



Leadership is a Conversation T⁴ Teaming for Transformation



Leadership is a Conversation

*How to improve employee engagement and alignment
in today's flatter, more networked organizations*

[Link to Harvard Business Review](#)



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Problem statement – Why conversational leadership ?

More leaders today recognize that driving their team in a traditional command-and-control manner doesn't work anymore.

Leaders today need to communicate things like goals and vision which are still needed to keep an organization aligned. In a small company communication among employees is simple. But as a company grows, communication becomes more difficult.



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Are there any other kind of leadership styles ?

Participative Leadership seeks to involve other people in the process

Situational Leadership requires skills to manage different situations

Transactional Leadership seeks clear structures, rewards and punishments

Transformational Leadership puts passion and energy to transform organization

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Methodology – Research to shape a conversational model

Interview with professional communication experts and top leaders from various organizations (start-ups, large, small, non-profit etc.)

Developing a conversational approach in terms of an organization culture in which the communication function becomes a form that two friends would talk.

Four principles of conversational leadership:

1. Intimacy
2. Interactivity
3. Inclusion
4. Intentionality



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INTIMACY – 1st principle of conversational leadership

“Intimacy is closing gaps between employees and their leader.”

- It is not physical proximity but rather emotional or mental proximity
- It is about trust, being authentic, communicating the vision, and at the same time listening to what employees have to say



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INTERACTIVITY – 2nd principle of conversational leadership

“Once some intimacy is established, it's important to keep the conversation flowing.”

- Like a personal conversation, organizational one should be bidirectional too.
- Social thinking – Using interactive and social tools to communicate within the company
- Interactivity isn't just about technology. It's equally important to build an interactive culture.



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INCLUSION – 3rd principle of conversational leadership

“Allow employees having voice to engage them. And engagement will drive more effort. And effort will drive individual performance, and subsequently that will drive organizational performance.”

- Inclusion means giving employees a chance to help tell a company's story. And avoiding risks that can be arise by uncontrolled messaging.

- Methods:

Employees might create content like

- internal / public blogs, wikis, podcasts

- creating guidelines, best practices, success stories



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INTENTIONALITY – 4th principle of conversational leadership

“Even if you can't control everything anymore you still are the leader. You still have responsibility for setting the tone and the direction.”

- Having a clear agenda / goals
- The goals should be to ensure that all the employees understand the company's strategy
- As planning a conversation, it should be in alignment with company's strategic goals.



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Summary: Principles of conversational leadership

INTIMACY	INTERACTIVITY	INCLUSION	INTENTIONALITY
"getting close"	"channels"	"content creation and control"	"pursuing an agenda"
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- gaining trust- listening well- getting personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- social thinking- promoting dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- expanding employees' roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- alignment of vision and goals



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Critical discussion

Benefits

- Minimizing distance (borders) that separate leaders from employees
- Speaking to employees more directly and authentically
- More transparency
- Engaging employees and sharing vision and goals more easily
- Shifting a top-down distribution to a bottom-up exchange of ideas

Drawbacks

- Intimacy efforts might be very time-intensive
- Interactivity events can cause privacy concerns
- If there is no some kind of common accepted regulations, Inclusion actions might drive out of control



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Elements of Organizational Conversation

Intimacy

How leaders relate to employees

Interactivity

How leaders use communication channels

Inclusion

How leaders develop organizational content

Intentionality

How leaders convey strategy

Old Model: Corporate Communication

Information flow is primarily top-down

Tone is formal and corporate

Messages are broadcast to employees

Print newsletters, memos, and speeches predominate

Top executives create and control messaging

Employees are passive consumers of information

Communication is fragmented, reactive, and ad hoc

Leaders use assertion to achieve strategic alignment



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New Model: Organizational Communication

Communication is personal and direct

Leaders value trust and authenticity

Leaders talk *with* employees, not *to* them

Organizational culture fosters back-and-forth, face-to-face interaction

Leaders relinquish a measure of control over content

Employees actively participate in organizational messaging

A clear agenda informs all communication

Leaders carefully explain the agenda to employees

Strategy emerges from a cross-organizational conversation



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What It Means for Employers and Employees

Leaders emphasize listening to employees rather than just speaking to them

Employees engage in a bottom-up exchange of ideas

Leaders use video and social media tools to facilitate two-way communication

Employees interact with colleagues through blogs and discussion forums

Leaders involve employees in telling the company story
Employees act as brand ambassadors and thought leaders

Leaders build their messaging around company strategy

Employees take part in creating strategy via specially designed communication vehicles