



The trouble with using the word Obviously

Imagine sitting in the board-room with your peers listening to one peer presenting a business case for a new product to go into your primary market. Then you hear the O word... 'Obviously you need to'... The words fade into background noise as you fold your arms, lean back in your seat, lock your jaw and start perusing your peers for their response.

'Obviously' is one of those words I like to call problematic.

Why is using the word 'obviously' one of the fastest ways to split your audience and put people off side?

To what degree they could be off side may vary, yet the messenger may be left pondering where the conversation went wrong.

Let's explore this...

If it is not obvious to others, then they are at best feeling as if they cannot see what is obvious and do not get the simplicity or clarity of the talker's point. They could feel stupid. And on a sliding scale they may be feeling a level of judgment against themselves (whether it is there or not).

Exploring this judgment angle further; The reason the talker thinks it is obvious depends on the way you view the situation.

They may be saying it is obvious. However what they are not saying could be much more without you realising it.

Is it obvious because?

- It is right (therefor other views are wrong). You perceive yourself as the guardian of process.
- I am certain (and therefore others have not done as much thinking about it as I have). You perceive yourself as the deep thinker.

-
- I know what the people are telling me (and those that disagree don't because you have not been in the conversations I have been). You perceive yourself as a people person.

And so you may immediately find yourself in conflict, by saying 'Obviously'.

How do people respond to this?

Unless they feel comfortable in saying 'I don't see it, can you tell me why it is obvious to you?' You are in conflict and you don't know it.

Perhaps people will not say it to you because you are their boss. Or you may be in a meeting and they do not what to challenge you in public. Maybe they think it is simply not worth the effort or perhaps past experience has taught them not to ask why it is 'obvious' because of the response they may receive.

So you have some one who says 'obviously' a lot. What can you do about it.

Depending on your situation options may include:

- Can you tell me more?
- That sounds interesting, tell me more?
- You appear to be convinced about this, not all of us are across the background work you have done. Can you take us through it?

The good news is that by adopting some of these suggestions you are bringing the different ideas and perceptions to the discussion and creating new paradigms.

Tess Brook is a communication and conflict coach and work place mediator. She specialises in deconstructing language and conflict alike. She creates awareness around how language leads to conflict, simply from your word choice, (refer to problematic words) and communication patterns. She works one-on-one ([communication coaching](#)), with parties in conflict ([conflict coaching and/or mediation](#)), teams focused on creating effective conversations (The trouble with talking program) as well as large team conflict resolution.

Contact details

Tess Brook +61 (0) 414 749 444

tess@1stcall.com.au

www.1stcall.com.au

www.thetroublewithtalking.com.au