

Conversations that Produce Results

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Interpersonal conversations define the environment in which people work. It can create conflict or barriers to productive performance or it can cultivate the kind of atmosphere needed to make a major breakthrough in achieving business goals and objectives. Interpersonal conversations also affect people's self-talk, which in turn influences the willingness of individuals to get involved in change and transformation ventures.

Leaders and managers have to pay attention to the reciprocal impact of inter-and intrapersonal conversation for aligning both of these dimensions toward the achievement of business goals and objectives.

After all, leadership is the ability to persuade other people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it. The emphasis here has to be on supportive conversation to make high-performance become more easy. There are two strong psychological propositions for illuminating the challenge of

intervening with supportive communication: 1) **HOW WE TALK TO OTHERS (INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION) INFLUENCES THEIR ATTITUDES AND ONGOING BEHAVIORS.** 2) **HOW WE TALK TO OURSELVES (INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION) INFLUENCES OUR OWN BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDE.**

Therefore, self-talk or the mental scripts people carry around in their heads before, during, and after eliciting behaviors, contribute to the quality of their performances. THE NATURE OF ANY CONVERSATION BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS INFLUENCES THE DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT BETWEEN THEM.

The empirical statement is the following: The way anyone talk will determine the extent to which other people will engage with him or her in any diligence. The long-term effort of any person in the workplace, in the home or in everyday life is determined by the quality of their conversations. I am not referring here to high tech communication but to the quality of one-on-one interpersonal conversations around key issues at hand.

Conversation is a very powerful tool that shapes personal and team attitudes about loyalty, commitment, social support and high performance. There are some

strategies for engaging in an effective conversation. 1) Look to the future. 2) Seek commitment. 3) Stop and listen. 4) Ask questions first. 5) Avoid biases.

Conversation about past events help us connect with others and recognize similar experiences, opinions and motives, but such communication does not enable progress toward problem solving. For this to happen conversation must leave the past and move on. To direct the flow of a conversation from the past to future possibilities, and then to the development of a practical action plan for the present, it is important to first recognize what the other person has to say. Then, it is necessary to shift the focus toward the future. One has to remember that whenever we approach a person to discuss possibilities for engaging in something or do specific things for us, it is desirable to suggest what are those specific things that we want to achieve.

An interpersonal conversation is productive when someone makes the commitment to do something for us in a constructive and positive way. This reflects success in moving the conversation from the past to the future and then to specific action plan and very concrete results. For example, a verbal

commitment tells you that something is happening on an interpersonal level within that other person. The person is becoming self-motivated, increasing the probability that the target decision will materialize. Then, you can move to talk about how commitment can be supported with concrete actions.

In their eagerness to achieve results some people show an overly directive approach to get others to change their behavior or make a decision. A word of warning. Sometimes, the less directive approach to giving advice or suggestion is more effective, especially over the long term. A conversation among adults interpreted as an adult-child confrontation will probably not work. A nondirective approach better when using interpersonal conversation to affect behavior change.

Instead of telling people what to do, it is better to get them to express what they ought to be doing in order to achieve the established goals and results. This can be done by asking concrete questions with a sincere and care demeanor. Avoid at all costs a sarcastic or demeaning tone, first, point out certain specific behaviors

that are positive and can contribute to success. **BY ASKING QUESTIONS WE ALWAYS LEARN SOMETHING.**

What if the person does not give a satisfactory answer to questions about very specific issues? What if the individual does not seem to know the answer? Then we need to change the conversation from nondirective to directive. This is a moment for giving behavior focus advice. In this case we can start with expressions “as you know” that implies that you value the other person and that you want to explain, teach or share in a more profound manner.

The aim of this approach is to acknowledge, that we implicitly recognize that the other person knows things, but for some reason just overlooked it or forgot, and that this can happen to anyone. The logic here is to prevent the other person from feeling that his/her intelligence has been insulted.

Finally, when engaging in a work conversation one has to beware of biases by prejudgments. It's probably impossible to escape completely to the impact of

premature bias in our conversations, but it is possible to exert some strategic control. The nondirective approach attempts to overcome this condition by listening actively and making questions before making suggestions. With this approach a person's biasing filters can be identified and considered in customizing an action plan.

Pay a close attention to the body language and tone of conversation because they can kill you or save you. The method of delivery is as important as the content of the expression. Listen for passion, commitment and caring expressions. They are precious pieces of information.

Our intrapersonal conversations can either facilitate or hinder what we learn from interpersonal conversation. Excitement lies in good conversation!