

## HOW to NEGOTIATE WORKLOAD LIMITS

- **Earn the right.** Asking for fairness in work limits is easier when you have a reputation as a hard worker. Before raising concerns, evaluate if you are truly doing more than your share.
- **Clarify intent.** Don't start the conversation with complaints—start by establishing mutual purpose with your boss. Begin with, "I have a concern about my workload, but I want to be clear that I care about helping our team succeed. I don't want to request changes that will make your life harder or put our goals at risk."
- **Focus on facts.** Don't start with broad conclusions or generalizations that put others on the defensive. Build the case for the point you want to make by sharing objective facts. For example, "I've observed that those who do their work get rewarded with more work."
- **Clarify boundaries.** Be clear about any hard and fast limits you have on your workload. If, for example, you have family commitments or personal time values you won't compromise, lay those out clearly and stick with them.
- **Propose solutions.** Don't just come with complaints—come with recommendations for how to make this work for your boss. If you just dump the problem on your boss, he or she may help you solve it, but you'll strain the relationship.
- **Invite dialogue.** Finally, invite your boss or teammates to share their viewpoints. People are willing to listen to even challenging views as long as they believe you are also open to theirs.

According to our research, the most difficult issue for women in the workplace to discuss and successfully resolve is negotiating limits on their workload—it's also one of the main issues that cause one in five women to leave their job.

The study of 845 women in business also found that women struggle most to hold high-stakes discussions with other women rather than with men.

The four most difficult issues for women to discuss in the workplace are:

1. Negotiating limits when asked to do more than is reasonable or possible
2. Giving performance feedback to someone without hurting his or her feelings or damaging the relationship
3. Asking for a raise or a change in a performance plan related to a raise
4. Not receiving support from other women

According to the study, only 13% of women are "very" or "extremely" confident in their ability to candidly and effectively bring up these issues while the rest fear how they'll be perceived if they speak up or simply don't work for an organization that supports candid dialogue.

What happens when a crucial conversation goes awry? Nearly half admitted a failed high-stakes discussion caused their productivity and/or engagement to drop, and one in five women said they've had a crucial conversation go so poorly they left their job.

However, those who are skilled at stepping up to difficult issues at work experience greater satisfaction and increased productivity.

**About VitalSmarts**—An innovator in corporate training and leadership development, VitalSmarts combines three decades of original research with 50 years of the best social science to help leaders and organizations change human behavior and achieve new levels of performance. VitalSmarts has identified four high-leverage skill sets that, when used in combination, create healthy corporate cultures. These skills are taught in the Company's award-winning training programs and *New York Times* bestselling books of the same titles: *Crucial Conversations*, *Crucial Accountability*, *Influencer*, and *Change Anything*. VitalSmarts has consulted with more than 300 of the Fortune 500 companies and trained more than one million people worldwide. [www.vitalsmarts.com](http://www.vitalsmarts.com)

## KEY RESULTS

**1 in 5** women leave their job due to failed crucial conversations

**13%** of women are "very" or "extremely" confident in their ability to candidly and effectively bring up issues

The **#1** most difficult issue for women to discuss at work is negotiating workload limits

**ABOUT THE RESEARCH.** The study collected responses via an online survey of 845 individuals in August 2011. Margin of error is approximately 3%.

**LEARN NEW SKILLS.** To learn how Crucial Conversations® Training can help you navigate high-stakes conversations, visit [www.vitalsmarts.com](http://www.vitalsmarts.com) or call 1.800.449.5989.