

Servant Leadership Focus is a monthly newsletter to promote and stimulate servant leadership ideas and tools into the Viox culture.



ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ Excerpts from Judith Glaser's new book to be published in the next few months:
- ❖ Conversational Intelligence by Judith Glaser
 - ❖ Topic: Conversational Intelligence

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Go to Mike's recommended leadership reading through his personal link to Amazon <http://www.futurenowed.com/resources/recommendedBooks.aspx>

This publication was created by
FutureNow Consulting, LLC
Michael J. Stabile, Ph.D.



TRANSFORMATIONAL STORIES

Words are Powerful Judith Glaser

Twenty-eight years ago I began my first experiment in what I call **conversational intelligence**. I was hired by Union Carbide to work with 17 high-powered sales executives in danger of losing a bid for a key contract. My job was to figure out how they could raise their game and beat the other seven competitors.

For more than two weeks I had them role-play potential conversations with "customers" and I charted what they said. The patterns were clear: **The executives used "telling statements" 85% of the time, leaving a paltry 15% for questions.** What's more, almost all the questions they asked were actually statements in disguise. They were talking and talking, trying to bring their counterparts around to their point of view, all the time thinking that they were still conducting good, productive conversations.

CONVERSATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

JUDITH GLASER

A seemingly simple act such as talking with a colleague—a small momentary exchange of words in a hallway—has the ability to alter someone's life permanently. Phrases like "I can't do that!" and "If I only knew how!" may take only seconds to utter, but they can be life changing. There is little connection between the time it takes to say the words and the impact they may have on a person, a relationship, or an organization.

Conversations have the ability to trigger emotional reactions. Words carry baggage. They are rarely neutral. Words carry a history of years of use. Each time another experience overlays another meaning and it all gets collected somewhere in our brain—the vault—it's there, ready to be activated during conversations.

Conversations carry meaning that becomes more embedded in the listener than the speaker. We communicate with each other through conversations; we connect to others through conversations. Once the umbilical cord is cut, conversations are the connectivity that keeps us all together. However, words are not external, objective reality. They are projections of our own inner reality.

Language is instinctual. It is also utilitarian. All animals use language to communicate, and most of all to signal each other about how to explore, navigate, and survive the environments in which they live.

Conversational Intelligence™ is the intelligence hardwired into every human being to enable us to navigate successfully with others. Through language and conversations we learn to build trust, to bond, to grow, and build partnerships with each other to create and transform our societies. There is no more powerful skill hardwired into every human being than the wisdom of conversations.

Having spent thousands of hours observing executives in similar, real-world situations — from prospecting to performance reviews, business development to innovation — I can tell you this is a common problem. People often think they're talking to each other when they're really talking past each other. They carry on monologues, not dialogues.

Through coaching, the Union Carbide sales team began to notice when they were making assumptions, interpreting incorrectly, and jumping to conclusions. They started asking discovery questions and paying close attention to their customers' answers, which expanded their frame of reference and gave them new insights into needs and opportunities. **In so doing, the executives presented themselves as conversationally intelligent partners, not sales people.** They won the contract.

Benchmark Communications, Inc. researches, and studies leadership-culture and brand success and failure, and through our work with clients, we have learned how to capture, deconstruct and teach the conversational patterns of successful leaders. Throughout this website and through our client engagements you will have the opportunity to explore and understand the power of conversations to change your world.

My life long goal is to help leaders build a whole new sensitivity for the words you use and the conversations you have with others. *You will realize that words will either cause us to bond and trust more fully and think of others as friends and colleagues, or they will cause us to break rapport and think of others as enemies.* Your mind will open up as you see the connection between language and health, and you will learn how to create healthy organizations through the conversational "rituals" that you establish. You will be able to see the impact of change, and you will learn how to design conversational rituals that enable people to embrace and navigate change in healthy ways, and prevent those rituals that become toxic over time.

Everything happens through conversations. *Conversations carry meaning—and meaning is embedded in the listener even more than in the speaker.* We communicate with each other through conversations. Conversations have the ability to trigger emotional reactions. The words we use in our conversations are rarely neutral. Words have histories informed by years of use. Each time another experience overlays another meaning it all gets collected somewhere in our brain to be activated during conversations. Understanding how we project meaning into our conversations will enable us to connect with others and, in so doing, let go of much of the self-talk that diverts us from **Creating WE.**

servant Leadership focus

"To get to the next level of greatness depends on the quality of the culture, which depends on the quality of relationships, which depends on the quality of conversations. Everything happens through conversations."

"Our mindscape determines what we focus on, what we see, how we react and how we influence others. When we lead from a WE-centric Mindset, we create environments that are more than collaborative - they are transformational."

Coaching reminders:

Mike is available for individual leadership coaching. Call or email for appointments.
mstabile@futurenowed.com
513-460-1015



Yelling, embarrassing and punishing others to motivate them to action is so ingrained in us that we often don't give it a second thought. Yet punishment and embarrassment used to get others to perform is not only an outdated strategy for employee motivation – it's a harmful strategy – with both short-term and long-term unexpected consequences.

Leaders who create a healthy culture get better business results. Leaders who make up and apologize after they "lose it" do more to restore trust and health in their workplace than they may realize. Better than that, leaders who understand how to sustain positive work environments, will motivate their employees to do more and produce more than they might have ever expected.

On some levels, we human beings are very simple. We turn to those who make us feel good, and we turn away from those who make us feel bad. Finding comfort from people who care about us is a healthy strategy. Learning to down-regulate fear at work and up-regulate the factors that stimulate growth is a winning strategy for success.

We've now learned that what quiets the brain's fear state is trust, empathy and support. When someone shows concern for our state of mind, or shows care for our feelings, our chemistry makes a shift. We become calmer, we can gain composure, and we can think in constructive ways.

The hormone oxytocin is a neurotransmitter associated with bonding behaviors. New scientific research is suggesting that oxytocin is the most prevalent hormone in the heart and the brain, and is driving our

Leaders need to learn to control their impulses. But we have to learn to master them because *clear two-way, empathetic, non-judgmental communication is critical for the high functioning of any business.* It's how deals get done, projects get run, and profits get earned. That's why I now spend my time teaching people — just like those executives at Union Carbide — how to become more intelligent about conversations.

Recognize your blind spots.

Stop

- **Assuming** that others see what you see, feel what you feel, and think what you think, since that's rarely the case
- **Failing** to recognize that emotions, such as fear and distrust, change how you and others interpret and talk about reality
- **Thinking** you understand and remember what others say, when you really only remember what you think about what they've said.
- **Underestimating** your own propensity to have conversational blind spots!

need for social contact. This hormone's power is the newest discovery in neuroscience and may explain why isolation is so painful (lack of oxytocin), why loners die young, and why rejection is more painful at times than physical pain. Some scientists call oxytocin the "cuddle hormone" because of its effect on making us feel cared for, and its power to create and restore a feeling of well being is as good as a mother's hug.

What is most exciting about this new science of human behavior is that we now know that our heart acts more like an orchestra leader of our states of mind than as a solo musician. Capable of reading the chemistries of our interactions, our heart sends messages up to the brain through a large number of pathways, instructing our brains how to interpret and respond to our moments of contact with others. With this information from our heart, our brain guides us to either withdraw from others in fear or reach out to others to connect.

Leaders don't need to physically touch another person or hug them to produce this **caring effect**. Instead they can touch someone's heart with words of sympathy or support, or they can validate someone's concern and trigger a more positive mental and physical state of mind.

Rather than "replacing employees who aren't cutting it" or punishing them for not achieving expectations, *leaders can now learn new leadership practices they can use with employees to help release or trigger skill-building* – propelling mediocre employees to become better and ensuring good employees to become even greater.

RECOGNIZE YOUR BLIND SPOTS JUDITH GLASER

Start

- **Paying** attention to and minimizing the time you "own" the conversational space
- **Sharing** that space by asking open-ended discovery questions, to which you don't know the answers, so you stay curious (i.e. What influenced your thinking?)
- **Listening** non-judgmentally to the answers
- **Asking** follow-up questions

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