decide you need to meet with the staff member and raise the issue. Plan your approach for the interaction, then call the staff member to a meeting.

## **SCENARIO 4      STAFF MEMBER**

You are a long term and loyal employee and love your job. However, you have had some issues outside of work recently. You have parted with your spouse about a month ago and are struggling with getting the children to school in the mornings etc. before getting to work. You are a private person and haven't shared your situation with your Manager yet, but know it's starting to impact on your work. The last thing you need is to lose your job...

## **SCENARIO 5      MANAGER**

Whilst your staff member is generally very effective in their role, they tend to have a strong sense of humour and sometimes can step over the line when interacting with other team members and occasionally, customers. Recently you have had some feedback from other team members that the staff member has at times been offensive with their humour, particularly with members of the opposite sex. This is something you have witnessed also. You feel you now need to give the staff member some feedback with regards to this issue.

## **SCENARIO 5      STAFF MEMBER**

You have been a staff member at your organisation for a while and consider that you're pretty good at your job. You have a healthy sense of humour and get along really well with the team, using humour to make the work place a bit more fun. Sometimes people might act a bit surprised at your jokes, but it's all in good fun and sometimes people just need to get over themselves.

## **SCENARIO 6      MANAGER**

You have a team member who has been with the organisation for a number of years, and has great passion, knowledge and skill in what they do. However, you have noticed over the last 6-12 months that they have developed a very negative “us and them” mentality, where they often complain to other colleagues about “management” and their “bad decisions”. You are concerned about the impact this person is having on the people around them, as they tend to stir other people up.

You need this person to understand that being one united team is the only way forward and decide to have a conversation with them about this.

## **SCENARIO 6      STAFF MEMBER**

You have been with your organisation for quite a while and are really passionate about what you do. However, lately you've become more and more frustrated with management. They don't take the time to understand what is happening “on the shop floor” and make stupid decisions which you are then expected to follow. You are not impressed and are happy to share that view with those around you.

## **SCENARIO 7      MANAGER**

You lead a passionate, enthusiastic and creative team of individuals, that most of the time get along very well. Occasionally though, one staff member's passion can spill over into heated discussions, bluntness and rudeness toward their colleagues and you feel this is becoming more of an issue. You have noticed other team members starting to "walk on eggshells" around this person and simply avoid them when they appear to be in a "mood."

You fear that if you do nothing, the behaviour will start to impact on the moral of the team and decide to have a conversation with the person about respectful behaviour.

## **SCENARIO 7      STAFF MEMBER**

You are a passionate, creative and enthusiastic member of staff and work with a team of other like-minded individuals. Generally, the team is quite harmonious, but you don't always see eye-to-eye on everything. You know that you have a tendency to fight quite fiercely to get your way, and don't spend much time being "soft and fluffy". You tell it like it is.



## **SCENARIO 8      MANAGER**

You are the leader of a small team of professionals who are all very driven to make things happen. One team member in particular is very head-strong about what they believe is the best solution to issues, and their opinions often differ from your own in terms of what will add most value for the organisation.

On several occasions now, this team member has attempted to drive their agenda forward by taking up their ideas with your manager or other managers in the area, having already been told by you that you cannot support the idea. You have shown full consideration for this person's views and been clear as to why their proposed solution is not appropriate, but still they have tried to go over your head or around you.

It's important that your team member respect your decisions as their leader, and you decide you need to address this behaviour in a conversation with the team member.

## **SCENARIO 8      STAFF MEMBER**

You are a driven and experienced member of staff and tend to be quite head-strong in your views. Often its clear to you what solutions are needed in a given situation, but you find yourself frustrated when you are blocked by your manager (whom you consider less experienced and knowledgeable than yourself) from implementing these solutions.

You have built good relationships with other leaders in the area, including the manager of your boss, and a few times now you've been able to progress your ideas with these other leaders when you've found yourself blocked by your own manager. "Whatever gets the job done" is your motto.

## **SCENARIO 9      MANAGER**

You are a senior leader in your organisation with other leaders reporting to you. As leaders, you and your direct reports are often involved in confidential, and sometimes quite sensitive discussions. You have a very reasonable expectation that the confidentiality of such sessions is respected and strictly upheld by all of your team. Unfortunately, there has been a recent situation whereby a team member of yours has breached this confidentiality by sharing sensitive information from a meeting they attended with someone from another department who was not part of the meeting. This has led to significant angst for the person whose confidentiality was breached.

Disappointingly, this is the second instance where this particular team member has been involved in sharing confidential information. You decide you need to discuss the issue with the team member and make it very clear how unacceptable this behaviour is.

## **SCENARIO 9      STAFF MEMBER**

You hold a leadership role in your organisation and report to a senior leader. As you would expect in a leadership role, you are privy to a lot of information in meetings that would probably be deemed sensitive or confidential.

Having said that, there are situations where you've felt the need to have a quiet conversation about something that has occurred in a meeting with someone that was not present. This could probably "technically" be labelled as a breach of confidentiality, but you are in a leadership role and feel you have the judgement to decide when these conversations are justifiable. (Also, sometimes it's REALLY good gossip!)