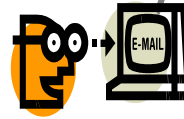




# Facilitating Strategic Conversations

**Leader’s role:** Create a compelling possibility and vision for the future that inspires everyone in the organization.

**Leader’s commitment:** Resource people so they can make that possibility a reality.



Dear Leaders,  
Love the vision!  
- the Employees  
  
*PS: Please turn us loose so we can make it happen.*

## Facilitating Strategic Conversations

**Leadership Retreats • Strategic Planning • Annual Corporate Meetings**

While it’s true that every conversation carries with it the possibility to forward people’s performance, strategic conversations beg for that to happen. Elevating the performance of the people responsible for fulfilling these commitments alters what’s possible for the entire organization. Creating and facilitating strategic conversations that raise people’s performance is the work of Work In Progress Coaching.

**Everyone’s working hard.** Talented leaders, managers, teams, line and staff alike are spending tremendous personal and corporate resources every day. When results don’t match efforts, it’s time to remove what’s interfering with people’s performance.

### Removing Interference

Interference seems to come from all directions: Wall Street, the weather, self-doubt, blame, power struggles, competition, fear, HQ, HR, them, us, me, you. “Seems” is the operative word. While interferences seem to come from most everywhere, on closer examination, we discovery they come from one place: our perception.

$$P = p - i$$

Performance = potential - interference  
*Gallwey, the Inner Game of Work*

To remove interferences and boost performance, shift perception. When a person’s perception changes, what they once perceived as an interference can literally disappear. The “interferences” that remain don’t have the impact they once did because their cover has been blown. This isn’t about putting on rose-colored glasses – it’s about consciously choosing the lens through which you and your team view the world.

**Work In Progress Coaching supports leaders in delivering on their commitments.** Our work together begins with a powerful design phase and completes with a compelling conversation for the future. Please read on...

Dear Employees,  
We’re ready to lead & get out of your way.  
- the Leaders  
*PS: What do U need?*  
*PPS: We love you.*

*(...and get ready to hit “Send”).*



# Facilitating Strategic Conversations

## Creating the Conversation

This is **YOUR** meeting with **YOUR** people to forward **YOUR** organizational commitments. Our fundamental role as facilitator will be to partner with the leaders and create an environment of communication and relationship within which the work gets done.

**Principles that guide our facilitation.** We believe it's possible to produce business results *and to have a conversation that matters*. To accomplish this, each person must come away:

- Being heard and respected, with personal values uncompromised
- Clear about his or her capabilities and strengths
- Seeing opportunities to maximize and threats to mitigate
- Aligning his or her accountabilities with objectives
- And, most importantly, in partnership with others.

### Element & Timeline

DESIGN		
Set-Up	Timing	3 to 6 weeks prior to the Meeting
	Who	Meeting owner, key players, facilitator
	Purpose	Establish a comfortable working relationship and create the flow of the Meeting
	Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate facilitator on what's happening in the company that's relevant to Meeting (See Discovery Questions)</li> <li>• Align on outcomes (qualitative and quantitative)</li> <li>• Craft pre-meeting communications for participants</li> <li>• Set up facilitator's confidential interviews with participants</li> <li>• Create the agenda</li> </ul>
Confidential Interviews	Timing	To be completed 6-8 days before the Meeting; individual or group format, via phone or in person
	Who	Facilitator
	Purpose	Understand participants' points of views and concerns
Finalize	Timing	4-5 days prior to Meeting
	Who	Meeting owner, facilitator
	Purpose	Finalize details
DELIVER the CONVERSATION – the MEETING		
	Who	All participants
	Timing	Variable; generally one-half to two days in length
DEBRIEF		
	Timing	Within 2-3 business days of Meeting
	Who	Meeting owner, facilitator
	Purpose	Review Meeting, facilitator's written report, feedback; identify accomplishments and opportunities, create what's next



## Facilitating Strategic Conversations

### Discovery Questions

These questions will begin to help the facilitator understand your company's world. Areas where a breakthrough is requested will focus the discovery. What else should the facilitator know? What questions do you have for the facilitator?

- Attendees** Who decides who will attend and what are the criteria? Who are the key influencers? The decision-makers? What are their expectations? What are their current concerns? What matters most to them? Any critical absentees?
- Culture** What's the company's Vision? Mission? Values? What's the formal organizational design? What's the informal? What industry or corporate "terms of art" need to be understood by the facilitator?
- Current Events** What internal or external legal, economic, or social events, situations are impacting employees, departments, the company, or the industry at large? What are employee retention figures? Revenues?
- Format** What are participants expecting? Large group? Break out sessions?
- History** What happened in previous meetings on this topic? What were the outcomes? How did leaders measure success? How did participants? How were results?
- Initiatives** What other corporate initiatives can this meeting forward?
- Issues** What topics are sore spots for any group of employees, department or the company as a whole? What might be some blind spots?
- Logistics** What seating configuration or room design will best support the meeting's intention? What support is required for capture commitments?
- Mood** What are the reoccurring employee complaints? What's the prevailing mood in the organization? What's the mood about the Retreat?
- Outcomes** What are the "must have" outcomes? What outcomes would you really like but don't think possible to accomplish?
- Work** What structures does the company rely on to get work done? Functional groups? Cross-functional teams? What decision-making processes are common?

*There is nothing more practical than a good question. - Peter Block*