

## *Don't Assume, Have a Conversation*

*By Donna Rawady*

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Assumptions are frequently made in lieu of communicating directly with another person and asking for accurate information. This is particularly true in the workplace, where—for so many interesting reasons—we're conditioned to be careful about being too honest or open. Go figure.

I have a bird's eye view of this dynamic in my work, as employees **share** candidly with me what they've yet to share with a manager, colleague or employee. I still find myself surprised, when I hear several sides of a situation, at how often people witness a behavior and then misunderstand its meaning, based on their own assumptions about where the behavior and/or the intent is coming from.

When experiencing frustrations, conflict or a lack of clear communication, it's not uncommon for us to make assumptions and judge others based on how we believe we would feel in a similar situation simply based on how we uniquely see the world.

Here's the good news. In my experience, most people are decent human beings, who may be communicating poorly, or even selfishly, in a tough situation. They're not intentionally trying to make it difficult for others.

So how do we avoid making inaccurate assumptions that may negatively affect our relationships at work? We can be honest, respectful and have a conversation.

Reaching out to others for clarification and probing to understand someone else's reality are powerful methods for breaking down barriers, building relationships and minimizing conflict at work. If we continue to remind ourselves that our world view may not be the same as our neighbor's or coworker's, perhaps we'll continue to see the benefit of sharing our reality and learning more about theirs.

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