Leadership & The Art of Conversation

By Kim H. Krisco

An Analysis
and Executive Comments

Linda Hammon

Presented by Linda Hammon, PMP
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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**
Shift conversations toward the Future
The Power of Future Conversation
(in stereo)
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

What is SPOKEN

What is HEARD

Proactive Listening

What is HEARD

What is SPOKEN

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 ...

Declaration
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.
Less 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

“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

“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

“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

“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.
Leadership & The Art of Conversation
Conversation As A Management Tool by Kim H. Krisco, Jaico Publishing House

Leading with Questions by Michael Marquardt