

LGLA LEADERSHIP FORUM – FEBRUARY 4, 2016

RESPECT FOR THE OFFICE #2

CONFLICT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS: Skills & Tools Workshop

Elected officials deal with the impact of reduced financial resources and the need to determine what services can be provided in the community. Councils work hard to resolve the inevitable differences of opinion as to what action should be taken. These are often very difficult conversations—even for the most experienced elected official. Learn strategies to deal with these challenging conversations.

I may want to look at some of my communication behaviours.

I may need to ask, “What should my goals be in a challenging conversation?”

- Agree to try to communicate differently with the other person
- Agree to try to name the issues
- State what the other person can count on from me going forward

I may need to ask, “How do I fix it?”

- Think about the “10 TOOLS” below for managing my emotions
- Ask: Which of the following “10 TOOLS” can I remember to use in a challenging conversation? How would I grade myself?

		ONGOING SELF-ASSESSMENT	
	YES	NO	
			<p>Rate my communication competency with a specific difficult conversation:</p> <p>Level 0 = (unaware communicator) *sarcasm; aggressive, dismissive words or tone: “This doesn’t make any sense at all!” *argumentative, focused only on myself, accusing, blaming, finger pointing, dismissive: “I want you to listen to me!” “What, you never do that!” “I’m done with this!” *body language and eye contact shows dislike; shuts down conversation about issues *keeps referring to the past; can’t name issues; doesn’t know how to solve old issues *indulges in office gossip (triangulation) – saying something about a person not present *engages the other person and continues the conversation when I shouldn’t</p> <p>Level 1 = (developing communicator) *makes quick judgments rather than gathers more information *follows discussion only enough to get a chance to talk; busy preparing rebuttal or advice: “I think my idea is a better way to do this.”</p>

		<p>Level 2 = (emerging communicator) *states facts: “I want to tell you what facts I know about this...” *listens to speaker’s concerns but I don’t demonstrate I “got it”</p> <p>Level 3 = (experienced communicator) *states what is important: “It’s important to discuss this because...” *uses neutral tone: tone creates the primary impact: it can support or discourage *uses descriptive words: words create the secondary impact; examples explain my ideas *names the issue: “This is about how we are speaking to one another”. “This is about the impact on the community.” *can state the facts but not the emotional significance to the other person or the bigger impact on the council or staff morale. *supports the other person: “I’ve got your back.” *can state the impact: “I waited for your email all day because I was worried about...” *makes a request: “It would help me if...” *uses small phrases: “You are right!” “I see it now.” “Thanks for saying that.” *stays (when I want to leave) and offers alternatives (even if I’m feeling upset)</p> <p>Level 4 (master communicator) *responds appropriately and supportively; listens from the heart as well as the head *uses questions to learn more: “What’s most important to you about this?” “What’s your reaction to what I’m saying?” “What would have made you feel I had your back?” *states what you want for next time: “Next time, please...” *asks what the other person might need from you. *shows recovery skills when conversations go sideways (“Yesterday, I wish I had said...”)</p>
		<p align="center">PART 1: PREPARING FOR THE CONVERSATION</p>
<p>TOOL #1</p>		<p>Name the issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *I’d like to improve the communication health of the council *I want to acknowledge what I have personally contributed to the present atmosphere *I need to clarify the role of committee members *I want to be less reactive when I’m upset (body language, words and tone) *I want to better manage defensiveness (mine and others) *I want to better use my assertive skills (finding my neutral voice when dealing with reactive statements from the public or other councillors) *I want to decrease uncertainty around whether the other person has my back and I have theirs *I want to notice the impact on others when I’m behaving in a reactive manner *I want to recognize the positive and long-term contributions of others in building the present day council *I want to give feedback in a neutral, calm and descriptive manner *I want us both to use respectful language and behaviour in the workplace and think about how we are speaking to one another *I need to avoid a quick “leap” to “outcome” or assumptions about the other person’s motives

TOOL #2			<p>Look at the challenging person like a “client”. I can change <u>my</u> perspective. I use great “public relations skills” in external meetings, on the phone, etc. I can do the same for this person.</p> <p>Is it a planned or unplanned conversation?</p>
	YES	NO	<p>PART 2: DURING THE ACTUAL CONVERSATION</p>
TOOL #3			<p>Reframe their message. Check that you have heard the other person by restating in your own words what the person says, feels and means.</p> <p>“You’re upset about the bid decision. You believe your bid was the lowest and yet you didn’t get the contract.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It confirms you are listening - It says, “I want to understand you.” - It enables you to check your understanding of what the person means
TOOL #4			<p>Ask curiosity questions:</p> <p>“What was your understanding of...?”</p> <p>“What are the issues from your point of view?”</p> <p>“What is our priority in terms of ...?”</p> <p>“What else can you tell me about this?”</p> <p>“What do you need from me?”</p> <p>“What questions might you need the answer to?”</p>
TOOL #5			<p>Remember my communication package of 4 - keep it neutral and professional</p> <p>eye contact - (no eye contact, hostile)</p> <p>facial expression - (angry, frustrated, tense; impatient)</p> <p>words - (blaming, aggressive, attacking, critical, condescending)</p> <p>tone - (raised voice, challenging, sarcastic, abrupt)</p> <p>Ask myself: Would I look at or speak to a member of the public in the way I speak to this person? (whether in council meetings, emails or in person)</p> <p>Don’t give the challenging person the worst of my communication skills.</p> <p>Don’t engage in a battle with the emphasis on winning, being right or defending the “family honour” (my municipality, my authority on council, my position on the topic)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - defending myself when I should be saying nothing - continuing the conversation when I should be leaving - resisting when I should be sticking to my “talking points”
TOOL #6			<p>Don’t stress the negative</p> <p>Negative: “You were rude when you criticized my work in front others at the meeting.”</p> <p>Positive: “Please talk to me about my work in your office.”</p> <p>Skip the verbal eraser (try “and” – not “but”). “But” is a verbal eraser because it erases the first part of the sentence. The listener focuses on only the second part.</p> <p>Substitute “and” or use a full stop.</p>

			Negative: “I like the way you did this, but the document has many proofreading errors.” Positive: “I like the way you formatted this and I need you to proofread it for accuracy.”
TOOL #7			Don’t use “fighting” words —“you have to understand; you always; you misunderstood me; that’s not what I said; you never do that; you manipulate others” Don’t start fights by describing the “flaws” of the other person. Don’t start fights by shooting down their ideas. Don’t use argumentative words or tone Don’t interrupt. Urge myself: “Don’t talk! Don’t talk!” (mouth stays tightly closed). W.A.I.T (Why am I talking?)
	YES	NO	PART 3: REFLECTION AFTER THE CONVERSATION
TOOL #8			Measure my improvement. Measure my assertive communication skills by whether I am a little bit better at communicating than last time with the other person (not how the conversation ends; all conversations end one of three ways: positive, negative or neutral). I won’t be at the mercy of other people’s poor communication skills.
TOOL #9			Reduce my own “wear and tear” with the other person. - Stop wanting them to meet my “needs”: stop wishing they would be more respectful say thanks consider others compromise - Stop wishing they were a different person! - Remember the big picture: Reduce “wear and tear” for myself Ensure my behaviour is professional Improve the communication health of the working relationship or Council atmosphere