

I NEED TO FUCKING TALK TO YOU!

THE ART OF NAVIGATING DIFFICULT WORKPLACE CONVERSATIONS

BY KEN CAMERON AND RUSSELL STRATTON

|CORPORATE CULTURE SHIFT



"Sometimes conversations suck, but you need to have them, and this book lays out how. Russell and Ken have put together and road-tested simple, up-front, and thoughtful approaches to awkward and difficult workplace conversations."

– **Andrew Phung**, actor, *Kim's Convenience*

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PROLOGUE

Let's get one thing straight off the top

"I need to **fxxxing** talk to you", is a bad way to start any conversation, let alone one with a co-worker. Unfortunately, too many of us have started conversations this way, even if we haven't quite gone so far as to drop an F-bomb in the middle of the office.

So why is this commonly happening in the workplace? Usually it's because some issue has been festering for weeks or months and it has finally reached the point where we can't stand it anymore. One last straw has broken the proverbial camel's back and we've just **fxxxing** lost it! Often the employee has been told about the problem over and **fxxxing** over again, yet still nothing has changed. Our internal dialogue becomes a stream of frustrated thoughts; *do they re-*

ally think they can get away with acting like this and making my life miserable? If they think I'm not serious about the consequences, then that ~~fixing~~ ~~fix~~ has another ~~fixing~~ thing coming. This shouldn't come as a surprise, because I have been perfectly ~~fixing~~ clear with them!

But have we really?

Too many managers approach a conversation in which they must challenge difficult behaviour with a lot of trepidation. We often begin our workshops by asking participants why this is the case and we hear the same answers repeatedly. Our participants tell us they are afraid of angry reactions on the part of the employee. Alternatively, they know what they want to say, but once the employee is in front of them, they get tongue-tied. Perhaps they know what they want to say, but instead they package it up in the dreaded feedback sandwich; layering constructive feedback between two examples of positive feedback. This convolutes the importance of the area that requires improvement.

The result is we aren't direct. We beat around the bush and try to soften the blow to avoid an adverse reaction. Maybe we didn't see the actual behaviour in question, so we are relying on hearsay, or we've become lost in an argument over the details of what really happened. Often, we know we need to continue to work with the person or we want them to like us, so we try to keep it light.

Sometimes out of necessity to keep a project progressing it's inevitable that we offer to help; only to find ourselves now taking responsibility to complete their work by the time

they've left our office. Even though it's not very clear what they're going to do about changing their behaviour, we validate ourselves with the thought *hey, at least we brought it up with them. If they continue to be this unmanageable, then next time, we'll really lay down the law.* So when the next time comes around and the individual exhibits the same behaviour, we feel it's completely reasonable that we just **fxxxing** lose it!

If this has been your approach in the past, you're not doing anyone any favours.

Are People Really Fxxxing Unmanageable?

Before we proceed any further let's dispel a myth now; there is no such thing as an employee who is truly unmanageable. Thinking of these individuals as "**fxxxing** unmanageable", is unfairly demonizing them, and unfairly positioning yourself as a victim or martyr. It may feel good, but it rarely positions you as a strong and reliable leader¹.

Russell begins almost every one of our Forum Theatre for Business workshops by saying "I'll let you in on a secret. In my twenty-five years of managing teams and developing other managers, I have realized that most people want to do a good job."

We usually have at least one participant who responds with "You need to come to *my* workplace."

You might be having the same thoughts. *There are some people who are inherently lazy, who are naturally disaffected, who are just so **fxxxing** antagonistic that they're impossible*

¹ It's unlikely (though not impossible) that you have an employee who is behaving like this for the sole purpose of making your life miserable. If that is the case, then what you may have is an employee exhibiting sociopathic behaviours. If you suspect that this is what you're dealing with then we'll refer you to *The Sociopath Next Door*, by clinical psychologist and former Harvard faculty member Martha Stout, PhD. Don't take this as an easy out, it's a last resort.

to work with and I've been stuck with one of them. This person is beyond hope.

If that is the case, put this book down and go ahead and fire them. It will be easier and less painful in the long run.

Before you say, *HR would never allow it or the union would make my life miserable or they're the boss's favourite*, consider the possibility that you're lying to yourself. If their behaviour truly is unmanageable, you can figure it out.

Ask yourself, was this problematic employee lazy, or disaffected or antagonistic when they started at the organization? Most employees develop their behaviour over time, as a response to some dissatisfaction or disillusionment with their work. They may have been mistreated in the past and are now distrustful. They may have good ideas, but they've been worn down because no one listens or they view the structures and systems as needlessly cumbersome. All of this can usually be boiled down to a reaction against change.

Resistance to change is another precursor to difficult behaviour. When we say "change" we mean any sort of deviation from the way things were. This could be extreme like a complete re-organization or it could be as simple as introducing a new computer program for tracking inventory. Other examples could be a change in the individual's workstation, or the addition of a new team member.

People respond to change in different ways. Some embrace change with an enthusiastic "YES" and feel energized, challenged and renewed. Others respond with an outright "NO"

and feel drained, challenged and dispirited. Between these two poles, there is an infinite spectrum of response.

Once you uncover and understand the change they are reacting against, you may find you can empathize with them. Empathizing with your employee makes the conversation easier. It makes them better listeners and it makes YOU a better coach.

Recently Ken mentored briefly under Peter Hinton, a brilliant theatre director who served for many years as Artistic Director of The National Arts Centre of Canada. Peter claimed that he doesn't believe in "talent". There is a prevailing belief in society that talent is some inherent mysterious force; you either have it or you don't. The Ancient Greeks and Roman societies even believed talent was a gift from the gods. But this idea is dangerously false and even destructive. "If we assume that some actors have talent and others don't," Peter explains, "then there's nothing a director can do for them. I might as well give up."

Instead, Peter is one of those who chooses to believe that everyone has talent. "Some actors simply have something that blocks them, some internal obstacle that gets in their way. This allows me to assist them by investigating what those obstacles might be. When we uncover it together, I can aid them in removing those blocks so their talent can flow freely."

By the same reasoning, if you suppose that some employees "just fit in", while others simply "aren't team players", then there is nothing you can do to coach them. You might as

well give up now and begin the process of firing them. And what kind of leader does that make you?

If, on the other hand, you begin to think of your employee as temporarily experiencing a behaviour that is getting in the way of their ability to do a good job, then possibilities for great performance emerge.

Here's what you need to do. Separate the behaviour from the individual. And here's why you need to do it.

- **It builds empathy.** Reframe your unmanageable employee as a colleague who needs support. Then you can reframe yourself as someone who can help.
- **It's constructive.** Behaviours are tangible. Now you can generate a list of actual problems to address.
- **It's engaging.** Build an action plan that sets them up for success. Their self-interest will get them engaged.
- **It's participatory.** When you view them as someone with the potential to transform, you enrol them as partners in change.

Once you separate the individual from the behaviour, you can begin to view your employees as well-intentioned colleagues who are trapped in a cycle that needs to be addressed.

THE FOUR HATS

If we agree that it's not effective to think of our employees as "fxxxing unmanageable, flawed individuals" for whom there is little hope, then we need a new language; one free of F-bombs and other gratuitous swear words. We find it useful to think of your employee as wearing a hat that epitomizes the behaviour they're exhibiting.

Behaviours are constant but hats are not. You can remove a hat and exchange it for another. With the proper encouragement, your employee can trade in their poor behaviour for another behaviour that's more productive. Just like a hat, behaviours can become overly comfortable if they are worn too long. And like a hat, a behaviour can get shabby if not exchanged regularly.

We've chosen four hats to illustrate four categories of behaviour. Let's go through these four hats one at a time.



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THE VIKING HELMET

No - (No Negative)

This person is willing to listen but is ready to react negatively at the drop of a hat.

I Am Resistant

I am defending a certain pattern or status quo. I have an aggressive or passive aggressive approach to change.

The individual wearing a Viking helmet, is usually defending a certain pattern or status quo that is precious to them in some way. Like a Viking who suddenly finds themselves transported into the modern world, this individual is clinging to old gods.

In other words, they are attached to an old way of life that is outdated; new approaches confuse them and cause them to lash out. This may take the form of aggressive behaviour, or it could also be a passive aggressive response.

For example:

- "I've tried it and it doesn't work."
- "This isn't my fault."
- "It's not in my job description."

Their response is not just no, it's **no negative** for extra emphasis.

THE SUN HAT

No + (No Positive)

This person is so disengaged they might as well be reading a trashy novel on the beach.

I Am Contented

My present situation feels good enough as it is. I have no reason to change.



This person's response is not quite as negative as The Viking Helmet, so we call this a **no positive**. Of course, such a person rarely says "no" outright, so you have to listen for the "no" buried within their comments.

For example:

- "I am on target, so what's the fuss?"
- "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."
- "I've always been good at this."

You can see how this individual is rationalizing their "no". In fact, it's important to realize that they most likely believe what they're saying. They really do believe they are on target and it isn't broken! In short, they feel their present situation is good enough as is. This person has no realization that there's a need for change.



THE HARD HAT

Yes - (Yes Negative)

This person is ready to work hard but needs clear direction to overcome inertia.

I Am Willing

I'm willing to change but I don't know how. Help me figure out what to do to move forward.

Let's say you've persuaded one of your team members to remove their Sun Hat or set aside their Viking Helmet. Now they've adopted another piece of headgear, a construction worker's yellow Hard Hat. We label this person as a **yes negative**.

For example:

- "How can I achieve my targets?"
- "I've got an idea, but I need permission to try."
- "What if we did it this way?"

The hard-hatted individual is willing to change but does not know how or what to do to move forward. This can be a bit frustrating at times because they require monitoring. They need your support because, left to their own devices, they may revert to Viking or Sun Hat behaviour. But this is a good employee to have because they can be coached. There is an opportunity here to be creative with them and to brainstorm a solution together.

THE GRADUATE CAP

Yes + (Yes Positive)

This individual is really starting to deliver high performance.

I Am Innovative

I'm all over this. I'll have it on your desk by morning.



We call this person a **yes positive**. In fact, “Yes And” is a common phrase you’ll hear from this individual: “Yes, that’s a great idea AND I can’t wait to get started.”

For example:

- “I’m going to do this. And I’ll do it on this schedule. I’ll report back when it’s done.”
- “100% we can make this happen, the issue is how can we achieve even MORE?”
- “Nothing can hold me back!”

This is the employee we all want to have! Not unlike a wind-up toy, you can wind them up, let them go and focus on your own work. However, be careful and don’t get too confident in their abilities. As we’ll see, they still require some management.

Out of necessity our categories are broad. We acknowledge that these four hats are likely to come in an infinite number of colours, shapes and sizes. After all, there’s no one size fits all when it comes to hats, just as with people. However, categorization is useful. Metaphors provide us with a lens by which to refocus our perceptions of the world. These tools are meant to give you a place to start a discussion.

I Can't Work With You When You're Like This

When dealing with the Sun Hat and the Viking Helmet, the first two hats on our spectrum, many leaders will dedicate their energies to coaching these individuals by offering empathy or logic.

This is a fool's errand.

A Sun Hat and a Viking Helmet can't simply be coached on how to work effectively with change. From the perspective of the Sun Hat and Viking Helmet, change isn't necessary and may even be counterproductive. A standard coaching approach won't work with someone who can't or won't admit they need to adjust their behaviour.

As we'll see in the first half of this book, initially you must make Sun Hats and Viking Helmets aware of their behaviour and its effect on others. Only once they accept these facts and embrace the need for change, will they be in a position for your coaching to have a positive impact.

These are the things we're not saying in difficult workplace conversations. There are ways we can say it better, and with greater clarity, so that the message sinks in and your employees are more likely to remove their hats and get to work.

The decision to have a conversation is the first and most important decision you need to make. Already after reading the prologue, you've learned you need to successfully separate the behaviour from the person. You've identified what style of hat they're wearing and by extension, what

kind of behaviour the person is exhibiting. You've determined the kind of conversation you need to have.

Now you need to decide if you're going to live with this behaviour or if you're going to fix it. There may be good reasons to live with it. The individual may be going through a difficult time for personal reasons, such as a divorce or the declining health of a loved one. The individual may be adjusting to a reorganization or a new way of working. An exciting project may have been shelved or defunded or put on hiatus. All of these may be good reasons to cut your employee some slack.

If you're going to live with this behaviour, then commit to that decision. Be intentional about it and stop complaining about this individual to your colleagues, friends and family. By doing so, you're transferring your own inability or unwillingness to address the issue onto them and once again unfairly demonizing them and positioning yourself as a martyr.

Keep in mind that each of the circumstances we've outlined is, or should be, temporary. It's perfectly ok for any one of us to put on a Viking Helmet or a Sun Hat for a short period of time. We all have bad days so the key words here are "days" and "temporary". You'll want to keep an eye on this individual and their behaviour, and if it doesn't clear up in short order and if isn't resolving itself, then you may need to address it.

The fact is not addressing the behaviour isn't really doing anyone any favours. Sometimes we can fool ourselves into

thinking that the problem will go away on its own accord, or that their fellow employees will apply peer pressure to change them, or that they'll figure it out on their own because it's so ~~fixing~~ obvious that they're behaving inappropriately. This approach never works. Instead, the opposite happens; usually questionable behaviour starts out as a small irritant but when left unchecked, becomes a major issue that leads to discipline or dismissal. How then, have we supported the employee by not addressing the matter early on? Instead, they would be quite justified in saying they had been blindsided because no one ever told them they were doing anything wrong.

Transferring the person to another department isn't resolving the situation either. In this instance, you're just taking your basket of snakes and handing it to another leader and suggesting that they deal with it. Except for the fact that you're not even giving them the courtesy of *telling* them that you're handing them a basket of snakes. Which means, you're guaranteeing that they'll get bitten as soon as they open the lid. A manager who decides that it isn't their role to address a problem behaviour, is just letting the responsibility slide off their shoulders as if their suit were made of Teflon.

Which means you have a choice to make. You can fix it but the only way to fix behaviour is to challenge it.

SPEAK UP

"You should fire him," said a gruff voice at the back of the room.

"Really?" Ken asked. "Why don't you come up here and show us how it's done."

We were delivering one of our workshops to a room of 30 engineers. They represented a cross-section of middle management business leaders in the twenty-first century that were educated, urban, open-minded, worldly, focused and experienced. They were comfortable identifying their strengths and had initiative to improve their weaknesses.

We hired a popular improv actor named Andrew Phung to play the employee. Andrew is a recognizable actor playing the character "Kimchee" on the popular television series *Kim's Convenience*. He has won two Canadian Screen Actor's awards and is famous across the country. However, on this occasion, Andrew was playing a geologist and each of the engineers was taking a turn as his manager. As each participant came forward and tried to calm him down, Andrew's character was becoming inflexible.

"Seriously," the gruff voice of an experienced engineer we'll call Witek piped up again, "if my employee was that insubordinate, I'd fire them." Witek explained that hierarchy is important in an engineering workplace. "One has to make everyone motivated, yes, sure, but sometimes the law has to be laid down." It was hard to argue against his logic, so Ken asked him to try it out in real time.

Our workshops use a technique called Forum Theatre that has been around since the 1950s. Forum Theatre, sometimes called Theatre of the Oppressed, is the brainchild of pioneering Brazilian theatre director, writer and politician Augusto Boal.

Boal trained as a chemical engineer before chasing his dream of working in the theatre. After graduation, he wrote and directed politically infused agitprop plays and toured around rural Brazil. In these villages, Boal observed a new generation of educators who rejected traditional teaching methods. Instead, this new breed taught their adult pupils how to read and write by focusing on everyday words they could use when they travelled to market. The stickiness of making work that was active and relevant, fascinated Augusto Boal. Over time he realized that his plays were nowhere near as effective at creating significant social and political change.

One day, while presenting a play at a community centre, Augusto Boal snapped. He'd been to this particular location many times with the same play. Every time he came back, the housing situation was worse and the residents more and more disenfranchised. Boal stood up and stopped the actress playing the mother mid-sentence. He asked for input from the audience. He demanded to know how the character should react to the oppressive situation. He pointed at the mother. "What should she do?" Silence. Crickets.

Finally, a disgusted voice shouted from the back of the auditorium. "Speak up!"

It was the cleaning lady. She had seen this same play perhaps a dozen times over the past two or three years. Like Boal, she could put up with the play no longer. She threw down her broom and stormed out.

Boal chased after her. "Wait!" he shouted. "What do you mean?"

"The wife should speak up," the cleaning lady repeated. "So, she can be heard and others know exactly what is needed."

"Show us," Boal urged.

The cleaning lady came onstage and took over the role of the wife. She tore a strip off the landlord and rallied the other characters. When the cleaning lady ran out of ideas, she demanded the audience give her some help and when she was done, Boal encouraged someone else to pick up where she left off. Other audience members leapt onto the stage one after another, emboldened by this cleaning lady who first decided the character should speak up.

The spectator had become the "spect-actor", and Forum Theatre was born.

Fast-forward fifty years to our training centre, when Ken asked Witek to "show us how it's done." Witek groaned at being asked to participate, but he rose and strode to the front of the room. He sat down opposite Andrew and stared him straight in the eye. That's when everything changed.

WITEK: Andrew. I need to fxxxing talk to you. Do you have a family?

ANDREW: Uh. Yes.

WITEK: Children?

ANDREW: A little boy.

WITEK: That's more important than all this. At the end of the day, we all just want to go home to our families. So, Andrew, it's a simple job I'm asking you to do.

ANDREW: I know! It's so simple a monkey could do it! Is that what you think? That I'm a monkey?

WITEK: No. Everyone here respects you.

ANDREW: That's how you show respect in this place? By putting me in a closet at the end of the hall?

WITEK: It's not a closet.

ANDREW: It was a broom closet before it got converted into an office! That's why it has no windows.

WITEK: At the end of the day, we all want to go home to our family.

ANDREW: And when I get home, do you know what I tell them? I say, "Hey, your Daddy is just like Harry Potter. He

spends his day locked in a closet." And meanwhile, Beverley gets to finish organizing the seismic shoot on MY project with MY team. And now you're telling me I can't go back to my old team?

WITEK: Maybe I can help with some of your workload?

Ken called a time out. Witek acknowledged he made a fundamental mistake. He formed a logical argument while standing on the sidelines, however once in the hot seat and faced with Andrew's strong emotion and counterargument, he couldn't nimbly change tactics. By the end of the dialogue, he was volunteering to do Andrew's work for him.

The military have a saying: "No plan survives first contact with the enemy²."

Witek's plan didn't consider that strong emotions aren't defused with logic. Someone in Andrew's position is in the heat of the moment, triggered by a deeply held emotional need. This state keeps them from seeing another side of the issue, no matter how rational. To simulate a real-life situation, we instructed Andrew to remain angry until the participant defused it with empathy. His anger was to resurface regularly until the participants unearthed the underlying issue. For the purposes of moving the scene forward and giving Witek an easy win, Andrew handed him a giant

² According to Ralph Keyes author of *The Quote Verifier: Who Said What, Where, and When*, this quote has had various attributions through the past three centuries. American leaders adopted it in the early stages of the Iraq war, which led many to falsely attribute it to Dwight D. Eisenhower or George Patton. Others claimed Napoleon said it. Keyes tells us the observation originated with Helmuth Von Moltke in the mid-nineteenth century.

clue at the end of the scene. Did you spot it? Look at the last paragraph. Andrew complains of isolation. He's working in a small windowless office while the rest of the team get to do something much more exciting.

Witek completely missed the clue, because he had already decided on his logical argument. He hadn't been trained to listen and respond.

The Art of Difficult Conversations

Recently we were asked to deliver a workshop on respect in the workplace for a group of 60 front line workers in an oilfield services company. As the workshop began, we noticed the group trudging in and eyeing us warily. Our contact at the company explained that a few years before, the same group sat through a respect in the workplace seminar that consisted of the facilitator reading the entire policy out loud and then asking everyone to sign a form stating they understood it.

This is an extreme example of the kind of ~~fixing bxxxxxxx~~ training that managers regularly suffer through in the business world.

We believe that no leader should have to suffer like this, and we have dedicated our respective companies to making workplace learning engaging and relevant.

Our work together began bleary-eyed, at an early-morning networking event. The two of us share an interest in active, experiential learning. Russell's early experience as a Personnel and Operational Manager in the UK sparked a

curiosity that led him to earn a Master's Degree in Human Resource Management, from the University of Northampton. In London, Russell worked with a wide range of organizational cultures. He provided training to all levels, from frontline staff to executive management boards. Among these clients were Her Majesty's Customs and Excise (a.k.a. the UK Customs Service) and Scotland Yard. Both employ simulation as a method to achieve lasting, measurable change in business performance.

Over coffee at that morning networking event, Russell asked Ken if he had ever worked with Forum Theatre. Russell had explored the technique in the UK to train his clients on how to handle difficult situations. That early experience had planted a notion that Forum Theatre could be a powerful way to create good leaders and not bad bosses.

Ken is one of Alberta's leading playwrights, who has penned hit plays performed across Canada. His published works are available around the world. As well, for twenty years he worked as an independent director, producer and arts administrator. At the pinnacle of this phase of his career, Ken was Artistic Director of Canada's national theatre festival. Ken had his first experience with Forum Theatre when he organized a conference in conjunction with his festival and commissioned a theatre director to explore contract negotiation using Forum Theatre techniques.

After leaving the festival, Ken applied these techniques to the corporate boardroom as a group facilitator. When he met Russell, Ken had just completed a stint as "Citizen

Raconteur” for the City of Calgary’s Cultural Transformation Project. In that role he helped the city’s administration redefine a corporate narrative for its 15,000 employees. Ken was also Artist-in-Corporate-Residence for a leading credit union called First Calgary Financial. There he led 28 senior leaders on a customized 8-week Innovation and Creativity in Business training program. So, like Russell, Ken was deeply engaged with experiential learning.

We began with a simple principle: the best way to learn is by getting participants out of their seats and onto “the stage.” In *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*, Peter Brown points out that many common learning habits, such as listening to a lecture, re-reading, underlining and highlighting create the illusion of mastery, but what is learned fades quickly. More complex and durable learning comes from challenging participants to put their new knowledge into practice and pushing them slightly out of their comfort zone.

When we add an actor skilled in improvisation and trained in Forum Theatre techniques into the mix, then everyone gets pushed out of their comfort zone, including us. Participants get engaged, instructors get nervous and lessons get cemented. We realized that with Forum Theatre, we could get participants as close to real life as possible, without actually having their employees in the room with them. With Forum Theatre, business leaders can make mistakes. The worst thing that can happen is that they’ll get their egos slightly bruised, but within this experience, they’ll have an opportunity that doesn’t exist in the real world; the opportunity to rewind and try again.

From this realization, Forum Theatre for Business was born.

In our workshops we can interview our clients in advance about the issues their managers face in the workplace. These interviews allow us to customize scenarios that are specific to the workplace and resonate with participants. We have found over the years, that it is beneficial to create a scenario that is set in a parallel universe. For each workshop, we create a fictional company that is very close to, but not identical to, our client's company. One client's oil and gas company becomes "Riverside Exploration". Another client's construction company becomes "Riverside Construction". Otherwise we find participants get bogged down in details. They fixate on which processes are different. They spend time explaining to us which regulations prevent or enable certain actions. They tell us which forms need to be filled out, in which order and in what colour pen.

This is not what's important in our workshops.

At the outset of our workshops, Russell usually offers participants a set of tools to effectively prepare for a conversation. He begins with a simple but effective structure, that is memorable even under pressure. Then Ken offers an opportunity to put these skills into practice with our trained actor-improvisers. Participants come to the front of the room one at a time to have a conversation with our live actor. We find that in traditional role-play, peers are matched up with one another and half-heartedly pretend to be another person. No one wants to embarrass themselves, or their partner so participants tend to make it easy on one another, rather than useful for one another.

Our actor-improvisers don't do anything half-hearted, and they don't make it easy. Their training allows them to acquiesce only if they are persuaded to give up their unmanageable behaviour. Participants often work through one problem, only to come up against another. At these moments, Ken can pause the action, call upon other audience members, rewind, and then resume. He invites someone who may have a different tactic in mind to replace the person who is stuck. Our workshops provide participants with an experience as close to real life as possible, though unlike real life, we can pause our scenarios and offer a do-over.

Written Tools for Surviving First Contact

In this book we offer a detailed explanation of the conversation techniques we recommend. Since we can't get you onstage in front of your fellow readers, to simulate the powerful impact of engaging in dialogue, we have adapted four of the most popular scenarios that we use in our workshops. You'll get to watch these conversations unfold and see how the characters struggle to have the conversation that they know they need to have.

In the following pages, you'll meet a cast of 8 characters in 4 different workplaces.

In Act One we'll focus on the Viking Helmet and meet Raj, a Manager at Riverside Exploration who is struggling with Veronique, one of his Geologists. We'll share with you a framework that Raj will use to challenge Veronique's behaviour and convince her to remove her Viking Helmet.

In Act Two, we'll focus on the Sun Hat and meet Kendra, the Director of Culture at the City of Riverside who is working with Alon, the Manager of the Public Art Program. We'll see how Kendra uses the same framework but adapts the challenging conversation to her specific situation.

During the Intermission, we'll introduce you to a coaching model, inventively titled the C.O.A.C.H. Model.

In Act Three, we meet Dean, a Manager at Riverside Construction, who uses the C.O.A.C.H. Model with Mario. Mario is successfully wearing his Hard Hat, but he needs coaching on how he can deal with someone under his direct supervision who is wearing a Sun Hat. In Act Four, we will explore how the C.O.A.C.H. model can be useful in structuring a conversation with Graduate Cap wearing individuals. We'll encounter Andrea, the CEO of Riverside Hospital, who's in a conflict with Luis, the Executive Director of the stand-alone Riverside Hospital Foundation.

In each Act, you'll encounter an exercise, worksheet or other opportunity to help you to envision how the manager could succeed. We will give you some tools to apply to the situation. You'll be able to reimagine how this dialogue should progress. Then we'll offer you a "take two", in which our fictional manager gets a chance to try again. When the text resumes, you'll be able to see if your ideas match up with ours. Yours may be as good as our suggestions, they may be better, or we may share ideas that overlap. That doesn't make your ideas right or wrong; you'll still have gained knowledge from the exercise. Just like the participants in our real-life workshops, you'll be free to make

the intellectual leap between these fictional Riverside companies and your own workplace.

Together these techniques and strategies promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the content in ways that allow it to stick with you long after you set the book down.

This means that you can read this book in several ways. You can read it straight through as one would read a novel. This allows you to follow the arc of the leaders as they learn how to manage their employees. You can identify with the employees as they grow under the guidance of their increasingly insightful mentors. Or you can read it as a practical toolkit, in which you choose to stop and methodically complete the exercises. Some exercises may take a few minutes, while others take only a moment. You may want to fill out a worksheet or you may choose to reflect on the exercise mentally for a few moments.

However, there's one thing we strongly recommend; don't be shy to write in this book. It's not going to become a collector's item. We know. We wrote it. Something different happens to our brains when we write things down or mark up a text. The act of writing, scribbling, circling and underlining allows you to ingest the information, build neural pathways and to both literally and figuratively draw connections within the text.