



Hate Speech in the Workplace

How Managers Can Recognize and Address Troublesome Situations

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INTRODUCTION

Incidents of hate speech have been in the news a lot lately. It's an almost sure bet that people in your organization, and maybe on your team, are hearing, reading, and actively discussing the issues both in and outside of the workplace. And, unfortunately, some may be engaging in it.

Based on our research and experience, many large organizations have policies and procedures for reporting hate speech and discussing the consequences for employees who engage in such behavior. In those cases, our recommendation is to know your policies and procedures and strictly follow them.

In the absence of a clear policy or procedure, many managers need advice on how they can best respond to the situation and communicate with employees who may have been affected. This document provides that guidance. We'll cover key topics such as: What are a manager's responsibilities when someone says something inappropriate or hurtful to others? How do you address it with all parties if you witness an incident? What should you do if you are not present when it happens but learn about it later?

Our goal in writing this is to get you thinking about how you'll react now. You need a plan for a proper response.

You might be reading this because you experienced such an incident and you didn't respond as well as you could have. Maybe the words were personally shocking, and you were ill-prepared to deal with the event in that moment. You may have found yourself reacting with anger toward the hate speaker and surprised yourself because that's not a fair or acceptable response.

This paper is not intended to define your company policy. It is not legal advice and therefore does not apply in instances where there was illegal harassment, which is "severe or pervasive enough to create a hostile or abusive work environment." You should already be thoroughly familiar with employment law related to harassment and your company's policies and protocols for dealing with such situations. Rather, this paper provides practical guidance to prepare managers at all levels to quickly recognize legal but harmful hate speech and address it in a planned, proper, and effective manner.

WHEN TO ACT

At the time of this writing, the news is filled with flashpoints that can cause turmoil when discussed in the workplace. Immigration, reproductive rights, political polarization, Second Amendment rights, and Civil War monuments are just a few examples. The media regularly reports on issues involving race, religion, and sexual orientation, all of which can stir deep-seated feelings. The people you work with will certainly have a range of positions on these and other topics. Some of them may be quite passionate. Some you'll agree with, and others may hit a raw nerve. As a manager, you need to understand and respect this diversity of opinion, even when it goes against the grain of your own set of values, beliefs, and attitudes.

While it's important to be tolerant, as a manager you need to act when differences of opinion cause disruption in the workplace, are hurtful to others, violate company policy, or might have crossed the line into legally defined harassment.

HATE SPEECH vs. FREE SPEECH

As you formulate your plan for dealing with hate speech, keep in mind the following:

1. The definition of hate speech, according to the Oxford dictionary, is "abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group."

2. Merriam-Webster defines freedom of speech as:

"The right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations (as the power of the government to avoid a clear and present danger) especially as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution."

3. Justice Samuel Alito made clear the distinction between hate speech and free speech in *Matal v. Tam*:

"[The idea that the government may restrict] speech expressing ideas that offend ... strikes at the heart of the First Amendment. Speech that demeans on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, or any other similar ground is hateful; but the proudest boast of our free speech jurisprudence is that we protect the freedom to express "the thought that we hate."

“

*“An employee may have a constitutional right to talk politics,
but he has no constitutional right to be employed.”*

Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr

”

4. Freedom of speech does not mean anyone can say anything at any time. For example, there are civil prohibitions against defamation (written defamation is called “libel,” and spoken defamation is called “slander”), and the Supreme Court has ruled that freedom of speech rights do not include:

- inciting actions that would harm others, such as shouting “fire” in a crowded theater (*Schenck v. United States*, 249 U.S. 47 [1919]),
- making or distributing obscene materials (*Roth v. United States*, 354 U.S. 476 [1957]),
- burning draft cards as an anti-war protest (*United States v. O’Brien*, 391 U.S. 367 [1968]),
- permitting students to print articles in a school newspaper over the objections of the school administration (*Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, 484 U.S. 260 [1988]),
- students making an obscene speech at a school-sponsored event (*Bethel School District #43 v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 [1986]), or
- students advocating illegal drug use at a school-sponsored event (*Morse v. Frederick*, U.S. [2007]).

5. Speech that is protected by law does not have to be tolerated in the workplace. Workers who exercise their freedom to speak may still face disciplinary action, as noted in this statement by Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.: “An employee may have a constitutional right to talk politics, but he has no constitutional right to be employed.”

Google Fires Engineer Who Wrote Memo Questioning Women in Tech – New York Times 8/7/2017

SAN FRANCISCO — Google on Monday fired a software engineer who wrote an internal memo that questioned the company’s diversity efforts and argued that the low number of women in technical positions was a result of biological differences instead of discrimination.

The memo, called “**Google’s Ideological Echo Chamber**,” angered many in Silicon Valley because it relied on certain gender stereotypes — like the notion that women are less interested in high-stress jobs because they are more anxious — to rationalize the gender gap in the tech industry. The memo quickly spread outside the company, as other Google employees railed against many of its assumptions.

https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/evzjww/here-are-the-citations-for-the-anti-diversity-manifesto-circulating-at-google

In a companywide email, Google’s chief executive, Sundar Pichai, said portions of the memo had violated the company’s code of conduct and crossed the line “by advancing harmful gender stereotypes in our workplace.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/07/business/google-women-engineer-fired-memo.html>

Google

RECOGNIZING HATE SPEECH

Because of its broad interpretation, hate speech is always in the ear of the beholder. Hate is an emotion; therefore, by definition, hate speech must be speech that attacks, threatens, or insults a person or group with the intent to invoke bad feelings. That intent is often to make one feel humiliated, trapped, angry, intimidated, attacked, alienated, scared, or some combination of these. Many times, the purpose is not clear-cut: what can bring about these emotions and generate a negative reaction for one person may not affect another.

An individual's recognition of hate speech is affected by the demographics of the speaker (male or female, black or white, job title, etc.), the location (a locker room vs. a classroom), and the setting (an informal gathering of friends vs. a formal church supper).

When it comes to hate speech, for most people it's "I know it when I hear it," to borrow a memorable phrase from Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart.

When the Pizza Delivery Guy is Also "Nazi Bob"

The Boston Globe published an intriguing, in-depth story about Chad Eisenhart, the owner of a food delivery service in New York. He had to quickly respond when he learned one of his employees, Bob Martin, was caught on camera wearing white nationalist garb and marching in public with racists and anti-Semites during the widely reported violent protests in Charlottesville, VA, in August 2017.

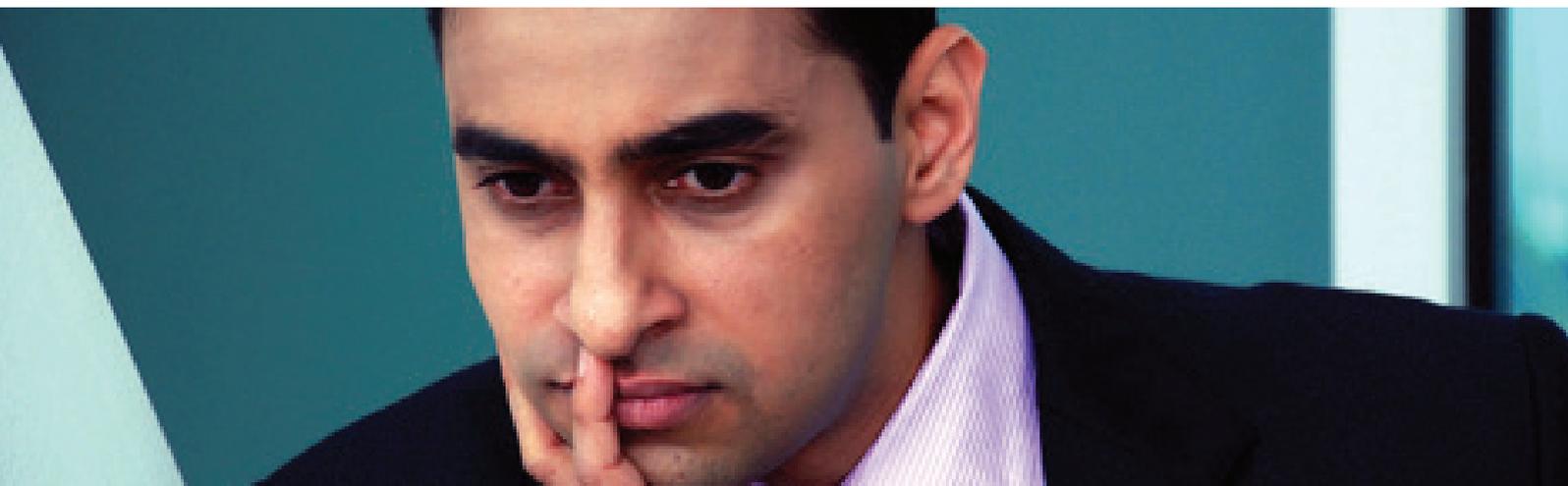
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/politics/2017/11/18/when-pizza-delivery-guy-also-nazi-bob/NGHvJmfooYw04VXp5RRbyK/story.html>



Whether someone "hears it" is based on two things: their understanding of what was said and their personal values, beliefs, and attitudes. So, your first step toward dealing with hate speech in the workplace is to understand what you hear clearly. The second step is self-awareness of your own values, beliefs, and attitudes, allowing you to understand and control your emotions so you can respond appropriately.

Let's look at how listeners interpret speech. Lessons taught by Aristotle over 2,000 years ago can be directly applied today to any speech that's intended to persuade, including hate speech. Here at The Speech Improvement Company, when we teach methods of persuasion—whether speaking in front of thousands of people, in a small meeting, or a one-on-one situation—we talk about:

- ethos, which is an ethical appeal, a means to convince listeners through the author's credibility or character;
- pathos, which is an emotional appeal, a means to persuade listeners by appealing to their emotions; and
- logos, which is an appeal to logic, a means to convince listeners by use of logic or reason.



THE ONLY 3 WAYS TO CONVINC ANYBODY OF ANYTHING

Being persuasive is the topic most often requested by our clients. We meet people from all over the world—Fortune 500 executives, managers in companies of all sizes, entrepreneurs, politicians, athletes, and educators—who tell us again and again that they want to be more convincing.

In this 24-minute podcast, our co-founder, Dr. Dennis Becker, explores the three modes for persuading: ethos, pathos, and logos. Originally taught centuries ago by Aristotle, these concepts have stood the test of time and are as relevant and important today as they were back then.

Listen, learn, and you too can master these timeless techniques to be more persuasive on the job, at home, or anywhere. Listen to the podcast here:

https://speechimprovement.com/tsicmedia/Only_3_Ways_to_Convince_Anybody_of_Anything.mp3



The person delivering the hate speech often frames it as logos, as in, “Our government is run by a bunch of [name of group].” To the speaker, it’s factual and therefore should be understood and believed by everyone. But listeners respond to the pathos in the statement. The message is truly received by the emotions evoked, not the logic. In addition, facial expressions, hand gestures, body language, the tone of voice and emphasis on certain words can be demeaning and suggest that the [name of group] is somehow bad. This “non-verbal delivery” can be highly subjective and difficult to document. Often, the non-verbal communication is what we respond to. It can be helpful, as a listener, to separate what words were used from how they were communicated. This is a listening skill that can help equip you with a more accurate or constructive response.

Being self-aware of your values, beliefs, and attitudes will allow you to step back and see the speech for what it is and understand the ethos (speaker credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic) of both the speaker and the message. Then you can decide exactly how to respond.

To develop self-awareness, think about your values, beliefs, and attitudes and where they came from. The roots are born out of one, or some combination of the following elements:

Observation. If you see someone burned by touching a hot stove, you gain a belief about hot stoves.

Experience. If you touch a hot stove, you’re likely to remember an experience that will stay with you forever.

Teaching. We are taught to believe things in school, in church, by parents, and by peers. How often have you said, “My mother taught me to always...”?

Personality. The combination of characteristics that form your unique character defines you. Whether those traits are positive (e.g., persistent, dependable, trusting, observant, fearless) or negative (e.g., impulsive, pompous, unfriendly, bossy, stingy), they have a great impact on how you perceive the world and those around you.

While these four elements have defined your current values, beliefs, and attitudes, they are continuously reshaped by new information and experiences.

Let’s dig a bit deeper and see how those values, beliefs, and attitudes affect you today. It takes a little bit of practice.

First, look for an event in your personal life that brought about an emotional response, whether positive or negative—a son or daughter doing something that made you proud, laughing with a friend, or an argument with a family member. Think about your emotions and reactions through the above four filters and answer the following questions:

- What similar events or situations have you observed in the past?
- What experiences did it bring to mind?
- What have you been taught that’s relevant?
- What personality traits had an impact on you?

Try this exercise again, recalling a good or bad emotional event at work. Think about how you felt and reacted in light of your past observations, experiences, and teachings combined with your personality traits.

Do this a few times, using different times, places, people, and events in your life.

Lastly, take some incidents from recent news that you believe involved hate speech and put them through those four filters. Why do you feel that way? Which of the four places did your reaction come from? Can you envision how someone with a different set of observations, experiences, teachings, and personality traits might see the situation very differently?

Practice using these exercises. They will give you tremendous personal insight that, in turn, will allow you to keep your emotions under control when a difficult situation arises.

Do you have a policy for hurtful or damaging speech outside the workplace?

Social media has changed the landscape as it relates to an employee's right to free speech and a company's need to protect its image and reputation. For example, how will you respond if an employee boldly criticizes his or her manager on LinkedIn? Or posts some unflattering, behind-the-scenes photos on their Facebook page? You can get ahead of this before it becomes an issue by having a written company policy for employee use of social media. According to Bloomberg Law, "social media policies are now just as necessary for employers as discrimination, leave, and vacation policies." We're not suggesting you limit employee social media activity—in fact, you may want to encourage it. A policy that clearly sets boundaries allows employees to participate more freely.



TWO WAYS TO RESPOND

There are only two ways to handle hate speech: ignore it or engage it.

Ignoring hate speech can take several forms: you might simply not respond to the comment using verbal techniques such as continuing the dialog as if nothing was said, changing the subject, asking an off-topic question of someone else in the room, or staying silent. You could use non-verbal disengagement such as breaking eye contact, turning away from the speaker, and even walking away. But putting your nose in the air and abruptly turning away is likely to anger the speaker. A careful, measured response can make it clear to the speaker that the conversation has ended, and you are not going to respond.

However, be aware that by ignoring their hate speech, you could embolden the speaker and leave others who may have heard it believing that you think such behavior is OK. That could result in more hate speech.

When you engage with hate speech, you have two choices:

- Take control of the conversation.
- Respond directly to the speaker.



Taking control of the conversation must be done without confrontation. Try using this simple technique, called “bridging”:

1. Acknowledge the speaker, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with what was said. For example, say, “Thank you for your contributions, John,” which demonstrates that you heard him. That alone may somewhat pacify the speaker.
2. Turn toward someone else in the room, look directly at them, and ask a logos (logic) question loosely related to the hate speech that requires a factual response. For example, “Jane, you told me that in your last position you gained some experience we can all learn from here. Can you tell us about it?” The point is not to respond to the speaker but instead redirect the conversation away from emotional statements, in another direction, and to another individual.

Responding to the speaker requires that you speak and act firmly to avoid any further discussion. Often, the purpose of the hate speech in the first place is to draw you and others into a discussion, or even an argument. Your response should follow these steps:

1. Stop it right then and there, letting the speaker know that what was said is not accepted in your workplace: “John, that’s inappropriate for this group.”
2. Defer all further discussion: “I’m sure that does not represent the feelings of everyone here, so let’s you and I take that offline.” This allows you to come back at a time, place, and manner of your choosing. There, in a more controlled, planned setting, you can deal with the issue as you would any incident in which an employee exhibits bad behavior, is disruptive, or violates company policy.

Many managers have told us they dread those follow-up meetings because they are stressful. We teach the following six-step model for providing difficult feedback and corrective action. Having a guide rather than winging it boosts managers’ confidence and makes them far more effective. We strongly recommend that you practice the conversation with a trusted advisor, such as a peer, your coach, or a good friend. Then have the meeting.

Here’s how to structure the discussion:

1. Start by positioning the conversation positively, and clearly identify the purpose. Here are examples of what you might say:

“Thanks for coming in, John. The reason for this meeting is to...
...make sure we’re both clear on what should and shouldn’t be said in my department.”
...discuss that comment you made at last week’s meeting.”
...review company policy on speech that is hurtful to others.”

Next, isolate the hate speech as a single incident that is an exception to that person’s behavior. For example, “I respect the way you work well within the team and get things done. This meeting is to talk specifically about that one comment you made.”

Be careful that your own attitude is not punitive when having this conversation, or else your tone of voice and non-verbal communication will send the message, “You’re in trouble.”

2. Describe the behavior and the impact:

- “The comments you made in our morning meeting regarding [X] are in violation of our company’s code of conduct policy.”
- “While we all have strong opinions, the comments you made at today’s meeting [hate speech] are considered derogatory and hurtful and, in this office, that’s unacceptable.”
- “After you made your comments, the whole mood changed in our meeting. I noted that there was an awkward silence and I observed that our colleagues were shifting in their chairs, looking at the floor, and disengaging from you and the conversation. The comments were a disruption that created an uncomfortable feeling among many people on the team.”
- “We are part of a diverse group with different backgrounds and experiences, and many of your colleagues think very differently than you. The comment you made may have been shocking to some and can trigger painful emotions. That results in hurting your coworkers and creating harmful distractions.”

3) Stop talking! Wait for a response, allowing the person to react, and then gather information and listen actively. Ask questions to get the person thinking about their behavior and its impact, such as:

- “How do you view this situation?”
- “What are your feelings about this?”
- “What do you see as the main issue?”
- “Help me understand how you view this.”
- “How do you think others felt when you said that?”

4. Prescribe what needs to happen going forward, choosing one of two proven approaches.

With the Socratic Method, ask questions that lead the person to desired changes in behavior.

Examples are:

- “What might you do differently to...”
- “What are your suggestions on how to make sure this doesn't happen again?”
- “Given our discussion, what's the best option now?”
- “What are you willing to try?”
- “What are your thoughts about moving forward?”

With the Didactic Method, you tell the person what behavior or actions are required or would be most productive, as in these examples:

- “Based on what we discussed, here's what needs to happen going forward...”
- “I want you to try...”
- “You need to do the following...”
- “I know you'll fix this when you...”

5. If needed, work out a plan for supporting their efforts to change. Give them support after the meeting if needed, and agree on a time frame for review.

For example:

- “What specific actions/first steps will you take to address the issue we've discussed?”
- “What are you agreeing to do in the next few days/weeks?”
- “Let's meet in two weeks to see what progress has been made. How does that sound?”

6. End the meeting with a positive statement such as:

- “I'm glad we talked, Alex. I see you now have a better understanding of...”
- “I'm encouraged that we've come up with a workable solution.”
- “I'll look forward to speaking with you again after....”
- “Thank you for listening. I am hopeful that the behaviors we discussed won't happen again.”



What's important is not to address the specifics of the hate speech, nor the speaker's thoughts and opinions that drive it. In other words, don't take the bait, even though, at times, that will be hard to do. You may want to speak out and correct their distorted view. You may want to scream at them because their words hurt you personally. But that is not your role here. Stay focused on the fact that what was said was unacceptable, not why it was said. Your concern is about the impact of the speech on the business environment, not whether the speech is factual.

The key for successfully taking control or responding directly is to be prepared so you can remain calm, keep your personal feelings in check, think on your feet, and be effective at the time you encounter the hate speech.

WHEN YOU DON'T HEAR THE HATE SPEECH DIRECTLY

Sometimes, an individual will report an incident involving hate speech. When this happens, you should first validate it. Understand what really happened. Determine if there really was hate speech and whether to address it with the speaker, the listeners, or both. For example, someone forcefully voicing a political position is not necessarily engaging in hate speech. And there's nothing inherently wrong with a passionate exchange of views and opinions. But if they are hurting others or disrupting the business, then the situation may still warrant the same response from you.

When someone tells you of an incident that you didn't witness firsthand, listen fully and openly to get both the facts and the implications. In addition to "What happened?" ask "What was your reaction to that?" and "What did the other people say or do?"

Next, determine the severity of the individual's reaction by asking, "What would you like to see happen now?" You may hear a range of suggestions, from "I don't want you to do anything. You just need to know what's going on around here" to "I want you to speak to Bridgette and make sure it never happens again." You could hear, "I think Joe should be fired!" Comments like these cannot determine your course of action but will help you understand just how far-reaching the concern is among the staff.

When the conversation comes to a close, do three things:

1. Let them know that you will take action. Say something like, "I will look into this further with the others who were there, and then I will speak directly to Jim about it." Or, "Rest assured I will address this incident once I've gathered all the facts."
2. Reassure them that you respect their privacy. An example is: "Everything we discussed just now is confidential. We may need to talk again depending on what I find out."
3. Thank them sincerely. You may say, for example, "Thanks for your honesty. I appreciate that you came forward. It means a lot to me."

Lastly, if you don't already know, find out who was at the incident so you can sit down and talk with them, too. Do not assemble a group. Instead, you want to meet privately with each person who may have been a witness to and therefore affected by this. Doing so shows respect and concern for each individual, and it gives them a safe place where they can speak more freely.

It may be hard to have that same conversation with all those who may have been directly affected by the incident. (We hope no one told you being a manager was easy.) Some may not have the courage to come forward, but you must give them an opportunity to speak in a safe environment. As uncomfortable as it might be for you both, you should ask them what they heard, how they felt, and what they think should be done. Always start out by telling them they can speak freely and what they say will be held in strict confidence. You must honor that promise.

It may be that the group of witnesses is too large to speak with everyone individually. In this case, meet with a representative sample, focusing on managers, team leaders, and others who may be able to "pass it on" and let the others know you are addressing the issue.

Once you have met with the listeners, you can approach the speaker to have a frank conversation. Even though you weren't there to personally see or hear what went on, you'll be well prepared with the information needed to use the six-step technique covered earlier.

Afterwards, close the loop and let the people who were affected know that you followed through and took action. You can use formal channels (e.g., email) or informal means (e.g., letting the team leaders know) to get the word out. You don't have to give the specifics of your action, and you should not provide details, as all conversations were in strict confidence. But let them know that you were true to your word and that you addressed the situation. Say you don't expect a repeat, but you need to know immediately if there's a reoccurrence or if a similar situation arises.

Lastly, document the incident. Follow all protocols if your company has formal policies for reporting disciplinary incidents with employees. If not, write it up as an informal communication to your manager or as a note to yourself. This is important. Should there be further corrective action or if this incident somehow escalates, you don't want to rely on a distant recollection; you want to have access to the facts.

WHAT IF THE HATE-SPEAKER IS IN A POSITION ABOVE YOU?

You may face a real dilemma if the speaker is in a position of authority. Again, you have the choice to ignore or engage the hate speech. Ignore it by using the verbal and non-verbal techniques noted earlier. Engaging directly with someone in a position to discipline or fire you, or to have you fired, is risky and difficult.

If you have a good-enough relationship with the individual, then have a direct, honest conversation, loosely following our six-step technique outline above. State the behavior and the impact. Wait, allowing them to respond. How they react will determine your next step. It may be that they realize they erred, and by addressing it, there will not be a repeat. Or they may not even grasp that what they said was an issue, in which case it may happen again. Should that occur, you might choose one of the options outlined below.

If you are not in a position to address the speaker directly, consider one of these options:

- Reach out to the HR department. You may want to speak directly to an HR manager “about a private matter of importance,” rather than going through the normal chain of command. High-level managers deal with issues involving people with authority, so go high. If you don't have an HR department, go to a senior manager who you believe will understand and address the situation.
- Speak to your peers who are at the same level in the organization as you. It's possible that they have had to deal with the same issue, and there's certainly strength in numbers when it comes to approaching either the speaker, a more senior manager, or HR.
- Transfer to another position, department, or location. It could be best to resign. This action can be the healthy choice if you're exposed to improper, upsetting behavior, and you feel powerless to resolve it. Nobody wins when you remain unhappy in a culture that is out of sync with your own values.

IN SUMMARY

Dealing with hate speech—or any employee behavior that may be upsetting or disruptive—is part of being a manager. If it's hurtful, you must come to the aid of the people for whom you are responsible. How you manage these situations can have an enormous impact on their well-being. Beyond that, your words and actions will shape people's perception of you, your organization, and your company. Being prepared is the single best way to ensure an effective and proper response.



ABOUT THE SPEECH IMPROVEMENT COMPANY

Founded in 1964, we are a team of professional speech coaches helping clients worldwide strengthen their communication skills for applications in business and personal settings. We provide one-on-one, private coaching and onsite group workshops in the following five areas:

- Leadership & management
- Public speaking
- Sales communication
- Customer service communication
- Accent modification

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The SpeechImprovement Company

Dr. Dennis Becker

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Founder & Executive Communication Coach

Dr. Dennis Becker is a well-known speech coach and communication consultant who has over 45 years of experience in corporate, public, and private settings. He is a Principal of The Speech Improvement Company, Inc., a Boston-based firm specializing in training and coaching professionals in all aspects of communication effectiveness.

Experience:

Dr. Becker has helped thousands of men and women from all backgrounds. He is a highly sought-after coach and consultant to executives worldwide. He coaches professionals for appearances on all the major broadcast networks as well as CNN, CNBC, and CFN. In addition to individual, political, sports, media personalities, and business professionals, his clients include: Boston Scientific Corporation, the TJX Companies, Genzyme, Bank of America, Land's End, and Watson Wyatt Worldwide. His areas of expertise include leadership and management communication, presentation skills, IPO and VC investor presentations, interpersonal effectiveness, conference planning and coaching, and media coaching.

As a speaker, Dr. Becker has appeared before hundreds of clubs and organizations, from local community groups to national associations. He is often featured on radio and television programs as a guest expert or motivational speaker and was the host of the syndicated radio series Talking About Talking. In addition to consulting, Dr. Becker has taught at both Harvard and MIT.

He has developed a unique and insightful approach to help clients overcome their fear of speaking and refine their communication skills. Dr. Becker's style is informal, informative, and interactive. His shirtsleeve practicality and humor relax even the most nervous speakers and presenters.

He is recognized worldwide for his leadership in the research, invention, and use of virtual reality for the treatment of the fear of speaking. Dr. Becker has written a book and audio series, No Fear of Speaking, that talks about causes and controls for the fear of speaking. He has also authored the number one college text titled Speaking Skills for Business Careers, as well as two training books titled Powerful Presentations and Customer Service and the Telephone. His most recent book is Personal Communication Style: "control the impression you make".

Education:

Dr. Becker completed his undergraduate study in Speech Communication and Broadcasting at Emerson College in Boston, his Master's work in Rhetoric and Public Address at Emerson, and went on to his Ph.D. in Media Communication from The Union Graduate School in Cincinnati. He has served as President of both the Massachusetts Speech Association and the New England Speech Association and is currently an active member of several professional organizations, including the National Communication Association. He is respected as a leading expert in his field.



The SpeechImprovement Company

Dr. Ethan Becker

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President & Executive Communication Coach

Ethan Becker, President, is a second-generation speech coach and trainer with The Speech Improvement Company. He holds multiple degrees in communication, and travels the globe coaching and training leaders of countries, companies, and people in all levels of organizations on how to be more effective and comfortable with their communication.

He is a co-author of the best-selling book *Mastering Communication at Work*, which is published worldwide by McGraw-Hill. Ethan has developed and delivered powerful customized motivational training programs on various topics related to communication worldwide. In addition to group work, he serves as trusted advisor and coach to many.

“In today’s competitive business environment, it is critical that messages be communicated with clarity, competence and confidence. Human beings have the potential to be as effective as they wish. Sometimes, it’s learning a whole new skill, while other times it’s just a bit of guidance,” comments Ethan.

Ethan compliments his motivational group training technique with a patient and precise one-on-one coaching style. Topics for which Ethan brings unique expertise include: Executive communication, leadership and management communication, presentation skills, motivational speaking, persuasion, negotiation, and dealing with conflict.

Experience:

In addition to helping business partners throughout the United States, Ethan has unique international experience. He has lived in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he immersed himself in the Asian culture conducting research, training, and coaching with the ICLIF leadership and governance center. In addition, Ethan has coached and presented in countries such as Japan, Australia, Singapore, and Korea. This experience provides him with valuable international and cultural perspectives, which he brings to his clients.

Ethan has taught at and helped such organizations such as Harvard University, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Apple Computer, The New York Giants, Bain Capital, Canon USA, Biogen IDEC, Telekom Malaysia, Maybank, Kenanga, AmBank, RAZAK School of Government, The FBI, CBT Architects, Build Boston, Northeast Human Resources Association, Aspentech, Kronos, SuriaKLCC, and IBM. He has also coached countless individual executives, managers, politicians, celebrities, and other clients from around the world.

Education:

Ethan holds a doctorate in psychology, PhD, from the Harold Able School of social behavior and sciences at Capella University, with a focus on industry and organizations. A second doctorate in humane letters, DHL, from Fitchburg State University, a Masters of Business Administration, MBA, from the school of business and technology at Capella University, with a dual focus on International Business Communication and Leadership, and a BS in mass communication.



Sharesz T. Wilkinson

Executive Communication Coach

As an award winning international breakthrough strategist and experienced Executive Communication Coach, Sharesz is traveling around the world with The Speech Improvement Company. She has coached TED talk and keynote speakers, chairmen and presidents of companies, as well as executive groups and high profile individuals such as professional singers, athletes, entrepreneurs, celebrities, and royalty.

Sharesz is a member of the prestigious, invitation-only **Forbes Coaches Council**, a select group of world-class professionals unified by a shared mission to empower leaders.

She is the **author** of the upcoming book *Obstacle Buster™ – How to Create Big & Bold Shifts for Lifelong Success* and is an **international judge** at “Maldives Business & Customer Experience Awards 2018”, an event that celebrates success in the business and service industries.

She further serves as a **mentor** for the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women (UK), and previously Rotary Education Fund (MY) and WomenWay.org (Switzerland). She is a member of LeanIn.org (USA).

Experience:

Sharesz has a unique and very diverse background, is highly cultured, has been to more than 45 countries so far, lived in ten, and speaks multiple languages. Her expertise lays in providing direct feedback and creating lasting shifts. She has a great ability to inspire people from all backgrounds and delivers tangible results in a very short period of time. She is highly efficient, creative, and empowering.

Sharesz employs a client-oriented and thoughtful one-on-one coaching style, covering a wide variety of topics, including executive, leadership and management communication, presentation skills, handling difficult conversations, delivering outstanding customer service, controlling nervousness and fear, and many more. She has a passion for customer service excellence and the international top-level hospitality industry. Sharesz brings in experience with many exclusive hotels and famous brands from around the globe and is able to provide accurate feedback to enhance employees' learned skills to create an excellent experience for guests.

Education:

Sharesz holds a Masters of Arts with an emphasis in German and French Linguistics and History at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. She studied further Arts and Sports at the university level, was a competing athlete and very active in arts and culture.

Sharesz holds post graduate degrees as a Cultural Manager from SAWI Switzerland in Marketing, Communication and Cultural Management, and a post graduate degree on Masters level as an Advanced Business Executive Coach from Bristol Business School at the University of West of England, UK.

Originally from Switzerland, Sharesz is currently based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and services The Speech Improvement Company's clients worldwide.



The SpeechImprovement Company

Jeff Turner

Business Manager & Sales Communication Coach

Jeff Turner has built companies and led high-performing organizations for over 25 years. He has advised companies on strategy, operations, distribution channels, sales process, and compensation. He led Brightleaf Solutions, an award-winning services company that focused on legal risk, contract management, and big data analytics for Fortune 500 companies.

Jeff was General Manager at The Support Group, overseeing the expansion of their custom software design services and growing revenue over 450%. During his six years at Media 100, a Boston-based video startup, Jeff successfully managed North American operations (direct sales, dealer sales, and customer support), driving product and service revenues 50x and allowing them to go public.

He was VP Sales at Giganet during their \$600M acquisition by Emulex, and he spent 10 years at Apple Computer where he was a four-time winner of the "Golden Apple" achievement award, setting a company-wide record for managing the very first team to exceed \$100 million in revenue.