

Powerful Conversations – Phil Harkins

- Conversations that are properly aimed get things done.
- Think about the quality of every conversation that you have,
- Consider: the day to day running of a ship is more a matter of influence, trust and mutual commitment than any authority or command.

Do 3 things in your conversations:

- 1) Advance your agenda
- 2) Share learning
- 3) Strengthen relationships

Part I – The Discipline of Powerful Conversations

- Use conversation to influence and direct

Through conversation, leaders:

- 1) Foster relationships
- 2) Build support networks
- 3) Sharpen organization focus

- Make everything crystal clear and follow-up on every promise.

Conversations are about:

- 1) Shared beliefs
- 2) Exchange of needs
- 3) Action steps

9 Factors That Make Conversations Powerful:

- 1) Mutual sense of respect
- 2) Exchange views honestly; take time to listen
- 3) Listen even if there are differences
- 4) Don't judge others in the conversation
- 5) Strengthen relationships
- 6) Explore questions that matter
- 7) Develop shared meaning
- 8) Learn something new/important
- 9) Strengthen mutual commitment

The Importance of Listening

4 Principles involved in becoming a great listener

- 1) Focus in a visible way
- 2) Sort & compartmentalize needs/wants
- 3) Recognize the feelings as well as the content
- 4) Balance the inquiry, advocacy & judgment

Tower of Power

- 1) What's Up – Ask questions to confirm understanding
 - strive to make an emotional connection with the other person so that person will, in turn, open up, share hidden dialogue and reveal hidden undiscussables.
 - in order to advance your agenda, you will also have to advance the agenda of others
- 2) What's So – Rigorously test thinking to agree on facts
 - focus on determining the hidden factors underlying the issue or problem
 - probe to establish the soundness of the reasoning behind the assertions

- 3) What's Possible – Create new possibilities for action
 - challenge the people on the other side of the conversation to stretch their thinking and go beyond what they think is possible
 - forge some creative solutions
- 4) Let's Go – Confirm action plan
 - make a confirmed and mutually understood commitment to action
 - make clear requests regarding actions

Leadership Assessment Instrument

5 Competencies

- 1) Focused drive
- 2) Emotional intelligence
- 3) Trusted influence
- 4) Conceptual thinking
- 5) Systems thinking

5 Types of powerful conversations

- 1) Those that actualize strategy
- 2) Those that stabilize
- 3) Those that build trust
- 4) Those that drive ideas
- 5) Those that systemize

Actualizing Strategy Through Focused Drive

Leader:

- defines clearly for the individual the part he/she needs to play, asks the individual that he/she wants and needs in order to accomplish that goal and stresses the importance of driving toward that goal.

Stabilizing Through Emotional Intelligence

Leader:

- recognizes positive potential behind difficult situation
- channels stress into positive energy
- has empathy to acknowledge and understand the fear of others

Building Trust Through Trusted Intelligence

Leader:

- balances between commitment and empowerment
 - commitment involves aligning shared goals with shared values
 - empowerment is about displaying trust in others by delegating authority and inviting participation in decision making
- develops confidence and brings out the best in others

Driving Ideas Through Conceptual Thinking

Conceptual thinking is the balance between innovation and big picture thinking.

Innovation involves seeking better solutions to problems, testing assumptions, challenging the status quo, and improving on ideas that create profit or growth potential.

The next best idea won't come from senior management/leadership.

Leader:

- builds a climate of learning

- engages the full support, energy, passion, feedback and brain-power of the organizations employees.

Systemizing Through Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is a balance between process orientation and mental discipline.

Process orientation involves taking steps to ensure that new ideas are integrated with established procedures.

Mental discipline is about displaying rigor in thinking through difficult situations.

Leader:

- uses powerful conversations to strategically achieve their goals
- exhibits conscious aforethought about who they want to talk with and why
- plans and uses different types of powerful conversations to maximize their impact.

Chapter 4 The SWAMP: Getting into and out of bad conversations

Agenda

In a bad conversation, an agenda is not advanced.

Bad conversations can sabotage progress made in previous powerful conversations.

Learning

In a bad conversation, information is not shared and learning is not advanced.

Relationships

In bad conversations, relationships can be damaged.

Sources of bad conversations

Characteristics of bad conversations:

- Unclear, poorly expressed, or poorly understood content
- Unfocused content marked by tangents, or the cramming in of too many facts, concerns, wants and needs
- Frequent interruptions lead to poor exchange of signals and information as well as rising frustration
- Uninterested participation and lack of active listening
- Unexpressed feelings or beliefs, guarded emotions, and unspoken needs and wants
- Indirect language, with facts and assumptions ineffectively communicated
- Harsh voice and tone, often unintentionally at odds with message
- Unresponsive body language, such as poor eye contact, turning away and crossed arms

The outputs of bad conversations

Bad feelings

Bad judgments

Bad decisions

Getting out of the swamp (some steps to consider)

1. Drop the agenda – deal with the swamp talk
2. Validate the issues and feelings
3. Create a list or complaints/issues
4. Confirm the list – review it to confirm understanding
5. Start with the last thing on the list – bottoms up approach may bring faster solution
6. Build up the issue
7. Hold up the mirror

8. Leave the SWAMP behind by reframing the issue, unearth the assumptions, consider new possibilities and craft actions that everyone can commit to in going forward

Chapter 5 – Difficult Conversations

Some conversations provide a challenge that tests the bounds and skill of experience. When this occurs, you need discipline in your conversation.

You need clear communication that advances agendas, promotes learning and strengthens relationships.

Some rules for succeeding in having difficult conversations:

1. Expressing compassionate feelings with sincerity
2. Confronting fear with confidence
3. Asking clearly what is wanted and needed
4. Offering and commanding support, direction and focus
5. Making it crystal clear how everyone can win

To explain your point of view properly:

1. State your inference
2. Provide your data
3. Explain your reasoning
4. Ask for reactions

To better understand their point of view:

1. Restate what you have heard
2. Ask for the person's observable data
3. Ask for the person's reasoning

Chapter 6 – Powerful Conversations and Trust

The Essence of Trust

- trust is the currency of leadership
- when trust exists within groups, there is ease of communication
- trust is an organizational asset

The Four C's of Trust

- caring
- commitment
- clarity
- consistency

The Rules of Trust

- all trust begins with a commitment
- trust requires being clear and consistent
- loyalty can only be obtained through consistent acts of caring
- trust requires living one's own beliefs
- total trust involves an interlocking system of internal beliefs

Levels of Trust

Level One Trust is about commitment. This is professional trust.

Level Two Trust is loyalty. This is personal trust.

Level Three Trust is belief. This is total trust. Total trust equals commitments plus loyalty plus shared beliefs.
Chapter 7 – The Agenda for Change

Powerful conversations are fundamentally instruments of change; they compel change through the learning they foster and the action steps they demand.

Driving productive change is the real work of leaders.

High impact leaders influence culture, direct work outputs and drive change at levels unmatched by others.

Conversations and Organizational Culture

- common language is the first step toward common action
- culture derives from conversation and change itself is linguistically based and driven

The Agenda for Change:

- is a deliberate, structures approach to transformation
- supplies the framework that brings strategy from the level of “vision” and “mission” to the reality of the common language and committed action.

Qualities of high impact leaders:

- 1) they listen to and spend time with employees at all levels of the organization
- 2) they are caring people who are very direct
- 3) they do exactly what they say they will do
- 4) they do not let the strategy overwhelm the people
- 5) they are incredibly open to diversity

The Steps in an Agenda for Change

- 1) Develop the agenda for change vision by setting the goal and clearly defining the objectives
- 2) Focus the senior leadership team on defining and fine tuning the architecture for the agenda for change
- 3) Focus managers at all levels on the vision and the objectives
- 4) Institute a learning system
- 5) Ensure that Passionate Champions are heading up specific, critical components of implementation and operation

Chapter 8 – Passionate Champions

- Passionate Champions are change agents whose personal mission is to achieve very specific change-related goals and who creates change in pursuit of his or her objectives.
 - they are highly driven and enormously focused, with strong mental discipline
 - they are trusted inside of organizations; everyone knows how committed they are to getting specific tasks accomplished
 - they see the big picture
 - they are not necessarily systems thinkers but they are always perceptive
 - they are achievement oriented
 - they are drivers, capable of unstoppable momentum
 - they simply don't entertain the probabilities of NOT reaching their objectives

Ensuring that Passionate Champions stay aligned

- leaders spend time quality time with Passionate Champions on a regular basis
- leaders frequently check in with Passionate Champions to ensure they stay on track

- leaders follow up on the commitments they make to their Passionate Champions

Chapter 9 – Retaining Great People

There is a war for talent going on.

The Six Myths of Turnover

- 1) People will stay because they are loyal to the organization
- 2) All employees have a price and will leave if they get it
- 3) Turnover is governed by demographic influences and is difficult to control
- 4) The departure of key people is a surprise
- 5) Turnover is a series of isolated cases that occur in a vacuum
- 6) The overall turnover rate is the important measure

People leave because of one of the following dissatisfiers:

- 1) the confidence factor – people want to be part of a winning organization
- 2) the emotional factor -
- 3) the trust factor – loyalty is a two-way street
- 4) the fit factor – values, principles, and ethics must be in sync with the organization
- 5) the listening factor – employees need to be heard by their subordinates, peers and bosses

Proactive Retention Strategies

- 1) Build confidence and hope through vision and strategy
- 2) Practice the art of paying attention
- 3) Build loyalty, commitment and trust
- 4) Build and maintain relationships
- 5) Create clear communication systems

Chapter 10 – The Voice of Leadership

All great leaders develop and cultivate a distinct voice of leadership.

Strive to bring about top performance or realize the power of strategic, organization-wide alignment. Crystallize the organization's vision. The leader's voice should forge a coordinated effort and make the daily action steps happen.

Leaders should constantly look for new ways to utter the simple words that reflect their mission, vision and values.

The leader's message provides a framework for thought and a conduit for action.

Daily touches – use every means possible to communicate with as many people in the organization as possible in as many different ways as possible. Your message should permeate the organization.