



Conducting Difficult Conversations

2024

Introduction

Difficult conversations are an inevitable part of any organization, including sports communities like Bowls Alberta. They arise from various situations, such as conflicts, performance issues, or misunderstandings among members. This report outlines a framework for engaging in these conversations while aligning with Bowls Alberta's mission to support member clubs, cultivate a positive culture, and uphold its core values: integrity, inclusion, collaboration, and stewardship.

Understanding the Importance of Difficult Conversations

Engaging in difficult conversations is essential for:

1. **Conflict Resolution:** Addressing issues before they escalate, ensuring harmony within the community.
2. **Building Trust:** Open and honest discussions foster trust among members, enhancing teamwork.
3. **Personal and Organizational Growth:** Navigating challenging discussions can lead to personal development and improvements in organizational practices.

Preparation for the Conversation

1. Define the Purpose

- Clearly identify the goal of the conversation. Is it to resolve a conflict, provide feedback, or clarify misunderstandings? Understanding the purpose aligns with Bowls Alberta's mission to provide leadership and guidance.

2. Gather Relevant Information

- Collect any relevant data or examples to support your position. This might include performance metrics, feedback from other members, or organizational policies.

3. Anticipate Reactions

- Consider how the other person might react and prepare for various responses. Acknowledging their perspective is crucial for fostering a respectful dialogue.

4. Choose the Right Setting

- Select an appropriate and neutral environment for the conversation to ensure both parties feel comfortable and safe.

Engaging in the Conversation

1. Start with Empathy

- Begin the conversation by expressing understanding and concern for the other person's feelings. This sets a positive tone and demonstrates your commitment to inclusivity.

Example: "I appreciate you taking the time to meet. I understand this may be a sensitive topic for you, and I want to ensure we can discuss it openly."

2. Use "I" Statements

- Frame your concerns from your perspective to avoid sounding accusatory. This aligns with the value of integrity, emphasizing honesty and respect.

Example: "I noticed that there have been some challenges in team coordination during recent matches, and I feel it's important to address them."

3. Be Clear and Direct

- Clearly articulate the issue at hand. Avoid vague language or ambiguity, as this can lead to misunderstandings.

Example: "I want to discuss the recent incident where the communication breakdown led to confusion about the match schedule."

4. Listen Actively

- Give the other person a chance to share their perspective without interruption. Active listening fosters collaboration and shows respect for their viewpoint.

Example: "I'd like to hear your thoughts on this situation. What are your feelings or concerns?"

5. Seek Solutions Together

- Encourage collaborative problem-solving. This aligns with Bowls Alberta's commitment to engaging stakeholders and soliciting feedback.

Example: "What do you think we can do to prevent similar issues in the future? I'd love to hear your ideas."

6. Agree on Next Steps

- Conclude the conversation by summarizing the discussion and agreeing on actionable steps moving forward. This demonstrates stewardship by honoring the trust of members through responsible action.

Example: "To ensure we're on the same page, let's agree on the communication protocol for future

events and check in with each other regularly."

Post-Conversation Follow-Up

1. Reflect on the Discussion

- Take time to reflect on the conversation and identify areas for personal improvement or adjustments in approach.

2. Check-In

- Follow up with the other person after some time to see how they feel about the conversation and any changes that have been implemented.

Example: "I wanted to check in after our discussion last week. How do you feel about the changes we agreed upon?"

3. Document Key Points

- Keep a record of the conversation, agreed actions, and any follow-up steps. This ensures accountability and clarity moving forward.

Conclusion

Navigating difficult conversations is essential for maintaining a healthy and inclusive community within Bowls Alberta. By preparing thoughtfully, engaging empathetically, and collaborating on solutions, we can uphold the organization's mission, vision, and values. Embracing these conversations not only enhances personal and organizational growth but also reinforces the trust and respect fundamental to our sport.