

Silence Kills, Dialogue Heals

New data points to seven specific crucial conversations healthcare must adopt to save lives, improve workplace

Provo, Utah, Feb 8, 2006—VitalSmarts, a corporate training company specializing in organizational performance, will today release via Webcast new data from leading healthcare organizations across the US which demonstrates that being skilled in holding seven specific conversations is key to solving some of healthcare's most crucial patient safety problems.

The data says seven specific conversations have a disproportionate impact on quality of care, patient safety, and employee engagement. For example, the Crucial Conversations program at MaineGeneral Health has helped increase the willingness and frequency with which employees speak up in the most crucial situations as much as 160 percent.

"There's been a great deal of emphasis on communication in general in healthcare," says Joseph Grenny, president of VitalSmarts. "But unless and until healthcare workers learn to step up to these specific crucial conversations, they will fall far short of their potential for delivering high quality care."

The Silence Kills study, unveiled a year ago by VitalSmarts and The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, revealed that people's ability to hold crucial conversations—emotionally and politically risky discussions—is key to creating a culture of safety in healthcare and also relates to significant gains in quality of care, productivity, and staff turnover, among other crucial issues. For example, healthcare professionals see a co-worker take a shortcut, make a mistake, demonstrate dangerous incompetence, fail to support a co-worker, undercut the team, treat someone with disrespect, or abuse their authority. According to the study, fewer than 10% of healthcare professionals speak up when they have these types of concerns.

Since the Silence Kills study launch, leading healthcare organizations including Intermountain Healthcare, Sutter Health, Sharp HealthCare, The University of Colorado Hospital, MaineGeneral Health, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Spectrum Health System, and others have used Crucial Conversations skills to drive dramatic improvements in patient safety, quality, and work environment.

"Our success as an organization depends heavily on the relationships between our employees," says Martie Moore, VP of Patient Services at MaineGeneral Health. "The Crucial Conversations program has helped our employees with every type of relationship – relationships with each other, with vendors, with patients, and more. We have seen substantial results from the training, especially in an increased willingness to speak up when it matters most. Crucial Conversations has made MaineGeneral a better place to work, and that translates into a safer environment for our patients."

MaineGeneral Health saw the following improvements related to employees' willingness to speak up:

- 88 percent improvement when they see someone take a shortcut that could be dangerous for patients
- 107 percent improvement when they see someone show poor initiative
- 83 percent improvement when they are concerned about someone's competency
- 167 percent improvement when they see someone demonstrate poor teamwork
- 167 percent improvement when they see someone being disrespectful
- 122 percent improvement when they see someone micromanage or abuse their authority

“From the operating rooms to the boardrooms of some of the largest and most prestigious healthcare systems in the US, this data is further evidence that being skilled in crucial conversations and creating cultures of safety can literally save lives,” says Grenny.

Note to editor: Joseph Grenny and Martie Moore available for interviews.

About VitalSmarts

An innovator in corporate training and organizational performance, VitalSmarts has two training initiatives: Crucial Conversations® and Crucial Confrontations™. Each delivers a powerful set of influence tools that builds teams, enriches relationships and improves end results. The Company has two *New York Times* bestselling books of the same titles, *Crucial Conversations* and *Crucial Confrontations*. VitalSmarts has helped more than 300,000 people worldwide, including leaders from 300 of the Fortune 500, realize quick, hard-hitting results in areas they care about most. www.vital-smarts.com.

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