

5 Tips for a constructive budget conversation



#1 Emotions

Face it, there are going to be lots of them.

We are starting the first in the series with the human traits that will impact every person during the budget conversation. Everyone from sales through to the company CEO will at some point need to present their plans for the future. Emotions will play large role.

For each series we will hear from industry experts on concepts and recommendations to have the best conversations possible. Dr Adam Fraser will be our contributor for this series.

We have likely all been through this process in one way or another and like me, I would imagine emotions would be very evident through the entire journey. Anxiety, stress, panic, fear, frustration, excitement, and let us not forget, relief, when it's all over.

As we go through the process starting in the preparation stages, emotions are already starting to take hold. Usually for good reason as we want to do a good job. However, the closer we get to the presentation part, our emotions elevate. During the presentation itself they can either settle and calm or, spike, creating an uncomfortable feeling and situation.

For me, going into the discussion with a little anxiety, feeling a bit nervous, butterflies and sweaty palms etc. was my body telling me I am ready, I am prepared, I am invested, I am going to do my best. When these were significantly heightened, my head was telling my body, you are under prepared and not in the best position for this to go well. My head was always right, and my body responded, and yes, they did not go too well. The one thing I learnt was to recognise my emotions and what they were telling me. What I also learnt is how my emotions impact other people and their emotions. For example, if I am anxious and pick up the pace to race to the end to escape, the likelihood is I will cause someone in the room to become frustrated.

The interesting truth is, everyone in the room, wants and needs this to be successful, however, when emotions take hold within the group, it can feel like the complete opposite. One thing you can do is try lead by leading yourself. Recognising your emotions when they start elevating, slowing the pace down, collecting your thoughts before responding, will likely have a positive impact on the conversation overall.

Dr Adam Fraser

Researcher, Author, Expert on Human Performance & Keynote Speaker.

Dr Adam Fraser is one of Australia's leading educators, researchers and thought leaders in the area of human performance. Adam works in the corporate and business world to provide one on one coaching, consulting, workshops and keynote presentations that elevate and sustain employee performance. Adam is renowned for making the complex, simple and engaging... and for taking the latest science and translating it so that people can immediately apply it to their own situation.



Rock8 Science
Uncomplicated Success

To get an expert's opinion, we asked Dr Adam Fraser on what he would advise to manage our emotions to get the best out of a budget or planning conversation.

With a high likelihood of emotional spikes e.g. Anxiety, frustration, fear, excitement manifesting during these scenarios, what advice would you suggest for people to manage their emotions?

Adam – Perception is, that in order to perform one needs to be collected, present and calm. We are taught that we need to present in a positive manner, however, it is always in conflict with the way we really feel. It is OK to go into this with the knowledge it is going to be stressful, and you may be lacking in confidence, don't panic if you go into this not feeling on top of your game. It's OK, recognise it and accept, you don't need to go into this in a prespecified manner, choose yourself how you are going to show up. Try to shift your emotions from one of fear and anxiety, to one of curiosity. Curiosity is the best emotion to take into these scenarios. This brings in the will to explore how do we all get the best out of this. How do you, the company, the customer get the most out of this. Are you showing up focused on self, is this all about you or is this all about us, in a win-win-win for customer, company and you in that order. When transitioning in, ask yourself, where is my focus? Is it protecting yourself and self-preservation or is about what is possible? How do we get the best outcome between us? Remind yourself how you want to show up, service and contribution or is it about self.

What are the common mistakes/missed opportunities people make emotionally when in challenging conversations?

Adam - Breathing, specially breathing out, exhalation is one of the best ways you reduce anxiety in the moment. We have a tendency of holding our breath in stressful situations which usually affects how we present ourselves.

Humans are the only animal that are aware of our thoughts and emotions in the moment e.g. I feel anxious, afraid. We can observe what we are saying to ourselves in our heads. For example, if asked a question we don't know the answer to, we observe we may feel anxious for not knowing the answer. We let our emotions and thoughts run our behaviour, however, we can choose the ones that drive the most constructive behaviour e.g. a pointed question, choose to respond with curiosity vs say anger, frustration or fear. Try to slow down and breath to collect your thoughts and respond in a curious manner.

Create space to observe your thoughts and emotions watching your reaction rather than getting caught up in it. Slowing down means your thoughts and following responses will likely be more accurate, and therefore the pace is not affected if anything it may accelerate.

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian neurologist, psychologist and Holocaust survivor said,

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

What 3 tips would you give to people to practice prior and during these scenarios?

Adam – Breathing, recognising, and accepting your emotions, Keep asking, how am I showing up?

As the author of The Third Space, what part of your book would you guide people to for ideas that may be useful for managing emotions during challenging meetings?

Adam –

Check your baggage at the door – While this is more for how we transition home, it is also very relevant for when transitioning in general. Clearing your thoughts and collecting the ones required for the purpose at hand.

Take it when you can get it, Rest – This is about rest, while the experience of planning meetings is generally acute, the time leading up to it does not require all those emotions to be elevated. During planning, allow time to step away and collect your thoughts so you can move away from being too caught up in emotional situations. By doing this you are more likely to show up calm vs anxious.

How will I show up, Reset – If you want to grow and exhibit constructive behaviours, you must make the conscious choice to do so. Focus on mastery and curiosity not the outcome.

What is my clear intention – By asking yourself what you would like to achieve from this helps frame how you show up. If your intention is self-preservation, that is likely how you may show up, reactive and defensive. If it is servitude to customer, company and colleagues, you will show up that way. If you include being curious to that, you may be the director of a whole different conversation.

It's not me it's you – Prioritise your behaviours above the outcome you want to achieve. Your behaviours impact the behaviours of others, recognise them, choose the constructive ones and you are in a better position to lead the conversation.

Authored by

Charles Heeley – CEO and Founder of Rock8 Science

Guest contributor

Dr Adam Fraser



Rock8 Science
Uncomplicated Success