

TIPS FOR OPENING THE VAULT

1. **Assume people can change.** People change all the time. Do the person the favor of letting them try to change.
2. **Determine what you really want.** Not just for yourself, but also for the other person and for your working relationship. This long-term, inclusive goal can make the conversation constructive, rather than destructive.
3. **Approach as a Friend, not a Foe.** Explain your positive motives up front. For example, “I’d like to discuss a concern. My goal is to support you and to help us achieve the metrics you’ve set for our team...”
4. **Stick to the facts.** Avoid broad conclusions such as, “you don’t care” or “you’re incompetent.” Instead, focus on specific incidents, events, and actions such as, “The last three staffing decisions were made without input from the managers in the affected areas.”

ABOUT THE RESEARCH. The study collected responses via an online survey of 1,409 individuals in May 2015. Margin of error is approximately 3%.

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According to research from Joseph Grenny and David Maxfield, authors of the *New York Times* bestseller *Crucial Conversations*, **56%** of us safeguard toxic secrets or grievances in the workplace for more than a year—because we focus on the immediate risks involved in speaking up while ignoring the certain and ongoing costs of not speaking up.

In the study of 1,400 people, participants were asked to imagine they were given a “magical free pass” that would allow them to say anything they wanted to one person at work—with immunity from any consequences. People’s suppressed concerns ran the gamut from terrifying to disgusting to heartbreaking.

The study revealed that keeping these secrets “in the vault” creates problems that can be costly to an organization. “Secrets are not truly locked away,” said coauthor of the study David Maxfield. “If you don’t talk it out with the person and resolve it, you’ll act it out in unhealthy ways.”

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KEY RESULTS

56% of employees keep an awkward conversation “vaulted” up for more than 1 year

42% keep them in the vault for 1-5 years

The most popular workplace grievances we keep locked up are:

50% Speaking up to those in power (e.g. “You’re the worst boss I ever had.”)

30% Criticizing a peer’s performance (e.g. “Your fake, sugar-sweet ‘kindness’ tinged with sarcasm has made me not believe a work you say.”)

2% Addressing the elephant in the room (e.g. “Your hygiene habits are repulsive and offensive.”)

In imagining what would happen if they WOULD follow through and hold that conversation:

66% believed their organization would be helped

57% believed everyone who interacts with this person would be helped

43% believed the person themselves would be helped

43% believed a huge emotional burden would be lifted