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Putting the conversation together

By Donna Schneider, RN, MBA, CPHQ, CPC-P, CHC, CPCO, CHPC, CCEP

Tip 5: What approach should I take to plan for the conversation?

In an ideal world, you could plan to have a “crucial conversation,” and rehearse using a mirror or with a trusted colleague; however, we do not live in an ideal world. That said, it is better to plan ahead and be confident than to simply be optimistic that things will work out.

To put together what we have learned so far, you need to ensure you have a private space to have the conversation—not just a text or email. From there, you can draw upon the tools we have previously discussed, remembering the only behavior you control during this conversation is your own.^[1]

- Share your facts—What you can see or hear
- Tell your story—What the facts tell you

Ask for the other person’s input—You display nonverbal cues of curiosity^[2]

For example, pretend you are investigating a potential privacy compromise. You have just received an audit report that a senior member of the finance team has investigated the medical record of one of their employees several times. As you prepare for the meeting with this senior leader, you can rely on the facts, story, and input as previously mentioned.

The conversation can go something like this:

You: The audit report shows you have entered the electronic medical record of your employee on four different days for approximately six minutes each day over the previous two weeks. (FACTS)

You: I do not know of a business need for you to be in your employee’s medical record. (STORY)

You: Help me understand the background of these audit results. I would like to hear your perspective. (INPUT)

Then, you must be silent and wait for the response from the senior leader. The goal is to elicit dialogue and have a conversation.

In the final article for this column, I will discuss the importance of nonverbal cues during a crucial conversation.

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