Painless

Performance Conversations

A Practical Approach to Critical Day-to-Day Workplace Discussions

Webinar Series & Discussion Guide Preview

Four Part Webinar Series with Discussion Guides

Management Education Group, Inc.

By Marnie Green, **CSP, IPMA-CP**, Principal Consultant

Webinar 1 & Discussion Guide:

Making Painless Performance Conversations Happen

Webinar Overview

The *Making Painless Performance Conversations Happen* webinar establishes the framework for initiating Painless Performance Conversations. The following topics are covered during this webinar:

- What counts as a performance conversation?
- Why are they so painful?
- The cost of avoidance
- Have the guts to have the conversations that need to be had
- Relationship of conversations to performance evaluations
- Two of the four mindsets for a Painless Performance Conversation

Reading Assignment

This webinar refers to Chapters 1 & 2 (pages 1–29) and Chapters 5 & 6 (pages 63–94) in *Painless Performance Conversations: A Practical Approach to Critical Day-to-Day Workplace Discussions*.

Webinar 2 & Discussion Guide:

Eliminating Defensiveness with Painless Performance Conversations

Webinar Overview

The *Eliminating Defensiveness with Painless Performance Conversations* webinar discusses the importance of using effective questioning techniques to create space within your conversations and to allow the employee's voice to be heard. The following topics are covered during this webinar:

- The most powerful tool: Inquiry
- Creating space and stoking the fire
- What not to ask
- Guidelines for powerful questions
- Questions for every reason and every season

Reading Assignment

This webinar refers to Chapter 7 (pages 95 - 113) in *Painless Performance Conversations: A Practical Approach to Critical Day-to-Day Workplace Discussions*.

Webinar 3 & Discussion Guide:

Creating a Culture of Ownership with Painless Performance Conversations

Webinar Overview

The *Creating a Culture of Ownership with Painless Performance Conversations* webinar focuses on the differences between accountability and ownership and provides tips for supporting a culture of ownership. The following topics are covered during this webinar:

- What is accountability?
- Why we can't hold employees accountable
- Accountability vs. ownership
- Starting the ownership conversation
- The conversation hook
- Creating a culture of ownership

Reading Assignment

This webinar refers to Chapter 8 (pages 115–130) in *Painless Performance Conversations: A Practical Approach to Critical Day-to-Day Workplace Discussions*.

Webinar 4 & Discussion Guide:

Leading Painless Performance Conversations with Confidence

Webinar Overview

The *Leading Painless Performance Conversations with Confidence* webinar reviews a simple framework for conducting a Painless Performance Conversation. The following topics are covered during this webinar:

- Review of the four mind-sets
- Setting the tone
- Opening the conversation with ease
- Tips on what and what not to say
- The Painless Performance Conversations Model
- How it sounds

Reading Assignment

This webinar refers to Chapter 9 (pages 131 – 148) in *Painless Performance Conversations: A Practical Approach to Critical Day-to-Day Workplace Discussions*.

Discussion Guide Purpose

The purpose of the discussion guides is to provide you with effective questions and activities in a structured format for use with groups of participants who have recently viewed the *Painless Performance Conversations* webinars. These guides are flexible and provide suggestions for use; you can modify the questions and activities to meet your audience needs by incorporating specific organizational goals and examples.

Discussion Guide Overview

The discussion guides are broken into several sections to cover the main topics from the webinars. Within each section, icons may be listed to guide you:

 This icon is listed next to specific **review points** covered in the webinar. Review this content with participants as needed before generating discussions or completing activities.

 This icon denotes **knowledge check** or **discussion questions** to ask participants.

 This icon is listed next to **participant activity overviews and instructions**. Make sure to review the activity instructions with participants prior to conducting.

The next two pages will provide you with a sample page from the first and second *Painless Performance Conversations* Discussion Guides.

Critical Mindsets for Success—Lead with Behavior

Key Points

There are four critical mindsets to successfully lead the performance conversation:

1. **Lead with Behavior**—Separating Actions from Attitudes
2. **Eliminate Judgment**—Focusing on Performance Evidence
3. **Inquire with Purpose**—Using Curiosity to Expand Possibilities
4. **Be Clear**—Creating a Culture of Ownership

This webinar explored the first two of these mindsets. The first is Lead with Behavior—Separating Actions from Attitudes.

What you want the employee "to be" is different than what you want them "to do". The "to be" is a vague notion, such as enthusiastic or team player. The "to do" is the true behavior, such as greeting a customer within 10 seconds or offering to cover the cash register when another employee takes a break.

Discussion Generating Questions

Q: When thinking about a specific employee, what are behaviors that are not meeting your expectations?

Q: Have you identified the difference between how you expect an employee "to be" and what you expect an employee "to do"?

Q: How will changing the behavior improve the workplace?

Activity: Choosing the Behavior

1. Distribute 1 – 3 small note cards to each participant.
2. Direct participants to list a specific behavior on each card.
3. Place all completed cards into a container.
4. Ask a participant to blindly pull a single card from the container.
5. Direct the participant to read the card aloud and to verify if the listed phrase/statement is a behavior rather than an attitude.
6. If the card states an attitude, ask the participant who selected the card to provide an example behavior that supports the listed attitude.
7. If the card states a behavior, ask the participant who selected the card to provide an example opening statement for a performance conversation that includes the listed behavior.
8. Repeat steps 4 – 7 as time allows or until all cards have been selected.

Activities: Powerful Questions

Activity 1: Paraphrase Practice

1. Read the scenario below to participants:

    I am having a really difficult time with meeting the new demands our clients are putting on us. Originally we only had to complete two reports each week for the project read-outs, but now we are expected to complete four or five. I know that you asked Beth to assist, but she has no idea how to work the system, I might as well be doing it by myself.

2. Ask participants to paraphrase what they heard and follow-up with an appropriate question to redirect the conversation using the technique from Guideline 1: Use the context of the conversation to paraphrase what has been said and to leverage the conversation in a new direction.

3. Debrief the activity by asking participants to share their responses. A possible response might be:

    It seems like you are feeling a lot of pressure with the client demands. Can you tell me a little more about what has been happening?

    Note: This activity can also be conducted as a pairs practice; each participant can share their response with their partner and provide feedback to each other.

Activity 2: Open-Ended Questions Conversation

1. Ask for a volunteer to participate in a conversation (with you or with another participant) where they can only use open-ended questions for three minutes.

2. Ask for another volunteer to time the conversation.

3. Begin the conversation; the participant asking the questions should not try to guide the conversation in any particular way but focus on listening to the answers provided.

4. Debrief the activity by allowing the participant that asked the questions to share what was difficult or easy about the activity.

Activity 3: Open-Ended Questions Conversation

1. Read the following statement to participants:

    There is no way we can complete this project milestone by the end of the week as requested.

2. Assign participants one of the following words:

    Might, If, Could, Consider, Possibly, Maybe

3. Ask participants to provide the group one question to ask in response to this statement using their assigned word.