



# Empowering Leaders, Elevating Dialogue: Mercer Raises Manager Effectiveness

Mercer

Best Competencies and Skill Development

November 2024



## Company Background

Mercer

Company-at-a-Glance	
<b>Headquarters</b>	1166 Avenue of the Americas, New York City, New York
<b>Year Founded</b>	1945
<b>Revenue</b>	\$5 billion
<b>Employees</b>	25,000
<b>Global Scale (Regions that you operate in or provide services to)</b>	130 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America and Australia
<b>Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)</b>	Mercer helps clients around the world advance the health, wealth, and performance of their most vital asset – their people. Clients include international companies of all sizes serving the leaders, HR managers and employees with the solutions, services and insight they need to make the most of their benefits.
<b>Industry</b>	Consulting and benefits/HR administration
<b>Stock Symbol</b>	MMC
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.mercer.com">http://www.mercer.com</a>



## Budget and Timeframe

Budget and Timeframe	
Overall budget	N/A
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	3
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	3
Number of contractors involved with implementation	0
Timeframe to implement	5-6 months
Start date of the program	14 <sup>th</sup> August 2023

## Fit to the Needs

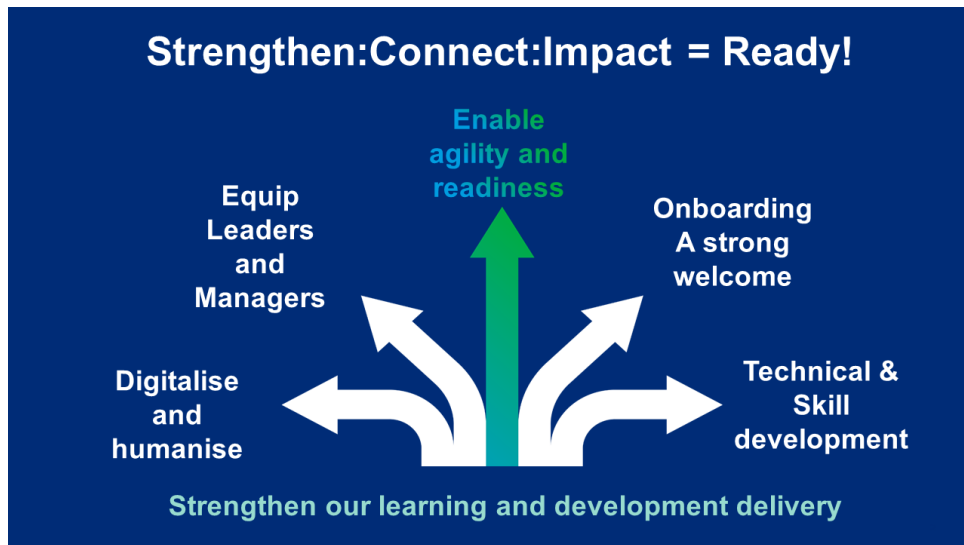
**Changing Business Landscape** - The organization operates in a rapidly changing and complex business environment; effective communication is paramount to achieving organizational goals mentioned below. Many frontline people managers encountered challenges to address sensitive topics, leading to missed opportunities and communication barriers. Manager Effectiveness index was strongly called in the TNI activities by the leadership in Global Service Delivery (GSD) Team. Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations was identified as practice which could aid in uplifting people management competencies for the frontline people managers.

The business goals for 2023 were:

- Digitalize and humanize - Identify opportunities to digitalize our delivery with building in practical simulations and experiences.
- Equip Leaders and Managers - Maximize the Enterprise learning opportunities, design and deliver practical and applicable Operations & Technology(O&T) solutions for managers and leaders.



- Enable agility and readiness - Provide learning and development for all colleagues and managers to be agile and ready for 2023 opportunities.
- Onboarding - Consolidate materials from MMC, Mercer and O&T into a digital, seamless, and strong welcome to all new hires providing the best onboarding experience.
- Technical & Skills - Continue to build and deliver strong technical training and enhance our people’s futures with targeted skill development.



## Overview

Based on the training needs assessment, clear and measurable learning objectives for the Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations were defined and aligned to the skills and competencies for frontline people manager development. Here is a high-level design on the program:

Program Name	Skills & Competencies Addressed	Key Objectives	Outcome of the Program
Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective Communication</li> <li>• Handle difficult conversations</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Foster culture of open dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make even the riskiest topics safe for discussion.</li> <li>• Create psychological safety where people can share meaningful input on important matters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superior Team Engagement &amp; teamwork</li> <li>• Improved Decision-making</li> <li>• Enhance communication</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolve conflicts</li> <li>• Provide constructive feedback</li> <li>• Influence and persuade</li> <li>• Manage emotions</li> <li>• Personal &amp; Interpersonal Skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to anyone about almost anything</li> <li>• Speak persuasively, not abrasively when the stakes are high, and opinions vary.</li> <li>• Learn how to turn disagreement into dialogue and conflict into collaboration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fostering open dialogue</li> <li>• Improved EQ</li> </ul>
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Here is a detailed view of each skill and competency that were touched through the program-

- **Effective communication:** Frontline managers should be able to engage in open and honest conversations, actively listen to others, and express their thoughts and ideas clearly and respectfully.
- **Handle difficult conversations:** Managers should be able to navigate challenging conversations with confidence and skill, addressing sensitive topics, managing emotions, and finding mutually beneficial solutions.
- **Trust:** Managers should learn how to establish trust and build positive relationships with their team members through effective communication, active listening, and empathy.
- **Foster culture of open dialogue:** Managers should create an environment where team members feel comfortable expressing their opinions, ideas, and concerns, promoting a culture of open and constructive dialogue.
- **Resolve conflicts:** Managers should develop the ability to identify and address conflicts within their teams, using Crucial Conversations techniques to facilitate productive discussions and find resolutions that satisfy all parties involved.
- **Provide constructive feedback:** Managers should learn how to deliver feedback in a way that is specific, timely, and focused on behavior and performance improvement, while maintaining a supportive and respectful approach.
- **Influence and persuade:** Managers should develop the skills to influence and persuade others, using Crucial Conversations techniques to effectively communicate their ideas, gain buy-in, and drive positive change.



- **Manage emotions:** Managers should learn how to manage their own emotions and respond appropriately to the emotions of others, maintaining a calm and composed demeanor during challenging conversations.
- **Personal & Interpersonal Skills:** Managers should understand the importance of adapting their communication style to different individuals and situations, ensuring effective communication and understanding across diverse team members.

Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations aims to develop people management skills – where managers should be able to apply the principles and techniques learned from the program at various workplace scenarios, demonstrating their ability to handle difficult situations and conversations effectively.

Through the Employee Pulse Survey conducted by HR People Partner in GSD, it came out very evidently that the following two parameters needed immediate attention, any they were: (the below observations are for front line people managers):

- **Performance Recognition:** The overall performance recognition decreased by 5 points from 77 in 2022 to 72 in 2023. Specifically, there was a decline in the perception of fair performance evaluation this was due to deficiency in holding open dialogue by front line people managers.
- **Manager Effectiveness:** While the overall manager effectiveness remained unchanged at 91%, there were slight decreases in areas related to feedback and development. The scores for regular feedback on performance and the value of feedback received from managers showed minimal changes.

Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations played a pivotal in addressing Manager Effectiveness and the quality of performance discussion. The goal of Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations was to improve and sustain the Manager Effectiveness index viz. (My manager cares for the well-being of their team members) and there has been an increase by 2% from 2022 to 2023. The Manager Effectiveness index is under the critical zone as the organization has been witnessing massive organizational structure change in 2023.

## **Design of the Program**

Based on the needs assessment, the Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations was designed to address the identified competencies and skills. A comprehensive training curriculum that covered the necessary skills and competencies was developed which included workshop, role-playing exercises, and case studies. The workshop ensured that the training sessions had ample opportunities for participants to practice and apply the concepts learned.



## Workshop approach



Overview	Objective	Offerings Plan	
<p>Participants in this course will acquire the communication expertise enabling them to confidently engage in dialogue even in challenging situations. It will enable participants with skills to step into disagreement—rather than over or around it—and will turn disagreement into dialogue for improved relationships and results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster a safe environment for discussing even the most sensitive topics</li> <li>Establish emotional safety to encourage meaningful input on important matters</li> <li>Master persuasive communication techniques for challenging situations with differing views</li> <li>Acquire skills to transform disagreement into constructive dialogue and promote collaboration in times of conflict</li> </ul>	<p><b>8</b> Workshops options to choose from</p>	<p><b>150+</b> Front Line People Managers in Scope</p>
		<p><b>3</b> Time Zones to be considered for offerings</p>	<p><b>8</b> Hours of time investment</p>
Approach		Enrollments through	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Workshops options per month from Aug to Dec to choose from as per participants convenience</li> <li>Workshop to be split into 2 days of 4 hours each</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workday</li> <li>Degreed</li> <li>Direct link</li> </ul>	

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## Delivery of the Program

Experienced facilitators were selected to deliver the program to cater to the real time challenges and equip frontline people managers with skills and competencies to lead teams efficiently.

Here is how Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations was delivered:

Module #	Module Name	Objectives	Case Studies	Duration (Mins.)
1	Introduction to Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of the Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations framework and its importance.</li> <li>Explanation of key concepts: safety, dialogue, and mutual purpose.</li> </ul>	<p>Sarah, a manager, notices a breakdown in communication within her team. Some team members are not actively participating in discussions, leading to misunderstandings,</p>	70



			and missed deadlines. Sarah needs to apply the Crucial Conversations framework to address this issue and improve team communication.	
2	Communication Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active listening techniques and practice exercises.</li> <li>• Verbal and non-verbal communication strategies.</li> </ul>	John, a manager, realizes that his team often misinterprets his instructions, resulting in errors and delays. He needs to enhance his communication skills to ensure that his messages are clear, concise, and easily understood by his team members.	45
3	Managing Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing and managing emotions during crucial conversations.</li> <li>• Strategies for staying calm and composed.</li> <li>• Emotional intelligence development exercises.</li> </ul>	Emma, a manager, finds herself in a conflict with one of her team members. The situation has become emotionally charged, and Emma needs to manage her own emotions while addressing the	90



			conflict in a constructive and respectful manner.	
4	Creating a Safe Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing psychological safety.</li> <li>• Building trust and rapport.</li> <li>• Setting ground rules for respectful communication.</li> </ul>	<p>Alex, a manager, notices a lack of trust among team members, leading to a lack of collaboration and open communication. Alex needs to create a safe environment where team members feel comfortable expressing their opinions and concerns.</p>	45
5	Handling Difficult Conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Techniques for addressing sensitive topics and managing conflict.</li> <li>• Strategies for defusing defensiveness and hostility.</li> <li>• Approaches for finding common ground and reaching solutions.</li> </ul>	<p>Lisa, a manager, needs to have a crucial conversation with a team member regarding their performance issues. Lisa must navigate the conversation effectively, addressing the concerns while maintaining a positive and supportive approach.</p>	40





6	Giving and Receiving Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing constructive feedback.</li> <li>• Receiving feedback with an open mind.</li> <li>• Techniques for delivering feedback in a supportive manner.</li> </ul>	Michael, a manager, needs to provide constructive feedback to a team member who has been consistently missing deadlines. Michael must deliver the feedback in a way that encourages improvement and growth while maintaining a supportive relationship.	40
7	Resolving Conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying and addressing conflicts within teams.</li> <li>• Mediation techniques and role-playing exercises.</li> <li>• Strategies for managing disagreements and reaching consensus.</li> </ul>	Sarah and Mark, two team members, have been involved in a conflict that is affecting team dynamics. Sarah, as a manager, needs to facilitate a crucial conversation between them to find a resolution and restore a harmonious working relationship.	60
8	Practice and Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role-playing exercises to simulate real-life scenarios.</li> </ul>	The team led by a manager, James, is struggling with	90



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies and group discussions.</li> <li>• Sharing experiences and learning from each other.</li> </ul>	<p>collaboration and decision-making. James needs to apply the Crucial Conversations principles to improve team dynamics, encourage open dialogue, and foster effective collaboration.</p>	
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Here are the salient features of Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations-

- Robust practice through Conversation Connect Toolkit
- Each module has a business specific case studies allowing the participants to rehearse the subject during the workshop.
- Post workshop participants can engage on the Social learning hub **#ConnectingPeopleThroughCrucialConversations** and share their experiences and best practices. This social learning hub play a pivotal role in continuous learning through exchange of best practices.
- Each participant post completing the workshop get a Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations badge to showcase the skill learnt and they are ready to apply them in their daily conversations.



- The workshop enabled individuals to connect with colleagues across different teams, departments, and locations, fostering a culture of continuous learning and knowledge exchange. It stood as a platform for continuous feedback and improvement. Continuously the training program was monitored and evaluated the effectiveness through feedback surveys.



## Measurable Benefits

Manager effectiveness is a crucial aspect of creating a positive work environment, and one indicator of this is the level of care a manager demonstrates for the well-being of their team members. Connecting People Through Crucial conversations played a significant role in driving higher penetration and traction to the learning experience and impact on people manager development. The observation shows the scores measuring Manager Effectiveness aspect showed a notable improvement. In 2022, the scores stood at 92, reflecting a manager's commitment to their team's welfare. However, by the end of 2023, these scores had risen to an impressive 94. This increase suggests that the manager's efforts to prioritize the well-being of their team members had a positive impact. Such a result indicates that the manager actively engages with their team, listens to their concerns, and takes appropriate actions to support their physical and emotional well-being. By fostering a caring and supportive environment, leading to higher employee satisfaction, increased engagement, and ultimately, improved overall team performance. This observation was extracted by the Employee Pulse Survey conducted by the HR People Partners. The Global Service Delivery (GSD) team and organization both recognizes the importance of attain a higher merit in the Manager Effectiveness index.

<b>Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations</b>	<b>Manager Effectiveness 2023</b> <small>(My manager cares for the well-being of their team members)</small>	<b>Manager Effectiveness 2022</b> <small>(My manager cares for the well-being of their team members)</small>	<b>Net Promoter Score</b>
Scores	94 ↑ (2% increase)	92	91

Here is an achievement summary of participants' experiences and learnings from a training on having efficient dialogues and addressing crucial conversations. They found the provided Conversation Practice Sheet helpful in starting conversations in the right direction. The training helped participants analyze their behaviors during conversations and improve themselves. 75% of participants achieved their learning goals post training. Participants plan to apply their learnings in daily interactions with mentees, peers, and managers, improve their communication skills, and initiate dialogues in a structured way using the Conversation Practice Sheet.



## Voice of Customer | Participant's Experience



### What I learnt

- ✓ Steps to have an efficient dialogue with somebody in crucial situations - Speaking persuasively, not abrasively
- ✓ how to address crucial conversations wisely. Learned fostering teamwork and better decision making
- ✓ I've known tools like AMMP and ABF that can help with it and with the videos I was able to understand situations in resolving individual and group disagreements



### My Experience

- ✓ The 'Conversation Practice Sheet' provided during the training is extremely helpful and can be used to start conversations in the right direction.
- ✓ Had opportunity to analyze our behaviors during conversations and understand how to improve ourselves.
- ✓ The reflections we had during the workshop along with the content/videos were powerful.



### How will I Apply

- ✓ Prepare ourselves mentally how to approach that conversation,
- ✓ I will use the learned approach to bring best out of meetings and brainstorming.
- ✓ Apply on my daily interactions with mentees, peers and managers. Improve my communication skills.
- ✓ Understand how can I initiate the dialogue with the other colleague, create always a safe space so the colleague don't feel attacked.
- ✓ I will use the Conversation Practice Sheet for all future crucial conversations ensuring the conversation is done in a structured way



Here is a view on the total number of colleagues, the number of people managers who completed a workshop, the number of learning hours accomplished, and the Net Promoter Score in in 6 months.

## Learning summary

Progress 2023



186

Total number of colleagues people managers successfully completed the workshop



1576

Total learning hours accomplished in 2023



91

Net Promoter Score

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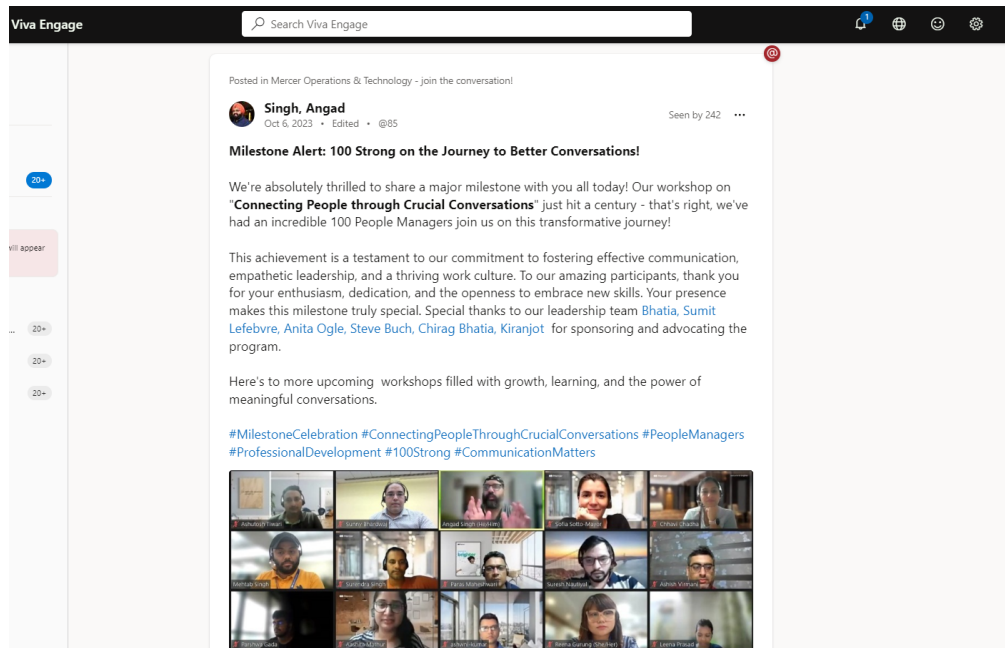
## Bright Spots:

- ~ **80%** of Grade D People Managers in GSD have attended the workshop
- Successfully delivered **13** workshop in span of 6 months
- **112** hours of training delivery investment
- Conversation Hub –
  - Online-Social learning hub
  - Online community works as continuous learning platform

The Online community played a significant role as platform to continuously engage participants post the workshops and seek feedback and observations to evolve the experience of the learners. The objective of sharing the program's notable



achievements and success stories on the organization's social media platform, Viva Engage, was to enhance visibility and cultivate a feeling of pride among the employees.



## Overall

Investing in Connecting People Trough Crucial Conversations training programs on people manager performance recognition and feedback has been crucial for Global Service Delivery (GSD) Team to improve employee morale, enhance manager-employee relationships, retain top talent, and drive performance improvement and development. By addressing these through this training intervention reinforced a culture of recognition, feedback, and continuous improvement, leading to increased employee satisfaction, productivity. These benefits entailed:

- **Improved Employee Morale and Engagement:** Training programs focused on performance recognition and feedback helped boost employee morale and engagement by ensuring that employees felt valued and appreciated for their contributions.
- **Enhanced Manager-employee Relationships:** Training programs strengthened manager-employee relationships by equipping managers with the skills to provide regular feedback, recognize employee achievements, and foster open communication.



- **Increased Retention and Talent Management:** By addressing the training needs in performance recognition and feedback, organizations improved employee retention rates and effectively managed their talent by creating a positive and supportive work environment.
- **Performance Improvement and Development:** Training programs facilitated employee growth and development by providing managers with the skills to deliver constructive feedback and support employees in enhancing their performance.

In 2024, GSD Learning & Development Team envisions a plan expand the reach of Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations to senior colleagues (Senior Manager at Grade E and Associate Director at Grade F), as this will help in disseminating a common language to foster superior performance and results through open and candid dialogue. Here is the plan for 2024 Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations journey:

### Way Ahead Plan 2024

#### GSD Approach

Grade D & E	Grade F
~250 People Managers to participate	~120 People Managers to participate
12 Workshops	6 Workshops
2000 Learning Hours	1440 Learning Hours
96 Training Delivery Hours	72 Training Delivery Hours

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**Grade D & E**

- 8 hours workshop – divided into 2 sessions
- Robust practice through Conversation Practice Sheet

**Connecting People Through Crucial Conversations**

**Grade F**

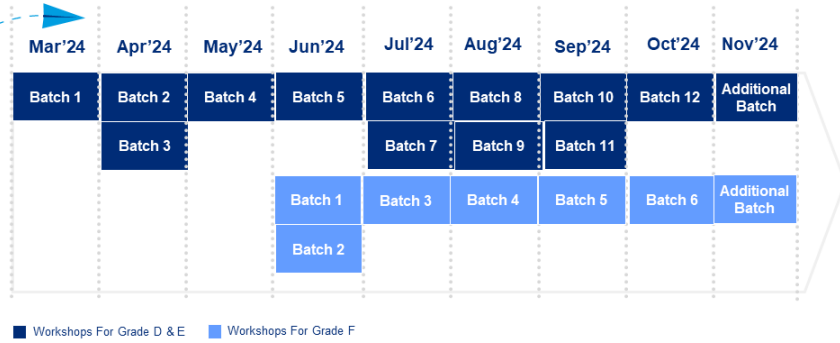
- 12 hours workshop – divided into 3 sessions
- Thorough rehearsal via Role Plays

Way Ahead Plan for 2024 outlines a plan from Q1 of 2024 till Q4 of 2024. The plan includes workshops for Grade D and E, as well as Grade F. Additionally, the addition of two new certified trainers to ensure seamless coverage.



## Way Ahead Plan 2024

### GSD Approach



- 3 new trainers to be added to the pool for seamless coverage



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