
Difficult Conversations at Work

22 – 26 March 2027
Vienna





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Difficult Conversations at Work is a one-week senior-level course delivered by Mars Training Centre in London, Dubai, Munich, Doha and Jakarta — designed for directors, vice presidents and senior leaders who carry the conversations the organisation cannot afford to get wrong.

Most leaders avoid difficult conversations for as long as they can. The cost shows up later: a performance issue that should have been raised six months ago, a partnership that ended because no one named the real problem, a senior team meeting where the most important thing in the room never gets said. The leaders who handle these conversations well are not braver than their peers. They have a method, they have practised it, and they have a clearer idea of what they are trying to achieve before they walk into the room.

Across five focused days you will work through the structure of a difficult conversation — preparation, framing, the moment of delivery, managing the response, and the follow-through that determines whether anything actually changes. The cases are drawn from the United Kingdom, Europe, the Gulf and Asia, and the work is delivered by senior practitioners with executive and negotiation experience.

What You Will Learn

- Identify the three layers of a difficult conversation — content, emotion and identity — and address each one deliberately.
- Prepare for a difficult conversation in the twenty minutes before you walk into the room.
- Open a difficult conversation in a way that protects both the message and the relationship.
- Stay calm and curious in the face of strong emotion, denial or counter-attack.
- Hold the line on the substantive point while listening genuinely to the other person.
- Reach a clear outcome — agreement, decision or honest disagreement — rather than a polite stalemate.
- Handle the specific conversations that come up most often at senior level: performance, conduct, restructure, partnership and personal feedback.
- Coach others in your team to handle their own difficult conversations.
- Decide which difficult conversations to have, and which to let go.

How You Will Benefit

You will leave with a clear method for difficult conversations, practical experience using it under pressure, and a Mars Certificate of Completion.

Your organisation will gain a senior leader whose team has fewer unresolved tensions, faster decisions on the issues people normally avoid, and the kind of conversational honesty that prevents small problems from compounding into big ones.



Who This Programme Is For

This programme is designed for senior leaders whose role requires them to have hard conversations, including senior vice presidents and vice presidents; general managers and country managers; directors of all functions with team or partner responsibility; senior HR business partners working with executive populations; senior project, programme and transformation directors; and family-business principals navigating succession or shareholder conversations. The seniority floor is senior manager and above.

How the Week Unfolds

Day one examines why difficult conversations are difficult, separating the three layers of content, emotion and identity that run through every hard exchange. Day two covers preparing without over-preparing, including what can realistically be done in the twenty minutes before the room. Day three is the conversation itself: opening in a way that protects message and relationship, staying calm and curious under strong emotion, denial or counter-attack, and holding the substantive line while genuinely listening. Day four works through the conversations senior leaders have most often — performance, conduct, restructure, partnership and personal feedback. Day five consolidates the week with follow-through, coaching others in your team, faculty feedback and a personal action plan.