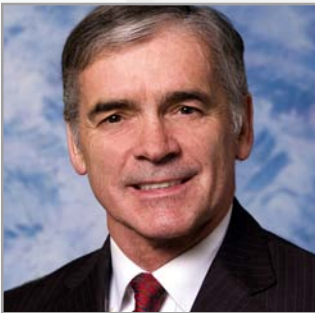


crucial  
conversations®

A PERSONAL SUCCESS STORY

# Employee Relations: Saving Jobs With Crucial Conversations



*“As employees talked with their managers... they came to realize that this was an opportunity to learn new skills, ensure job security, and advance in their careers.”*

**Erich Steinbock**, St. Louis, Missouri

I am the general manager of The Ritz-Carlton in St. Louis, Missouri. Because of the economic downturn, we were recently faced with a high stakes crucial conversation. Without wanting the budget to hire more staff, we needed to ask our 400 employees to take on more responsibility and new tasks.

Our goal in initiating this program was to continue to provide excellent service to our customers while running as effectively as possible and to avoid laying off current employees or cutting their hours. We also wanted to strengthen relationships and build trust with employees. We wanted them to realize this was an opportunity to keep their jobs and learn new skills. However, we were concerned they would feel betrayed and overwhelmed by the additional responsibilities.



## About VitalSmarts

*An innovator in corporate training and organizational performance, VitalSmarts helps teams and organizations achieve the results they care about most. With award-winning training products based on more than 30 years of ongoing research, VitalSmarts has helped more than 300 of the Fortune 500 realize significant results using a proven method for driving rapid, sustainable and measurable change in behaviors. VitalSmarts has been ranked twice by Inc. magazine as one of the fastest-growing companies in America and has taught more than 2 million people worldwide.*

*VitalSmarts is home to multiple training offerings, including Crucial Conversations®, Crucial Confrontations™, and Influencer Training™. Each course improves key organizational outcomes by focusing on high-leverage skills and strategies. The VitalSmarts authors have written three New York Times bestsellers, Influencer, Crucial Conversations and Crucial Confrontations. VitalSmarts also offers on-site consulting, research, executive team development, and speaking engagements.*  
[www.vital-smarts.com](http://www.vital-smarts.com)

After reading *Crucial Conversations* and becoming certified to teach Crucial Conversations Training, I shared the skills with department heads and managers, and encouraged them to use these skills in the high stakes conversations with their staff.

As we prepared for our first conversation with employees, these skills became even more important. We knew that, because our employees jobs were on the line, stakes were high and emotions would run strong. At our first meeting, we provided as much information about the program as possible, including financial data, reasons for initiating the program, and what we hoped to accomplish.

We then invited employees to share their concerns and provide input. At first, some were willing to do so, but we knew many had concerns and questions and were afraid to voice them.

In order to strengthen relationships with employees and make it safe for them to share their concerns, supervisors and managers were encouraged to use crucial conversations in one-on-one meetings

with their direct reports. As supervisors continued to expand the pool of meaning, they improved relationships and trust with their direct reports.

Additionally, employees talked with their managers and learned about the benefits of this program, they came to realize that this was an opportunity to learn new skills, ensure job security, and advance in their careers.

*“As supervisors continued to expand the pool of meaning, they improved relationships and trust with their direct reports.”*  
— **Erich Steinbock**

As a result of reaching this shared understanding, we have seen many positive results. For example, because employees work closely with others they had not previously worked with, they are coming up with new strategies and ideas for increasing effectiveness. They are also breaking out of silence and feel safe to share questions, concerns, and ideas. Additionally, employees are stepping out of their comfort zones

and are enthusiastic about their jobs. As a result, some have received promotions and many have maintained full time employment.

This program has received recognition from our company as a benchmark of reorganizing and using available resources to provide excellent service and secure current employees' jobs.