



# *Leadership & The Art of Conversation*

*By Kim H. Krisco*

*An Analysis  
and Executive Comments*

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# *What do you do all day?*



*What would you say if your 7yr old asked what you do?*

*For you, as for most people,  
conversation is work.*





*Conversation is*

*Leadership in Action*

"Unlike the old saying "Talk is not cheap", talk is the driving force behind positive change and growth that moves people and organizations into the future."

Kim H. Krisco



80% of the average, work-related conversation is in the past-domain

- Opinions
- Assessments
- Interpretations
- Comparisons
- Analyses
- Judgments

Kim Krisco calls this the **Domain of Description**

Past

Present

Future

**80%**

Domain of Description

**15%**

Domain of Action

**5%**

Domain of Possibility



*Shift conversations toward the Future*

**PLAY VIDEO HERE**





# Present Statements: The Domain of Action

## **Requests**

- *What* is to be done?
- *When* is it to be done?
- *Who* will be doing it?

## **Responses**

- Accept
- Decline
- Counteroffer



## Present Statements: The Domain of Action

### **Promises**

- Like a request it specifies what and when
  - It demonstrates your urgency and commitment to the effort
- A request coupled with a promise can be a powerful tool for creating action.



# Listening Skills

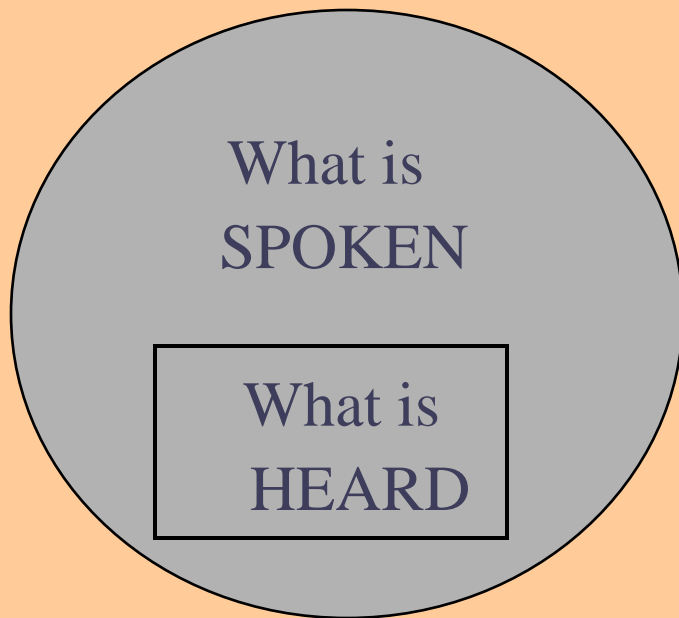
- “When you treat **listening** with the same care and concern you put into **speaking**, your conversations will have the influence and effect you want.” **Kim H. Krisco**



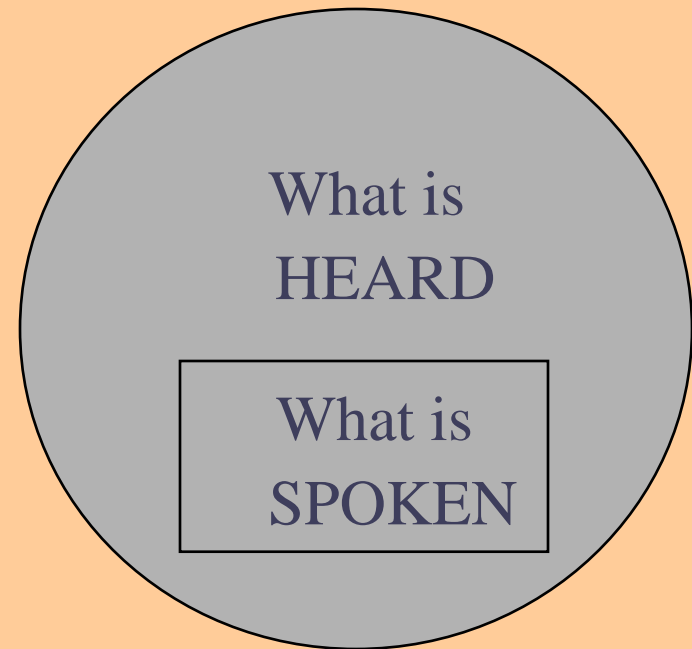
# Listening Skills

- Reactive listening = listening *to*
- Affirmative listening = listening *for*
- Listen affirmatively to others as well as your own thoughts.

## Reactive Listening



## Proactive Listening



*Proactive listening enables you to hear more  
than the words*

# *How does one bring conversations to the future?*

## Future Statements: Declarations

- What if ...
- I think it's possible to ...
- This team is capable of ....
- Imagine ...





# Additional Principles

- Background Conversations
- Recognizing Distinctions
- Creating Breakthroughs

# Background Conversations

- Invisible, unspoken conversations
- If you don't recognize and control background conversations, you become vulnerable to their control.

Women can't cut it,  
they're not as committed.

Unless you put in  
you're not serious about  
the project

Don't challenge senior  
executives  
or criticize their pet programs.

# Couching

- By guessing your audience's internal critic you disempower it
  - “This might seem farfetched, but let me finish...”
  - “This may seem like a waste of time, but let's take the time anyway...”
- Use this when you expect an adverse response



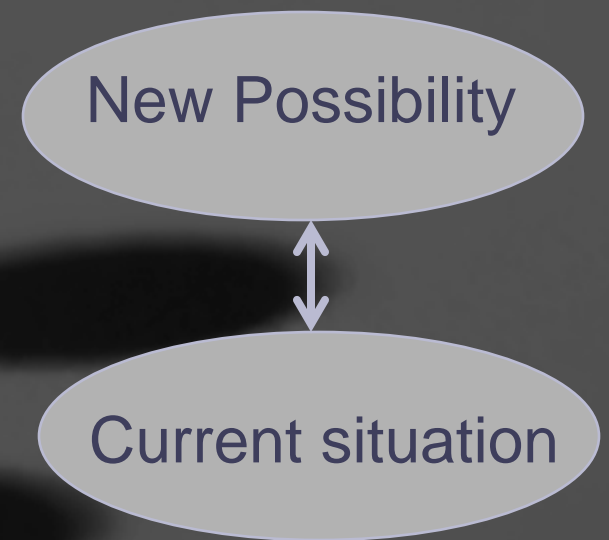
## Distinctions in Conversation

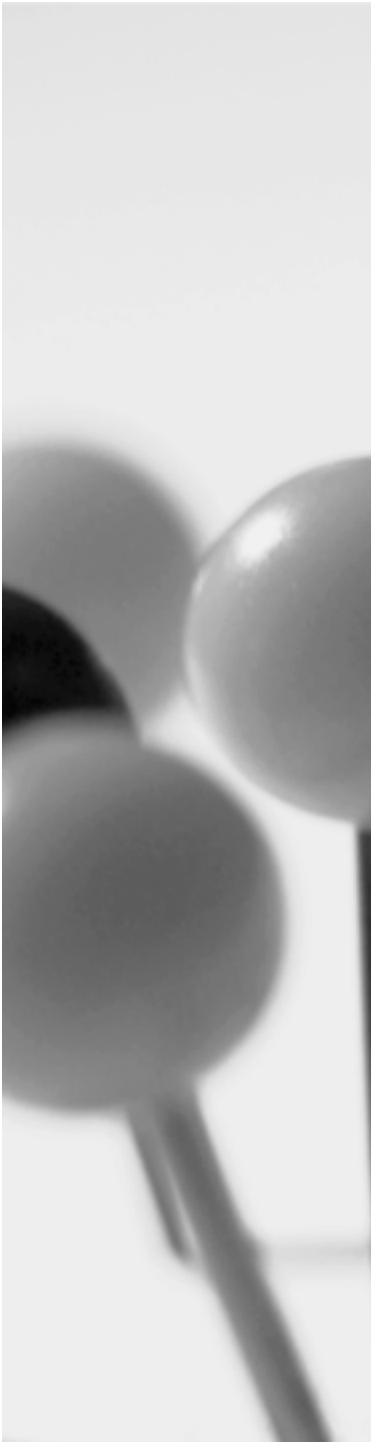
- “A clear distinction is the prelude to awareness, and awareness is the first step in managing the art of leadership conversation”  
Kim H. Krisco

# Creating Breakthroughs

- Creating a Vision that may seem impossible
- Repeated messages
- Moves one beyond incremental change

***“The bigger the difference between a new possibility and the ways things are now, the bigger the breakthrough you can achieve.”***





## Leaders that have mastered the Art of Conversation

- Bring conversations from the past domain to the future and then to the present.
- Treat listening with the same care and concern as they put into speaking.
- Create a future vision that brings about breakthroughs

# Executive Comments

**Eddie Reed – AOL LLC, Sr. Technical Director, Identity Services Development**

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“Good listening skills are important; however, equally important is the speaker’s sensitivity to the listener’s reactions. Interruptions are usually a sign that you’re not getting to the point.”

“In your face communications works best – short and to the point. Avoid attachments.”

“Repetition of the message is critical.”

# Executive Comments

Greg Kozy – AOL LLC, Vice President,  
Business Systems/Ops QA

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“ Manage discussions so all voices are heard. It’s often the quiet, unassertive that has the best viewpoint.”

“ Know your audience; many careers are ruined by not properly speaking/conversing to the audience.”

# Executive Comments

Tiane Mitchell – AOL LLC, Vice President,  
Office of Diversity and Inclusion

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“Act as though it is so – be future focused, intentional, and step into it as a belief.”

“Discern between dissent and dissonance. Listen to the ‘voice of dissonance’, the oppositional view can create the opportunity to bring an idea into alignment.”

# Executive Comments

John Cormier – Director-at-Large, PMI Washington DC Chapter, Independent Consultant

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“ Conversation defines you. It is the most often used skill of the Project Manager, yet most spend relatively little time developing that skill.”

“ Project Managers make it happen so conversation is essential to the success or failure of a project.”

# In Summary

1

Be aware of the power of conversation and pay close attention to how you speak and listen.

2

Don't allow conversations to drift into the past realm; use past statements to establish a connection and then move on.

3

Shift the conversation first from the past then to the future, and then to the present.

4

Be aware of, manage, and change the broad, invisible, unspoken conversations that determine the way people see and interpret the world.

5

Manage your listening and that of others by substituting affirmative for reactive listening.

# Resources

- *Leadership & The Art of Conversation  
Conversation As A Management Tool* by  
Kim H. Krisco, Jaico Publishing House
- *Leading with Questions* by Michael  
Marquardt