



one page summary



speaker

**Heather
Johnson**

title

How to have difficult conversations before they become impossible conversations

Who's the speaker?

Heather Johnson, our speaker for this session, is the co-founder and COO of Gozynta. With an extensive background in human resources and strong leadership skills, she's an expert in building great teams, and fostering thriving work cultures.

The core idea

The core takeaway from this session is to equip you with strategies to talk to your employees and set consistent expectations, and proactively manage difficult situations.

The breakdown

Now, let's break the session down into its best parts and highlights:

- Communication is key if you want your teams to get things done. Assuming that they're already aware of their responsibility only leads to delays, errors, and anxiety on their end.
- Document everything. Jotting down your expectations can make difficult conversations with your team members easier when things aren't going according to plan.
- You need to assign a high level of priority and commitment to your one-on-one meetings to let your team know you value their time, their role in the company, and their growth.
- Quarterly reviews with measurable goals can be a great lever to sort out any long-standing issues, set targets for the near-future, and help them move towards where they see themselves in the future.
- Impossible conversations are sometimes inevitable. It's simply easier to be direct and rip the band-aid off, instead of trying to ease things through by trying to soften the blow.
- Self-care after these conversations is important. Handling these conversations is challenging, and you need to give yourself the space to process things and recover.

Action points:

- Prevent difficult conversations by setting clear expectations and goals with measurable outcomes whenever possible. Communicate them in no uncertain terms by writing everything down.
- Set SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based goals.
- Have small difficult conversations routinely to keep the course correction small. Set weekly one-on-ones to constantly make minor improvements over time.
- Don't be defensive when you get feedback! It's hard, but be receptive, listen wholeheartedly, and try to act on it with an open mind.
- Tips for when you need to have impossible conversations: don't soften the blow. Don't be friendly. Firmly and clearly state your conditions, and the consequences of not meeting them.
- Keep that final conversation with an employee to the point, and have a procedure in place to handle next steps accordingly.



Always find something to celebrate in your quarterly reviews.