

How Silence, Values, and Feedback Affect Your Team



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

CrisMarie Campbell and Susan Clarke

[Beauty of Conflict](#) with CrisMarie Campbell and Susan Clarke

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CrisMarie: Welcome to *The Beauty of Conflict*, a podcast about how to deal with conflict at work, at home and everywhere else in your life. I am CrisMarie.

Susan: And I'm Susan.

CrisMarie: We run a company called Thrive Inc, and we specialize in conflict resolution, stress management coaching and building strong, thriving teams and relationships both in person and virtually.

Susan: We are starting 2021 with a series based on our book, *The Beauty of Conflict for Teams*. We'll be sharing tips, tools about how to make your team work more effectively especially in this remote and virtual environment. We hope you'll walk away from this episode and this series with some fresh ideas that change your day, your week and even your life.

CrisMarie: Hi. This is CrisMarie Campbell.

Susan: And I'm Susan Clarke.

CrisMarie: And we're continuing on our *Beauty of Conflict for Teams: Harnessing Your Team's Competitive Advantage* based on our book, our business book. And today we're covering chapter 17, *Silence is Deadly*.

Susan: We're also going to be talking about how this really has something to do with both values and feedback.

CrisMarie: Yeah, because in our book in chapter 17 we talk about we don't like conflict. I think you folks know that. But silence is even more detrimental. And it's one of the biggest problems in relationships, particularly on teams, speaking up in tough situations is critical to making sure operations runs well. And each of us helps perpetuate the bad behavior when we stay silent or blame another person in our heads or behind their backs.

And silence makes us the victim and them the villain. Silence on the outside does not mean silence on the inside. If you didn't know, I'm reading

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from the book here. Our outer silence only masks the ongoing rant in our head. It keeps us from seeing our part in the problem and that leaves the team's collective potential to the loudest person. In silence we advocate our responsibility in the we. We miss how everyone's role contributes to the outcome. It's so easy to blame the bully but on a team, silent members equally contribute to the dysfunction of the we, the team.

So we want you listeners to think about when do you go silent and justify it as hey, this is just what I have to do, I can't speak up. When does that happen for you and in your business day? Susan.

Susan: I was thinking of a situation a while back, this was before we went into our business and a different career early on in my working world. And I did not discover until, well, almost, for a long time that I thought people agreed with me around some of the things because I was pretty regularly speaking up. And thought I was actually speaking in favor of what other people wanted. And it wasn't until much later when someone finally told me, "You're very persuasive, no way was anyone ever going to argue with you about that." And I never agreed.

And I know for me that was such a painful experience because I had no idea that people were just going along with my ideas. And even sometimes that happens between you and I, you'll tell me later, "I just totally disagree with what you were proposing. But you were so passionate about it." And I've learned I'd better tame that passion a little bit or at least check-in.

CrisMarie: Check-in, yeah, and you do much more. But I think that happens to a lot of people. They're just, "I'm just being me, of course people will speak up." But other people have different styles. They feel intimidated so they don't speak up. And often if there is a value difference, they see somebody wanting to go after something or doing something that they don't really value, that can also drive them into silence.

Susan: Sure. I was kind of excited about us having this conversation today because one thing, there's been this whole year of Covid, remote working,

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various things happening. Some of the people I've been coaching and actually some of the teams we've been working with. One of the things that's come up is asking and do you remember what your values are?

CrisMarie: Your company values or your team norms or yeah.

Susan: Yeah, because often when silence comes up it's because either a personal value is getting crossed or an organizational value is ascribed to or has been talked about but is not being lived up to. And that's actually one of the times where I've seen silence become the most pervasive and kind of the most damaging. And I think during this time of Covid a lot of times the values have gone background because it's survival.

CrisMarie: Yeah, people are in fight or flight and so they're just trying to survive on Teams or Google Meets or Zoom. And we can't talk about that, it's just good enough, let's just get the work done kind of folks.

Susan: Yeah. I was thinking because just recently I was coaching a CEO and there were some things that he was describing and talking about that were going on. And I'm like, "Well, how does that align with your values?" And I mean to his credit after a moment of silence he did say, "At this moment I have no idea where that question came from. And I should know them right off the top of my head." And then he realized as he said it, he goes, "I've been just so focused on one crisis after another. I have not been doing that."

And we had a really good conversation about how maybe this is the time to pull it back, those values back out and share some stories about the people you have been working with who are living them.

CrisMarie: And a lot of times when we're working with an executive level like we are with that particular client, pulling out those values, a lot of times companies pick these values like integrity or teamwork. But then they don't do anything to reinforce them. And you want to have about three values, not five or six because nobody can remember that many. And you really

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want to make sure these values are part of the DNA of the company and they're really your star performers who are behaving this way.

And your leadership team, your executive team is really behaving this way. And the people that are you're moving out of the organizations, they're usually the misfits, people that don't ascribe to those values, don't live those values because they have to be, in our opinion, behavioral so that you can actually see somebody doing that thing.

Susan: Yes. Well, and also I mean CrisMarie I think so often really, we were playing around this before we talked. Our values are real, relational and practical. And I like to think that playful is in there. But I realize it's an aspirational value, that we don't take ourselves so seriously or we don't take work so seriously or whatever else, that we actually use play as a way to support our work but in reality...

CrisMarie: I get pretty serious.

Susan: And not just you but mostly.

CrisMarie: And that would move us to fork. So what we're talking about is really defining your core values, the best of your DNA that you want to replicate. And what Susan's bringing up is this idea of aspirational. A lot of companies say, "Urgency, that's our value." And when we could walk through their organization people were hanging out, moving slow. And we sat down with a CEO and we asked him what his values were and he said, "Urgency." And we thought, really, nobody else is doing so much. And he says, "That's why it needs to be a value, because we need to be that way."

Not that that's not true, that's an aspirational value, like our playful value. But it's not part of your core values. Those core values are really anchors and you can reinforce them and you naturally do them, the star performers and the leadership team.

Susan: Yeah, I agree with you on that CrisMarie. And one of the things I'd say that is, yes, for me one of the things I found most frustrating is how

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often people talk about their values and they have one that's teamwork. And yet they don't reward teamwork, they reward individual performance.

CrisMarie: So their system is out of alignment with their values. And even I brought this up earlier and I didn't circle back to it, so thank you Susan for doing this. But even integrity, if integrity is one of your core values, it means everybody in that organization behaves with that level of integrity that is unscrupulous. And that is a high bar to actually attain.

Susan: I think the only company I ever really thought – we've been in this discussion many times, that I thought really should have that was when we were working with the National Armament.

CrisMarie: Los Alamos.

Susan: Los Alamos and they did the nuclear weapons. And I thought, well, yes, you've convinced me that integrity should be and that you actually, you're above beyond. Because most of the time even in healthcare, integrity is a pay-to-play, so you have to hit a certain bar.

CrisMarie: You mean patient safety?

Susan: It could be, yeah, or a law firm, integrity, it should be. You should be doing legal things.

CrisMarie: With integrity.

Susan: But to rise it to a core value like that goes above and beyond that level.

CrisMarie: Yes. You bring up a good point, that's another part of that. So we are talking about defining your core values which we think one to three is really the bubble. And then there is these pay-to-play meaning in your industry there's certain types of values that just to be in your industry like healthcare you're going to have patient safety. You can't have people dying a lot, so all over the place, you're not going to stay in business as a

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hospital. So those are industry specific. And then there is those aspirational ones that you want to be, you're not, those aren't your core values.

Susan: Yes. So I mean the reason why we're talking about this is one, we think this is a really rich thing to do within your organization as a leadership team is to really look at what are our core values.

CrisMarie: Or are we living?

Susan: Are we living them? And especially even during this time when there's so much on the line and you may have forgotten them. And that's okay but just to go back to them because one thing that's really disconcerting, if you have a list of values that doesn't mean anything that's just not helpful.

CrisMarie: Yeah, it's de-motivating for the staff because they see the poster on the wall or they used to. And it's kind of like, well, yeah, we have to say that but we're not – the systems don't reinforce it, our leaders don't tell stories about people that live those. I don't see people acting in those and so that feels really incongruent.

Susan: Yeah. And there's certain times of year where – it's the year where you're doing performance feedback, you're talking to people about things. And I'm surprised how many times I bring this up with some of the people I'm coaching, when you're doing that performance do you bring in those values? Do you tie it to the behaviors that you're looking for? And how many times that's not what goes on.

CrisMarie: Or they have a very – we've worked in large organizations that have very complex systems where they have to fill out these charts and they have to figure out how are these people living these values? So it feels more mechanical and it's not really, you know, they're not living breathing things.

Susan: You want your values to be something that you can talk about and give examples. And this doesn't mean you're going to give the highest gold

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medal standard once a year for living the values. It means you're going to tell a story about how somebody – in our organization, we don't have a big organization. But people who work for us we could describe, "Hey, you're really what I love about working with you." We just have been working with this marketing firm which...

CrisMarie: We really like, PB Marketing, yeah.

Susan: P&B Seattle, it's a marketing firm.

CrisMarie: P&B in Seattle.

Susan: Yes. And one of the reasons I really like them is one, I think of them as very real. And that's one of our values, they show up, they're vulnerable, they're immediate. Every once in a while we'll ask them to do something and within a few minutes they've turned it around and done it. And they'll give us feedback on it right away and it's...

CrisMarie: They'll also say, "Hey, you two, it would be really good if you could write something about what's in the news right now." So it's that immediate real factor and we really like that.

Susan: Yeah. And they also I think are very relational which I have also really valued and for us that means curious about us, sharing what they want. Because a lot of times I've had sometimes with marketing, I sort of feel like I've been put into a system. And so I really enjoy the relational quality.

CrisMarie: It's true. They got to know us as human beings, it just feels much like we're a part of their team or they're a part of ours.

Susan: But we talk about those things and so even I can share a story about how I saw them show up as relational or real. And you want to be able to do that when it comes to your values.

CrisMarie: Yeah, even our third value, practical. I mean one of the ways we live that is we try to give you practical tools in our books, in our podcast,

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whenever we work with a team or even speak. People walk away with practical tools and even our marketing firm they are like, “Here’s what you can do today.” So they give us things that we can participate. And so even in saying this Susan, I’m just really appreciating our real relational and practical values.

Susan: So however, the thing that’s tricky about it CrisMarie is it’s so easy to kind of not bring that forward all the time, to kind of get busy and get into the work. And when we’ve been challenged this past year, if I go back to the values it has helped remind me. Don’t get too caught up on all these metrics and goals, not that those aren’t important. But if I go back to am I actually living the values that are important to us right now and how am I doing that? I usually get back on track faster than I would if I just looked at the goals because then I can feel like I’m on a hamster reel and it’s a challenge.

CrisMarie: It’s true because we are like, “How can we be of service right now in this moment, how can we be real about what’s happening and relational to you folks?” I have another thing that I was going to say.

Susan: This is why I thought one of our values was playful because last year about this time we generated the new morning show, which was a very playful part of our day. Although it hasn’t continued so we have to have more practical things come out of it. So I have to say it’s probably more practical than playful, still obviously working on that one for its aspirational aspects.

CrisMarie: And you do want to – gosh I just, I had it and then it went away again.

Susan: Probably because I was – took you off track.

CrisMarie: But really again coaching people to tie somebody’s performance into those concrete behaviors to help them. I was coaching someone and she was saying, “Well, this person isn’t emotionally intelligent.” And it’s kind of like, well, that’s nice and vague, what does that

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mean? And so when she came down to it, she wasn't very sensitive to other people. She didn't notice the impact she was having. And I think one of their values was teamwork and bringing people along.

And so that was one way she could tie teamwork to, "Hey, you're not noticing that you're being really critical to this person. It's de-motivating to them. You're not bringing them along." And that, so it's a great way, you may be missing opportunities to look at people who work for you and to describe their behavior in terms of how it either aligns with the value, so yay celebration. Or is out of alignment with the values and that's a good course correction.

Susan: I remember when we worked a while back with a – this was actually a mining company. But I love having the discussion sometimes about what, when an executive team begins to talk about their core values and they begin to define them. Instead of using the list of words that they thought should be their values; they really come up with them. And this one company, they were wrestling with, they wanted candor and that was kind of a word of the year or whatever. But then they started playing with it and they came up with forthright.

And it was like because people will just say what they need to say. And I wasn't particularly that fond of the word 'forthright'. But I loved the discussion they had about it. And I could really get how powerful it was to them to have that level of dialog and them get defined around it. So we always say to them, "Don't just make them the values, go out and see."

CrisMarie: Test drive them.

Susan: Test drive them, do you actually see them? Are people living them? Do they get it?

CrisMarie: I love when we take a team through that, "Who are your star players? Describe them. And then look at the misfits and then look at your folks and is there alignment?" And then test drive them, and they see and they gather data in between when we see them a quarter later they've like,

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“It’s totally not that. We were off on that one. Two of these are fitting. We’ve changed the words a bit.” And then they start integrating them into the culture. And also it’s so true when you look at who leaves your organization.

And this company was also purchasing other organizations, merging. And it really makes a difference when you’re merging if you’re in that position to look at the values of the organization. So often MBAs, which I have one are only looking at the numbers, yeah, this is a good buy, you need to do this. But if you don’t actually look at the behaviors, the values, when you integrate that company it’s usually a – I want to say a bad word, but it’s really a mess. And because the cultures clash, you can’t get people onboard.

So you don’t reap the ROI because you kind of have to let go of a lot of people or it’s just a real messy situation, so looking at those values. And if you go back and look at mergers that didn’t work I’m going to guess they were likely a mismatch of values. So whether you’re hiring, or buying people, or doing business with people, value alignment is key.

Susan: And I would go so far to say that if that isn’t aligned, that’s actually when silence comes into play the most.

CrisMarie: It’s so true.

Susan: People stop talking when they realize oh my, we are so different. I just think of companies we’ve worked with, with significant mergers where that has been such a big factor in what caused, even a breakdown at the highest level of the organization where people were not speaking up because they realized this is a mismatch in values. Now, sometimes we have been able to have them have that conversation.

In the mining group, that particular group we really did. And they made some key adjustments to their leadership team because they realized there were a few people that had been brought in that were very different.

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CrisMarie: It's so true. At that level if you bring one person into the team the whole dynamic shifts. So we went through that whole exercise again with the new company, because it was a big merger so they were kind of almost equal. So they had to redefine themselves. And they found their way. It was a bumpy process but they wound up being successful in the long run.

Susan: And partially because they had some really messy conversations. They ended up going differently than I thought they would in terms of some of the people that stayed and some of the people that didn't. But having that makes all the difference. And if it's not happening at that highest levels and there's big mismatches, further down in the organization all sorts of weird stuff, all sort of mischief is happening as they say.

CrisMarie: Yeah, because you've got us and them, and those things just keep getting anchored in. Now, we're talking about the highest level of the organization. But even if you're in a big organization and you have a team, you might want to actually look at how is that team living the values of the organization?

Susan: Yeah, discuss it.

CrisMarie: Yeah, what is working? What isn't? Where are we out of alignment? How could we bring ourselves back in? And usually, by the way, feedback is the best way and even peer feedback, getting in the habit of checking out your story like I thought, if practical was one of the values and somebody kept coming up with these abstract, strategic, big picture plans, letting them know, "Hey, how is this actually going to help us move our business forward?"

Susan: Yeah. I mean but that is so important right now. And to keep going back to where you are in the organization, check-in, am I living these values? Do I know what they are? How do I define them? And then how do they apply to the team? Because on a team that may not be at that highest level, looking at the behavioral pieces and that's often how a team can

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decide what some of their norms are going to be. Okay, we're not living this, we say we're frank and candid but we're not. So how can we invite more dialog as we go? And that becomes the work.

CrisMarie: Yeah. So if you want a real practical tip, since we have practical as one of our values. Just brainstorm, one, put your values up that either are your company or yeah, let's say the company level. And talk about, well, what's working? Where are we modeling these behaviors and where are we not? And then brainstorm what you want your team norms to be. And we go through that example in another chapter in our book which walks you right through that whole thing.

Susan: That can be a vital thing to bring into play and it's a good healthy discussion. I mean you heard us, one of our things is real, which means here and now, what's happening right now. And we think anything you have up on a wall, in a binder, printed out across the world should be checked in on, on a regular basis. And it should be simple enough that you can talk about it.

And if you've made it more complex than that, even if you decide that integrity really is our word. Be sure you make it something that means something for your business and what you do. Don't just leave it on the wall.

CrisMarie: Yeah, because then it becomes two dimensional and not alive. And I guess that's what we're really talking about is how to make your values, your company values living breathing things. And not make them about awards or posters, but make them about stories and feedback about when people are doing it, living those values and when they're not and then checking it out. The more you do that the more alive they're going to be. The more people you're going to attract too are in alignment with those values and those other people will go.

Susan: And it's okay I think sometimes to, wow, something is happening and I'm not living up to that value. And I think what happens is sometimes

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people are afraid to look at that. But wow, that can be a really important thing for your team to discuss, where have we gone silent? Where are we not really...

CrisMarie: Yeah. Too often people will go silent and then just leave the organization or leave the team. And it's like if you have a few of those, that's the time to have the conversation, "What is happening? What are we not talking about? What makes it so hard for us to have these conversations so people can bring up, "Hey, this doesn't feel good to me, what's going on, or I'm concerned about the direction." Rather than just having people go silent and leave.

Susan: I mean that is so deadly and toxic to all involved.

CrisMarie: And I did find the chapter as I was busily – so this chapter is chapter 17, Silence is Deadly. And then we have a real practical thing for you to walk through in chapter 27, Make Your Meetings Matter where we talk about team norms and there's little charts and everything, it makes it real easy and you can do it with virtual teams. So I want to encourage you to do that.

Susan: Alright. Well, you were going to pitch.

CrisMarie: Yes. Well, if you want to purchase our book, The Beauty of Conflict: Harnessing your Team's Competitive Advantage, it's available on amazon.com both in kindle and in hardcopy. And then also we are actively wanting people to connect to us on LinkedIn specifically Thrive Inc. And so you can look for CrisMarie and Susan, CrisMarie Campbell, Susan B. Clarke but also follow us on our business page because we are producing tons of content.

We've got the four toxic team killers, there's videos, there's polls, it's really neat and we'd love you to connect to us there.

Susan: And give us feedback.

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CrisMarie: Yeah, what's working, what's not? And you can certainly check out our website because we've just revised at thriveinc.com. So hopefully you have a good week and live your values or at least talk about it.

Susan: Wow, CrisMarie, I have sure been enjoying doing this series for teams and utilizing our chapters from our book *The Beauty of Conflict: Harnessing Your Team's Competitive Advantage*. It's been fun to go back and review the material and apply it to virtual teams.

CrisMarie: It's true. And it's so much good bite sized material in these chapters, I mean if I do say so myself. And if you want us to speak at your organization, or work with your team, yes, virtually, we've been doing that, team sessions, or coach you or leaders on your team, please reach out to us. You can check us out at our website www.thriveinc.com, that's t.h.r.i.v.e.i.n.c.com or send us an email, write to us directly, we're happy to chat, t.h.r.i.v.e@t.h.r.i.v.e.i.n.c.com, that's thrive@thriveinc.com. Okay, take care.