

Having Productive, Change-Oriented Conversations

by, Maria Seddio - President, CorpTalk

In today's high-pressure business and economic environment, engaging in productive, change-oriented conversations has become more critical than ever; in fact, it is a key leadership skill and a core business process. By learning how to participate in and facilitate meaningful conversations with others, HR leaders can effect transformation, foster greater innovation and accelerate business results, all of which lead to competitive advantage.

Productive, change-oriented conversations are essential to but they are inherently high-stakes conversations. As stakes get higher, disagreements often emerge: strategies are defined, important decisions are made, and resources are allocated with multiple parties vying for their point of view or agenda. In this regard, productive, change-oriented conversations are sometimes difficult conversations, often requiring both or all parties to give up control or certainty and be open to the point of view of another. As a result, people may shut down or struggle to continue to communicate. Yet, our ability to have these difficult conversations with others is precisely what is required. This is not a "soft" process, or a "nice to have." Rather, it is the most critical skill required to succeed today, because talking about things is the first step to changing them or making things happen. If channeled effectively, the struggle within the conversation can lead to a "third path," or alternative outcome, resulting in a stronger, more resilient and innovative outcome.

In order to tackle the difficult or sensitive conversations most productively, though, it is essential to understand how to engage the "whole person" - looking beyond the words to truly comprehend what is being expressed and experienced. We begin with understanding the different levels of experience that impact how we interact and communicate with others about important issues. We can use the analogy of the iceberg where what you see (in this case, what you say) is just the tip of the iceberg. There is a lot more going on beneath the surface: what we think (but may not share with others) and what we feel (which may be outside of our own level of awareness). If we only respond to the words people say, we are losing out on the meaning of their message.

As HR leaders become more confident and competent at having change-oriented conversations, they are better able to take down barriers, develop innovative solutions, and build better partnerships within the business.

About CorpTalk:

CorpTalk, a WBE-certified, woman-owned business, helps organizations improve their performance through operational effectiveness and innovation. CorpTalk utilizes a fully developed content library and proprietary design elements to introduce systems thinking and conversation as a core business process. They create cost-effective, sustainable solutions that support high-priority strategic initiatives and the development of agile, change-ready cultures. Additional information may be found at www.corptalkonline.com. Contact: Denise Foerst at 908-301-1053; denisefoerst@corptalkonline.com

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