



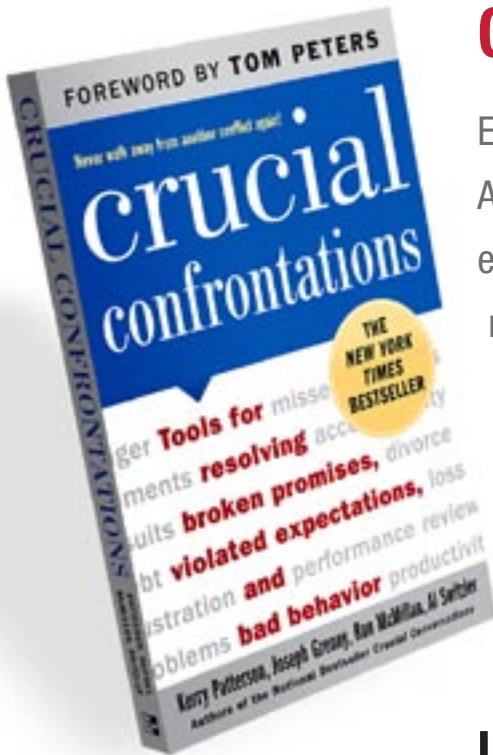
# crucial confrontations™

T R A I N I N G

**Enhance Accountability,  
Improve Performance, and  
Ensure Execution**

*"Revolutionary ideas...  
opportunities for  
breakthrough..."*

—Stephen R. Covey, author  
*The 7 Habits of  
Highly Effective People*



## Can You Ensure Accountability?

Every individual, team, and organization faces disappointment. A coworker misses a deadline, a boss fails to live up to an expectation or a direct report just plain behaves badly. People make promises, break them—and then bad things happen.

We all face accountability challenges because in today's highly complicated and interdependent world we rely on one another and then, for some reason or another, we let each other down. We run into barriers, something comes up, priorities change—the list is endless.

## Learn From the Best

But not everyone responds to broken promises in the same way. Top performers step up to problems, solve them, and improve relationships—all in one healthy confrontation. Instead of backing away from the real issue, allowing problems to worsen, or charging in, these skilled individuals solve real problems and avoid creating a whole new set of challenges along the way.

For over two decades, VitalSmarts researchers have studied top performers—those who achieve the results their employers value most. To no one's surprise, people who are valued the most are talented at holding others accountable. They know how to speak up when others let them down, no matter the other person's power, position, or temperament. By watching how top performers deftly handle broken promises, we've been able to isolate

their unique skills, organize them into a step-by-step process, and place them in a revolutionary training course that teaches the best to the rest. Teach crucial confrontation skills in your company and solve problems ranging from poor performance to sketchy execution, to waning morale, to sagging quality, to dissatisfied customers . . . you name it.

### Break Away From the Rest

Here's the problem most companies need to solve. When it comes to handling a broken promise, many people turn a blind eye. After all, if you confront a problem, it could take a turn for the worse. If you're lucky, the problem will go away on its own. Of course, when you say nothing about a deviation, you not only give your unspoken permission to continue behaving badly,

Accolades for *The New York Times* bestseller *Crucial Confrontations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations, and Bad Behavior* (McGraw-Hill 2004) based on Crucial Confrontations training include:

*"Unleash the true potential of a relationship or organization and move it to the next level."*

— Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager*

*"Crucial Confrontations goes beyond conceptual 'solutions' and provides simple techniques and approaches that anyone can use."*

— Paul Mckinnon, Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Dell, Inc.

*"...practical and proven tools to immediately improve individual performance and organization success."*

— Stacey Allerton Firth, Vice President, Human Resources, Ford of Canada

you also create a “culture of maybe.” You make plans, set goals, give assignments, and then maybe people will deliver. Predictability, consistency, and integrity drop while your blood pressure rises. Eventually, you can take it no longer so you say something—but rather forcefully. Now, you live in a “culture of maybe” periodically punctuated with ugly stares, accusations, and threats.

## How About You?

Is your work culture one where accountability is rock solid? When coworkers and direct reports make a promise to you do you heave a sigh of relief or do you start biting your nails? Are you currently achieving the results you want? Here are common signs you work in a “culture of maybe”:

- A colleague has just missed a deadline. You're not sure what to do. People who speak up in your company are often labeled as “hard liners.” You don't want to be labeled, you just want results.
- One of your best employees harshly accuses a coworker of racism. You're glad he had the courage to speak, but wish he had done so in a less abrasive and insulting way. Are your only choices silence or violence?
- Employees who are hard working are routinely given more and larger assignments. No good deed goes unpunished. Poor performers get away with shoddy results and are asked to do little. As a result, top performers are either discouraged or leave while poor performers enjoy their cushy jobs.
- When people fail to deliver on a promise, many are better at providing excuses than they are at achieving results. Creative story-telling appears to be more valued than actually keeping a promise. In your company: Success = Failure + a Good Story.
- When someone appears unmotivated, people tend to pile on guilt, make sarcastic comments, or bark threats rather than use more enlightened motivation methods.
- When you try to talk with people about deviations or disappointments, it's as if they have a Ph.D. in sidetracking you. They're masters of diversion, not delivery.
- You try to talk with people about problems, but they seem so touchy and explosive that you often have trouble making it past the first few sentences before the conversation tanks.

## Improving Results

During the past twenty-five years, we've studied thousands of influential individuals, hundreds of effective teams, and dozens of productive organizations. We've carefully examined top performers to identify what separates them from the rest. Here's what we've learned. The best routinely employ skills that turn diverse thought into synergy and synergy into results—by mastering crucial confrontations. And so can you. Implement the principles and tools taught in Crucial Confrontations training, and you will see significant improvement in areas such as:

1. **Performance**—talking honestly and openly with people no matter how delicate the topic or powerful the individual.
2. **Productivity**—making decisions in a way that encourages people to act on them with conviction; eliminating resistance and infighting.
3. **Teamwork**—jointly reaching agreement as to how you'll work together and treat one another as teammates.
4. **Change Management**—creating a culture where people are able to come to agreement about difficult changes (Six-Sigma, SAP, ERP, etc.) and then follow through.
5. **Quality**—developing processes and methods that are not only helpful but are also eagerly implemented.
6. **Relationships**—working through differences with a loved one in a way that not only solves the problem, it also strengthens the relationship.
7. **Safety**—brainstorming causes and solutions in a way that comes up with the best ideas without pointing fingers or creating resentment.
8. **Diversity**—willingly and ably discussing diversity problems face to face and in the moment rather than blowing a gasket or requesting a transfer.
9. **Meetings**—speaking up when things get off track and suggesting how to improve them.



*“Why did we have to wait until this moment for Crucial Confrontations? Crucial Confrontations is the essential element of the organizational DNA.”*

— Tom Peters

Author, *Re-imagine!*

*Business Excellence in a Disruptive Age*

Put Crucial Confrontations skills to work in nearly any area and measurably improve your individual, team, and organizational results.

## What Others Say About Crucial Confrontations

*"I've seen first-hand how these ideas can change a company for the better. Crucial Confrontations is not for the faint-hearted leader but it works and profoundly affects performance."*

— Russell K. Tolman

President & CEO, Cook Children's Health Care System, Fort Worth, Texas



*"Brutal honesty is easy. Suffering in silence takes no skill. Achieving absolute honesty while maintaining complete respect requires skill. Crucial Confrontations redefines how we relate to each other at work and at home."*

— Harry Paul

Coauthor of *FISH! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results*

*"Clear and consistent communication can work magic in an organization... but only if leaders have the courage and skills to set clear expectations and hold all individuals accountable. Crucial Confrontations gives leaders simple, effective tools to address tough problems and move to resolution."*

— Quint Studer

CEO, Studer Group and author of *Hardwiring Excellence*

*"Brilliant strategies for those difficult discussions at home and in the workplace."*

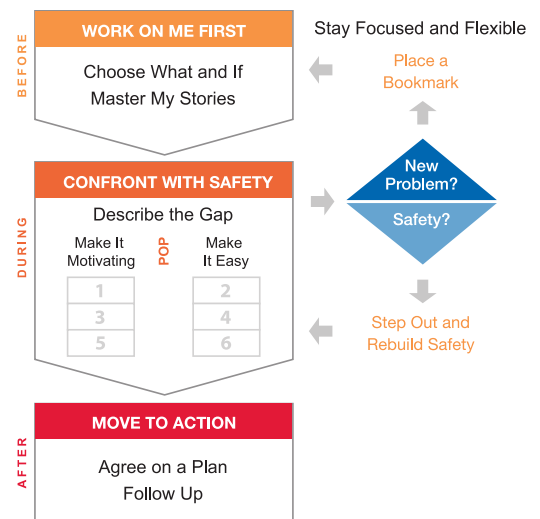
— Soledad O'Brien, CO-host of CNN's Morning Edition

## Course Overview

### Here's What Makes the Best the Best

When others break a promise, violate an expectation or behave badly, top-rated employees:

- Know When to Speak.** Most of us are extremely creative when it comes to inventing excuses to avoid talking to someone who has broken a promise. Not top performers—they know how to analyze a problem, decide if it's worthy of a confrontation, and then take the right action. Consequently, they step up to far more violated expectations than their less-skilled colleagues. Of course, they're exceptionally skilled so when they do step up, they typically succeed—enhancing their confidence and encouraging them to speak up the next time. It's the same old story—the rich get richer.



Crucial Confrontations training teaches this model for resolving gaps in execution, performance, and accountability.

- Pick the Right Problem.** Most problems come in large bundles. A single infraction may include everything from a procedural violation to failure to keep a commitment to insubordination. Given the host of problems to deal with, which issue do you address? Low performers typically pick the easiest or least controversial problem—allowing the most important one to remain unresolved. Top performers are masters at recognizing the elements tied up in a single infraction, picking the most important issue, and then, once and for all, resolving the problem that really matters.
- Take Charge of Emotions.** When someone lets you down, you first become disappointed and then upset. Then, if you're not careful, you carry these strong emotions into the confrontation. Dumbed-down by the effects of adrenaline, you don't exactly shine. Top performers cut off their strong reactions at the source. They learn how to be curious rather than angry. They use their curiosity to propel them into a healthy confrontation rather than a futile and dangerous attempt to punish the guilty. Without doubt, top performers will address infractions, but they'll never look abusive or out of control when they do.
- Avoid the Fundamental Attribution Error.** When you ask people why someone has broken a promise, the answer is predictable. They typically see others as thoughtless and selfish. They believe others behave badly because they take pleasure in causing pain. Top performers however, view the world differently. They ask: Are people capable of doing what you've asked them? Are their peers

and managers supportive? Do others both encourage and enable? Finally, what role does the reward system, policies, and procedures play in either encouraging or enabl the behavior? By bringing a more humane and yet sophisticated view to the problem, the socially adept are far better prepared to first diagnose and then solve broken promises.

- **Master the “Hazardous Half Minute.”** Top performers set themselves apart from everyone else with their ability to immediately establish a healthy climate—despite the fact they’re talking about problems. During the first thirty seconds, they not only provide a clear and concise problem statement, but they do so in a way that makes it safe for the other person to talk openly and honestly. In short, they start each encounter on a healthy note.
- **Avoid Groundhog Day.** If you want to separate the best from the rest, watch for this phenomenon. When employees repeat a mistake, do the individuals who are addressing the problem treat each infraction as if it were the first one? If they do, they live the life of the meteorologist Phil Connors who was forced to repeat the same day over and over again—until he got it right. We call this hellacious cycle, Groundhog Day. Savvy problem solvers avoid infective repetitions by treating each infraction with increasing levels of severity and urgency. First, the person violates a quality procedure, next they fail to live up to a promise, next they’re acting insubordinate, and so on. They never live Groundhog Day.
- **Motivate without Using Power.** Most people believe that if they only had enough power, they could motivate just about anyone to do just about anything. And they’d be right. Of course, if they do wield power they may ruin their relationship and incur other long-term costs, but power can “motivate.” Skilled problem solvers rely on the power of persuasion, not the power of fear. Even when they do possess formal power, they rarely use it. They’re gifted at making the invisible visible. They do so by clearly and concisely explaining natural consequences that inform choice rather than mutter threats such as: “My way or the highway,” or the ever popular veiled threat: “Are you a team player?”
- **Enable without Taking Over.** When people face ability barriers—making it difficult or even impossible to complete their promise—it’s tempting to rely on motivational techniques to encourage them to comply. Over time, this wears thin, and when the task is impossible, motivating is irrelevant anyway. Top performers are quick to help the individual come up with methods for reducing barriers. They’re skilled at creative problem solving and know the difference between enabling others and allowing them to get away with excuses.
- **Stay on Track without Getting Conned.** As crucial confrontations unfold, it’s common for the person who caused the problem to side track or even hijack the discussion. They throw up smoke screens, do their best to deflect the blame, and skillfully turn the focus on the more trivial aspects of the infraction—taking the heat off themselves and in some cases, moving the conversation to a whole new topic. Top performers aren’t easily side-tracked. They’re adept at staying both focused and flexible. They know when and how to stay on the original topic, or if necessary, switch to a new and more urgent issue—without being drawn away from the original infraction.

## Who Should Participate?

Crucial Confrontations training is ideal for individuals who manage people or processes as well as those who have supervisory or cross-functional management responsibilities. For true change to be achieved, involving teams and even entire organizations is essential. At a minimum, consider attending our public training events. Or bring our training faculty into your organization.



## Train-the-Trainer

We advocate leader-led training as the most effective approach for acquiring and retaining new skills. Or use our train-the-trainer program and resource kits which enable your trainers to offer the highest quality in-house training program available today.



## Rich with Real-Life Video Clips



Crucial Confrontations training delivers over one hundred and twenty video clips and examples of situations managed both poorly and well.



Participants are sure to leave training with the ability to spot bad behaviors and enact good behaviors—in personal and professional situations alike.



A proven approach, video-based training moves training participants from mere familiarity with the subject to eventual mastery of each and every skill.

## Course Design

### A Step-by-Step Approach

Crucial Confrontations training infuses fourteen hours of classroom time with over one hundred and twenty original video clips and examples of situations managed both poorly and well. Expert descriptions of key concepts round out the theoretical aspects of the course. Course pacing is active and engaging, with frequent role plays, intense class participation, personal reflection, planning, and commitment.

By carefully integrating philosophy, theory, and hands-on tools, participants acquire the skills that help them step up to and handle high-stakes issues.

### The Flow

Here's what we do to move training participants from mere familiarity with the subject to eventual mastery of each and every skill. Each training session starts with a principle, teaches one or more skills, and then provides participants with a chance to actually practice the skills in a controlled environment. Next, participants apply the skills to real issues they deal with every day—identifying what it means to them and how they're going to behave differently. Then they commit to implementing the skills back at work. Finally, participants implement the skills and report back on what happened.

The goal, of course, is not only to provide training, but to help people master the same high-leverage tools routinely used by top performers. Once again, the focus is on teaching the skills that lead to individual, team, and organizational effectiveness.

### The Delivery

Crucial Confrontations training is not only powerful, relevant, and engaging, it's also easy to deliver. Your options include:

- Send individual contributors, leaders, or your in-house trainers to one of our regularly scheduled public courses. In this two-day course, learn from Master Certified Trainers while mixing with peers from other organizations.
- Certify your in-house trainers in our train-the-trainer program—which is covered during days three and four of each of our public courses.
- Bring this training in-house with our certified trainers, your own trainers, or your internal leaders and managers. Our train-the-trainer program and resource kits enable your trainers to offer the highest quality in-house training program available today.
- In-house courses may be spaced over multiple training sessions or delivered back-to-back over two days.

Our training design makes this course flexible and easy to deliver. Integrating the best of high-tech digital technology with high-touch group dynamics, course activities vary from discussing video examples to developing personal plans, to participating in

fast-paced group exercises, to actually practicing the skills. At the end of every session, participants walk away with important skills that they'll master. And once again, keeping our original goal in mind, they learn skills that make them more valuable to your organization.

## Award-Winning Technology

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Crucial Confrontations training lies in a CD-ROM-based Instructional Layering™ technology that allows for maximum flexibility. Concepts, summaries, setups, and video examples are projected to a screen. How much is revealed, which exercises are used, even which video examples are displayed are within the control of the trainer. Newer trainers, for instance, often choose to reveal detailed instructions. Seasoned professionals, in contrast, will draw from their memories. Instructional layering includes:

- Video scenario branching that allows you to customize your presentation from the boardroom to the shop floor.
- Instructional drill-downs that reveal multiple additional levels of detail.
- Video clips of author explanations to further illustrate important concepts.
- Branches that allow for both continuous and spaced learning.

## Research Overview

### Teaching Best Practices

Crucial Confrontations training grew out of a request to study and replicate the best accountability practices of individuals and leaders across organizations. How did they handle broken promises or poor performance? What did they do that was different from everybody else? We discovered that those with the right skills willingly confronted others who had broken an expectation—and they did so in a way that was superior to their colleagues. How? They stepped up to issues before they grew into larger problems. And they used the skills now covered in Crucial Confrontations training.

Did focusing on crucial skills rather than changing strategies or systems actually make a difference? Absolutely. To date, in virtually every case where we've tracked results, an increase in crucial confrontation skills has led to an increase in results. Our hypothesis turned out to be true. Teach everyone how to routinely employ the crucial skills previously demonstrated by top performers, and your whole world changes.



Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Al Switzler, and  
Ron McMillan (L to R).

## Participant Materials

Course participants receive the following materials during the course to provide the best possible classroom experience and to ensure transference and retention of the skills being taught.

- *Crucial Confrontations Participant Toolkit* (224-page training workbook)
- *Crucial Confrontations Action Planner*
- Contract cards
- Model cards
- A copy of *Crucial Confrontations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations, and Bad Behavior*
- Crucial Confrontations Audio CD Companion (6-CD audio workout for strengthening Crucial Confrontations skills)
- A subscription to the Crucial Skills Reminder, a weekly e-mail service
- A follow-up process that includes multiple Web resources (a self-scoring *Style Under Stress* self-assessment, video examples, downloadable samples, and more)
- Access to our complete line of books, audio companion CDs, and Web Seminars at [www.crucialskills.com](http://www.crucialskills.com)

The Crucial Confrontations Leader's Resource Kit provides certified trainers with all they need to install the integrated presentation on a laptop computer, prepare to conduct a training course, brush up on Crucial Conversations skills, and successfully conduct a facilitated classroom training.



## More Crucial™ Skills

Interested in making a difference in your team or organization around accountability, performance, and execution? Then check out our most recent training course and book, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* (McGraw-Hill 2004), a companion to *Crucial Confrontations*.



*"Crucial Conversations skills are practical and principle based and can benefit anyone. Life changing."*

— Sandra McCarthy van Winkelhoff  
Director and Trainer, Creative Resources & Education Services Pty. Ltd.

*"I have never attended a development course that has completely changed my life and produced immediate results as much as Crucial Conversations has."*

— Richard D. Jarvis  
President, Extraordinary Development, INC

*"If ideas can change the world, then the ideas in Crucial Conversations will change yours. Practice just one of the ideas and you'll see what I mean."*

— Jim Granger  
President, Worthlin Worldwide



## Company Overview

VitalSmarts currently offers two Crucial Skills training initiatives: Crucial Conversations® and Crucial Confrontations™. Each delivers a powerful set of influence tools that builds teams, enriches relationships, and improves end results.

The founders of VitalSmarts have two *New York Times* bestselling books based on this research of the same titles, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* and *Crucial Confrontations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expecations, and Bad Behavior*.