

Saying What Needs to be Said

A practical guide to high-stakes conversations

Difficult conversations are a constant in the workplace, yet most leaders and teams lack a consistent, confident approach to having them. Whether the issue involves underperformance, organizational change, interpersonal conflict, board dynamics or misaligned stakeholder expectations, the instinct to delay or soften often makes things worse. When tough conversations are avoided or mishandled, trust erodes, accountability weakens, and problems compound. This session gives attendees a structured, practical framework for approaching high-stakes communication with clarity and confidence. Drawing on AOE's deep experience in leadership development, board relations, association management, and organizational training, presenters address the most common barriers to effective communication and deliver tools that work in real-

world situations. Attendees will learn how to prepare for difficult exchanges, manage emotional dynamics, and deliver clear messages that move situations forward rather than stall them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the communication patterns that cause difficult conversations to fail or escalate, and understand how to address them proactively.
- Apply a structured framework for preparing and delivering high-stakes conversations with clarity, confidence, and respect.
- Develop strategies for managing emotional responses, both your own and others, during tense or sensitive exchanges.
- Adapt communication approaches to different contexts, including performance discussions, conflict resolution, board relations, and change management.

