









# CONVERSATION BUILDER






## Self-Advocacy at Work

The most effective way to advocate for improvement of a workplace concern is to have a well-planned conversation. Use the WorkWell People Solutions Conversation builder to help guide your planning process as you define the concern, identify possible solutions, determine necessary resources, specify a timeline, determine WHO to speak with, and Format a SMART Proposal.

DEFINE THE CONCERN		
What specifically is the concern?		
How is this affecting you?		
How is this affecting your work?		
Is this related to any employment regulations, such as discrimination or harassment?		
<b>No</b> 	<b>Yes</b> 	<b>View Federal Regulations:</b> <a href="https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/majorlaws">https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/majorlaws</a> <a href="https://www.usa.gov/labor-laws">https://www.usa.gov/labor-laws</a> <a href="https://www.eeoc.gov/">https://www.eeoc.gov/</a> <a href="https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/laws-enforced-eeoc">https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/laws-enforced-eeoc</a>  <b>View State Regulations:</b> <a href="https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/contacts">https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/contacts</a>
Do you need a Leave of Absence, Family Medical Leave, or any other time away from work.		
<b>No</b> 	<b>Yes</b> 	Review your leave of absence policy to better prepare and be informed during your conversation.
Are there resources in your company benefit plan or wellness program that can help? <i>For example: substance abuse care, psychological care, individual or family counseling.</i>		
<b>No</b> 	<b>Yes</b> 	Call your benefit provider or wellness program vendor, or view available resources on their websites. Look for a provider finder tool to connect to the appropriate professional care.
Do you need an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act?		
<b>No</b> 	<b>Yes</b> 	Discuss the need for accommodation with your healthcare provider. Ask them to write an ADA accommodation request outlining the specific reasonable accommodation for your employer.

# DETERMINE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Now that you have more clarity around the concern, consider possible solutions to alleviate the impact of the concern.

	<u>DREAM SOLUTION</u> Describe a solution you think is ideal in a best-case scenario, even if you think it is unrealistic or asking for too much.	<u>FAIR SOLUTION</u> Describe a solution that is realistic and likely attainable.	<u>ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION</u> Describe a solution that could work, but is not necessarily ideal.
 <p><b>SPECIFICS</b></p>			
 <p><b>NECESSARY RESOURCES:</b>            tools            training            budget            time            staff</p>			
 <p><b>SUPPORT:</b>            champion            guidance            approval</p>			
 <p><b>IMPACT:</b> your            work team            goals            company            success</p>			

# IDENTIFY WHO TO SPEAK WITH

Now that you have clarity around the concern and possible solutions, determine who is the most appropriate person to address the concern with. Generally this is your immediate supervisor, however it may be someone above them or in a support role.

- **Is your immediate supervisor an appropriate first person to discuss the concern and proposed solution(s) with?**
  - **Yes** - skip to the next chart.
  - **No** - continue to next question.
  
- **Is the concern regarding your immediate supervisor?**
  - **Yes** - if you can speak to the next-level manager skip to the next chart, if not, continue to the next question.
  - **No** - continue to next question.
  
- **Is the concern a possible legal or policy violation?**
  - **Yes** - check your related company policy for a stated process for addressing these type of concerns. If a person is identified skip to the next chart, if not, continue to the next question.
  - **No** - continue to next question
  
- **Is the concern an HR related matter regarding but not limited to a leave of absence, healthcare need, disability accommodation or any other matter that HR may support?**
  - **Yes** - determine who your assigned representative is and skip to the next chart.
  - **No** - generally it is best to speak to your direct supervisor, thier manager, or your assigned HR representative. Your company may also have a compliance committee or an anonymous hotline. Try to avoid sharing an anonymous concern unless necessary, as you may not have input in the resolution or receive follow up on if and when a resolution has taken place. When all other options fail, you may seek assistance from outside counsel, a career coach, employee advocate, or employment regulatory agency.

**I WILL SPEAK WITH \_\_\_\_\_**

## DETERMINE TIME & LOCATION

When is this person typically available?	
When is this person generally in an agreeable, accepting, or supportive mood?	
When can I typically make time to meet with someone?	
When do I tend to feel most confident and think clearly?	
<b>CONCLUSION - WHEN</b> is the most ideal time to maximize the potential for a productive conversation for both the individual and myself:	
<p>Where is this person least likely to be interrupted or distracted, and most likely to engage in active listening?</p> <p>Remote Setting, Personal Office, Conference Room, Public Setting, etc.</p>	
<p>Where am I most comfortable and able to feel confident and think clearly?</p> <p>Remote Setting, Personal Office, Conference Room, Public Setting, etc.</p>	
<b>CONCLUSION - WHERE</b> is the most ideal location to maximize the potential for a productive conversation for both the individual and myself:	
<p><b>LOCATION:</b> _____      <b>DATE:</b> _____      <b>TIME:</b> _____</p>	

Now that you've identified who you will speak with, where, and when, determine the best way to invite them to meet with you. This may be as simple as sending a calendar invite, however you may also consider discussing the need for a meeting in person or over the phone before sending a cold calendar invite.

Be sure to indicate that this is important and you will need undivided attention. Resist discussing any details in advance to ensure you are fully prepared and in control when the conversation takes place.

# PREPARE YOUR MESSAGE

When approaching a company leader first remember that they are a person, doing their best, just like you. The fundamental attribution error states that we credit our own shortcomings to external factors and our strengths and accomplishments to our character, yet we do the opposite for others. When we perceive the company has caused us discomfort, we attribute the misfortune to malicious actions of the company or company representative, when this is rarely the case. Offer them the benefit of the doubt. Give them a chance to hear you out. Most importantly, this conversation is to create awareness and ask for guidance and assistance.

To prepare your message use the key points you want to address from above.

DRAFT MESSAGE	
<b>CONCERN: Details of the issue</b>	
<b>IMPACT: How this is impacting your work, the effectiveness of the team, and/or the success of the organization</b>	
<b>SOLUTION: Your ideal proposed solution, resources and support necessary (Specific &amp; Available)</b>	
<b>CONCERN: Details of the issue</b>	
<b>POTENTIAL: How the solution will improve your work, the effectiveness of the team, and/or the success of the company (Measurable &amp; Relevant)</b>	
<b>TIMELINE: Your expectations for when and how long the solution should take to be implemented (Timely)</b>	
<b>FOLLOW UP: When and how you expect to receive follow up communication regarding the issue</b>	

Feel free to use bullet points, this Conversation Builder form, a script or any other format you are most comfortable using in the meeting. The most important goal is to get your message across. Use whatever format will make you the most successful in delivering that message.

# PREPARE YOURSELF

## Physically & Mentally

- **Practice** to help your thoughts flow more freely, have a base to fall back on when stress hormones kick in, and give yourself something to focus on when your brain wanders to obsessing about the moment.
- **Power-pose** for two minutes beforehand to decrease cortisol and increase testosterone, improving confidence, stress-resilience, high-pressure performance, and ability to influence.
  - Maintain an open and confident posture, avoiding crossing limbs or folding into your core.
- **Hydrate** hours in advance, emptying your bladder before the meeting to promote clear articulation in the moment.
- **Pack:**
  - organized notes
  - appropriate supporting documentation (when applicable)
  - a method for taking notes
  - tissues
  - anything else beneficial

## SHARE

### BEGINNING

Send a reminder ahead of time

Show up early/on-time and prepared

Set the tone "Thank you for taking the time.." "This is important to me.." etc.

### MIDDLE

Share concern & impact

Propose solution with possible outcomes

Seek support, guidance, and buy-in

Offer optional back-up fair solution only if necessary

Seek support, guidance, and buy-in

Offer optional back-up acceptable solution only if necessary

Seek support, guidance, and buy-in

### END

Show appreciation

Schedule follow up meeting (they will need time to look into subject)