

Ten Conversations: Creating Alignment and Action

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“An organization’s results are determined through webs of human commitments, born in webs of human conversations.” Fernando Flores

At the heart of leadership is the capacity to create results that matter to the people you work with and the people you serve. When you and those you work with have a common understanding and a shared commitment to achieve measurable results that matter to you all, then acting together effectively can become your daily practice. Having the ability to know the kind of conversation that is required in a particular situation to be in alignment and action together is a powerful leadership skill.

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I. Conversations for High Action, High Alignment

The first step is to notice the current level of alignment and action for yourself and those you work with. Once you know the situation you are in, the second step is to choose a powerful conversation that will move you to or sustain you in high action and high alignment.

<p style="text-align: center;">High action, low alignment</p> <p>A leader working actively and independently to contribute to the result, but not reaching out to build relationships with others to achieve complementary efforts.</p> <p>Conversations that forge alignment: Meaning, Relationship, Possibility, Success, Results</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">High action, high alignment</p> <p>A leader with resilient relationships acting on collaborative decisions and being accountable for measurably improving results.</p> <p>Conversation that sustain high action, high alignment: Reflection/Learning, Results</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Low action, low alignment</p> <p>A leader observing what is going and not engaging in either relationship building or taking action that can contribute to result.</p> <p>Conversation that forge alignment and ignite action: Meaning, Personal Power, Results</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Low action, high alignment</p> <p>A leader joining with others and fostering relationships, but not using the relationships to leverage contributions to the result.</p> <p>Conversations that ignite action: Accountability, Commitments/Promises, Action, Results</p>

II. Ways to Start the Ten Conversations Moving Towards High Alignment

Leaders engaging people to work together for a common result requires connecting different interests, commitments, and perspectives in a new way so everyone has a relationship to each other and a shared result. Low alignment is a symptom of undeveloped relatedness. The four conversations of meaning, relationship, possibility and success move you and others out of low alignment by fostering aligned connections to shared results.

Conversation	Possible ways to start the conversation
Meaning	This is what is important to me and what I want to do with you... What is important to you? What matters to you? What do you want to do together?
Relationship	I'm not satisfied with our level of commitment and I'd like us to talk about it. I'd like to hear what you value about our working together? How can we build a cohesive working relationship
Success	What a successful outcome for each of us? What are our conditions of satisfaction for our work together?
Possibility	What can we create together? What is possible? What are the different options? What is open to us? What is our true potential? What haven't we considered?

Moving Towards High Action

Mobilizing action requires addressing issues of pace, capacity, competency, and peer accountability. Intentional conversations of accountability, commitments/promises, action, and results can support moving a group to action.

Conversation	Possible ways to start the conversation
Accountability	This is what I am contributing...In what ways are you willing to contribute towards our success? When are you willing to make the contribution? What are you willing to say yes to? What do you say no to? What are the consequences for each of us of taking this action? What's required of us that no one has yet taken responsibility for?
Commitment and Promises	What is your commitment to the results and the work so that we can meet our goals? What is your commitment to me so that I can be successful? What commitment do you need from me so you can be successful? What has each of us promised to?
Action	Lets coordinate the timing and communication of our tasks in order to get this work done in time. This is how I am progressing on my commitments...How are you progressing on your commitments? Do you want my input? Do you have any input for me? What proposals do you have for who needs to do what when?
Results	What outcome do we want to see? How important is that result? What are we willing to do, stop doing, not do or change to achieve that result? Is this bottom line reasonable? What do others expect of us? What do you expect as a result of our working together? What do you expect that our work will produce? Who will benefit from achieving the result? How will we know if we have achieved the result? Who are partners who can contribute?

Conversation to Move Out of Low Action Low Alignment

The cornerstone conversation to move out of a place of both low alignment and low action is one that allows you or those you work with to reflect on their own personal power – the power to act and the power to forge relationships.

Conversation	Possible ways to start the conversation
Personal Power	If you could move forward on your own, what would you do? What prevents you from exercising your power? What are your sources of power -- From your own unique gifts, talents and experience? In your roles of both formal and informal authority? In the systems you are part of? If there were no constraints how might you approach this? What do you need from us to support you? What can you give yourself permission to do? Is there risk you need to mitigate? If this is not a place you want to be what can you do to make it meaningful? What do you need to do to leave?

Conversation to Sustain High Action and High Alignment

Once you are in a place of high action and high alignment there are conversations of reflection and learning that can sustain this high level of engagement until the program results are achieved.

Conversation	Possible ways to start the conversation
Reflection	What just happened? What did we learn? What should we do next time? Were our working assumptions accurate when we started? Isn't it time to stop and reflect? What of the conversations that got us here do we need to have again?

III. Practice

Identify what conversation you need to have with whom. What do you hope to achieve with this conversation? What was the impact of the conversation – what happened? Journal...keep practicing.