

## TIPS for TALKING ABOUT UNETHICAL TAX STRATEGIES

- **Decide if and who.** When you hear about unethical or illegal violations, first decide if you will speak up and then to whom. Consider how well you know the person, the severity of the violation, and the other person's awareness of what he or she is doing. For example, if a coworker you hardly know brags about committing a felony, report the crime. On the other hand, if a friend breaks a law and is unaware of the violation, you probably want to talk to him or her directly.
- **Don't accuse, ask.** Begin with a non-accusatory question like, "Are you aware that strategy might actually be illegal?" See if the other person is aware of the possible offense. Often, after you raise the issue, the other person will say he or she wasn't aware, ask for more details, and back away from the offense.
- **Share your concerns.** If the person says, "Of course I'm aware, but I'll save a bundle of money!" you're at a crossroads. Do you continue or back off? With most friends you would probably feel comfortable explaining your concerns. Don't lecture, but let them know you're worried they are putting themselves and their reputation at risk. When it comes to breaking the law, try to be a friend and not an accomplice.

**ABOUT THE RESEARCH.** The study collected responses via an online survey of 458 individuals in April of 2006. Margin of error is approximately 3%.

**LEARN NEW SKILLS.** To learn how Crucial Conversations® Training can help you talk to others about their illegal and unethical tax strategies, visit [www.vitalsmarts.com](http://www.vitalsmarts.com) or call 1.800.449.5989.

According to our study of more than 450 people, **58 percent** have found themselves in a compromising conversation in which family, friends, or coworkers described using or planning to use illegal or unethical tax strategies.

According to the survey, one-fourth of survey respondents who had been in such a conversation said they weren't sure what to say, or they generally feared the consequences of voicing their opinion.

In fact, the top five reasons Americans don't confront each other about unethical tax strategies are:

- 13 percent fear the consequences of voicing their opinion
- 10 percent don't know what to say
- 21 percent don't care
- 38 percent think it's not their concern
- 2 percent say they don't have enough time

When it comes to risky conversations, the research shows that many people still don't know how to speak up in a way that is helpful. In real-time conversations—where one minute you're talking casually and the next you're in the middle of a crucial conversation with strong emotions and differing opinions—people feel ill-equipped to hold others accountable. They end up avoiding the conversation altogether, or they speak up but allow external forces to take control, resulting in poor performance.

**About VitalSmarts—**An innovator in corporate training and organizational performance, VitalSmarts is home to multiple training offerings, including Crucial Conversations, Crucial Confrontations, Influencer, and Change Anything Training. Each course improves key organizational outcomes by focusing on high-leverage skills and strategies. The Company also has four *New York Times* bestselling books: *Change Anything*, *Crucial Conversations*, *Crucial Confrontations*, and *Influencer*. VitalSmarts has been ranked by Inc. magazine as one of the fastest-growing companies in America for six consecutive years and has trained more than 650,000 people worldwide. [www.vitalsmarts.com](http://www.vitalsmarts.com)

## KEY RESULTS

**58%** have found themselves in a compromising conversation with family, friends, or coworkers who planned to use illegal or unethical tax strategies

**25%** didn't know what to say and feared the consequences of voicing their opinion