

## FAST Pathways Example Successes – Confident and Effective Conversations

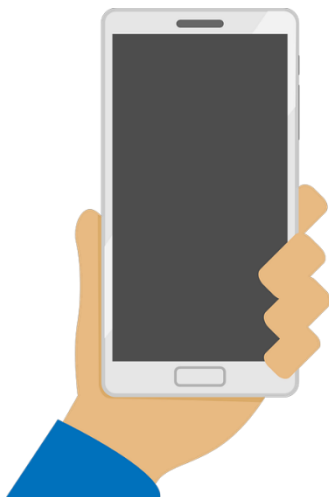
Jane's got 30 years of nursing experience. After almost 15 years working with the same team she'd moved to a new department, and was struggling to settle in. She was working with some big egos, and a couple of times when she'd shared her opinion, she'd been cut short. She'd tried to set it aside, but she was finding it increasingly difficult to speak up about anything – even when she felt that the decisions being made weren't best for the patient. Despite being confident and articulate outside work, she didn't seem to be able to speak out, which was really upsetting. And without sharing her experience, she was just a safe pair of hands doing what she was told.

It had been building up for quite a while, and she was getting more stressed out and anxious in general, until her GP recommended FAST Pathways. With our skills resources, she learned how to feel shielded, protected... comfortable to speak her mind when she needs to. She learned various ways to quickly clear away any discomfort, so that it doesn't build up and get in the way of working at her best.

The following week she called to tell me that not only had she spoken up twice that day, it was so natural that she hadn't even noticed herself doing it. A colleague with whom she'd shared her problem had spotted the change and pointed it out to her. She still experiences those gaps of 'something doesn't feel right about this decision', but that guides her to pinpointing what might have been missed and making sure it gets considered, which is much better for both her and her patients.

### Becky was Holding Herself Back

An experienced journalist, Becky was confident and outgoing. Conversations with strangers were both second nature, until she went freelance. Then everything changed. Because now she had to talk about herself and her business - and she hated it.



She recognised how much it was holding her back, but would still find anything and everything to do instead. Her desk was never tidier than on days when she'd phone calls to make! As soon as she thought about picking up the phone, her confidence would evaporate, and the more she tried to talk herself round, the worse it got.

The inner argument between the voice of reason, setting out what she needed to say and why it was important, and the other one, telling her she'd sound stupid, that they'd resent the interruption (even if it was someone who'd asked her to call them), and she'd only fluff it anyway, so why bother.... Those two voices had quite a fight going on between them.

Becky spent less than an hour experimenting with a few FAST Pathways techniques, and adapting the details to the perfect fit for her: She neutralised the unhelpful mind-pictures of the other person's possible reactions, and adjusted the mind voices, making the critical one really quiet and giving the

helpful one a tone of assured authority. Then she imagined a few of the conversations she'd been putting off, going just the way she wanted them to.

That small time she invested in making those changes paid itself back in days, as the procrastination evaporated. Now she's no problem at all picking up the phone, and as an added bonus, she's found herself much more comfortable networking face to face too.

### Face-to-Face Meetings

Louise had recently started her own business. As she talked about what she does, the passion shone from her – it was clear that she had a great track record and was committed to getting lasting results for her clients, but she was struggling to action any of her plans for growing her business.

She really wanted to build local business partnerships – it should have been a simple ask, being mutually beneficial. But every time she thought of having the conversation, she got so stressed out that she found a way to put it off. Again.....

Using a specific technique for designing the conversation in her imagination, seeing it from the other person's perspective, she completely changed how she was going to go about it. And the fear and discomfort evaporated. The next day, she had the conversation, and got exactly the outcome she'd hoped for.


She overcame months of anxiety and procrastination in minutes. Since then, her business has continued from strength to strength. It's a technique I've used in many of the businesses I work with, to overcome silo thinking or entrenched conflict which have been getting in the way of moving the business forwards. It helps to establish common ground, and almost every time, the resulting conversations go completely smoothly.



### Effective Feedback Conversations

Carla employed a small, close-knit team. One of her team, Sarah, had been a friend for a few years before she'd started working for her. Sarah was making errors, which so far had been picked up and resolved by others, but if they'd gone unnoticed, they could have had quite nasty outcomes for clients. Carla had talked with her several times about what was happening and how to prevent it, but so far nothing had changed. It was coming to a head.

Carla was quite clear about her priorities – if it came to it, she was quite willing to sack Sarah, but saw it as a last resort because of her other valuable skills and the knock-on effects on the team. We talked through why her previous conversations with Sarah hadn't worked. Based on her observations and feedback from others, she thought that Sarah wasn't really listening because in a work context, she was scared of Carla. Which wasn't at all how she wanted to be coming across. Firm, but not scary....



So we used the different perspectives technique. Carla was already clear in her mind what she wanted to say to Sarah – she'd been mulling it over for weeks and hadn't quite plucked up the courage, knowing how significant the fall-out could be. As she used the FAST Pathways technique to image the conversation from Sarah's perspective, she immediately pulled back, saying 'Crikey, I'm not surprised she's scared of me! That's awful!' I'm not sure what prompted that reaction, but it was very strong!

So she spent a few minutes trying out different alternatives in her imagination, until the conversation felt comfortable. The next morning, they had a very constructive discussion, agreeing what needed to change, what support Sarah needed, and how they'd track it and keep the conversation going. The errors stopped, and the friendship remained as strong as ever – so Carla had both retained and energised a key member of her team.

### **Confident Conversations with Customers**

I worked with one of the high street banks, during the peak of mis-selling claims for Payment Protection Insurance. The industry had emerged out of nowhere, and a lot of our staff had no previous call centre experience. They had to phone customers seeking more information which might help the Bank to deny the customer's claim, so people generally weren't too keen to talk to them.

Quite a few of our staff would put off those phone calls, significantly impacting productivity. Based on Becky's experience with improving her confidence on the phone, I shared the same skills in some informal coaching sessions, with similar results.

I also supported PPI team leaders in having more effective feedback conversations. Another side-effect of the industry growing from nowhere is that many of our team leaders had no previous leadership experience – the department grew so rapidly (from zero to over 650 people in under 4 months) that it wasn't uncommon for someone to go home on a Friday evening as a team member, and come back on Monday morning as its leader. With the legacy of friendly peer relationships, many of these new leaders were putting off potentially challenging feedback conversations, which meant that pockets of bad behaviours and practices were rapidly spreading, impacting productivity.

I ran a series of 90 minute Confident Conversations workshops, asking our team leaders to score before and after how comfortable they felt to initiate a challenging conversation – the average confidence levels doubled, and the frequency and quality of feedback conversations improved. All contributing to the £56Million productivity increase which we delivered over the next few months.