

SMART *Perspectives*

A collaboration of SimosConsulting & SMART Conversations® January 2011

Upcoming Events

- **Feb. 8**—Workshop: SMART Conversations® | The 4Ds, Jacksonville, FL
- **Feb. 9-10**—SMART Conversations® Instructor Certification, Jacksonville, FL

Past Events

- **Nov. 16** —"Essential Skills for Project Management Delivery & Team Development" presented to ACEC MA by Paul Weisman.
- **Nov. 19** —"A Taste of Dialogue" presented by Bob Zinsser, Certified SMART Conversations® facilitator.
- **Jan. 8**—"A Taste of Dialogue" seminar presented to the Florida Engineering Leadership Institute, (FELI), Orlando, FL. Presenters: Paul Weisman and Michele Simos.

Are you "Leading" or Breeding Silos?

Silos probably got their name from the farm metaphor. Whether the word refers to different departments or businesses within an organization, silos typically lack cooperation, communication and cross pollination of ideas. As a result, information does not make it across the organization and, like a grain silo, everything flows in one direction: downward.

Fear, lack of trust and respect, and a high need for control, feed the silo mentality. It is far easier for a group or department to act independently and withhold information or cooperation rather than open the doors to transparency and authentic communication. When a clear and common understanding of the *big picture* has not been communicated organization-wide, breakdowns occur and things simply don't get done.

To create a SMART Culture™, leaders need to ensure that everyone—from top to bottom and side to side— has a shared understanding of the organization's mission, vision and values and the organizational strategy and goals, and individual goals.

When people understand the *value* of creating a high-performance culture that works together, only then can synergy happen.



But how do you get silos to collaborate?

► **Set expectations.** It is up to the leadership team to promote, model and communicate cultural norms by encouraging managers to find ways to connect different parts of the

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SMART Conversations® Café: Open for Business



Introducing SMART Conversations® Café. In this section and at our new blog, we will highlight a news event that directly connects the dots between action-driven dialogue and an issue important to our state, country and/ or our global community

We will pose a question and invite you to add your voice to the conversation. Our first dialogue question relates to the recent tragedy in Tucson.

Are politicians, the media and Americans holding SMART Conversations®?

After the recent Arizona shooting, which left six dead and gravely injured Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, the airwaves and cyberspace have been flooded with conversation.

We're wondering what you think: Are we holding the *right* conversations? Are we learning from this event or merely re-stating positions? Can we talk together and open our minds to being changed or are we stuck in our positions?

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Are you “Leading” or Breeding Silos? Cont’d.

organization and by rewarding behavior that supports this effort.

► **Develop open communications.** Open-door policies work only when trust is present. And, trust building takes place over time and is demonstrated through action *and* words. When people feel in the dark or at risk, they will be unwilling to share their thoughts and feelings openly. As a leader, you can set the stage for openness and transparency by role modeling honest communication.

► **Speak the truth** and hold the expectation that others will follow your example.. Telling your employees that the company is not for sale when an actual transaction is imminent erodes trust. Once distrust takes hold in the workplace, few actions or words can erase the harm it causes. As a result, gossip and other negative, unpro-

ductive behaviors begin to breed.

► **Reward and acknowledge cooperation.** Show appreciation to all of the people who contribute their time and effort to a given project. Let them know, publicly if possible, that their results demonstrate the principles of a new cultural norm. Acknowledgement builds trust and respect. And, many times, a simple *thank you* can make an enormous impact.

► **Value each department’s contribution.** It’s easy to play favorites with the sales/marketing department since their work directly affects the bottomline. However, success requires the synergy created by the whole organization. If R & D and the Accounting department, for example, didn’t contribute, new product development would not exist and bills would not be paid. It is important to treat everyone in an organization fairly and to regard them as equal players.

Talent Intelligence: Driving Performance to New Levels

SMART Conversations® recently partnered with Talent Analytics (TA), a Cambridge business strategy company that gives business leaders the tools to *create intelligent teams*.

This powerful proprietary software provides reports and visuals that anticipate how people will work together.

Using sophisticated algorithms and analytics, the software identifies individual and team characteristics using an advanced version of the DISC model, featuring motivators or ambitions. The result? Companies see a full picture of a whole person and the relationship of each individual to their team and the organization.

In essence, TA gives leaders the tools they need to map individual core competencies to the needs of the team. In addition to a report, organizations may request a coaching session for a deeper interpretation of the findings.

To schedule a complimentary assessment, please contact Paul at

Please email your comments and suggestions to: msimos@simosconsulting.us. We welcome all feedback.

(SMART Conversations Café—continued from page 1)

If you think about the four core conditions of SMART Conversations®, which do you think are present or missing? Are people engaged in a dialogue or some other type of conversation?

To explore these concepts, questions, we invite you to reflect on the following:

Shared Meaning—Do the people in the conversation each have the same understanding of *what* the conversation is about? Are they listening to each other to understand *why* it is important to the person who is speaking?

Authenticity—Is each of the speakers being authentic? Are they being honest with themselves and with others in the conversation? Or, are they intentionally holding back to defend their position?

Respect—Does each *side* respect the other’s opinion?

Are they listening to each other’s points and looking for common ground (i.e., we all agree legislators need to feel safe in public) or are they taking positions?

Trust—Are they expressing trust or distrust? Are they checking out their assumptions and conclusions by asking questions or simply refuting what the other has to say? Are they open to having their minds changed?

For dialogue and learning to occur, we contend that all four core conditions of dialogue must be present. Like a balloon that leaks air, a conversation that lacks even one condition collapses. At that point, the speakers are engaging in a dispute, a debate or a discussion.

Your Thoughts?

Do TV news interviews and online blogs encourage open dialogue and two-way conversation? What happens when only people who think alike engage in a conversation? What do they learn?

Connecting the Dots...

How does this article relate to your organization? What are the benefits to you or your organization of listening to other points of view? What do you risk by *not* listening? How can diverse ideas and opinions help you succeed?

We invite your perspective at: smartconversations.wordpress.com.