

## Steps for Preparing for Difficult Conversations

*“Give me six hours to chop down a cherry tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”*  
– Abraham Lincoln

Many of my clients use the following framework (*thinking through and writing down their thoughts*) before a meeting – in order to strengthen relationships for greater influence and impact to the business.

1. **How do I want to "show up?"** What are 3-5 things I would like to hear my colleagues say about me after the meeting? (*e.g., I listened, remained calm, was thoughtful in my responses, and brought a sense of humor to the meeting*).
2. **What do I want?** What is my goal for this meeting?
3. **What does the other person want?** What does a successful meeting look like from my colleague’s point of view?
4. **What is best for the relationship?** What should I say or do in order to further enhance the relationship and lead to more trust?
5. **What is best for the business?** What might I be willing to agree to – or let go of - in the short-term in order to achieve greater long-term influence and impact to the business?
6. **How do I minimize drama?** What do I need to refrain from saying that might trigger the other person and make them feel defensive?
7. **How do I remain calm?** What could the other person say that might make me feel defensive? How will I prepare myself for the meeting and what will I do so I don’t go into reactive mode? If I do get triggered, how will I get centered again? (*e.g., suggest coffee or bathroom break*).