LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION: CONSTRUCTING CONVERSATIONS THAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Cornell Municipal Clerks Institute (CMCI)—Summer Workshop Series 2015

Paula Younger
Agenda At-A-Glance

- Welcome and Agenda Review
- Participant Introductions and Expectations
- Setting the Stage: “Creating A New Context” Group Exercise
- Constructing Conversations That Make The Difference (Part 1)

Break (15 minutes)

- Constructing Conversations That Make The Difference (Part 2)
- The FFID Approach to Orchestrating Interactions
- Research-to-Practice: Conversation Design and Planning
- Wrap Up/ WOWs ‘n HOW ABOUTs
- Adjourn
Introductions

- Name
- Affiliation/Position
- Length of time in position
- One “expectation” of this workshop.
Agreements for Working Together

- Be mindful of the agenda
- Speak from your own experience
- Keep confidences and assume the same from others
- Use the opportunity to “unlearn”
- Have fun!
Workshop Focus: Constructing Conversations that Make the Difference

1. Creating a New Context
2. Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns
3. Understanding Dynamic Complexity
4. Adopting a Formula for Thinking and Deciding Together
Workshop Focus: Constructing Conversations that Make the Difference

A Natural Thinking Process
Setting the Stage: Creating A New Context

Group Exercise

- Determine groups of 1s and 2s
- Create your sandwich boards with this message: “CMCI Experiment in Progress” and “Please Don’t Interrupt. Thanks!”
- Experience a new context for working together
- You have 15 minutes
Setting the Stage: Creating a New Context for Working/Deciding Together

1. How did it feel?
2. What did you do to compensate for the “disability”?
3. What did you do as a team to compensate for the other’s “disability”?
4. What was it about your individual experience that required you to think differently?
5. Why this experiment?
Creating a New Context for Working/Deciding Together

- **Link Minds**—The complexity and speed of change have made it impossible for one person to know it all.

- **Share Knowledge/Know-How**—What we share with others is what ultimately gets the job done.

- **Shift from Facilitator to Facilitative**—Ease the way for people to think and act together. Instead of having to know, help build the capacity for more people to “be in the know.”
Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns

- Watch out for the “TKOs.”
- Look to embrace the “big picture.”
BREAK (15 minutes)

Agenda At-A-Glance

- Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns and Understanding Dynamic Complexity
- The FFID Approach to Orchestrating Interactions
- Research-to-Practice: Conversation Design and Planning (Exercise)
- Wrap Up/WOWs ‘n How Abouts
- Adjourn
Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns

Watch out for the “TKO”

Our thinking patterns are our habits of mind that become ingrained.

They define for us Truth (Facts), Knowing (Experience), and Opinion (Feelings) which are often confused.
Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns

Look to Embrace the Big Picture

- **Task**—*What* has to be done?
- **Process**—*How* is it to be done?
- **Purpose**—*Why* do we need to do it?

And when these are **not balanced** . . .
Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns

. . . the result is limited thinking perspectives:

- Task (What we do)—things get done, but it tends to be directive, not participatory.
- Process (How we do it)—things get done, but usually by oneself.
- Purpose (Why we do it)—things get done, but with a tendency toward trying to keep everyone happy.
Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns means being mindful of our TKOs and working to see the larger perspective of things (i.e., a healthy balance of task + process + purpose).
Constructing Conversations that Make the Difference

Recap:

1. Creating a New Context
2. Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns
3. **Understanding Dynamic Complexity**
4. Adopting a Formula for Thinking and Deciding Together
Understanding Dynamic Complexity

Dynamics create the relationship among the details and the assumptions.

There are **3 basic dynamics** in any organization:

- **Economic** Dynamic (*Environment/What we do*)
- **Political** Dynamic (*Leadership/How we do it*)
- **Cultural** Dynamic (*Competence and Confidence/Why we do it*)
## Understanding Dynamic Complexity

### Framing Challenges in Today’s Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynamic</th>
<th>Perceived Demand/Conflict</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Key Mindset to Create</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Tension</strong> (Operations)</td>
<td>Balance resources to need or Do more with less</td>
<td>Innovate or Be Overwhelmed</td>
<td><em>What do we need to start doing, stop doing, or keep doing but differently?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Tension</strong> (Decision-making)</td>
<td>Control or Involvement</td>
<td>Bureaucratic or Participatory</td>
<td><em>What is the role each of us can play?</em> (As a leader, how do you balance the need for both bureaucratic structure and participation?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Tension</strong> (Style/customs)</td>
<td>Identity or Knowledge</td>
<td>Hold to tradition or Look to change as an opportunity</td>
<td><em>What is in sync and what is not?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding Dynamic Complexity

- Creates the relationship among the details and the assumptions.

- Allows getting to the *why* of what we do (i.e., purpose, competence and confidence) to energize people for the *how*.

- Allows flexibility in creating the mindset needed to make strategic choices toward action.
Constructing Conversations that Make the Difference

Recap:

1. Creating a New Context
2. Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns
3. Understanding Dynamic Complexity
4. Adopting a Formula for Thinking and Deciding Together
The FFID Approach

- **Facts** (objective data)
- **Feelings** (reflect on experience)
- **Implications** (interpretation)
- **Decision** (conclusion)

**FFID** rests on two basic principles:

1. Every person has a perspective that needs to be recognized; and
2. Asking the right questions are more powerful than assuming there is the “right answer.”
The FFID Approach

- **Facts**: *What did you see? Who was involved?* (seeking objective data)

- **Feelings**: *What do you like/dislike? What are your similar experiences?* (reflect on experience)

- **Implications**: *What will the consequences be? What might need to change?* (interpretation)

- **Decision**: *What are we agreeing to? Who will have oversight?* (conclusion)
The FFID Approach

- A formula for structuring conversations that help people move from one level to the next, challenging assumptions along the way.
- Intentional sequencing questions to reach a decision.
The FFID Approach
What Happens When We Skip a Level

____X____ + Feelings + Implications + Decision = Decision without data; let’s hope it was a “no brainer.”

Facts + _____X_____ + Implications + Decision = Decision is made without feeling or experience; no passion or ownership.

Facts + Feelings + ______X______ + Decision = Decision is made without analysis; the “emotional buy.”

Facts + Feelings + Implications + ______X______ = There is no decision, but a great discussion; the “group think.”

Facts + Feelings + Implications + Decision = Firm decision is made based on data, feelings, implications, and conclusions.
Constructing Conversations That Make the Difference

Research-to-Practice: An Exercise in Conversation Design and Planning
Leadership Communication: Constructing Conversations That Make the Difference

Wrap Up

- Creating a New Context for Working Together
- Shifting Habitual Thinking Patterns
  TKO: Truth (Facts), Knowing (Experience), and Opinion (Feelings)
  Embracing the Big Picture (Task, Process, Purpose)
- Understanding Dynamic Complexity
  (Economic, Political, Cultural)
- The FFID Approach for Constructing Conversation
Wows ‘n How Abouts

I didn’t realize . . .

How About . . .
Leadership Communication: Constructing Conversations That Make the Difference

Thank you.

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