

Create a *Conversational Code Of Conduct*[™] (CCOC)

A CCOC is a clear set of norms and rules for how people agree to communicate with one another in your organization or team.

Clear and shared expectations

With a CCOC you don't leave it to chance that people understand what's expected in terms of behaviors. You ensure more consistent fit between organizational goals and conversational behavior by outlining the behaviors you agree to abide by, cultivate, and reward.

Ready Reference

When hanging in an office or meeting room, a CCOC provides a ready reference for reminding people of appropriate behaviors, for coaching people into more productive patterns of behavior, and holding people accountable for how they participate in conversations and meetings about significant issues. It also provides a handy way to share your behavioral norms with new members of the team, or even guests and clients.

Plan for mistakes

A solid CCOC should also include a protocol for the inevitable mistakes and breaches that will occur – how your team agrees to self-correct and get back to the sweet spot when it drifts off-course.

Example

Here is a sample *Conversational Code of Conduct*. You're welcome to use this as a starting point – and you might even choose to adopt it wholesale – but first explore it as a team and use the conversational capacity skills to decide whether it fits, or whether you want to make adjustments, changes, or additions. Make sure your CCOC fits your unique culture, strategy, goals, and challenges.



Sample CCOC

We agree to build our collective capacity to work together in the **sweet spot** – balancing *candor* and *courage* with *curiosity* and *humility* – when we’re addressing important issues. To build this capacity we agree to the following ground rules:

- **Emotionally disciplined**, we each take responsibility for monitoring and managing our own defensive emotional reactions – our need to *minimize* or “*win*” – to prevent them from overwhelming our good intentions.
- Subordinating our egos to effectiveness, we adopt a **mindset** focused on learning and use it as our conversational North Star. When facing an important issue, we work with others to pool perspectives to expand and improve our thinking, lean into difference to spark insights, and assess information with a critically open-mind. To remain mindset forward we constantly ask ourselves these three questions: *What am I seeing that others are missing? What are others seeing that I’m missing? What are we all missing?*
- **Both candid and curious**, we share our views about important issues in a way that contributes to learning:
 - We state a clear, succinct **position**.
 - We “show our work” by sharing the underlying **thinking** that informs our position.
 - Intellectually humble, we treat our perspective like a hypothesis and **test** it.
- Valuing both candor and curiosity, we use **inquiry** to help others express their ideas in a clear and influential way:
 - If someone fails to share their perspective, we invite it into the conversation.
 - If someone shares a position but the thinking that informs it isn’t clear, we use inquiry to encourage them to share it.
 - If someone’s sharing their thinking but their position isn’t clear, we use inquiry to help them express it.
- **We treat our inevitable mistakes as opportunities to learn.** Rather than get judgmental and critical, we get candid and curious and explore the breakdown in order to increase our individual and collective competence.
- We hold each other **accountable** in constructive, supportive ways.
 - By listening for what’s being played and then playing what’s missing in the moment. (If a colleague forgets to test, for example, someone jumps in and *tests* for them.)
 - By providing feedback and coaching offline.
- If we’re in a management role, we recognize that our authority can intimidate others below us in the organization, so **we emphasize curiosity and humility and encourage them to speak up and engage with us in an open and balanced way.** We work hard to wield our **authority** in a way that elevates the conversational capacity of our people and makes our teams smarter, stronger, and more agile.

