



LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

6033 WEST CENTURY BOULEVARD,  
5<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90045  
T: (310) 981-2000  
F: (310) 337-0837

135 MAIN STREET,  
7<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94105  
T: (415) 512-3000  
F: (415) 856-0306

5250 NORTH PALM AVENUE,  
SUITE 310  
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93704  
T: (559) 256-7800  
F: (559) 449-4535

550 WEST "C" STREET,  
SUITE 620  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101  
T: (619) 481-5900  
F: (619) 446-0015

400 CAPITOL MALL  
SUITE 1260  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814  
T: (916) 584-7000  
F: (916) 584-7083

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (NAIS)  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**Courageous Authenticity:  
Reimagining Critical  
Conversations**

*2/28/2019*

*PRESENTED BY:*

**Michael Blacher, Elizabeth Tom Arce,  
Rose Helm & Rebecca Rowland**


# Courageous Authenticity: Reimagining Critical Conversations

National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Annual Conference

February 28, 2019

Presented by: Michael Blacher, Elizabeth Tom Arce, Rose Helm and Rebecca Rowland

LCW LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE



**Courageous Authenticity:  
Reimagining Critical  
Conversations**

National Association of Independent Schools  
(NAIS) Annual Conference | February 28, 2019

Presented By: Michael Blacher, Elizabeth Tom Arce,  
Rose Helm and Rebecca Rowland

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**What is Courageous Authenticity?**

- Surface the issues others are reluctant to talk about
- Speak directly to the issue
- Be courageous in meetings
- Exhibit personal behavior consistent with school's values and performance expectations
- Hold to school values during good and difficult times
- Lead in a manner that is aligned with the school's values
- Be open-minded to the perspectives of others
- Be balanced including positive and constructive feedback

2 | LCW LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Value Driven Culture**

- What are our schools values?
- Are they integrated into everyday actions?
- Are they the framework of expectations for employee conduct and job performance?
- What engagement strategies do you use regularly to reaffirm, clarify, and communicate their importance?

3 | LCW LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Courageous Authenticity: Reimagining Critical Conversations

National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Annual Conference

February 28, 2019

Presented by: Michael Blacher, Elizabeth Tom Arce, Rose Helm and Rebecca Rowland

**What Holds You Back?**

- Possible consequences or fear of backlash
- Feelings of discomfort or awkwardness
- Concern over the reaction from the other person
- You just would rather avoid it all together
- Prior relationships with people
- “Imposter syndrome”

**What other things hold you back?**

4 | LCW LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

LCW LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

**Do You Care Enough?**

6 | LCW LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Critical Conversations**

- You have to care enough to take action
- Challenges are most easily managed when you “nip it in the bud”
- Separate Issues
- Seek to understand root causes
- Whose interest is at stake?
- Work from positive intentions
- Don’t let your discomfort keep you from addressing conflict

6 | LCW LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


# Courageous Authenticity: Reimagining Critical Conversations

National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Annual Conference

February 28, 2019

Presented by: Michael Blacher, Elizabeth Tom Arce, Rose Helm and Rebecca Rowland

The Performance Evaluation



7 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Can We Say Awkward?

- How does one conversation result in two different perspectives?

8 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Develop an Approach of Curiosity

- What is really going on here?
- What do I not understand?
- Why is their perspective so different than mine?
- How does what they think make sense to him or her?
- Am I contributing to the difficulty of this situation/behavior?
- What needs to change in order for a useful dialogue to take place?
- Observations seek to clarify a situation

9 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


# Courageous Authenticity: Reimagining Critical Conversations

National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Annual Conference

February 28, 2019

Presented by: Michael Blacher, Elizabeth Tom Arce, Rose Helm and Rebecca Rowland

Performance Evaluation  
(continued)



10 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Critical Conversations & Derailment!

- How can we get back on track when we are derailed or surprised by information?

11 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Keys to Courageous Authenticity

- Be honest but not hurtful
- Be direct but not demeaning
- Be clear and provide context
- Be mindful of your motive and share it
- Be consistent and compassionate
- Be willing to confront issues
- Believe that caring really counts

12 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Courageous Authenticity: Reimagining Critical Conversations

National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Annual Conference

February 28, 2019

Presented by: Michael Blacher, Elizabeth Tom Arce, Rose Helm and Rebecca Rowland

**Preparing for the Critical Conversation**

- Align language you intend to use with existing language articulated in documented expectations (position descriptions, handbooks, rubric for evaluation)
- Run a “pre-mortem”
- Write the letter in advance
- Role play the conversation

13 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**The Conversation Itself**

- Convey genuine care for the person and belief in their ability to incorporate this feedback and grow from it
- Use “impact vs. intent” as a frame if the person’s behavior negatively impacted someone else
- Use questions and “I wonder...” statements as non-threatening ways to inspire self-reflection and agency in making the change

14 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Following the Conversation**

- Use different methods of documentation as follow-up based on the level of concern
- Incorporate the person’s feedback or response (as appropriate) into the subsequent written summary
- Indicate clear action steps to be taken and timeline in which to do so
- As needed, indicate a time period for a follow-up conversation

15 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Courageous Authenticity: Reimagining Critical Conversations

## National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Annual Conference

February 28, 2019

Presented by: Michael Blacher, Elizabeth Tom Arce, Rose Helm and Rebecca Rowland

**Exercise: Courage Challenge**

- Find a partner, and share a situation that you should address, want to deal with, or can no longer avoid in the workplace.
- Discuss a strategy to tackle this challenge in the next week and practice/role-play the conversation with your partner.
- Let your partner share observations, offer ideas, and word of encouragement to you in preparation for this challenge.
- Make a commitment to address this issue courageously in the next week.
- Switch roles and repeat!

16 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Thank You!**

**Michael Blacher**  
Partner | Los Angeles Office  
310.981.2031 | [mblacher@lcwlegal.com](mailto:mblacher@lcwlegal.com)

**Elizabeth Tom Arce**  
Partner | Los Angeles Office  
310.981.2000 | [earce@lcwlegal.com](mailto:earce@lcwlegal.com)

**Rose Helm**  
Head of School | The John Thomas Dye School  
310.476.2811 | [rhelm@jtdschool.org](mailto:rhelm@jtdschool.org)

**Rebecca Rowland**  
Director of Human Resources | Campbell Hall Episcopal School  
818.505.2459 | [rowlanr@campbellhall.org](mailto:rowlanr@campbellhall.org)

17 | LCW | LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---