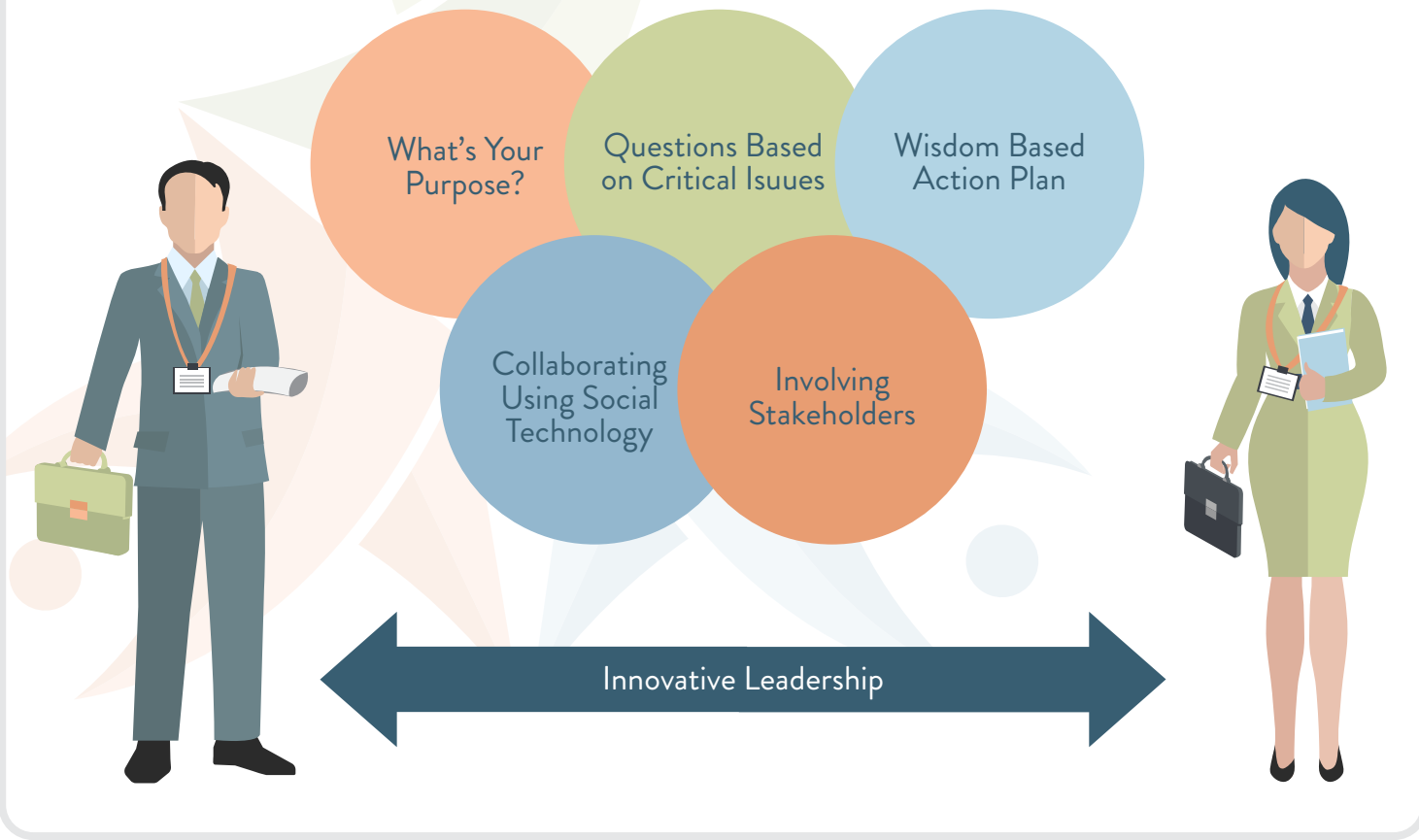




The Conversational Leadership Framework

This framework was created by Thomas Hurley and Juanita Brown. It is helpful in understanding the key aspects of conversational leadership and how they can be applied.



World Café Tables



Asking the Right Questions

Here are some guidelines to help you create the best questions possible:

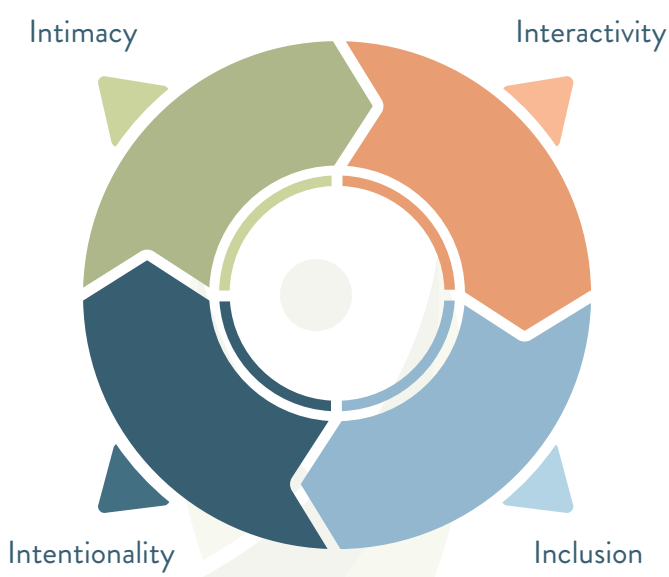
- State all questions affirmatively.
- Start out with a leading question that can build on the affirmative topic choice.
- Provide a broad definition of the topic.
- Invite participants to speak in story and narrative.
- Avoid report talk and use rapport talk in your approach.
- Be okay with ambiguity; this gives participants space to explore and tap into their own creativity and wisdom.
- Value and appreciate the way things are.
- Help the person identify experiences worth appreciating by helping tap into their creativity and imagination.
- Sincerely project unconditional positive regard to the person and the process.
- Provide a safe place.

Questions to Consider

To develop conversational leadership in your organization, consider the following questions:

- ✓ Do the leaders see the organization as a network where there is real work taking place in the conversations going on?
- ✓ How is the organization (and you in it) leveraging the power of conversation as a core process?
- ✓ How much of your and your colleagues' working time is dedicated to creating the right questions and answers?
- ✓ How skilled are you and other organizational leaders about the use of techniques and technology for collaboration, sharing intelligence, and coordinated action?
- ✓ Are your work areas (including meeting areas) conducive to informal sharing and collaboration?
- ✓ How does your organization help leaders cultivate the skills and competencies that they need to be successful in conversational leadership?

The Four-I Model



Words of Wisdom

"Words, of course, are the very stuff of conversation. Leaders who aspire to bring intentionality to their company conversation, therefore, will handle those essential building blocks with care. The words that you use change the understanding. Then, once the understanding changes, the culture changes," [Enerchem CEO Ken] Bagan argues. And yet, while making sure that people throughout an organization all 'speak the same language' is necessary, it's hardly sufficient."

(From Talk Inc.: How Trusted Leaders Use Conversation to Power Their Organizations)

Becoming a Better Listener



Make a decision to listen. Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.



Don't interrupt people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about, and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.



Keep your eyes focused on the speaker and your ears tuned to their voice. Don't let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.



Carry a notebook or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise 8-10 times, you will be able to see what level your listening skills are currently at.



Ask a few questions throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarize and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.



When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be infectious. If you want people to communicate well, you have to set a high example.

The Four Features

Small companies are adept at using four features to accelerate their results. By applying these four features through conversation, large companies can move as quickly as smaller ones.



Scale

relates to the number of people in a conversation, which typically involves just a few people at a time.



Structure

incorporates the proximity of people being close together physically (even if it's virtual) and an inviting atmosphere.



Participation

in a small company means that fewer formal dividing lines exist.



Focus

refers to all employees being aware of and staying committed to the priorities that have been defined.

Communication Tools

If you've heard of dialogue tools like these, they exist to help people to communicate better:



Meeting audits



Facilitated conference calls



Storytelling for corporate leaders



Accountability agreements



Interest-based negotiations