

HOW OUR WORDS TRAVEL

A 10-Min Guide to Build Awareness of Indirect Communication and Its Impact

GUIDE 1: STARTING THE CONVERSATION

This is the first conversation in a series of short, structured discussions designed to strengthen how we communicate and work together over time.

Many communication challenges do not begin with bad intent. They begin with small, indirect patterns - talking about someone instead of to them, repeating concerns in groups, or softening feedback in ways that create confusion. Most people don't realize how quickly words travel - or how they land.

Culture does not shift through one dramatic moment. It shifts through small conversations, repeated consistently.

This conversation is not about blame. It is about awareness. Today, we begin by noticing.

10-MINUTE CONVERSATION AGENDA

1 Minute | Set the Tone

Leader Open: "I'd like us to take a few minutes to reflect on how we handle frustrations with one another. This isn't about blaming anyone. It's about noticing patterns that may affect trust on our team."

8 Minutes | Spark Discussion

Discussion Prompt: "When something bothers us about someone, we have two choices — we can talk to them, or we can talk about them. What usually happens when we choose to talk about them instead?"

Let the team respond. If needed, gently prompt:

- *Does it solve the issue?*
- *Does it make things clearer?*
- *Or does it create confusion?*

The goal is shared recognition of:

- *How quickly words travel*
- *How trust can shift*
- *How issues sometimes grow instead of shrink*

Keep the focus on patterns — not people.

1 Minute | Close the Conversation

Leader Close: "Thank you for being honest. This is just the beginning of a series of short conversations about strengthening how we communicate and work together. Today was about awareness."

AFTER THE CONVERSATION

Follow-Through Guidance

- Email a short summary of the key themes that surfaced - especially anything related to trust, reputation, or team impact.
- Let the team know this is part of a short series on strengthening professional communication.
- The goal right now is awareness, not immediate behavior change.

Facilitation Notes

- This does not need to be perfect. Employees don't expect polished facilitation. They want to see leaders thinking how work feels day to day.
- If the group is large, do pair or small-group discussion before sharing highlights with the full team.