



# Leveraging Emotional Intelligence in Difficult Conversations

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The role of a leader in the high-pressure, dynamic world of the global gambling sector is not an easy one. Among the crucial abilities that differentiate effective leaders is Emotional Intelligence, a skill set that can profoundly impact how we navigate through challenging conversations. I wanted to delve deeper into the relevance of Emotional Intelligence in managing difficult dialogues, alongside actionable strategies to enhance its use in your leadership approach.

Emotional Intelligence, at its core, is the capability to perceive, use, comprehend, and manage emotions in a constructive manner. This encompasses self-awareness, empathy, and the aptitude to regulate one's own emotions and those of others.

To bring this concept to life, let's consider a scenario all too familiar within our sector – regulatory changes. Regulatory changes can often trigger a ripple of uncertainty, tension, and worry within an organisation. As a leader, it falls to you to address these pressing issues, a task that often entails difficult, high-stakes conversations.



In this instance, Emotional Intelligence can serve as your compass. Start by acknowledging your emotions about the upcoming conversation. Whether you are experiencing anxiety, concern, or frustration, recognising and understanding your emotional state will help you control your reactions and navigate the conversation more effectively.

Beyond personal emotions, Emotional Intelligence requires an understanding of your team's emotional landscape. By empathising with their concerns and fears, you can create a dialogue grounded in mutual respect and trust, even in the most challenging circumstances. Here are some practical strategies to leverage Emotional Intelligence when engaging in difficult conversations:

**Deepen Self-awareness:** Acknowledge and understand your emotions before entering a conversation. Recognising whether you're feeling nervous, angry, or worried allows you to manage these emotions and prevents them from overshadowing the dialogue. This introspection also helps you to communicate authentically, which builds trust with your team.

**Enhance Empathy:** Place yourself in the shoes of your team members. Understand their concerns and fears. This empathetic approach allows you to communicate more effectively, validating their feelings, and fostering a supportive environment.

**Practice Active Listening:** Show genuine interest in your team's viewpoints. Ask open-ended questions, acknowledge their feelings, and provide constructive feedback. Active listening can help diffuse tension, establish rapport, and build a sense of mutual respect.

**Communicate Clearly and Compassionately:** Be transparent and considerate in conveying your message. Avoid sugar-coating or avoiding the issue, as this can lead to confusion and mistrust. Choose your words carefully and deliver them in a manner that respects the other person's feelings, while still conveying the reality of the situation.

**Establish Emotional Boundaries:** While it's important to empathise, remember to also establish emotional boundaries. This can prevent the emotional toll from impacting your mental well-being and decision-making abilities.

Every leader will have a unique approach to leveraging Emotional Intelligence, depending on their personal style and the specific situation. However, by consciously integrating these strategies, you can guide difficult conversations towards a more constructive outcome.

Leadership is a journey of continuous learning. The more we practice and develop our Emotional Intelligence, the more adept we become at steering our teams through the turbulent seas of change and uncertainty. As leaders in the global gambling sector, this ability isn't just a bonus - it's a necessity.

