

POWERFUL CONVERSATIONS

How High Impact
Leaders Communicate

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MAIN IDEA

Any time two people engage in a conversation, there is an opportunity for one party, the other or both to:
(1) Advance an agenda; (2) Learn something new; (3) Strengthen the relationship between the two.

Powerful conversations are a structured approach to maximizing the benefits and impact of these conversations consistently to achieve great results. As such, powerful conversations are a driver of change -- either business or personal -- by fostering learning and demanding that action steps be taken.

Every powerful conversation goes through three stages:

Stage 1 -- A sharing of feelings and beliefs.

Stage 2 -- A discussion about what should be done in terms of discussing specific needs and wants.

Stage 3 -- Agreement on the specific action steps to be taken and the mutual commitments to be kept by both parties.

Since powerful conversations are an agent for change to occur, they can be harnessed productively within any organization. The people who become most adept at conducting powerful conversations are usually the business leaders. Those leaders that can enter into powerful conversations with candor and clarity often become high impact leaders -- in other words, leaders who generate impressive and substantial results for their organization.

Not all leaders are high impact. But every person who masters the concept of powerful conversations can achieve exceptional and notable levels of performance, create and foster important relationships and drive forward personal and organizational goals consistently and productively.

1. The Link Between Powerful Conversations and High-Impact Leaders Page 2

With very few exceptions, there is a direct link between high impact leaders and powerful conversations. In other words, high impact leaders invariably become that way because of their ability to conceive and deliver a series of powerful conversations on a regular and consistent basis.

2. The Anatomy of a Powerful Conversation Page 3

Powerful conversations, broadly speaking, tend to take a three stage approach:

Stage 1 -- An agenda or desired outcome will be specified.

Stage 2 -- The issues and options will be discussed.

Stage 3 -- A specific commitment to action will be made.

In addition, there will often be a preamble discussion and exchange of ideas to set the tone and create a good atmosphere for a powerful conversation which follows.

3. The Five Types of Powerful Conversations Page 4

Powerful conversations come in five primary types or flavors:

- 1. Focused Drive -- those that actualize strategy
- 2. Emotional Intelligence -- those that stabilize
- 3. Trusted Influence -- those that build trust
- 4. Conceptual Thinking -- those that drive ideas
- 5. Systems Thinking -- those that systemize

High impact leaders understand the differences and use whichever flavor is most appropriate to the situation at hand.

4. The Opposite of Powerful Conversations -- And How To Avoid Them Page 5

Bad conversations are at the opposite end of the effectiveness spectrum from powerful conversations. Most people don't need a definition of bad conversations -- they know instinctively this type of activity leads nowhere and achieves nothing. A high impact leader will most often have the presence of mind to recognize when bad conversations are developing and attempt to move them in more positive directions.

5. Powerful Conversations and Trust Page 6

Trust is at the heart of a powerful conversation. The three outputs of a powerful conversation are an advanced agenda, shared learning and a strengthened relationship -- in short, a deepening of trust. High impact leaders use powerful conversations to build trust.

6. Powerful Conversations and Change Page 7

Powerful conversations guide and direct productive change -- frequently by inspiring people to become passionate champions of change. These passionate champions are the link between the agenda for change and its actual implementation within the organization.

7. Powerful Conversations and Retention Page 8

High impact leaders work hard at retention of their star performers because they understand there are numerous other options available to them. They use powerful conversations to attract, retain and motivate top performers on an ongoing basis.

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