

Wanted: SBOs with communications savvy

***OSBA Capital Conference
Nov. 15, 2016***



Presenters

- » Jim Rowan, OASBO Executive Director
- » Barbara Shaner, OASBO Associate Executive Director
- » Panel members:
 - > Warren Local Schools:
 - + Melcie Wells, Treasurer
 - + Kyle Newton, Superintendent
 - + Debbie West, Board President
 - > South-Western City Schools:
 - + Hugh Garside, Treasurer
 - + Bill Wise, Superintendent
 - + Cathy Johnson, Board President



OASBO Strategic Goal #3



» Develop a strategy to communicate the value of OASBO membership and SBOs professional roles.



OASBO Strategic Goal #3

How did we tackle this goal?

1. Convened a member-driven task force
2. Surveyed our members and boards of education presidents
3. Completed focus groups of members and boards of education presidents at last year's Capital Conference.



What did we learn & What are we doing about it?

» What we learned about OASBO & what our members value

- > The value of OASBO membership to members =
Professional Development and Advocacy

 - + Make this info easy to find and promote it well

- > **Members want a clearinghouse of information**

 - + Help members find info they need from ODE, TOS, AOS, ETC.



What did we learn & What are we doing about it?

» What we learned about what Boards of Educations want from our members

> BOE presidents want communication

- + Of financial information (that they can understand)
- + Between treasurer and superintendent
- + From treasurer to community
 - Add communication info to regular vehicles
 - » Enhance current communication PD offerings and add new
 - Work to educate BOE and Superintendents



What Are We Doing About It?



By Chris Zimmer, CAE

department: leadership & communication

Communication is NOT a Soft Skill

As part of OASBO's strategic plan, a group of members was assembled to tackle this goal: "Develop a strategy to communicate the value of OASBO membership and the SBO professional role."

The task force consisted of

Dee Cramer	<i>Retired Treasurer/CFO and Past OASBO President</i>
Carolyn Hinds	<i>Treasurer at Wyoming City Schools</i>
Chris Potts	<i>Business Manager at Upper Arlington City Schools</i>
Matt Reed	<i>Treasurer at East Guernsey City Schools</i>
Carla Rice	<i>Treasurer at Montpelier Exempted Village Schools</i>
Mike Robinson	<i>Treasurer at Polaris Career Center</i>

The task force has been meeting regularly since August to discuss the challenges faced by school business officials, specifically in their interactions with their Boards of Education. As you can imagine, the discussion was both lively and thought-provoking.

The same issues surfaced time after time: some boards/board members do not understand the role of the treasurer/CFO, or the information provided, or both; and many times SBOs are not viewed as part of the leadership team. The reality is that all SBOs can provide insights and information integral to the decisions Boards make.

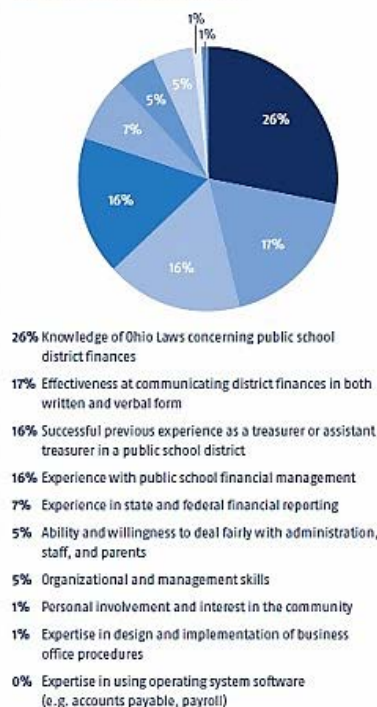
At their October meeting, the task force asked Chris Mohr, President of K-12 Business Consulting and Past OASBO President, to speak about what qualities and competencies boards are specifically looking for in their treasurer searches. Mohr explained that it is no longer enough to simply be a competent school business official. Having a clean audit, saving the district tens of thousands of dollars through energy programs, and meeting federal requirements for child nutrition are the types of skills that are absolutely expected in today's school business environments.

Beyond fiscal and business competency, though, boards of education are seeking administrators and SBOs who can communicate information, challenges, and solutions clearly, concisely and in language which is easily understood. In addressing treasurer searches specifically, Mohr said "Boards are seeking a CFO—Communicating Finance Officer."

Armed with this information, the task force began collecting information in November, with help from the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA). In a survey to nearly 100 Board presidents, the task force asked the following questions.

When thinking about your district's Treasurer, please rank the following characteristics in order of importance.

The chart shows the percentage of respondents who chose each characteristic as most important.



What Are We Doing About It?



By Kara Brown

department: leadership & communication

Mastering Discussions with Difficult People: The Art of the Crucial Conversation

One of the questions I am asked most frequently is how to have conversations with difficult co-workers. In most cases, the people asking the question want to improve the relationship, reduce conflict, and improve productivity. Many times, it is not that we do not know how to have these conversations, it is that we are afraid they will go poorly—resulting in high emotion and greater conflict.

The real challenge is finding a way to get to dialogue where we can discuss the facts and concerns and come to an understanding.

information into the dialogue even when conversations are risky or controversial. More importantly, they also discovered that the skills displayed by these people are learnable. Success during difficult conversations was not based on a personality trait, but on a set of acquirable attributes.

Start with Heart

The first of those skills is to “start with heart.” This seems fairly simple at first glance. Begin each exchange with an idea of what is to come out of the conversation. The idea is to stay focused on what we really want out of a conversation—to get all of the information on the table.

However, we have a tendency to shift

most difficult skills. We tend to create an explanation in our head about why others are doing what they are doing. For example, the guy who just cut you off on the highway is an impatient jerk with no respect for the rest of human existence. The key is to ask yourself, “Why would another person act this way?” and look for other stories. His story may be that he learned that his mother is having a heart attack. If this were the rest of the story, would you feel differently about what just happened and be more willing to listen? To improve results from crucial conversations, change the stories you tell yourself about others’ intentions.

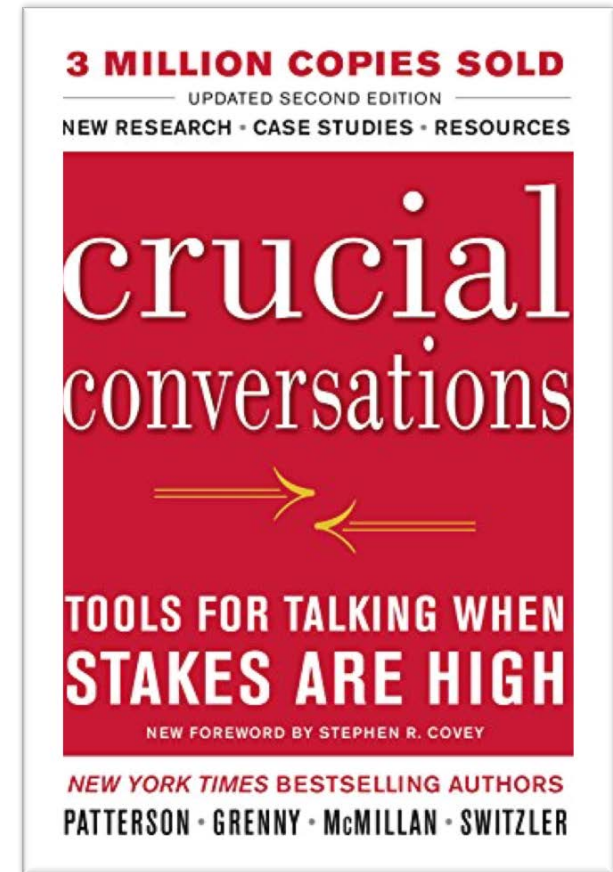
Now to the original question: “How do I have a productive conversation with a



What Are We Doing About It?

- Crucial Conversations
2-day workshop –

Dec. 15 – 16



What are We Doing About It?

- » Educating members and boards of education about the evolution of the treasurer's role





By Dee Cramer

The Profession's Past Offers Meaningful Insight to Today's Challenges

"They just don't understand!" I have been hearing this statement quite a bit lately—and not just from our members, but also from superintendents and board members. And yes, they don't understand you either sometimes. So the question begs to be asked: What don't they understand, why don't they understand, and, most importantly, how can you help them understand?

To provide some context for this, let me first share a memory of a time when my daughter, then age 7, came home from school totally outraged. Standing with her hands on her hips (a trait she still has) she stated, "They just don't understand!" Trying to comprehend my daughter's upset, I asked, "Who doesn't understand what?"

"The kids at school, they just don't understand!" As patience was my forte at this point in time, I replied, "Yes dear. What don't the kids at school understand?"

"The kids at school... they just don't understand that you don't have to be right or wrong—you can just be different!"

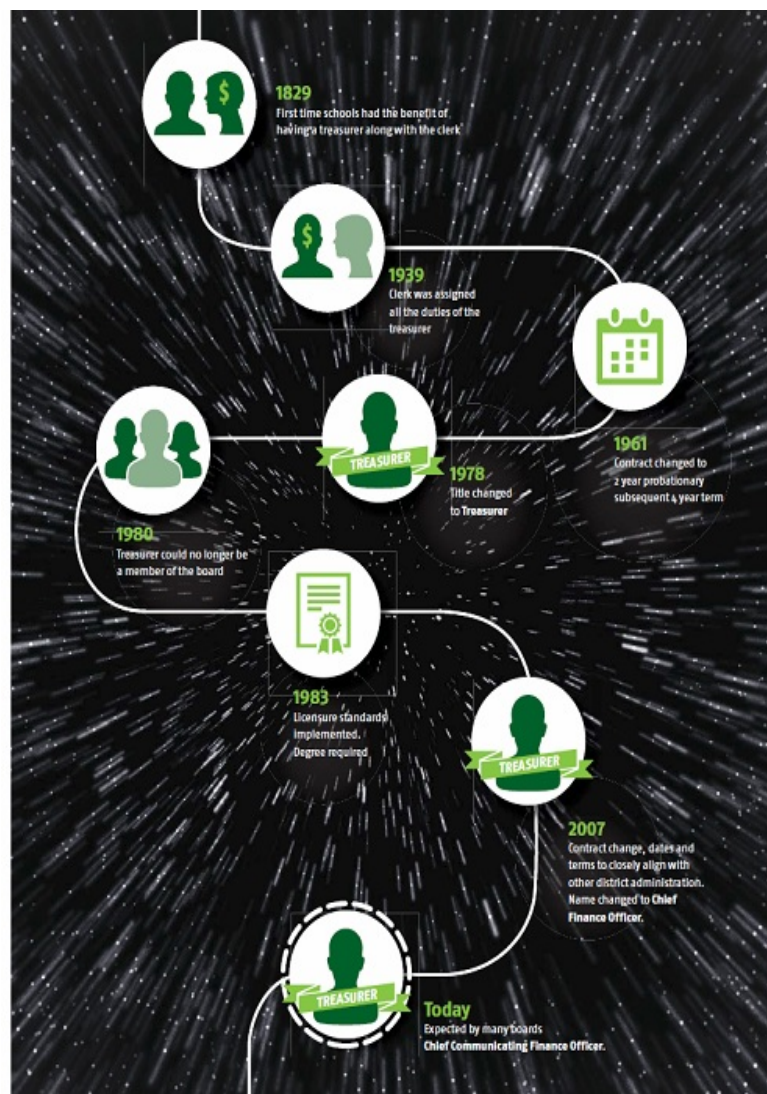
It was at this point I realized she had actually been listening, and had understood what we had been sharing with her about foreign exchange students living with us and why it was okay that they did things differently.

Now you are asking, "What does this have to do with us and communicating with our district leadership?" Good question! I'm glad you asked. It has everything to do with us and the situation we find ourselves in when we feel frustrated by the following scenarios (or scenarios like these):

What my daughter understood was that we are all coming from a different place on a continuum of understanding. She had yet to grasp, at that point, that the kids at school were not in the same spot on this continuum as she was.

Each of you reading this started your career at a different point in history on the Ohio school business continuum, so each of you will identify your roles and responsibilities differently—just as the other district leadership members do. They, too, may have a different understanding of your role and their own, depending upon at what point in time they started down on the very same 200-year school business continuum.

In an effort to establish some common ground and effectively communicate our business goals, motivations, and actions, we need to first understand ourselves and where we are coming from on this time line and where the other leadership team members are coming from as well.



**Panel discussion on
Crucial Conversations
among board members,
superintendents and
treasurers**



Panelists

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Discussion Question # 1:

- » As it relates to communicating financial information about your school district, what methods/tactics does your board and leadership team use to inform & engage all stakeholders?



Discussion Question # 2:

- » What do you do to foster a good working relationship?



Contact us!

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