Materials to Supplement Audible version

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Conversations for Results:
Accelerating Performance through Conversations
By: Frank Binnendyk

Overarching principles:

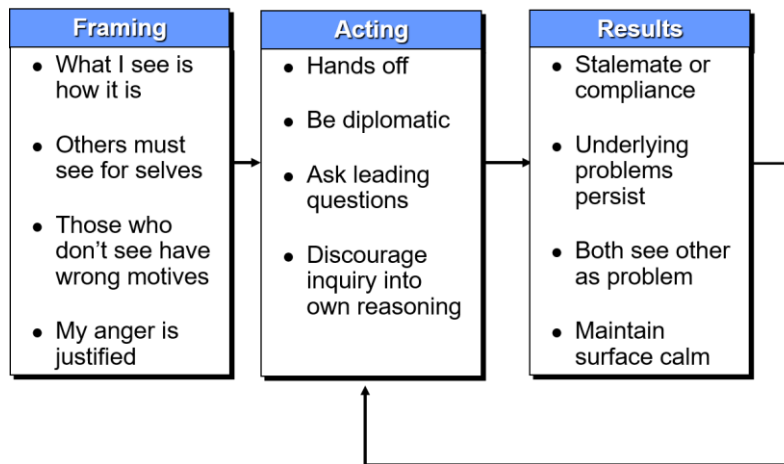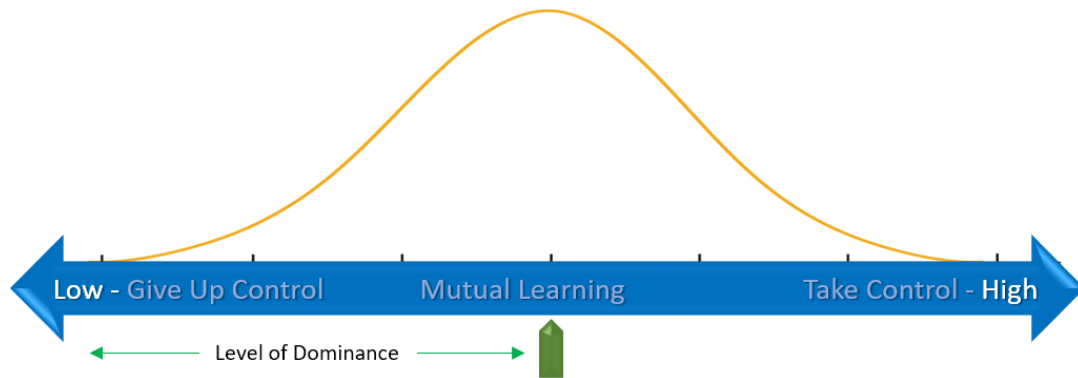|	
Set the stage	▪Pick the venue ▪Choose the participants ▪Analyze stakeholders ▪Choose your mindset ▪Create a safe environment
Show up in the conversation	▪Be present ▪Be intentional with a desired outcome ▪Come out from behind yourself
Manage your mindset	▪Manage your internal conversation ▪Listen ▪Be direct ▪Distinguish facts from meaning ▪Manage inferences
Maintain integrity	•Muster courage •Explain and ask •Maintain consistency
Close the loop	▪Follow through ▪Confirm ▪Tie-off

Take Control frame

Framing	Acting	Results
• What I see is how it is	• Be diplomatic	• Stalemate or compliance
• Get others to do what I know is right	• State conclusions, but discourage challenge	• Underlying problems persist
• Others have wrong motives	• Ask leading questions	• Both see other as problem
• My anger is justified	• Little inquiry for understanding	• Maintain surface calm

Give Up Control frame

Framing	Acting	Results
• What I see is how it is	• Hands off	• Stalemate or compliance
• Others must see for selves	• Be diplomatic	• Underlying problems persist
• Those who don't see have wrong motives	• Ask leading questions	• Both see other as problem
• My anger is justified	• Discourage inquiry into own reasoning	• Maintain surface calm

Mutual Learning frame

Framing	Acting	Results
• Each may see what others miss	• Exchange all relevant information	• Informed choice and commitment
• Use differences to improve	• Explain my view	• Act on shared concerns
• Others strive to act with integrity	• Ask for other views	• Underlying problems addressed
• I may be contributing to difficulty	• Make dilemmas discussible	• Each feels understood and respected

Level of Dominance

## Left-Hand Column Example

What I was thinking (Left-hand)	What was spoken (Right-hand)
Don doesn't like to lose. Here he goes pushing personal views. We've had this conversation before.	Me: I don't understand why you have a problem with my suggestion.
If you're right we're already dead.	Don: Like I said this won't work. It will eventually get us in financial trouble.
	Me: It sounds like you want to do nothing. If we can't fix the business we might as well sell it.
That is just preying on the owner's fears. It might help if you offered ideas about how we could make this work.	Don: We've been through this before. Your proposal is too risky.
	Me: I'm not saying there's no risk; I'm saying that doing nothing is not the answer. Your team was there when we made the plan and they didn't see it as that big a risk.
The hell I did! I asked for their opinions.	Don: You were a steamroller and just pushed your ideas through. They said they tried to bring up the risks but you wouldn't listen.
	(and so on. . .)

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Listening

The Japanese Kanji symbol for listening elegantly brings these dimensions together.   The individual symbols that form the composite "to listen" include: Ear, King (Unity between Heaven, Man, and Earth), You, Eye, Undivided Attention, and Heart.
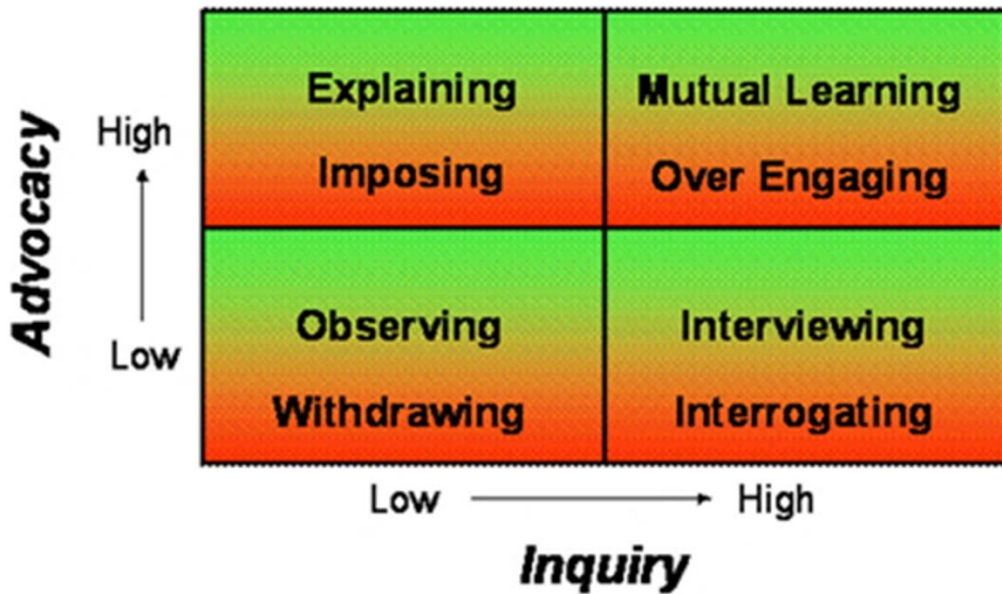

Separate Fact from Meaning
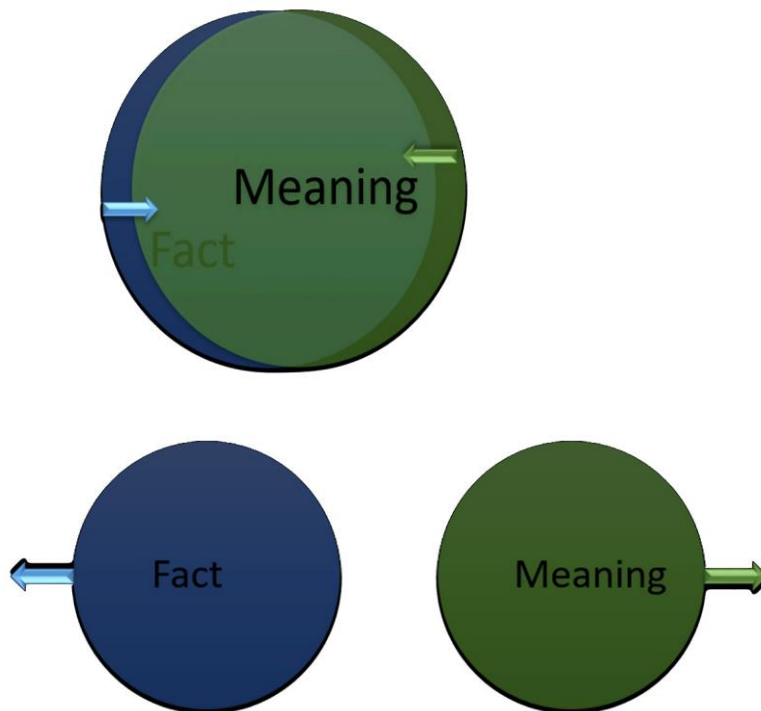
The Ladder of Inference

Questions to Ask	Ladder of Inference	Example
What action did I take based upon my beliefs?	**Actions**	I go.
What did I believe to be true that caused me to take that action?	**Beliefs**	I can go.
What conclusions did I draw that formed those beliefs?	**Conclusions**	I can trust the traffic light. I can trust others to follow the traffic light. I should obey the traffic light.
What assumptions was I making that led me to draw those conclusions?	**Assumptions**	The traffic light controls traffic.
What did I see/hear?	**Selected "Data"**	Black box with green light shining.
Data and experiences as a video tape recorder might capture it.	**Pool of Available Data**	Street scene with traffic including black box with red, yellow, and green lights. Cars to my right and left are stopped. The light facing me is green.

☐ = The Reinforcing Loop

| High | Explaining / Imposing | Mutual Learning / Over Engaging |
| Low | Observing / Withdrawing | Interviewing / Interrogating |

(Advocacy — vertical axis, Inquiry — horizontal axis: Low → High)

Balancing Advocacy and Inquiry	**Examples of What to Say**
Test your understanding of what others said	What I'm hearing you say (feel, think, react to, etc.) … Did I get that right? Have I missed anything?
Summarize	Here are the key points I heard…
State your views	The way I see it is … My concern is… Of the three options, I endorse...
Give examples that illustrate	Last year we were 30% under plan… When you said, 'Our morale is low,'… When you roll your eyes and sigh…
Make your reasoning explicit	Competitor X just announced a new product that leap-frogs our own. It will take 2-years to do the same given our most recent setback.

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State your conclusions as discussable options	One possibility is to look for a technology acquisition to regain our market advantage quickly. What path do to you favor?
Disclose your emotions, without assuming others are responsible for creating them	I'm feeling (concerned, upset, angry, frustrated...) by this conversation. Can we take a minute to talk about why?
Ask others for examples that illustrate their views	What are you seeing or hearing on this topic?
Ask others for the reasoning that connects their examples to their conclusions	Tell me more about how your example supports your conclusion. What assumptions are you making about why our technology is lagging?
Ask others for conclusions that flow from their reasoning	Given what you are saying, what do you think we ought to do to address our technology gap?
Seek a range of perspectives	John and I weighed in on this issue. What do the rest of you favor as options?
Share the reason for your questions	I'm asking because you may see things from a sales perspective that I may have missed. I'm asking because between all of us, there is a lot of knowledge and different viewpoints in the room.
Encourage others to challenge your assumptions and conclusions	In what ways do you see the situation differently?" Can you draw a different conclusion? What am I missing?
Ask if you're unknowingly contributing to difficulties	Is there anything I am doing that is keeping us from finding a solution?

Poor (closed) Inquiry Questions	Great (open) Inquiry Questions
Don't you agree?	In what ways is your proposal different?
Do others feel that way too?	What concerns have others expressed to you on this proposal?
Do you understand what I'm trying to say?	What's your reaction to this proposal?
Did you do that because of this, that, or because of something else?	What leads you to that conclusion?
Why don't you just do what I'm suggesting?	What about my proposal concerns you?
Why didn't you just tell me?	What got in the way of you just telling me? Did I do or say something to make it difficult?

Dealing with Disagreement	Example of What to Say
Seek to understand others' views	I'm hearing you to say … What might I be missing?
Ask others to make their reasoning, concerns, and/or interests known	What concerns do you want to address? What are you considering from your perspective that I might not have considered?
State your reasoning, concerns, interests with the intention of learning if others can see gaps	Here's how I'm see it… What might I be missing?
Discover ways to address mutual concerns and interests	I'm concerned about… How would you approach addressing these concerns?

Getting Through an Impasse	Examples of What to Say
Acknowledge the impasse without blame	We seem to be stuck. Neither of us seems to be persuaded by the other. Is there another point of view we can examine the issue from?
Identify assumptions and beliefs that contribute to the impasse, and test how others see it. Ask others to help, if needed	We appear to be working from different assumptions. For example, … How are you seeing it differently? What assumptions are we making? How would another stakeholder view this?
Reflect on what would need to be different for you to change your perception of the issue	Conditions that would lead me to change my perception would be… Are you aware of any examples? What conditions, if present, would lead you to change your perception?
Test your assumption via experimentation	Let's gather data on… and use it to test our assumptions. Are you open to an experiment where we try both options for a brief period and then re-evaluate?
Get outside opinion. Identify a mutually trusted individual to help you reflect on your current thinking, and to invent alternatives	Who could we ask to help us examine our thinking, and come up with alternatives?

Tie-Off

 Agree, this is good

 Basically agree, but with some hesitation and can go with the decision

 Not there yet, something is off

 Do not agree, this is wrong

Types of Conversations

There are three broad categories of Conversations for Results.

Conversations for Relationship

Conversations for Possibility

Conversations for Performance
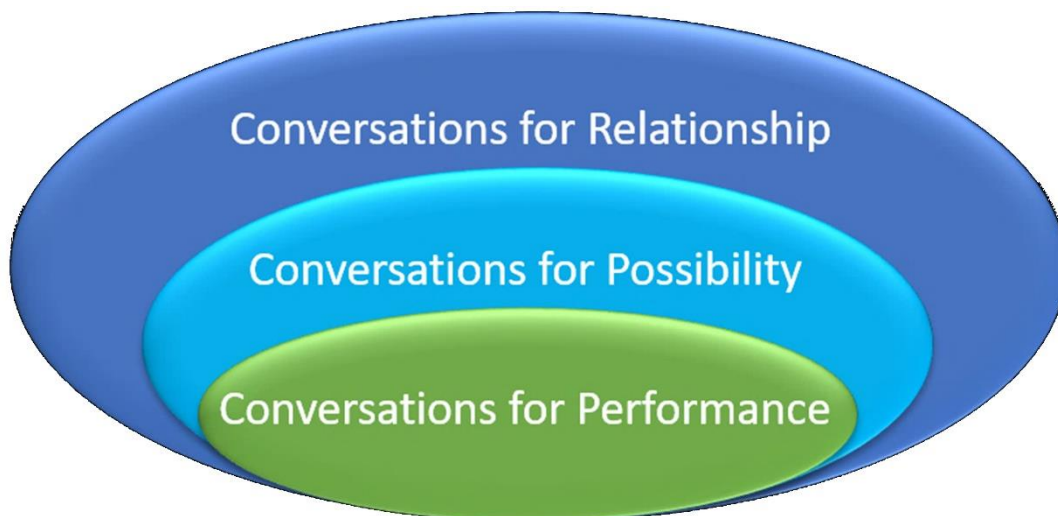
Trust

If you wrote trust as an equation, it would be:

$$Trust = f\, \frac{(Credibility) \times (Empathy)}{(Risk)}$$
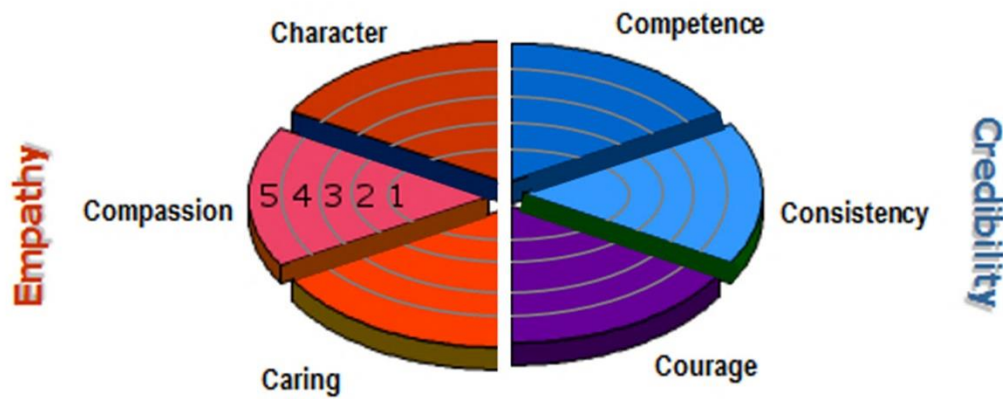
Trust and Intimacy
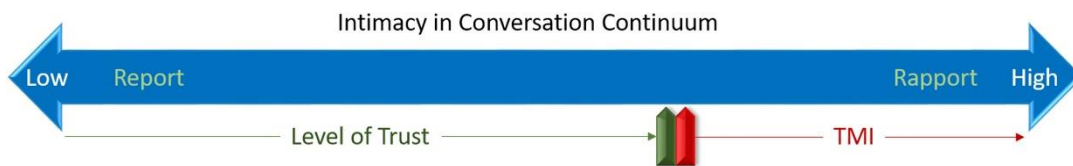
To Increase Trust	What it looks Like	Ways to Kill Trust
Seek first to understand	Listen to others before advocating for your position.	Focusing only on getting your point of view across.
Offer trust	Be the first to extend trust, within reasonable boundaries based on the situation.	Remaining closed and untrusting. Micro managing employees.
Straight talk	Speak the truth in love and caring. Tell it like it is, while respecting the individual.	Withholding information, putting too much spin on the message.
Face reality	Confront the tough issues head-on. Muster the courage to get difficult messages across the threshold of your lips.	Ignoring "the elephant in the room" and operating in a space of denial.
Show respect	Offer respect for everyone. Recognize and preserve the dignity of all others regardless of their station in life.	Acting rude toward others, especially those who are dependent on you in some way. Showing a lack of concern for others. Being dismissive, diminishing, or belittling.
Admit and correct mistakes	Apologize when wrong, commit to restoring any losses and ensure the offense will not happen again.	Trying to hide mistakes or passing the blame when you're wrong. Ignoring the situation.
Demonstrate improvement	When you let someone down, be sure they see your efforts to improve.	Continue making the same offenses. Try to pass off activity for results.

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Operate transparently	Be open, honest, genuine, and verifiable.	Operating with hidden agendas. Creating appearances different from reality.
Demonstrate loyalty	Maintain the integrity of information shared in confidence. Cover someone's back as in "I've got your 6"	Disclosing confidential information. Throwing others under the bus. Talking bad behind others back.
Deliver results	Deliver on-time, every time, with high quality.	Missing deadlines and not following through on promises.

Rapport Building Assessment				
When sitting, did you lean slightly forward, towards the person you're talking to, with hands open and arms and legs uncrossed?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you look at the other person about ½ of the time making eye-contact?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Were you careful not to make them feel uncomfortable with too much eye contact?	Yes☒	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
When listening, did you give nods, and make encouraging sounds affirming your interest?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you remember to smile using your whole face?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you use the other person's name early in the conversation to be polite and reinforce the name in your mind?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you ask open-ended questions?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you summarize, reflect, and clarify back to the other person what you think they have said, thereby giving the opportunity to clear any misunderstandings quickly?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you talk about things that refer to what the other person previously said and find links between common experiences?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you show empathy by demonstrating that you understand how the other person feels and can see things from their point of view?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
When in agreement with the other person, did you openly say so and say why?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you build on the other person's ideas without hijacking the conversation?	Yes☐	Partial ☒	No ☐	N/A☐
Were you non-judgmental towards the other person, letting go of stereotypes and any preconceived ideas you may have about the person?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you admit when you don't know the answer or made a mistake?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Were you genuine, with visual and verbal behaviors working together to maximize the impact of your communication?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you offer a compliment, avoid criticism and be polite?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did you ask for a small piece of advice that highlights a skillset of the other person?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐

| What people do in this stage:	To *move a group forward:*
Stage 1: Pseudo-community	
• Appear extremely pleasant & avoid all disagreements • Maintain a pretense that denies individual differences • Tell white lies, withhold truth and true feelings to avoid conflict • Speak in vague generalities while focusing on superficial topics	• Surface differences you hear • Create ground rules that make it safe to increase the level of honesty • Take a risk and share what you're experiencing • Challenge assumptions in a productive, supportive manner • Refuse to engage in a false sense that "everything's great"
What people do in this stage:	To *move a group forward:*
Stage 2: Chaos	
• Engage in well intentioned attempts to heal and convert others • Don't pretend there are no differences; try to remove them • Try to "convert" others to the prevailing "norm" • Unproductive, circular conflict and struggle - uncomfortable for most	• Don't suppress the conflict/emotion • Focus people on the issues & behaviors and don't allow personal attacks • Reinforce honest, productive communication • Support the use of ground rules to keep the environment safe • Redirect declarations, assertions, and assumptions into questions
What people do in this stage:	To *move a group forward:*
Stage 3: Emptying	
• Empty the barriers to authentic communication (our solutions only, prejudices, judgments) • Listen Actively • Stop trying to convert and change others • Let go of need to control	• Focus on being" with" people • Model active listening • Express your own emotions & observations • Verbally & non-verbally support people talking about "the hard stuff"

What people do in this stage:	To *move a group forward:*
Stage 4: Community	
• Experience a safe place to share • Appreciate & celebrate interpersonal differences • Allow themselves and others to "be themselves;" respect & acceptance is the norm • Fight gracefully, share equally, decide more effectively • Authentic communication is present & experienced	• Reflect to the group periodically how they're communicating & being • Encourage the group to "stay in" this space • Understand this process is cyclical and requires ongoing effort, even in a mature team and relationships
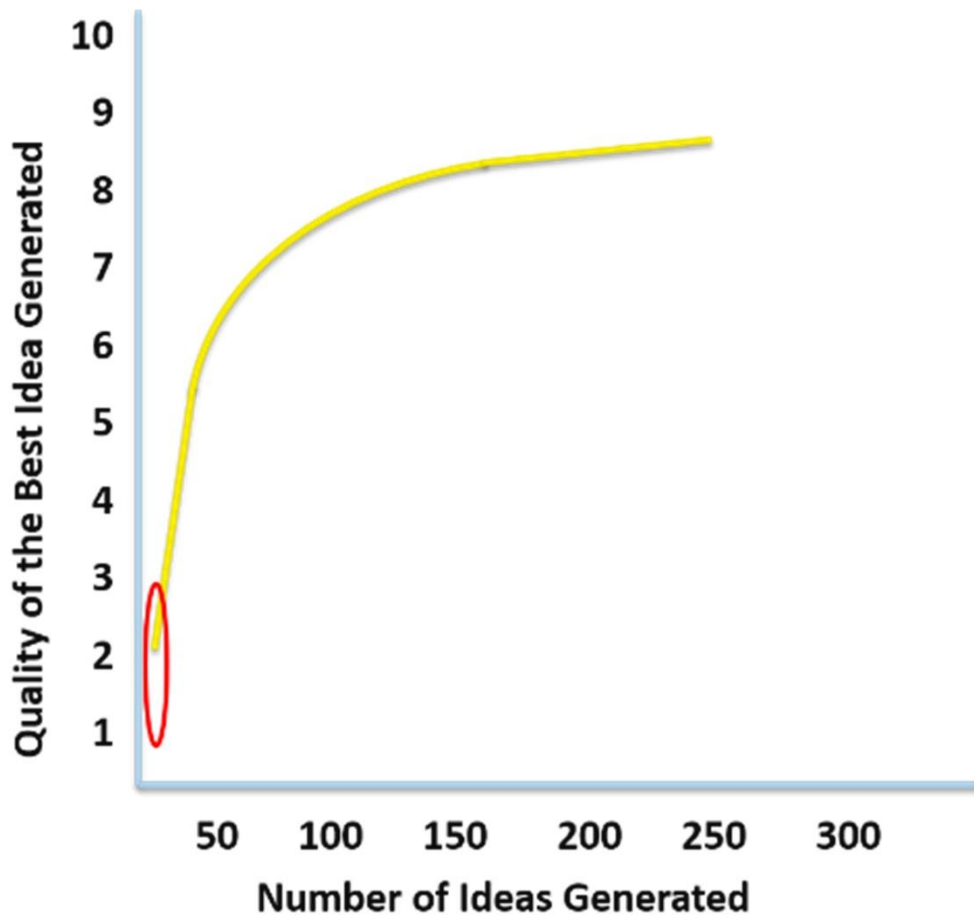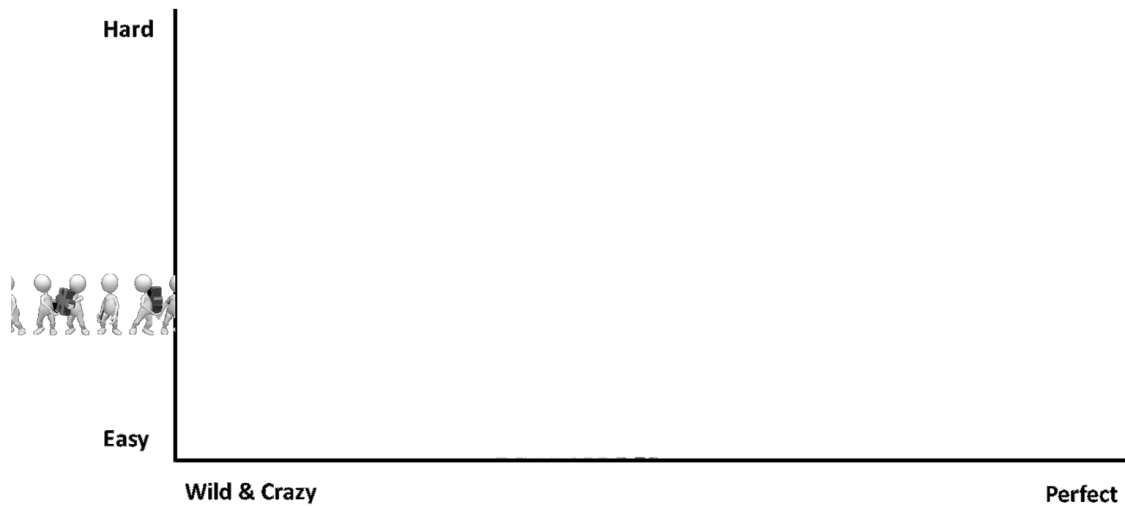
The vertical axis (y-axis) represents effort to implement. The horizontal axis (x-axis) represents feasibility. Feasibility ranges from wild and crazy, to the threshold of something useful, to perfect. When rating and placing ideas on this chart, the most viable ideas show up in the lower right corner. This is where you find the ideas that are **Easy and Feasible.**

Solution Selection

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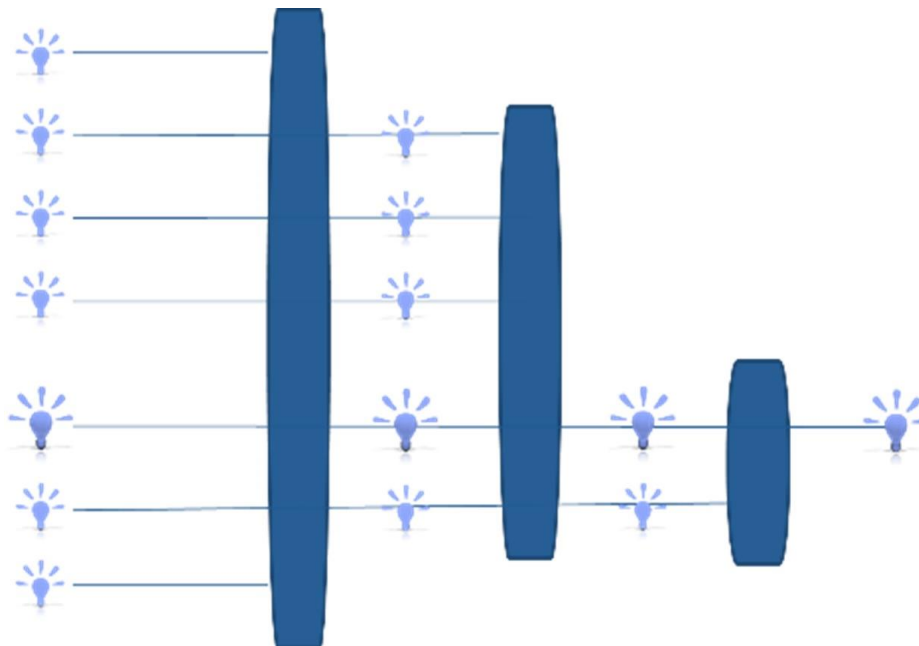
Conversations for Action are based on the complete atom of work.
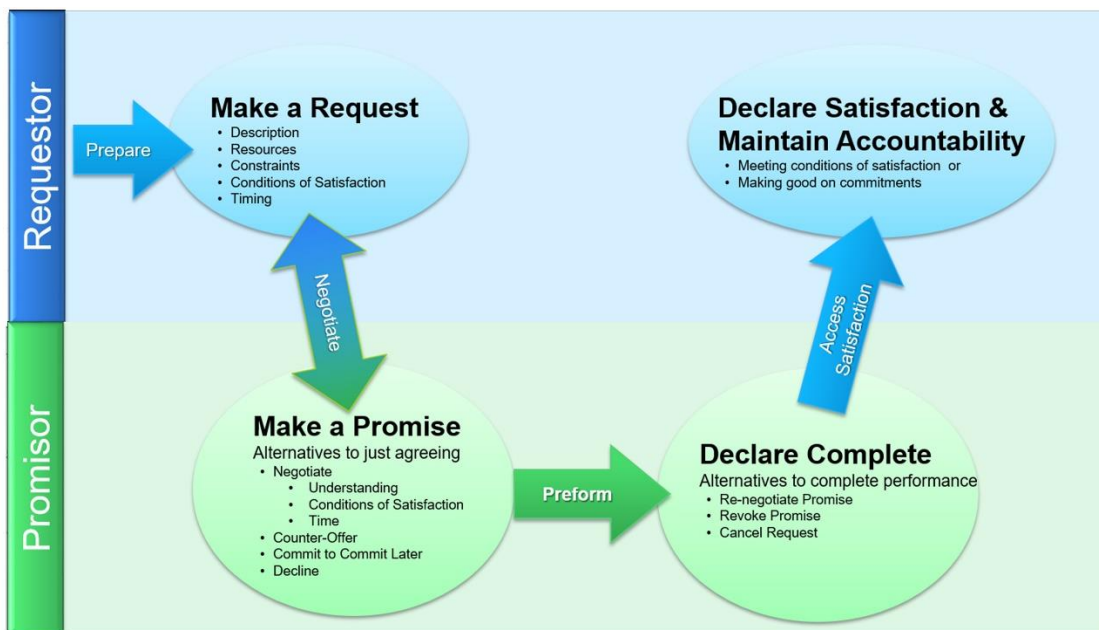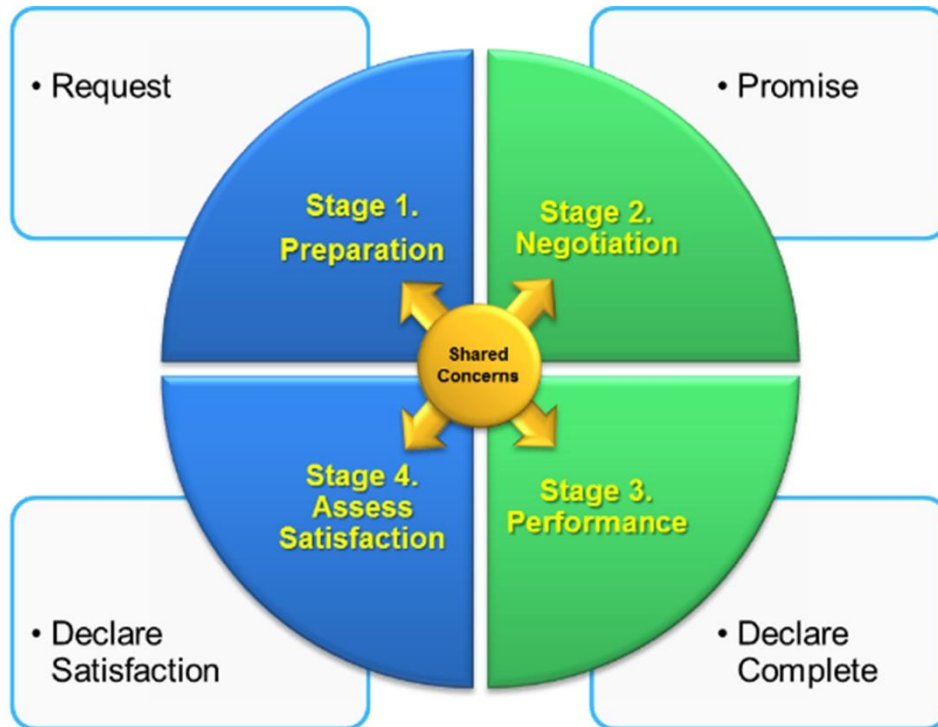
Diagnosing Breakdowns
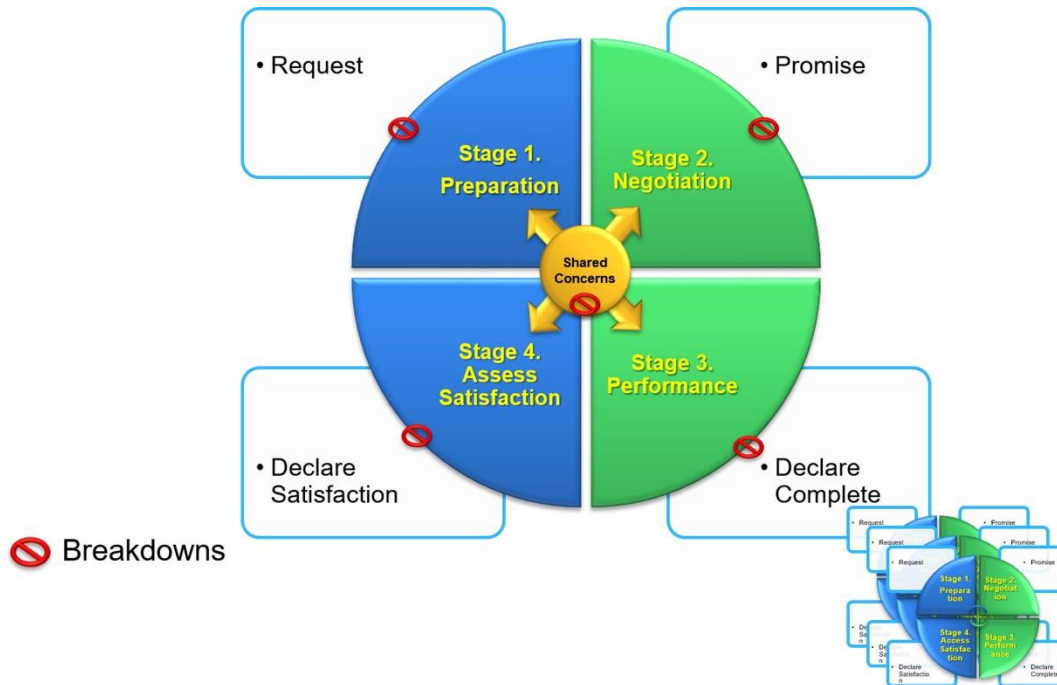
Stage 1				
Was there a clear and complete description of the request?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Were resources identified and made available?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Were the Conditions of Satisfaction specified so there is no ambiguity?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Was the timing specified?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Were constraints specified?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Stage 2				
Was there a solid promise?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Were negotiations complete?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Was there an acceptable counter offer?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Was any commitment to commit later followed up?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Was the request declined?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Stage 3				
Was the task completed?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Was the promise re-negotiated?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Was the request cancelled?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Was the work declared complete?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐

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Stage 4	
Were the deliverables consistent with the request?	Yes☐ Partial ☐ No ☐ N/A☐
Were resources identified and made utilized?	Yes☐ Partial ☐ No ☐ N/A☐
Were the Conditions of Satisfaction met with acceptable quality?	Yes☐ Partial ☐ No ☐ N/A☐
Was the delivery on time?	Yes☐ Partial ☐ No ☐ N/A☐
Were constraints followed?	Yes☐ Partial ☐ No ☐ N/A☐
Shared Concerns	
Were the shared concerns acknowledged?	Yes☐ Partial ☐ No ☐ N/A☐
Were the shared concerns in alignment?	Yes☐ Partial ☐ No ☐ N/A☐

Conversations for Delegation

Level	Label	Decide or Recommend	Get Approval	Act	Report	Note
1	**Just do it!**	X		X		Make the decision, act and do not report. These are often daily activities expected with the job.
2	**Do it & report**	X		X	X	Make the decision, act, and report your action on a regular basis. These items are important for your manager to know and may show up on your performance review.
3	**Get approval**	X	X	-	-	Make the decision and get approval before acting. These are typical of issues that other parts of the organization.
4	**Input only**	X	-	-	-	Gather data and provide input to upper management so they can make an informed decision. Do not act until explicitly asked.

Accountability Assessment

Up Front				
Were clear expectations set in advance?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Was the individual capable of completing the task?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Were there clear measurements and standards?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did they make a solid commitment?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
During and After				
Did you provide clear and timely feedback?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Did the individual have an opportunity to make things right?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Were there clear and appropriate consequences?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐
Was praise given for success?	Yes☐	Partial ☐	No ☐	N/A☐

Conversations for Confrontation

Concisely state the heart of the issue in 1 or 2 sentences. There may be more than one underlying issue so be sure to call them out separately, on separate forms. The issue could be a concern, challenge, opportunity, or recurring problem that is becoming more of an issue.	The issue is…
What's at stake? How does this effect: the team, customers, goals, profits, loss, costs, products, services, suppliers, timing, the future, or other relevant factors? What does the future look like if it continues?	This is important because…
What are your emotions resulting from the issue? Emotions include: surprise, disappointment, anger, concern, etc. What is triggering this emotion? Does this surface yet another issue?	My emotions around this issue are…
What is your contribution to the issue?	I may have contributed by…
What is important to the other person? What is at stake for them and how might they react to your addressing the issue? How do you want to respond to their reactions?	They may respond with…
What specific results do I want? What are the observable changes necessary? If the issue was no longer present, what would a successful scenario look like?	An ideal outcome is…
Make a list of background facts detailing the who, what, when, where, why and how. What forces are in play; what is the status? This list will prepare you to address issues and potential push-back in the conversation.	Relevant background information…
What options are up for consideration?	The consequences of no notable change could include…
What are acceptable alternative solutions. Often there is more than one right answer. This is a list you keep in your hip pocket until it's needed.	Other acceptable solutions include…

Emotion	Link	Goal
Sadness	Appreciation	Joy
Anger	Understanding	Love
Fear	Reassurance	Peace

The tools are SETT – METT (Subtle Expressions Training Tool - Micro Expressions Training Tool)

Happiness
— Crow's feet wrinkles
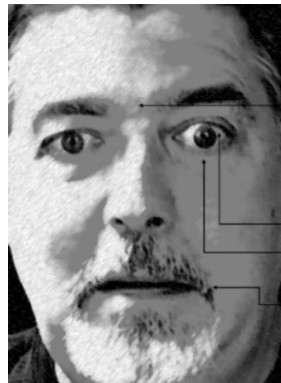— Movement from muscles that orbit the eye
— Pushed up cheeks

Anger
— Eyebrows down and together
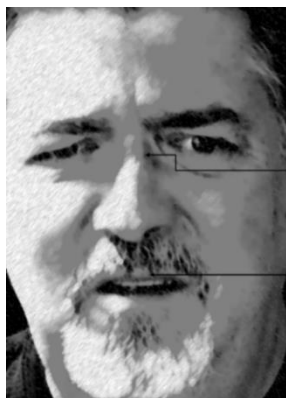— Eye glare
— Narrowing of the lips

Surprise
— Eyebrows raised
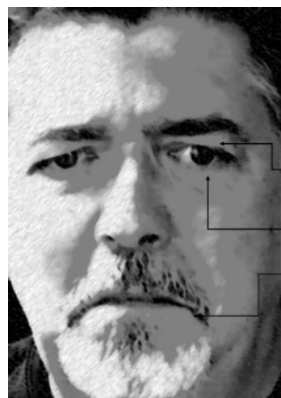— Eyes widened
— Mouth open

Fear
— Eyebrows raised and pulled together
— Raised upper eyelids
— Tensed lower eyelids
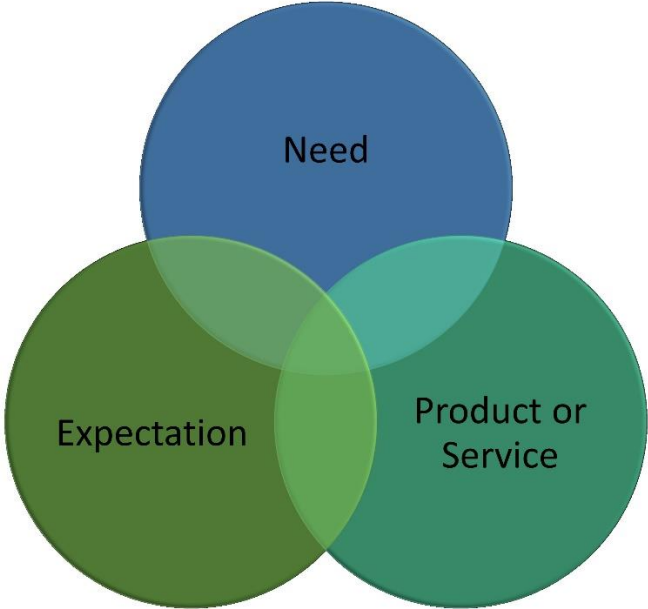— Lips slightly stretched horizontally back to ears

Disgust
— Nose wrinkled
— Upper lip raised

Sadness
— Drooping upper eyelids
— Loosing focus in eyes
— Slight pull down of lip corners

Conversations for Selling

	Dissatisfaction	Dissatisfaction	Dissatisfaction	Satisfaction
Need	Aligned	Aligned	Not Aligned	Aligned
Expectation	Aligned	Not Aligned	Aligned	Aligned
Product or Service	Not Aligned	Aligned	Aligned	Aligned