

## Member's Quarterly

## Fall 2025 Edition

### Feature

## Learn to Speak Up

*It actually hurts the business if you remain silent*

It is tough at times to speak up for yourself, especially at work. Many times, employees bite their tongue when they know they should be saying the quiet part out loud. How many bosses have we encountered in the past who threw a tantrum when we suggested an alternate way of doing things? We actually got into trouble for trying to improve the process. There's no longer a place for that attitude or behaviour in today's workplace. The suggestion from the experts now is that failure to speak up is not only hurting the employees, but also the company or organization they work for.

### Why are we afraid of speaking up?

That's a good question. There seems to be a built-in anxiety about speaking up and a healthy amount of fear, both real and imagined. The real fear is that maybe our colleagues or even the boss may not like us if we speak an uncomfortable truth. The imagined part is that we feel there may be repercussions or consequences when we speak up at work. That should never be the case, unless of course we are repeating gossip, innuendo or some false version of a story about someone else.

Some people have literally taken the old adage that we shouldn't be seen or heard to heart. It's hard to shake old messages or family dynamics, even though we are no longer children. Others have been taunted or bullied whenever they've chosen to speak up. Some have been ridiculed or verbally abused when they have given an incorrect answer. Women, in general and not as a rule, often have difficulty in speaking up at work. 45 percent of women in a recent study said that they found this difficult.

### When should we speak up at work?

There is another good question. There are actually many situations where it is better to speak up than to hold your peace. They include when someone else is in trouble. It is sometimes easier to speak on another's behalf and that might help you become more comfortable when you need to do it for yourself. Another time might be if someone or something is clearly against the rules or norms of your workplace. We have norms because we have agreed to them, but we only get to keep them if we are willing to stand up for them.

Speaking up when you are in a supervisory or leadership role should be mandatory. You will have to speak for your department when difficult discussions are being made about things like the budget or workforce allocation—definitely not a time to sit back and be quiet. In this leadership role, you will also be asked to speak up on behalf of your team or individual employees if they come under attack or become vulnerable. That's your job and don't shrink away from it. One more time when you should likely speak up is when no one else is prepared to do it. That's the time to be brave and speak the truth. Your employer needs you to speak for the benefit of success.

### Tips about speaking up

Here are a few more suggestions about speaking up.

Don't go on and on and on and don't overexplain your position. You will lose your audience. You may notice that some people talk too much because they're nervous. Don't be that person. Do your homework and come prepared to speak and then wait for a response before talking again.



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Know what you would like to achieve before you start the conversation. Have an ideal outcome in your mind and ask for it directly and clearly. If the response is no, or not right now, you can determine your next steps. Also, come prepared to negotiate. You may not get everything you want right now, but can you move your issue forward. Take a partial yes as a victory. Be gracious and live to fight for more on another day.

Be considerate of others. This applies to ALL parties engaged in the conversation, including the boss and senior management- no one is exempt! Don't be the person who sucks all of the oxygen out of the room. Give others time and air space to share their ideas too. Be kind and compassionate to others in the discussion. Treat them the way that you would want to be treated yourself. And as much as possible, contain your emotions. Passion is good, anger is not. If you find yourself getting upset, call a timeout or reschedule the discussion. If the other party in the conversation is the one who is getting upset, suggest that this may not be the perfect time for the discussion, bring it to an end and reschedule it.

Remember that you will have to deal with these people no matter what position they hold when you show up for work tomorrow. The best time to start is now - practice makes perfect.

*Members Quarterly Staff Writer*