



February 2010

Masterful Mentoring

TIP

Tip of the Month

Demonstrate courage and fortitude by letting your mentoring partners know what your conclusions are, as well as how you think your partners will be affected.

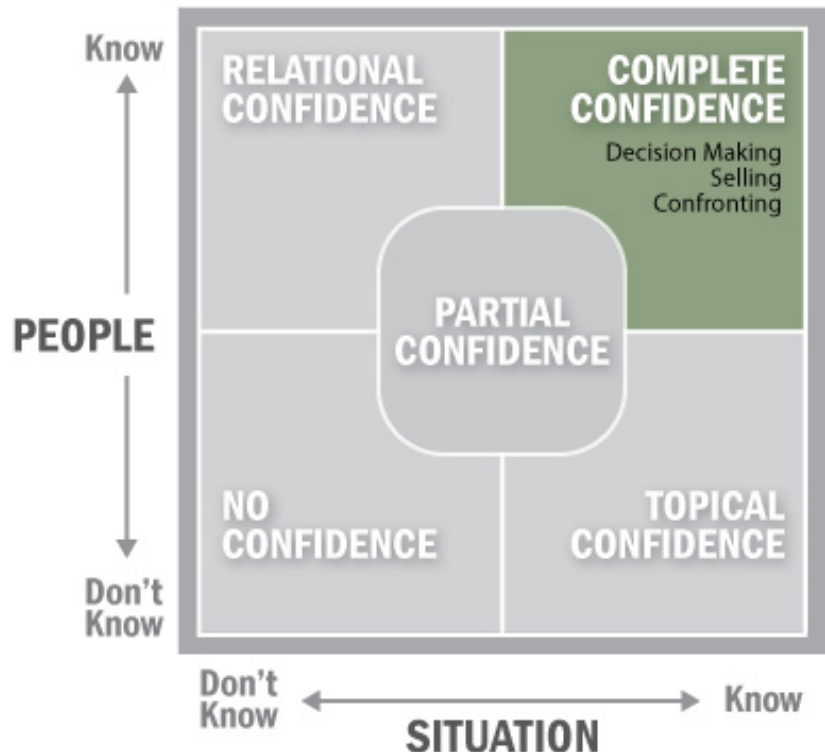
COMPLETE CONFIDENCE CONVERSATIONS

By Randy Emelo and Glenn Hughes

Mentoring Dialogues Series Introduction

The *Mentoring Dialogues: How to Have Productive Conversations* series will explore twelve distinct conversations that help create a productive and engaging mentoring relationship. This series will include six issues: [an introduction to the Mentoring Conversations Model](#), [no confidence conversations](#), [topical confidence conversations](#), [relational confidence conversations](#), [partial confidence conversations](#), and complete confidence conversations. This installment in the series explains complete confidence conversations.

MENTORING CONVERSATIONS COMPLETE CONFIDENCE



For a more in-depth look at the Mentoring Conversations Model, please see our [September 2009](#) issue of *Masterful Mentoring*.



✎ AUTHOR INFO

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✎ COMPLETE CONFIDENCE CONVERSATIONS (cont.)

Complete Confidence Conversations

Have you ever engaged in a conversation with someone and realized that you knew a lot about the situation and people involved? At that moment, you were in the Complete Confidence zone.

The Complete Confidence zone can be applied to instances in which you have a high amount of understanding of both the people and the situation under consideration. Take advantage of these circumstances to set direction, share your truth, and gain commitment to necessary actions. To accomplish this, we suggest that you have selling, confronting, or decision making conversations.

The objective of Complete Confidence conversations is to bring your dialogue to its conclusion and gain agreement on possibilities, determinations, or final stance. These conversations may signal the end point for this particular topic, or they may lead you to the path of a new topic; regardless, the path forward will be clear.

Failure to make conclusions and final determinations can lead to the following:

- **Lack of Understanding** – This occurs when personal positions, opinions, and conclusions are not expressly stated. This leads others to guess where they think you are coming from, what they should believe, or what they should consider important. Highly effective mentoring relationships are ones where there is clarity regarding view points, understandings, and conclusions. Lack of understanding leads to inaccurate or incomplete insights.
- **Lack of Progress** – This occurs when dialogues fail to deliver contradictions, opposition, or comparisons. Learning often springs from being challenged to see or think of things differently. Dialogues that do not draw conclusions or challenge the status quo will lack the power to inspire transformation.
- **Loss of Credibility** – This occurs when conclusions or determinations are never voiced in ways that enable change to take place. Being present and active in mentoring relationships necessitates sharing your perceptions and determinations. By avoiding opposition or decisive communication, you risk appearing as though you lack character or personal resolve.

Productive Conclusive Conversations

The overarching objective of conversations within the Complete Confidence zone is to speak your truth, persuade others to take the appropriate action, or state possible solutions. Not all dialogues need to end in a definitive conclusion, but if the intent of the dialogue is to determine a distinct course of action, then you will need to bring it to an end. Once you have a full and confident grasp of the situation under discussion and the people involved, it is advisable to conclude the dialogue. Productive concluding dialogues are supported by selling, confronting, and decision making conversations. We have outlined all three for you here.



QUOTE

“The open mind never acts: when we have done our utmost to arrive at a reasonable conclusion, we still must close our minds for the moment with a snap, and act dogmatically on our conclusions.”

– George Bernard Shaw

COMPLETE CONFIDENCE CONVERSATIONS (cont.)

Selling Conversations – persuading others to accept, approve, or adopt an idea or course of action

Leading indicators for use:

- When you need to express your bias.
- When you have been asked to give a reason for your belief.
- When you need to avoid (warn about) obvious disaster.
- When you need immediate results.
- When you have an alternative that is a clear winner.

How to use:

Think It Through

Start by first considering the magnitude of your proposed solution and the way it will affect others. There are always risks and tradeoffs to be considered before proposing a course of action or new concept. Upon thinking it through, decide if the solution or idea that you are considering is worth convincing others of before presenting it.

Make Your Pitch

In order to persuade others that your idea or course of action has merit, it needs to connect closely to what others want from the dialogue. Your pitch should be delivered with the appropriate amount of detail, urgency, and priority to match the importance and impact of the problem (or issue) being addressed. If you are absolutely certain that your solution is the correct one, then make your conviction be known. If you are not thoroughly convinced of the correctness of your solution, then present it in a conditional manner.

Remain Flexible

In mentoring relationships, it is important not to get too rigid about how others respond or conform to our will. Strive to remain open to changes or opposition to your ideas and propositions. Remember that there is your way, their way, and quite possibly another way to get your objectives met. In mentoring relationships, it's important that you encourage experimentation and discovery. When others contradict your advice or direction, stay open to the possibilities and discoveries that are sure to follow.

Useful questions:

In general, selling questions focus attention on uncovering and proposing solutions to dilemmas and problems.

Sample questions include:

- Can I share a recommendation?
- Are you open to another concept?
- What action would you recommend?
- Can you sell me on that idea?
- How does your idea compare to mine?
- What would convince you?
- What is the most important aspect of...?
- What do you see as a necessary next step?



RESOURCES

Triple Creek offers many free resources on our web site, including booklets, research papers, and an archive of past newsletters.

Visit www.3creek.com for access to these additional mentoring resources.

COMPLETE CONFIDENCE CONVERSATIONS (cont.)

Confronting Conversations – helping others see alternative perspectives

Leading indicators for use:

- When you sense certain failure.
- When you notice non-productive patterns.
- When others are avoiding responsibility or reality.
- When you want to draw focused attention to a particular issue.
- When you doubt the ability of others to get results.

How to use:

Observe

Tactful disagreement is a very valuable aspect of mentoring, but you must be careful that it is done in a timely and respectful manner. Stay alert and tuned in to the motivations, attitudes, and behavior of others in order to see areas of possible contradiction emerge. This will allow you to cite specific instances where they have given you cause for concern.

Articulate

When openly voicing your disagreement or opposition to a mentoring partner, it is best to be as clear and direct as possible. Avoid condemnation, disapproval, or personal judgments. Stay solution-focused and positive about possible outcomes. It usually helps to clarify your position or reason for addressing the issue of concern at the onset of the conversation. If you don't do this, you risk raising suspicion or mistrust regarding your motives.

Validate

When you confront, you need to be willing to listen to your partners' responses and help them process your comments. Check to ensure that you delivered your message in a way that was correctly understood by your partners. While you should not take ownership of what they do with your advice, you can own the proper interpretation of your intent and meaning and clarify yourself if needed.

Useful questions:

In general, confronting questions focus on clarifying intent and meaning behind behavior.

Sample questions include:

- Can I share with you my perspective on...?
- Do you see the implications of...?
- Are you aware that...?
- How does this align with your commitments/values/desires?
- Really? Can you explain how that will work?
- Have you noticed...?
- Can I correct your assumption regarding...?
- Are you willing to think differently about...?



PODCAST

Listen to our [podcasts](#) to hear Randy Emelo discussing this topic and many more.

COMPLETE CONFIDENCE CONVERSATIONS (cont.)

Decision Making Conversations – selecting a course of action or an opinion of choice

Leading indicators for use:

- When all options have been weighed.
- When deadlines are approaching.
- When a pattern of procrastination is seen.
- When you need forward movement.
- When you have a clear path forward.
- When you have several viable options to choose from.

How to use:

Get Solution-Focused

It is easy to get sidetracked into less important details and lose sight of the most important aspects of the decision. Techniques for keeping focused include prioritizing issues (Pareto Analysis), assessing the risk versus gain (Risk/Gain Analysis), determining positive and negative forces of change (Force-Field Analysis), and assessing critical criteria. The goal of these techniques is to uncover the most important issues that need to be considered in order to select the best option or course of action.

Make Your Choice

Once you are clear on the most important issues that you need to resolve or change, select the option that most closely aligns with it. Keep in mind that you can always change or modify your decision later if new information or understanding arises. The important thing is to make your decision and manage the implications as best you can. Keep in mind that by not making a decision, you may be putting more at risk than simply making a decision and living with the results.

Determine Your Action

Decisions should lead to obvious changes in thought, attitude, or behavior. At this point in the decision making process, it is important to consider exactly how you are willing to change to accommodate your decision. Two major areas of consideration are your values and your tolerance for taking risks. You will want to ensure that the type of changes that you anticipate making align with your values. At the same time, the amount of change that you are willing to accommodate will be largely influenced by your risk-taking tolerance. Be careful to not commit to a course of action that you are unwilling or unable to take. Instead, set expectations for change that you are confident you can act on.

Useful questions:

In general, decision making questions are focused on determining the most relevant and impactful course of action.

Sample questions include:

- Can you commit to this course of action?
- Are we ready to decide?



WEBINARS

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COMPLETE CONFIDENCE CONVERSATIONS (cont.)

- Is the risk of not choosing higher than choosing one?
- Which option do you feel most comfortable with?
- What is holding us back from making a decision?
- Are we in agreement as to a decision?
- Do we have a clear path forward?

Productive Strategies

One of the greatest values of mentoring relationships is actually processing issues and concerns. The temptation is often to move too quickly to the point of decision, persuasion, or telling others how to improve. In doing so we can bypass the development of wisdom and understanding that comes from reflection and contemplation. On the other hand, when we process an issue to the point of complete confidence and have learned all we are going to, it is time to move forward with conviction. The following conversational strategies will help you as you seek to bring your dialogue to a conclusion.

Be Timely

Time is a great catalyst for concluding dialogues. If you have to get results by a certain time, it will lend a degree of urgency to arrive at a conclusion within the allotted timeframe. Strive to ensure that everyone involved agrees to the timeliness of your conclusion. It is quite possible that everyone has different expectations on how much time and energy should be spent on any given issue.

Be Concrete

When drawing conclusions, you want to be as factual and tangible as possible. You will want to avoid abstractions and generalities, choosing instead to cite specific instances, courses of action, determinations, and expectations for outcomes. At this point in the dialogue, there is a high need to be focused on what can be realized and determining what magnitude of effort and commitment it will take to get there.

Be Objective

When making conclusions, it is best to be as objective as possible. While it is true that we need to consider the emotions involved in the issue under discussion, we need to stay resolved to do the right thing regardless of how others will feel. It is often hard to stand in opposition to the will of another, but we would be remiss if we did not stick by our convictions and speak our truth. Being objective means letting others make their choices without reservation. Once you have made your conclusion, how others respond is up to them and not your responsibility. Yet it is important to understand that being objective means be willing to be wrong or corrected. By accepting others' responses with an open mind and not taking them personally, you may discover that your partners have a perception, thought, or conclusion that is better than yours.



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COMPLETE CONFIDENCE CONVERSATIONS (cont.)

Practice Exercise

The following exercise can help you improve your complete confidence conversations with your mentoring partners.

1. Identify an issue that you have drawn a conclusion on that fits within the boundaries of your mentoring relationship.
2. Determine which type of conversation is most appropriate for you to use at this time (selling, confronting, or decision making).
3. Draft several questions for the type of conversation you selected.
4. Conduct a conversation on your topic with your mentoring partners using your questions as a guide.
5. Discuss the results with your mentoring partners.
6. Determine how you can use selling, confronting, or decision making to enhance your mentoring engagement.