



KEEPING THE TEAM

BUILDING TRUST

BUY-IN

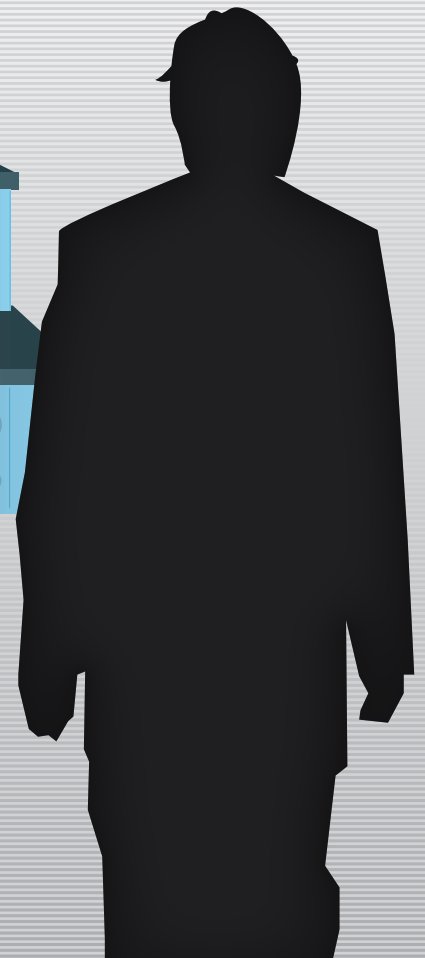
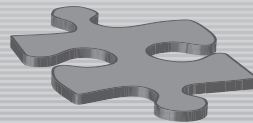
COMMUNICATION
AND COLLABORATION

PROBLEM SOLVE AND
THINK OUT OF THE BOX

UNDERSTAND
EACH OTHER

UNDERSTAND
OURSELVES

*"Getting Better Solutions To Your
Pressing Business Needs!"*



About This Book

The ultimate goal for any team - anywhere - anytime - is to create a “whole” that is greater than the sum of the parts.

In a business setting, where innovation and improvement matter - ***Dynamic Discourse™*** is at the heart of this ongoing process.

The ability to see past the ever present and dominate universal mentality of “us against them” - to a better way of communicating - that seeks to find the best solution from a group of talented individuals – that is ***Dynamic Discourse™***

About the Author

Wayne Bennett has been involved in building teams for almost his entire life beginning at age 10 building ropes courses with his mother and then creating a non-profit team building company at the age of 21. He was the youngest college head basketball coach in Oregon at the age of 23, a NISOA college soccer referee at 27, and is currently the owner and President of TeamWorx, a nationwide corporate team building company.

Mr. Bennett is also the author of *The OPZ: The Optimal Performance Zone*. He studied religious studies at Reed College in Portland Oregon, and attributes many of his insights into team dynamics to the principles he learned from studying world religions.

All visual images done by the wonderfully talented professional cartoonist
Dr. Ernie Olson

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*Benefits from **Dynamic Discourse™** in your organization*

Preface

FOUNDATION FOR *Dynamic Discourse™*

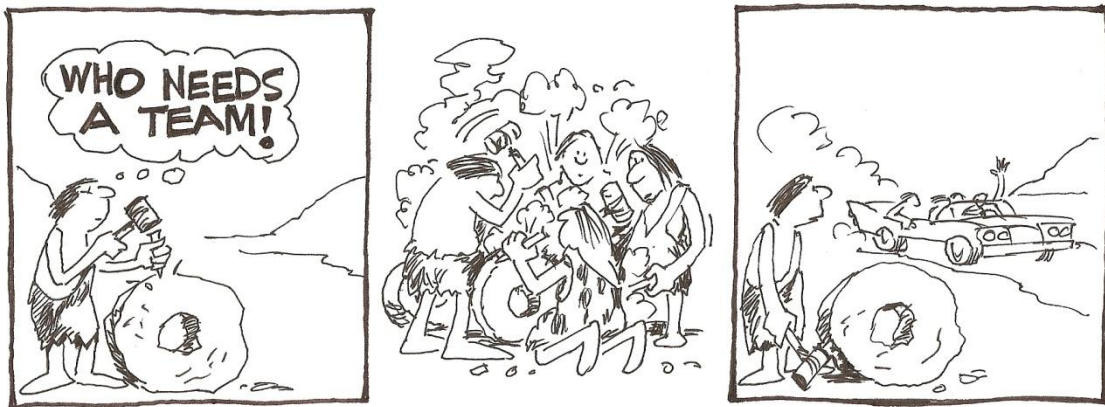
Creating the Foundation for *Dynamic Discourse™*

3 Attributes of Great Teams

Have Well Defined Roles

The Optimum Number is 4.6

A Desire to Win



Once the foundation is in place, you can then move onto more advanced steps.

WELL DEFINED ROLES

Once upon a time I taught middle school literature and like all modern teachers steeped in the team approach I created dozens of group projects every year for the kids to tackle. Early on what I observed was one kid doing all the work and the others goofing off or disengaged; until I began to assign roles to each student. Magic! A specific role gave each child a specific responsibility unique to the other team members; this process mimicked competency, and it diffused leadership throughout the group depending on the circumstance. It turns out my findings were discovered and confirmed much earlier by Stanford sociologist Elizabeth Cohen.

“I’m not lookin’ for the best players... I’m lookin’ for the right players.”

**Herb Brooks
US Hockey Coach**

Think of the great sports teams of all time and you will inevitably find a perfect blend of role players. The Chicago Bulls basketball teams of the 90’s who won six NBA championships, although most remembered for Michael Jordon, actually had a perfect mix of role players.

Steve Kerr made close to as many game winning shots as Michael Jordan, including the final shot of the 1997 NBA finals, while Bill Cartwright, Scottie Pippen and Dennis Rodman played intimidating defense, added consistent scoring, and gathered rebounds by the bushel respectively. Ironically Dennis Rodman may have been one of the best team players of all time; he never wanted to shoot the ball and thrived on getting it for his teammates.

There are many other examples in sports including most notably the 1980 US Olympic hockey team who defeated the Soviet Union in the semifinal game to record perhaps the greatest upset victory in all of sports history. The highlight of “The Miracle on Ice” was recently voted as the most memorable sports highlight of all time on ESPN. When asked about his controversial player selections, coach Herb Brooks said, “I’m not lookin’ for the best players ... I’m lookin’ for the right players.”

Remember the really great teams you have been on? Chances are you had people with different personalities and different skill sets that were able to come together and complement each other. In contrast, perhaps you have been on teams where ego, pride, and self-interest were competing with the goals of the team for dominance.

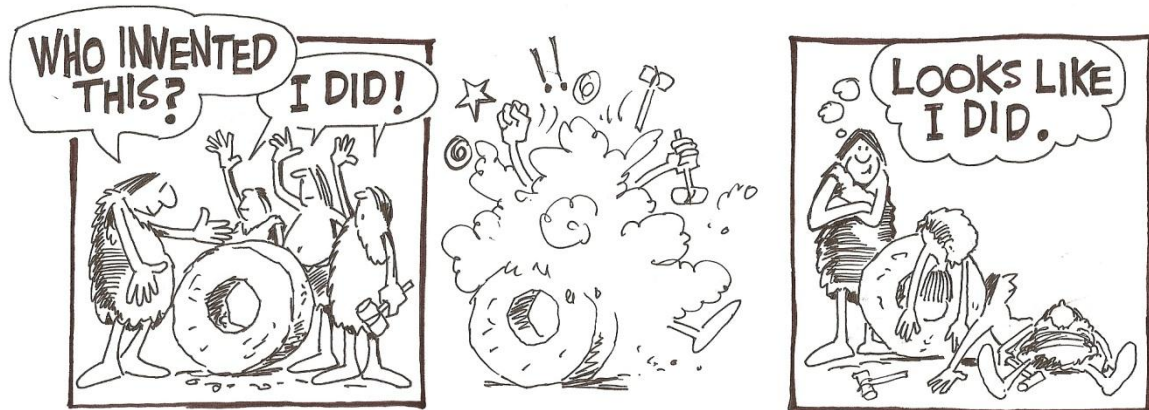
Roles allow team members to have an “ego and pride” safe zone, and shared authority and competence. Research on adult learning shows very clearly that we (as adults) need to feel a sense of autonomy; a sense that our ideas and knowledge have a reasonable chance of impacting the direction of the team and the decisions that are made.

Similarly, if you want the best team possible, you cannot have a team where its members are competing against each other for the same resources: promotions, incentives, bonuses, funds etc. There cannot be trust on a team, and team members will not give of themselves for the team, if they know it is their individual performance that will ultimately be rated or rewarded. This is one reason why “Dream Teams” rarely if ever workout.

My father was in the military when he was a young man and in business for forty years after that. When I asked him to describe the best team he was ever on, he answered immediately, “My boot camp squad!” I have had this same response from countless clients throughout the years. Why?

It is the complement of relevant skills that makes the whole greater than the sum of the parts

The military makes it crystal clear that you will be a team, that your life depends on the team, and that it is all about the team. There are no incentives outside of the team, and if you cannot be a good team member you cannot be in the military. To a person, they will describe how you don't even think, you just do. Helping the team becomes first nature.



If you are truly interested in creating great teams and maximizing performance you must eliminate counter-team incentives.

I have to chuckle at the number of companies I have experienced that want, for example, their sales people to be a "team," yet give them individual financial incentives. No amount of team building will fix this situation.

Roles allow people to be the best at what they do, **and** benefit the team. Each team member is held accountable for very specific goals; the sum of which equals the total parts of what needs to be accomplished.

THE OPTIMUM NUMBER FOR A TEAM IS 4.6

Jia Lynn Yang writes a great article to this point in the June 2006 issue of Fortune magazine. She puts together a variety of research done over the last 40 years on team size and performance. Psychologist Ivan Steiner found that team productivity peaked at about 5 people. This was the point where increased productivity from adding an additional person minus increased inefficiencies from adding an additional person yielded the largest gain. Similarly, Richard Hackman, a professor of social and organizational psychology at Harvard, and Neil Vidmar found the optimum team number to be 4.6.



You can determine your own ideal team size for your environment using their technique. Assign different team sizes a variety of tasks and ask them two simple questions at completion of the project: Was your team too large for the task? Was your team too small for the task?

Both of these studies were conducted in the 70s. It would be interesting to conduct this type of research today in a variety of settings. The business climate has changed considerably since the 70s with an exponential influx of MBA graduates and a much deeper appreciation for the value of teams. Please email me the results of your research and I will publish them as a service to all!

One thing is clear however, when teams are too large people will check out, cliques form, and the idea of a team is lost.

I have seen this principle in action thousands of times in team building programs. My own research would suggest the ideal team size should never be greater than 10, and is most efficient at 5-8 persons.

We spend a considerable amount of time talking with participants after our programs and ask them questions just like this. Based on our own observations and these conversations I am very confident in the perils of having too many people on your team.

As we mentioned earlier in chapter 1, and for the same reasons that roles are important, research on adult learning shows very clearly that we (as adults) need to feel a sense of autonomy; a sense that our ideas and knowledge have a reasonable chance of impacting the direction of the team and the decisions that are made. This becomes impossible if the team is too big.

A KEEN DESIRE TO WIN

Ironically, perhaps the most unifying principle in human history is our love of having an enemy. Some may argue it is what keeps the United States, well, united. An imminent threat naturally motivates team members to give to a greater cause; better our team than the other team.

“No amount of trust, conflict, commitment, or accountability can compensate for a lack of desire to win.”

Patrick Lencioni
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

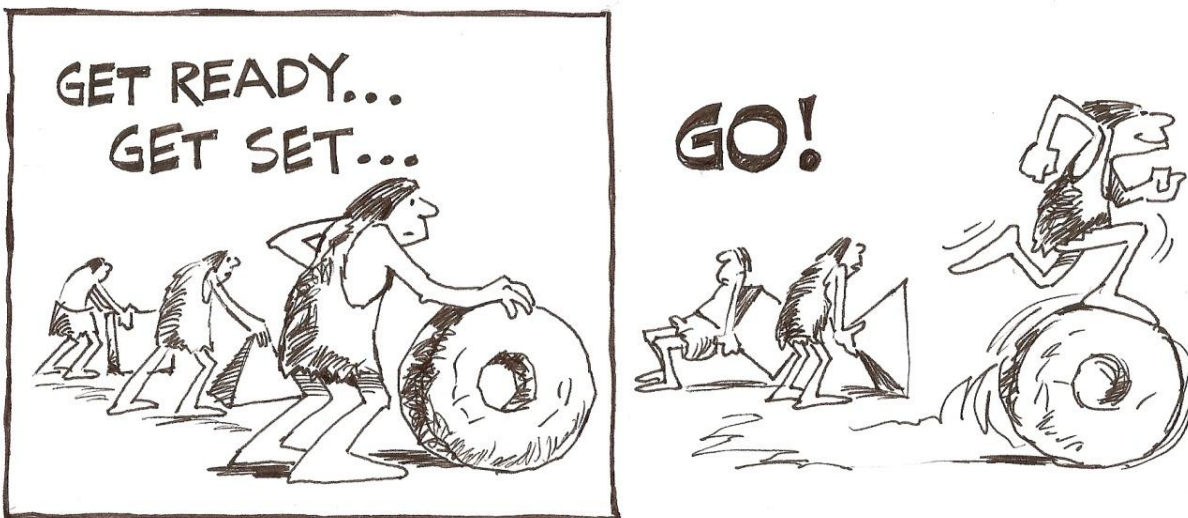
The military creates great teams in part because the *life* of each individual *depends* on the team. It’s easier to give up the “I” for the team than have no I.

Team sports are predicated on one premise; be better than the competition.

There is no solace in trying hard. “Them” – the other - is what pushes human beings to be more than they thought possible, and to give more than they knew they had.

Commitment to the team is directly related to how motivated individuals are for the team result. I have seen this principle in action hundreds of times over the last 15 years. If we challenge a team to succeed at a difficult team building activity without other teams to compete against we are likely to get a high degree of denial and excuses when they do not succeed: “well it was good enough for us.” In general, we hear a great array of self-limiting behaviors.

There is very little self-motivation to push team members out of their comfort zones. Our “comfort zones” are not where we achieve the highest results for ourselves or the team.



On the other hand, when we implement real-time competition between *many* teams doing the *same* team building activity *at the same time* we consistently yield highly engaged, open to learning and improving, hyper-motivated participants. Competition is still king.

Teamwork improves exponentially as team members desire to be part of the winning team (and avoid being on a losing team). Your average professional person wants to be a winner; without

immediate objective feedback, an imminent threat, and/or urgent pressure they are often not pushed to perform at their best; human nature.

Not all teams have direct competitors available in real-time to “out work” and win. They all *should* have real-time specific goals and clear measurable objectives that accomplish the same thing.

We meet our objective – we win; we don’t meet our objective and we all lose – no excuses. Winning is not relative.

How Do You Build a Great Foundation for *Dynamic Discourse™*

The concepts are simple; however, successful team behaviors do require specific skills and, equally important, practice. The three foundations will get things started in the right direction:

1 Well defined roles and incentives structured to reward team performance and not discourage it.

2 Team size should be between 5 - 8 people

3 Create competition. If an imminent threat does not exist – create one. Specific and public goals and objectives – with accountability - will work.

Most professionals want to be great team members given the proper environment. Great teams will happen by training people *and* practicing the skills required to be effective team members, and by *not* setting up systems that work against team behavior.

STEP 1

Understanding Ourselves

*How Humans Actually Work and Why That's Key to **Dynamic Discourse™***

Have you ever wondered how someone could have the opposite opinion as you about something, and be as certain as you are that they are right? How about completely different memories of the same event? Do you ever feel like you are talking Greek to your boss, subordinates, or spouse? There's a good reason ... actually many reasons, and good answers that we will explore in this chapter.

A 2011 story on CNN about the tree octopus is a good example of one of those insights into the human brain that happen all the time, but that we “choose” to ignore. I say choose in quotes because it's more like we filter these examples out because they don't affirm what we already believe. And by “we” I mean the loose collection of habitual responses that make up the illusion of ourselves as a unified entity; when in fact, we are not unified.

We are constantly battling within ourselves on any number of decisions – often termed “internal conflicts” - many of them unseen and unknown by the conscious mind. Most of you I am willing to bet will empathize with the first part of this sentence –the internal conflict “To be or not to be”; “To buy the car or save the money”; “To eat the cake or go to the gym” etc. is an ongoing dialogue we have with ourselves and our best friends for our entire lives – however I am also willing to bet most of you will ignore the second part of this sentence ... which brings me back to the “save the tree octopus campaign” I mentioned above.

*“The Pacific Northwest tree octopus (*Octopus Paxarbolis*) can be found in the temperate rainforests of the Olympic Peninsula on the west coast of North America. Their habitat lies on the Eastern side of the Olympic mountain range, adjacent to Hood Canal... Although the tree octopus is not officially listed on the Endangered Species List, we feel that it should be added since its numbers are at a critically low level for its breeding needs. The reasons for this dire situation include: decimation of habitat by logging and suburban encroachment; building of roads that cut off access to the water which it needs for spawning; predation by foreign species such as house cats; and booming populations of its natural predators, including the bald eagle and sasquatch.”*

(Direct from the website “Help Save the Endangered Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus”)

CNN reported that in a 2006 study 7th grade students were directed to this website as part of a research project. They almost universally believed the “save the tree octopus campaign” – which is interesting in itself, however **what’s even more interesting** is that **more than half of the students continued to believe in the tree octopus even after they were told the website was a hoax and there was positively no such thing as a tree octopus.**

How is this possible? If you read the blogs around this topic they center on veracity of sources and gullibility of youth. In the CNN interview the reporter kept trying to make the point that as we get older we get more cynical and more adept and checking multiple sources. The researchers point was that we need new reading skills for the internet ... but what was lost was a concept called “**belief perseverance**”.

“Adults do have a greater tendency toward doubt and disbelief, but this is not necessarily due to the lack of child-like gullibility. Rather, people will tend to believe anything they hear as long as it does not conflict with something they already believe. Adults come with a larger set of pre-existing beliefs than children, and so there is a greater chance that new information will conflict with an existing belief.

Even more disturbing is the evidence that people will maintain a belief once it is formed (a phenomenon called belief perseverance) even in the face of later disconfirming evidence. In fact, when people are told that the scientific evidence contradicts their beliefs they simply distrust the science, and in fact will distrust science in general.”

Dr. Steven Novella
Academic Clinical Neurologist
Yale University School of Medicine
<http://theness.com/neurologicablog>

Another study by Craig Anderson and Lee Ross retold in *The Inflated Self* by David G Myers (page 57) shows how adults will hold onto beliefs even after the facts that led them to create the belief have been shown to be completely false. In this case it involved asking whether people who take risks will make good or bad firefighters.

Two groups were separated and given opposite information. After being tested, each group chose “good” or “bad” fireman based on what they were given to read. Interesting in itself once again, however, **even more interesting, is that they maintained the belief even after being**

told the results of the study and that the information they were given was false and purposely misleading.

“Belief perseverance” is one of many true facts about humans that in general lie outside our beliefs about the human brain, the human self, and who we are. It’s really hard to accept that we will keep beliefs even when we know they are supported by false facts. It’s not logical, but it’s true.

Books like *The Inflated Self*, *The Illusion Trap* and many others list dozens of examples of how humans clearly fool themselves by creating our own reality.

The studies all use a similar model. They influence test subjects in some way – by giving them something or telling them something - and then observe their reactions. Statistically the reactions or actions of those being studied show an 80 to 90 percent specific reaction after the moment of influence, however, when asked about it, respondents give credit to the influence on a statistically low rate of only 10 to 20 percent.

In other words, it’s statistically impossible that 80% or more of the respondents are doing the same action or reaction immediately after they have been given the same exact influence, and yet only 20% of them were actually influenced.

We don’t fool ourselves all the time, mostly only when something “conflicts with something we already believe” ... as Dr. Steven Novella and other neuroscientists remind us.

We create for ourselves what I term ***Rational Dysfunction***, or the ability of the human being to rationalize certain behaviors and beliefs within their own reasoning system, regardless of obvious data to the contrary or a conspicuous absence of data to support it. The better we all understand our own ***Rational Dysfunctions***, the more likely we are to break through our own limitations. Therefore, the art of ***Dynamic Discourse™*** begins with a critical question that each person on the team must answer before moving forward:

“Am I willing to listen and engage with ideas and information that may be outside my beliefs?”

3 Specific Blind Spots Critical to Identify about Ourselves

The journey towards **Dynamic Discourse™** requires three specific realizations about humans. They are realizations because they represent blind spots we all have, and for good reasons, but nonetheless we have them. Unfortunately they get in the way of productive conversations and the best solutions.

- **Blind Spot 1:** We may be wrong even when we think we are 100% correct.
- **Blind Spot 2:** Humans will not “naturally” collaborate.
- **Blind Spot 3:** Active listening is not how we “naturally” listen.

Awareness of these three blind spots is critical to becoming an active participant in **Dynamic Discourse™**.

Blind Spot 1 – We May be Wrong Even when We Think We Are 100% Correct

The fields of brain consciousness research, cognitive science, evolutionary biology, and psychology have made fascinating discoveries tied together in books like *The Evolution of Human Consciousness* by Robert Ornstein.

An accurate understanding of ourselves begins with an understanding that our perception of the world is filtered long before our rational mind ever gets involved – we literally see what we want to see.

“During any given second, we consciously process only sixteen of the eleven million bits of information our senses pass on to our brains.”

Tor Norretranders
The User Illusion

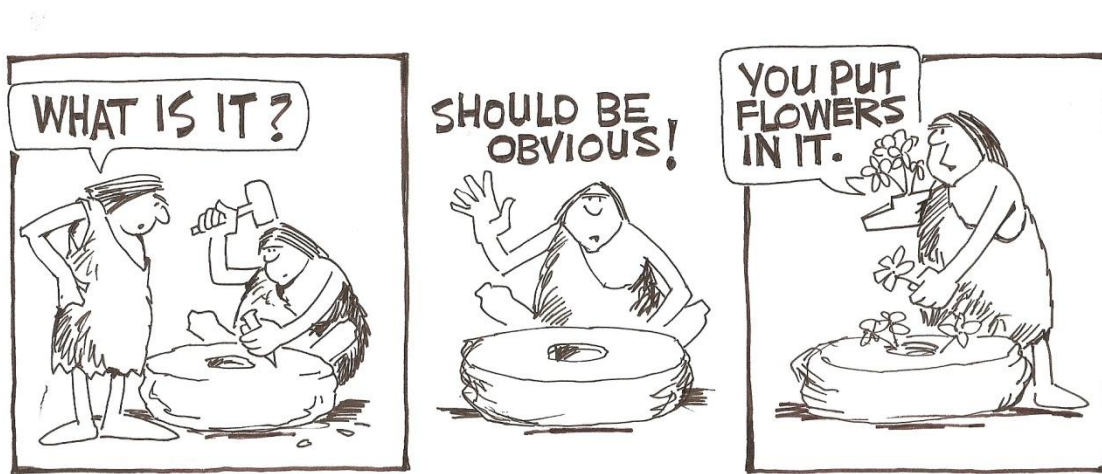
Our false sense of certainty has to do with the amount of raw information available for us to process and the actual amount our brains are capable of processing. We don't consider all the facts, just those that our brains filter into our consciousness, and not out of our consciousness.

We are, above all else, filters. Our brains are incredible at prioritizing information based mostly on survival. It is easy to see how we would filter out pertinent information depending on our objective.

Our beliefs and the assumptions we make determine what we filter, and what we filter is all we truly consider in any decision. If you think someone is a bad employee you will see them doing bad things, and vice-versa. As Socrates would say, "We don't know what we don't know."

The so called "data" we base our decisions on is chosen for us, and in general affirms what we already believe. This is one of the main reasons teamwork is essential to the creative process – because each of us is wired differently – based on our unique experiences – to filter a different 16 bits than the next person.

Teamwork is the process of breaking through the limitations of our beliefs, having our own basic assumptions challenged – our beliefs questioned – and questioning those of our teammates, so we can create the "truly original" or the "best possible" out of any opportunity.



Opening up to understanding other people's reasoning and perspectives is one critical way to breakthrough our own assumptions and beliefs and "see" what we are "not seeing"; which leads us to our next two blind spots.

Blind Spot 2 – Human Beings will not “Naturally” Collaborate

Collaboration can be defined as working with people outside of your immediate area of influence. Unfortunately, collaboration is not human nature – at least in the Western world.

“Getting workers to collaborate instantly – not tomorrow or next week, but now – requires nothing less than a management revolution.”

Business Week
“Managing the New Workforce”
August 27, 2007

Remember back to when most of us were in school they had a term for collaboration They called it cheating! For this and other reasons, teams must be proactive and have systems in place to collaborate or we will naturally default to unilateral thinking.

Common Reasons Humans Do Not Collaborate

- It's not human nature
- Information is power
- It makes us potentially vulnerable
- It takes *extra* work – it's not easy and few people do it
- Paradigm – “*When I was in school they called it cheating!*”

The advantages of collaboration are significant. Collaboration outside of our usual sphere of influence is one way to break through assumptions, and open up your team to new ideas and new thinking. Most of the great inventions throughout history came from collaboration between two or more different areas of influence.

We will discuss some specific examples of how collaboration can bring huge profits in Step 3.

Blind Spot 3 – Active Listening is Not How We “Naturally” Listen



Stephen Covey does an excellent job of pointing out this weakness in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. He articulates exactly how most of us listen to each other, which is to say, we don't really listen.

Think about what is going on in your own head as other people are talking. Most likely you are already thinking of how what they are saying relates to your life and/or you are thinking of a reply/defense to what they are saying.

Ask yourself how many times in a conversation you reply to someone without even asking any follow up questions to clarify what they mean. One reason we don't ask more questions is that under normal circumstances in business and the world in general, it implies we agree! People will often mistake our clarifying questions as agreement and steer the conversation in ways we are not ready to go yet.

In order to build teams that will perform at their top level you must reprogram the natural human form of discourse. People must literally take a new and fresh look at communication.

They must be able and willing to completely understand another person's position, and be willing to honestly and accurately answer questions about their own reasoning.

Active listening involves actually listening to another person with the sole intention of first understanding WHAT they are saying before we give our opinion or suggestions. Often after these activities we hear people saying, “That was the first time I have ever actually felt heard!”

Before we can continue our journey towards *Dynamic Discourse™* we must master these three critical and pervasive blind spots:

1. We may be wrong even when we think we are 100% correct.
2. Humans will not “naturally” collaborate.
3. Active listening is not how we “naturally” listen.

STEP 2

Understand Each Other

There are many things to know about your teammates that will make for better communication and a healthier work environment. The better you know your teammates the better you will work together. The more “humanized” we are the more tolerance and forgiveness we can give and the more we will receive.

Like many other areas of knowledge and skill, what you know about your teammates can be more or less valuable in terms of improving teamwork. Almost everything you can know about your teammates is helpful to some degree, however two specific areas provide the most possible value in terms of creating the right environment for *Dynamic Discourse™* and for great teamwork.

The **two specific areas** that will provide the most value:

1. **Clarify Values – and market them!**
2. **Personality Styles – know the 4 and what each needs.**

It’s important to learn about your teammates. The more “human” they become, the more naturally tolerant and flexible you will become. Important things to learn would include family status, children, information about their spouse or partner, hobbies, what was their family like growing up, are they the baby, middle, or oldest in a family, or were they an only child growing up, allegiance to any sports teams, and many other unique and wonderful facts. It is also very helpful to take advantage of specific information tailored to communicating better under pressure, in a work environment.

Knowing someone’s **values** and their **personality style** allow for clarity in communication, and an understanding of how to communicate most effectively.

Clarify Values – Market Your Top 3

Values are important because they remain consistent over time. Although they can and do sometimes change over time, they are a very consistent barometer of how a person will react to situations, and how they will behave over time.

When you know someone's values, their actions make sense within a context. Although we may not agree with a person's viewpoint, we as teammates can learn what to expect. Better yet, we can find points of common ground, common feelings, and what feels like common sense.

In order to use values effectively as a tool, a team needs to first clarify their own personal values, and then share their top three with each other.

Why is clarifying important? With our understanding of the human brain from Step 1, as a *filtering machine*, you can imagine that we need to reduce information or it is going to “miss the cut”. Quite simply, our brains will filter out too many values; it's too much information.

If I listed 100 values below and asked you to select the ones you like or agree with, you would most likely select several dozen if not almost all of them. Many values are positive and agreeable. The key is to get people to sharpen their sword, and create a values “marketing campaign”. First, each individual should use a process to discover their top 3 values, and then they need to “market” those top 3 to others.

For example, if John first narrowed our list of 100 values down to his top 10. Then he would begin the process of prioritizing the top ten to achieve a list of his top 3. He may have to ask some difficult questions, and/or think more deeply about what certain words or values mean to him. At the end of the process he will have a much clearer understanding of himself, and he will be able to communicate his values quickly and clearly to others.

A common question that comes up in our training is “which values, at home or at work?” My answer is “***we only have one set of values.***” Studies show that alignment of your values with

the values of your immediate work environment, and with your company, significantly increase commitment to the organization.

If you feel that you have a different set of values at home than at work, it can likely lead to dysfunction and burnout. We often spend more waking time at work than at home. It is inconceivable that living more than half of our life with a different set of values than those closest to our hearts would not take a serious toll over time.

How to use values effectively

Respect is our number one tool in any social setting, and especially so in high powered teams. Often respect can be earned or lost without us even knowing why? Remember the three blind spots we listed earlier in Step 1 are only three of several we create for ourselves. So without understanding someone's values it is easy to lose their respect.

If they value something high enough to be in their top 3, you can bet they think it is valuable. Humans protect valuable things. Conversely, an appreciation for things people value can earn additional respect quickly. Earning and keeping respect is the number one reason for clarifying values.

Values also help us create more powerful bonds, become better leaders, and allow us to define ourselves rather than letting others define us. By marketing consistently, and backing up our marketing with consistent actions, we define ourselves in the workplace. **Focusing on our top 3 creates an effective message that other humans can digest** – we just might get past the filter!

Values are also an extremely effective snap shot into how a person thinks, what might potentially motivate them, and why they get up in the morning! In terms of getting to know them better, untold potential stories are connected to their top 3 values including why they are the top 3, what almost made it, examples that led to my top 3, and many more.

Values are a hotbed for interaction. This single activity in a work team will significantly improve communication, teamwork, and trust immediately, and will actually build over time. It is both a break through moment for teams, and a foundation they can continue to use to navigate the unknown waters of tomorrows.

Personality Styles

Easy to use is important. If it's not easy to use it doesn't get used. This is my argument against using several of the more common personality tools. There are some excellent ones as well, however they are excellent because they are easy to use, and they provide value, on a daily basis.

Most are based on the same 4 quadrant system. Although the terminology is different, you essentially have 4 personality styles.

1. **Driver** – impatient, goal oriented, can be abrasive with people
2. **Motivator** – passionate, motivator, lots of energy, attaches emotion to ideas
3. **Glue** – Interested in relationships and people first, holds back their own opinion
4. **Thinker** – Always wants more information, slow to decide, cautious, loves information

You can find your own personality style easily by answering two simple questions and placing yourself on a spectrum.

First draw a horizontal line on a piece of paper and place a mark in the approximate middle. On the right side of the line right Wind, and on the left side of the line write Water.

Question 1: Are you more likely to share your opinion without being asked, then you are to wait and hear what other people have to say before saying anything?

- If you are more open to others opinions, flexible in your opinions, and more reserved in saying something without being asked you will be on the “Water” side of the line.
- If you would be more likely to share your opinion without being asked, more “my way or the highway”, and in general opinionated you would be on the “Wind” side of the line.

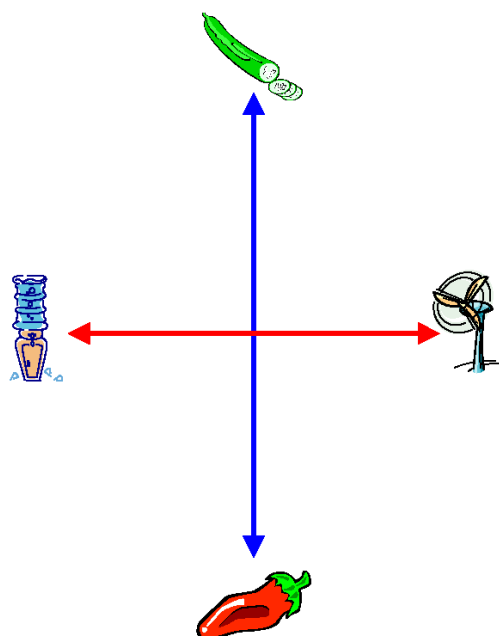
The more you are like one or the other description the farther away from the middle you should place your first mark. If it was immediately easy to decide which side you were on, it is likely that you would be far from the center line. If it was difficult to decide which side you are on, and you feel like you have a little of both, you will be closer to the center of the line.

You must be on one side or the other, not on the line.

Now, from the center mark you made earlier, draw a vertical line to form an X/Y axis. On the upper part of the X/Y axis write “Chili Pepper” and on the lower part of the X/Y axis write “Cucumber”.

Question 2: At work, are you more likely to allow your feelings to influence your decisions, or are you more likely to separate your feelings from decisions you make at work?

- If you are more likely to consider the human element in decisions, if you attach emotions to ideas, especially yours, and/or if you wear your emotions “on your sleeve”, in other words, people are likely to know how you feel about ideas and things at work, you will be more towards the Chili Pepper end of the spectrum.
- If you are more likely to be objective (non-emotional), goal oriented, facts oriented, logic oriented at work you would be more towards the Cucumber end of the spectrum.



Hopefully, you have successfully placed yourself in one of four quadrants:

- Cucumber-Wind
- Cucumber-Water
- Chili Pepper-Water
- Chili Pepper-Wind

Now you can match your quadrant to one of the four personality types.

- Cucumber-Wind = Driver
- Cucumber-Water = Thinker
- Chili Pepper-Water = Glue
- Chili Pepper-Wind = Motivator

From my experience delivering this activity thousands of times, corporate America hires mostly Drivers, followed in a distant second by Motivators, then Thinkers, and almost always the fewest are Glue.

Drivers are goal oriented, results oriented, and often do not consider the “human element” in personal interactions. People can become variables in their equation. Decision making is easy for them, they are great at taking a stand, being direct and making things happen.

I ask groups why they think companies hire mostly Drivers and, based on what they tell me, it makes sense. Often job descriptions they are hiring for are looking for qualities and attributes more like Drivers than Glue. Companies want team players, but what they really want are high performing, results oriented people who have hopefully figured out how to get along nicely (more or less) with others.

Rarely are people at the top known as “nice”. The disadvantage of this tendency is that over-time, day after day, Drivers cannot co-exist without at least one Glue person.

Dynamic Discourse™ benefits greatly from having all four personality styles represented. In a Driver dominated culture, the other three play important roles:

Glue: Smooth over rough points to allow people to “re-humanize” the situation. Help people to understand others – especially with difficult or demanding personalities. **Dynamic Discourse™** can by its nature become very charged emotionally. Without an ongoing presence of Glue these confrontations can get side tracked into personal or political battles. Additionally, Glue is often a great resource to help others see other points of view by building common ground. In **Dynamic Discourse™** the Glue can act as a facilitator to encourage *thinking fluently* and tapping into unique personality attributes of specific individuals. Glue needs to be conscious of giving their opinion without being asked, and they must be able to engage fully in discourse without withholding potentially great ideas in fear of hurting someone’s feelings.

Motivator: Emotion is a two sided coin in *Dynamic Discourse™*. Because the conversations tend to be charged, Motivators need to be aware that they will tend to attach emotion to their ideas. When people ask questions or disagree, they take it personally. This can be dangerous to productive discourse. On the flip side, inspiring ideas and energy can come from Motivators. Humans are motivated by energy, passion, and conviction, things you can't fake. Part of *Dynamic Discourse™* is the courage to think big, to motivate others, and to help people turn-on a switch inside that makes them want to give more to the team than they thought possible. None of this is possible without emotion and energy.

Thinker: The reins on the horse – common sense in a sea of move-fast and motivation. If the world were left to thinkers almost nothing would actually get done, however, on the other hand, many bad decisions would also have been avoided. Drivers and Motivators – which usually dominate the corporate team – both want to move forward fast. Drivers want three choices so they can select one and Motivators want you to “come on board” and join the revolution. Thinkers provide a valuable role of analyzing more information, thinking of the downsides and/or risks, helping to *think fluently* by introducing alternate possibilities, and in general making Drivers and Motivators think harder about the direction they want to move. Without Thinkers, groups will often move too fast without sometimes considering valuable information.

A healthy awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of each personality type will help a team leverage these strengths while understanding and adapting to the disadvantages. Once you are comfortable with the basic model you can assess (or ask for) someone's personality style and immediately have a gateway to better communication.

The advantage to a simple model such as this one is that everyone can use it, use it immediately, and use it in the moment. The goal is not to become each other's therapists, the goal is to have quick, ready to use, and easy to understand information about others on the team that you can use to improve *Dynamic Discourse™*. A great way to begin a *Dynamic Discourse™* conversation is to go around the room and quickly identify your personality style and what role you imagine providing to the team.

Knowing ourselves better, and knowing our teammates better, is a solid foundation for improved relationships and better discourse. By leveraging strengths, opening the mind to new possibilities, and building clear and lasting relationships with others, we open the door for much more to happen. One of the most exciting benefits is the ability to problem solve and think more creatively as a team, to literally break through barriers and see new light!

Step 3 will provide you with specific techniques for immediately improving your ability to team problem solve and think more creatively!

STEP 3

How to Problem Solve and “Think-Out-of-the-Box”

I was speaking at a conference in Chicago, and, as is prone to happen, I made friends with another one of the speakers. His name was Bob, he was a sales trainer from the same industry as the association and he was the keynote for the main event later that evening. I was right before him on the agenda so we worked on our transition together at the rehearsal and got to know each other.

He asked me what I was speaking about so he could make a joke as part of the transition, and I explained it was about how to be more creative, how to “think-out-of-the-box.” Later that night after our presentations, several of the speakers and other vendors were at the client’s VIP room (free dinner) discussing the speeches amongst other things. The topic of the speaker before me came up – he was a magician who related magic to better sales. I was one of the few people in the room who hadn’t seen the demonstration because I was rehearsing behind the stage.

Bob approached me with a small crowd and he said “I want to test your “creative thinking” ... solve this hotshot” and he handed me a small square piece of paper with a circular hole about the size of a dime in the center. He said “almost no one got this during his presentation, and the magician wouldn’t show us the answer – we have to go to his website to find the answer – but he guaranteed us it had an answer and a few tables had people that actually did it ... I’ll bet you can’t do it!”

He had already told me everything I needed to know. Without even knowing what the challenge was, I replied, “I’ll bet \$100 I can solve it – and I guarantee I’ve never seen it before.” Why would I make such a seemingly foolish bet? Sure enough I solved it in half the time – but how did I do it and how did I know?

For clarification, the challenge was to put a quarter through the dime size hole without tearing the paper – sounds impossible right?

One important advantage to problem solving is when you know there is an answer. Once you know there is a way or several ways – just eliminate options and learn as you go. In the example above, once I knew some people had solved it – even one person – it gave me all the confidence I needed. In addition Bob gave me three other hints that increased my chances of success.

Bob told me that most people – in this case almost everyone – could not get it. This made me confident that by asking the magic questions – What barriers am I not seeing? What assumptions can I challenge? – I would most likely yield an obvious answer. You will be shocked at how much more creative you will be by asking these simple questions, and then really exploring the possibilities.

On top of that, most people don't like to fail more than once or twice when experimenting for a solution. An astronaut speaking at the event chimed in "failing forward ... that's what we call it in the rocket design world." Sure enough, a recent study determined the number one attribute found in people who are good at math: persistence. I knew most people gave up before they even tried to solve the magician's puzzle, and many more were discouraged after one or two failed attempts at a solution.

Bob told me in his speech one of his "Sales Secrets" is to get at least three "No" answers from a client – because very few people will call back after one.

Strategy also plays a part in problem solving, and I deduced something very quickly. With such a simple design the amount of possible solutions would be manageable in the time given.

In this story I used two of the three techniques I recommend for improved problem solving. In my case above, once I knew that the problem had a solution and that most people did not get it, I immediately thought to myself "Invisible Barrier" and "Fail Forward".

Team Problem Solving

There are three techniques that will significantly improve your ability to team problem solve in your organization:

- 1 Identify Invisible Barriers**
- 2 Verbalize**
- 3 Failing Forward**

Invisible Barriers

Remember back to Step 1: *Understanding Ourselves* how our brains filter information and limit what data we consider. Another result from this process besides giving us a false sense of certainty, is that we base our reasoning on a limited range of “basic” assumptions. All of our reasoning builds from these premises.

Mental puzzles show us these “blind spots” by posing seemingly impossible scenarios. The trick to solving these puzzles is to ask yourself what can you actually do that your mind is not letting you. In other words, what “invisible barriers” is your mind creating that do not actually exist?

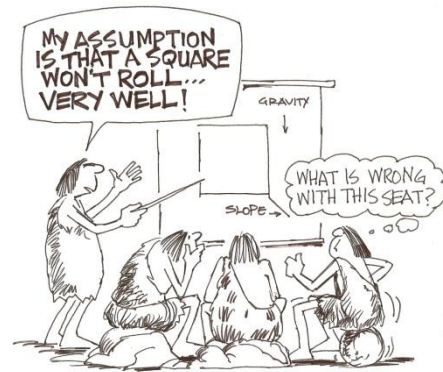
Take the classic “out-of-the-box” puzzle as an example. You must draw a line literally outside of the box and then back inside the box to accomplish the task. Almost everyone who tried this puzzle would not go outside the lines, why?

The answer is that somewhere we were conditioned to “stay in the lines” – literally. It is an invisible assumption that we rarely question. We cannot solve difficult problems or have innovative and creative thoughts until we activate the process of “challenging our assumptions” – of actively asking ourselves and others what barriers are our minds creating that don’t have to exist?

You will be surprised at how many solutions you can find in life – and with puzzles – by challenging some basic assumptions about the problem – asking yourself what is my brain not letting me see?

Verbalize

Most complex solutions and creative ideas come from multiple points of inspiration. If we were mind readers verbalizing would not be needed. We are not mind readers, and thus the only way others will know what we are thinking is by verbalizing our thoughts.



There is an art to verbalizing. Like most meaningful techniques some self-selection is required, and an awareness to what others are saying and doing, and towards what works and what doesn't work is required.

If you picture the human mind as we have described in Step 1, you can easily imagine how many different approaches could be possible within a team of 5 to 8 people. The goal of verbalizing is to get these perspectives out into the realm of common knowledge; to create a shared “cloud” of knowledge that everyone can work from.

Verbalizing is difficult for many of the same reasons “collaborating” is difficult. As we throw out ideas into the collective cloud, most will not lead immediately to a positive result. However, it is often ideas like this that inspire someone else to get closer to the best solution. They hear you say something and it triggers something else in their head that is a positive result – a “negative” in this instance is actually necessary for the positive result! Obviously this is not a negative at all, but rather a critical part of the process.

I witness this highly effective process first-hand, literally hundreds if not thousands of times a year, with people of the highest ranks in corporate America. As they attack the difficult mental puzzles we provide them, success almost always comes from *failing forward* both intellectually and in practice. They throw around ideas and banter seemingly mercilessly until something works. Usually someone takes credit, but from an observers point of view I can see the chain of reasoning that led to the final answer. It often includes several “crazy” or “different” ideas that trigger something better in someone else, and sometimes the crazy ideas *are* the best solution!

If you think about it logically, let's assume your team is looking for a solution or idea that is greater than any one individual can come up with on their own. Otherwise, why would you need to meet as a team? In order to achieve this result you will need to generate ideas that are greater than the intelligence and creativity of any one individual – in other words ideas that benefit from the combination of ideas from multiple sources and critiques.

We know we have to generate a “whole” greater than the “sum of the parts”. One powerful technique to get these ideas out there is verbalizing. Verbalizing can be as easy and natural as trusting your team to throw out ideas and work with each other, or as structured as a technique we call *thinking fluently*.

This idea can best be summarized by the phrase “possibility thinking before practicality thinking”. We observe this process in our team building programs when we apply time pressure to a difficult challenge.

Most often teams will pursue the **first idea** that makes any sense and is articulated with confidence and certainty. In other words they are already thinking about how to put the idea into “practice” before generating other “possibilities”.

More advanced teams may consider a few options and then move forward with the first **good idea** they come up with before finding a truly **great idea**. And, finally even those teams capable of waiting for a **great idea** fall short of finding the **best idea**.



A very real danger of assessing the “practicality” of ideas BEFORE generating numerous “possible” solutions is that it severely limits the process of “**idea brokering**”; the combining of seemingly different ideas into an original approach or solution.

Almost all great inventions came not from a linear path down one road, but rather from combining seemingly unrelated ideas, or ideas that did not have great value independent of each other into a new and creative solution. The sticky note invented by 3M is one of the most famous examples, other than the ever popular “you put your chocolate in my peanut butter” example.

Fortune magazine (August 6, 2007) offered an intriguing example of idea brokering in an article *Bend It Like Corning*. This article details how Corning – best known for cookware – is pursuing a large stake of a **\$23 billion business opportunity** from Verizon. It is a classic example of how **idea generation can lead to significant revenue**.

“Like many innovations at Corning, the discovery of ‘bend insensitive’ fiber was a combination of serendipity and determination ... (these scientists) began brainstorming on Friday afternoons... they had several physicists who rolled their eyes and said, ‘This will never work’.”

Three scientists from different fields (chemist, chemical engineer, and optical scientist) were thinking independently about “nanostructures” - the technology behind the eventual breakthrough. The **combination** of ideas from three different and independent disciplines, and the ability to test ideas that even “experts” thought would never work, led to the discovery of the unthinkable – fiber optic cable that can transmit light even when it is bent!

We find from experience in our training programs that even high performing teams cannot help but move directly into practicality thinking BEFORE possibility thinking; and for good reason. Practicality thinking is a survival instinct left over from our early days thousands of years ago. Humans for the most part are physiologically the same today as our *flight or fight* ancestors. We have many instincts that are not suited for the modern world. Practicality thinking is one of those instincts – strong, but not always the best route. *Thinking fluently* can help teams to

overcome the urge towards practicality thinking, and in turn help them generate more possible ideas, combine ideas better, and ultimately find the best idea for any solution.

Whether you use a technique like *thinking fluently*, or you are able to naturally encourage this type of interaction, or you have trained your team to be able to engage in verbalizing successfully, it is a critical skill in today's rapid pace of innovation. It is the new idea that allows companies to survive. Businesses have imploded or exploded before our eyes at a speed unimaginable just a couple of decades ago. Google, Facebook, Netflix and Apple on one side, and Nokia, Motorola, and Blockbuster on the other, are but a few examples of companies on both sides of this exponential "growth or death" trajectory.

At the center of these success stories is an innovative connection to human beings. A new way of doing things that bridged technology and/or logistics with a better way humans can use it. You can't have these creative breakthrough ideas without getting out of your own box, without breaking through the limitations each individual mind uses to make sense of the world. You have to be able to ask questions like "what would make this experience even better for the consumer" and be able to generate new and accurate solutions.

Verbalizing is a powerful tool to accomplish this goal because it leverages creative and experiential differences between teammates to generate new perspectives, new ideas, and combinations of ideas that far surpass the capability of any one person.

Fail Forward

Many problems can be solved – and require – experimenting and learning as you go. Not every puzzle, or solution in life or business, can be solved effectively by *verbalizing*. Sometimes you just have to *fail forward* – in other words keep trying different possible solutions without fear of failing. The faster you can learn from your mistakes the faster you will solve the problem.

Some cultures promote failing forward and others do not. In general, "carrot" cultures encourage failing forward, and "stick" cultures discourage failing forward. In other words, if

people are incentivized for success they are more willing to overcome fears of failure, and are more willing to commit the amounts of energy and determination it takes to achieve success.

In fear based cultures people will not risk experimenting, and will most certainly avoid failure of any type at almost any cost. I had an interesting first-hand experience with this concept many years ago as a young man working on a high ropes course. High ropes courses are the ones very popular in the 80s and 90s, where people wear climbing harnesses and jump off high ledges and grab things, or walk across tight ropes high in the air. This is the “trust fall” type team building often satirized.

I was working at a college ropes course and early in the morning starting at 5:00AM we had ROTC cadets utilize the course for a couple hours before our regular clients showed up at around 8:00AM. One morning we put out a problem solving challenge for the cadets to do while the other half were climbing.

The challenge involved three boards and 4 buckets. The goal was to balance one of the buckets full of water above the other three buckets, without the boards or bucket touching the ground. You could not move the three buckets, which were placed just far enough apart so that the boards could not reach from one bucket to the next. It is a fun challenge that can easily be reproduced in a bar or kitchen table with four glasses and three butter knives (or drink stirrers).

Despite the cadet’s success at almost any climbing challenge we handed their way, this puzzle eluded them. I observed them afraid to experiment for fear of being wrong. In contrast, our client this same day was a group of high school students at the course as part of a rehabilitation program. They were all at the school because it was a last chance facility for students that would not be accepted by any other school district.

I remember thinking to myself clearly “If those cadets couldn’t solve this puzzle there is no way these kids will have a chance”. What I observed shocked me. They solved it in less than 5 minutes. Watching their behavior they were really good at failing – they had literally no fear of failing! The result was that each kid couldn’t wait to try a new way to position the boards, and

almost without even thinking about it – they plowed through several options until they got the correct one. This was the beginning of my journey towards changing my own paradigm, and realizing how powerful our own limitations are. Sometimes it's about getting out of our own way!

I hear all of the time from people “I'm not good at puzzles.” My response is, “you probably haven't tried!” The number one indicator for success in math – which may surprise you – is not intelligence, socio economic status, race, or gender ... its perseverance. Children who stuck with the problems had success.

Now you have a powerful arsenal for problem solving that includes three easy techniques:

- Identifying Invisible barriers
- Verbalizing possible solutions
- Fail Forward

Once we understand how to problem solve, the next challenge is to communicate and collaborate effectively.

STEP 4

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Communication and collaboration are each an entire book in themselves, however our question in this book is what specific type of communication and collaboration do we need in order to successfully engage in *Dynamic Discourse™*?

First it is important to define each term so we know the difference. For the purposes of this book we define each word as follows.

- **Communication** – discourse between team members or within your immediate work environment or area of influence.
- **Collaboration**- working with people outside of your immediate area of influence.

The number one **communication** skill required for *Dynamic Discourse™* is the ability to hear and understand what other people are saying before processing its merits, or your likes, or dislikes.

The number one **collaboration** skill required for *Dynamic Discourse™* is the ability to question and learn from people outside of your immediate area of influence with the intention of extracting relevant ideas for what you are doing.

Communication

Imagine your team is challenged to rebuild a car from its component parts. Half your team is in a control room and they have the plans to rebuild the car and step by step instructions. Half your team is in a state of the art auto repair facility. You have all of the tools you need and all of the parts, you just need to assemble them correctly. Neither team can see each other, but they can communicate.

What would be your first move? Where would you start?

Based on my experiences, I would suggest **two critical communication skills** that will help your team in this car building challenge, and, more importantly, in developing the communication skills necessary to engage in *Dynamic Discourse™*.

1. Find “Agreement” on key terms
2. Ask follow-up questions the *right* way

Agreement

Imagine having to “re-describe” every car part each time either room wants to communicate what part they are talking about. It is a gigantic time waster, and it is inefficient. It is easy to get it wrong.

Successful teams, on the other hand, take the time initially to describe, question, confirm, and agree on a specific name for each specific part. They (1) describe the part, (2) engage in a series of back and forth questioning until they feel confident to (3) confirm it’s the same part, and then (4) agree on a term to describe it.

After completion of this first step, termed “agreement”, they can efficiently discuss parts without having to “re-describe” them each time.

After finding “agreement” on the names for the specific car parts, they apply the same technique to reach agreement on other core areas of the building process, for example orientation. “When you say ‘up’ as in rotate the part ‘up’, do you mean towards the sky or towards the front of the car? ... or ‘rotate left’ do you mean my left or your left as you are looking at the instructions?” They agree on terms to minimize confusion and significantly speed up the process of orienting the parts when they actually start building.

Successful teams create a core of common words. The meaning is very specific and meant to be used in action. The more they use the terms in action during the process of building the car, the easier and more natural they become. Although these teams invest time early on and

initially fall behind other teams, their efficiency quickly catches up and takes over once they begin the building process.

Success at *Dynamic Discourse™* requires a similar process. Your team must agree on specific terminology for the key words you will use in your discourse. Although this will take some time investment initially, the clarity and efficiency it will provide once you begin *Dynamic Discourse™* is critical to your success.

It is important to have clarity of as many terms as possible, however, it is *critical* to have clarity around the key terms you will be using. As our blood pressure rises, or the complexity of the issue rises, it is very helpful to have objective crutches to lean on to bring clarity back into the discussion. It prevents regression, and promotes a common foundation to build upwards from.

Another potential liability without the investment in *agreement* is that we will use words thinking we are saying the same thing, or meaning the same thing, as someone else, only to find out upon further inspection the same word means something significantly different to both of us. Ask what “family” means to 5 different people. How many different responses would you expect to get?

Taking the time to find a **common core of terms for which you have gained agreement** is well worth the investment. It is difficult to have *Dynamic Discourse™* without *agreement* as you will end up wasting too much time and energy on misunderstanding, confusion, and unnecessary repetition.

Ask follow-up questions the right way

Part of the process of finding *agreement* is a back and forth questioning, and confirmation. In the car example above, your team would have to ask several questions back and forth between the two rooms.

“Does the object you are holding have any holes or outlets?”

“Yes, two”

“Are they on the same side or opposite sides?”

“Opposite.”

“How would you describe what side they are on –
Are they on the top and bottom, back and front?”

“It depends what you consider the ‘top’, and ‘bottom’ ...
this part is more round than square or rectangle.”

“Is it plastic or metal, clear or dark?”

“Clear and plastic”

“There is only one clear, plastic, roundish part –
it’s called the window wash fluid reservoir.”

In this activity both “rooms” are interested in finding common ground with the other room. They are trying very hard to understand what the other people are describing. They are asking detailed follow-up questions, calmly eliminating possibilities, and narrowing down their choices until they problem solve together a solution. The key is, they are listening and responding, and asking several follow-up questions until actual clarity is reached. They are asking follow-up questions in the *right* way!

Too often in discourse we are not interested, or we are not afforded an opportunity, to reach actual clarity with other people’s ideas. We do not ask the *right* kind of follow up questions.

Part of the reason we resist asking these questions are the invisible barriers I talked about in STEP 1 and STEP 3. The more we ask follow-up questions, the more likely we may hear information contrary to what we believe, and then we would have to accept something new. Remember, we don’t fool ourselves all the time, mostly only when something “conflicts with something we already believe.” (see STEP 1)

Another reason is a false paradigm ingrained into our cultural fabric, and most, if not all, corporate cultures – a term I call *adversarial discourse*. In other words, we feel compelled to mimic our justice system and assume an all-out fight between two competing ideas will yield the best solution.

We instinctively feel compelled to put down others' ideas, or compete with them, without asking the seemingly difficult questions to actually understand what they are actually saying. In many work cultures, asking these questions is frowned upon, and is looked at as upstaging authority, which is of course ridiculous.

One of the reasons so many bad decisions are made in corporate America, and I suspect in many other organizations, is that we have imbedded into our culture an aversion for the facts. Bringing up facts, asking tough questions, is uncomfortable and it is particularly uncomfortable for *Drivers* because it slows things down, and most of the workforce are *Drivers*!

Second most prevalent in the work force are Motivators, whose most prominent characteristic during heated discourse is to take "disagreement with their ideas" personally. Motivators tend to attach emotion to their ideas, and it can be difficult to let go of these feelings and see clearly and objectively. The result of this may be a serious aversion to disagreeing, or asking obvious questions, with Motivators in power. Motivators don't always react well to questioning of their ideas.

In a team setting this can sabotage discourse because Motivators can dominate the "idea factory" and others will resent it. It may also result in clashes with both Drivers and Thinkers, as these two quadrants see the "facts" not necessarily the person or the passion.

One of the advantages of *Dynamic Discourse™* is that it solves these types of misunderstandings, and allows us to get beyond our imbedded cultural tendencies. We are expected to question, and be questioned, with one goal in mind – the best solution.

Similar to our aversion to *thinking fluently*, we often filter new ideas immediately through preprogrammed paradigms, and when the idea conflicts with one of our beliefs we seek to dismiss it. Instead of listening and thinking of follow-up clarification questions, we are thinking of our own "comeback" and essentially tuning out the speaker. These paradigms quickly filter the "facts" we hear or consider, and they often cloud our assessments and limit our ability to

actually understand the idea. That is one reason asking follow-up questions until mutual clarity is achieved is so critical.

Just like your group building the car, we need to achieve a mutual clarity with the speaker, an understanding between one or more groups that we all do understand what is being presented.

Just like the car parts were an interesting challenge to describe, complex ideas will be equally, if not more, challenging during your *Dynamic Discourse™*. Because each of us brings such a unique experience to the table, we literally filter and hear things very differently. Ironically, we take for granted that we all hear the same thing, and so we don't ask basic and obvious questions. As we know now, nothing could be farther from the truth.

I sometimes hear in my class the objection that asking confirming questions can feel robotic and awkward. Yes it can, but just like any new habit it becomes more and more natural over time. The good news is that the rewards are immediate and tangible, and this is a great motivation to keep perfecting your art.

Finding *"Agreement"* on terms and *"Asking follow-up questions the right way"* are too critical **communication** skills for successful *Dynamic Discourse™*.

Collaboration

We all live in a fish bowl - big or small or something in between - that reinforces our beliefs and gives us confidence to carry on, and faith that things will be more-or-less like yesterday. Our fishbowl is the reduced world of facts and input we are left with after our brains filter information. We don't often realize the extent or perhaps even the existence of our fishbowl, which leads to the blind spots we talked about in STEP 1. For example, ask yourself the question: "Why do I go through intersections when the light is green without stopping and looking both ways?"

A simple answer is that you have absolute faith no one will run a red light coming the other way. It is literally a life or death decision, because if someone were to run the red light they

could very likely cause a very serious accident. All of us know that sometimes people do run red lights, and sometimes there are serious accidents, however, in order to function in our society we have to have faith, otherwise we couldn't drive. We don't normally think of it this way, but it's true.

This is one example of how our fishbowl helps us move through life, and how you really don't question these limits unless something jars them open – for example you or someone you know is an accident of the type above.

In a business setting, where innovation and improvement matter, when we are looking to solve a complex problem or think of something new and creative, it is critical we find ways to get outside of our fishbowls.

Collaboration, reaching outside of your “fish bowl” or “area of influence” is an excellent way to break through with new ideas, new paradigms, new products, and new clients. Who should you collaborate with?

The answer is not easy because it may be the person or group you or I rule out, the one our paradigm helps our brain to filter out, that could end up being the breakthrough moment. On the other hand it is difficult to talk to everyone looking for a source of inspiration.

I have a good friend who produces game shows. He has worked with several of the most famous game show hosts in high profile productions, has invented several of his own game shows, and in general is immersed in the world of game shows.

He reminded me of how available collaboration can be when we are open to inspiration. He used to pay huge sums of money to have his game show sets custom designed and built by specialty companies, until recently. A chance collaborative discussion while he was getting his car stereo installed led to a manufacturing breakthrough.

He now contracts his set-building with a local custom car stereo shop that builds them from a variety of custom speaker boxes. The builders are already trained in wiring and electronics, so

adding the fun and fancy features to the sets was no problem – and the sound is better. My friend has cut his production costs in half, and the audio store has a new revenue stream.

An excellent example of collaboration was the one described above in STEP 3 of how three scientists reached out across disciplines – outside of their area of influence – to find common ground and share their unique perspectives. Each were interested in a common item - “nanostructures” - the technology behind the eventual breakthrough.

The **combination** of ideas from three different and independent disciplines, and the ability to test ideas that even “experts” thought would never work, led to the discovery of the unthinkable – fiber optic cable that can transmit light even when it is bent!

I have found the best way to collaborate is to always keep an eye open for inspiration, and when you find it, follow-up immediately with questions and discovery. By becoming aware of how our brain works, how it filters out information, you can then consciously open yourself up to a wider range of input. Direct your mind to see new things.

For example, I am always under pressure to think of new team building events and fun ideas. It’s hard for me to be creative under pressure, so instead I am always looking for new inspiration.

I go to toy stores, educational stores, sports stores, hardware departments, junk yards, game stores, flea markets, garage sales, industry conferences and sales exhibitions, client businesses, fancy restaurants, theme parks, and many other places all looking for something to catch my eye. I talk and collaborate with anyone I think I can learn more about something. I am constantly looking for inspiration in places no one would expect to find it. Not only is it fun, and annoying at times for my wife, but occasionally it actually works.

Imagine each member of your team looking outward for ideas to share and add to the idea factory at your next *Dynamic Discourse™* infused meeting. There are examples of excellence,

opportunities for efficiency, and countless complementary components, all waiting for you to see them, and add them to your ever expanding paradigm of problem solving variables.

1. Finding “*Agreement*” on terms
2. “*Asking follow-up questions the right way*”, and
3. Looking outside your area of influence for inspiration

All three are critical to **Dynamic Discourse™** and comprise the basic **communication** and **collaboration** skills necessary for success.

STEP 5

Buy-In

Why Consensus Should be Avoided

By following the STEPS to *Dynamic Discourse™* one of the inevitable outcomes is greater buy-in from participants. It is both an outcome of the other STEPS, and a specific and necessary goal of any *Dynamic Discourse™* session.

When we are not entering a discussion from a combative or competitive viewpoint, concessions and compromise, or “my way or the high way”, are not even successful outcomes we are looking for. By changing our paradigm towards a more solution focused interactive discussion – where we challenge each other’s reasoning and look to build better ideas together – the outcomes become less personal, merit is less assignable, victory is everyone’s, and everyone leaves saying “we did a good job.” We can leave a discussion having agreed on an idea that **no one had going into the meeting** – a new idea built from the combination and creative thinking of the entire team.

Imagine trying to build the car in the example from STEP 4 above if one room entered the discussion wanting to describe the parts “their way” and the other room entered the discussion with the same objective. Contrast this to a solution focused style where they use the correct communication techniques to gain a clear and solid common understanding of each part. In the first case each room will spend all their energy trying to convince the other side, and in the second case they will use their energy immediately and directly towards a solution.

In the real world we are constantly faced with a quality/quantity dilemma. Time is almost always limited, expectations are high, and we are faced with tough choices. This often makes obtaining the ideal solution difficult. Even in these instances where we gladly forgo the “best idea” to accept the “good idea” – the one that solves the problem and lets us move on - buy-in is achievable and critical to long term performance. The act of engaging people in the dialogue, and the courage and discipline to use the techniques required to achieve *Dynamic*

Discourse™ will lead people to “buy-into a solution,” even if they don’t agree. Reasonable people do not need to be right; they do need to be heard.

One of the least attractive outcomes of a competitive environment is that it almost always closes the other side off to your ideas. Their mind goes into “defend mode” and you can believe it is actively filtering out anything positive or enlightening you might have to say! One advantage of consistently asking follow up questions the *right* way is that it opens people up to hearing more about *your* ideas.

This concept is similar to what Stephen Covey would call giving people their “psychological air.” As he describes it, imagine if you were in a room without any oxygen. Until you could breathe, you would not be able to hear or concentrate on what anyone was saying. You would be completely focused on getting air.

In the same way, until people can express themselves, until they can be heard, they often find it difficult to listen to anyone else. A competitive environment does not generally make people feel heard. In contrast, **Dynamic Discourse™** encourages participants to take the time investment necessary to hear and understand what people are thinking.

Why Consensus Should be Avoided

If the goal of a group interaction is to make everyone feel as good as possible consensus is an excellent tool. However, if the goal of the group is to solve a problem, create something new and creative, or engage in productive conversation, consensus should be avoided.

We have been force fed for several decades a myth around teamwork, and a large part of that myth is consensus. Somewhere along the way we learned that the ultimate goal of teamwork was to fly in the same formation like the birds, or all row together like we are in a racing scull, mindlessly following all in unison. Let me quickly shatter this image and remind you of the size of a bird brain.

It is true that once we “leave the room” so to speak a team needs to be on the same page. There is a certain degree of “acting as one,” especially on the execution and implementation side of teamwork. However, when you are looking for new ideas, innovation, creative thinking, and the best possible solution to a problem, the truth could not be farther from this image.

As we have discussed earlier, it is the interchange of diverse ideas coupled with a laser focus on results that defines **Dynamic Discourse™**. Done correctly, this interchange will pick-up support along the way for the long haul, rather than leave a wake of collateral damage.

If you reach a consensus decision you should be alarmed and immediately rethink your outcome. There are several reasons for this. The first one is that the focus of your discussion is misguided. If your intent is to appease people rather than find and discover solutions you will:

- Never get the best solutions
- Never breakthrough and get new and creative ideas
- Always have a limited ceiling of ideas
- Always get less than the value of even the ideas that came into the room.

Dynamic Discourse™ is not about appeasing people and compromising to make them happy. This is not how you get buy-in. In fact, the collateral damage from this will most likely insure you will not have **Dynamic Discourse™**.

Dynamic Discourse™ requires a laser focus on results, a meritocracy of ideas independent of politics and rank, and an openness to be influenced. It is a process that relies on a trust people have that ideas will not be influenced by any factor other than what will work best – period. Once anything gets in the way of that, people will sniff it out like a drug dog at port. Once you have “the boss” enter and get a special set of rules, spontaneity, creativity, willingness to verbalize and fail forward, the courage to collaborate and see what we can’t see, all of the necessary components to **Dynamic Discourse™** are in danger.

Keep the focus of **Dynamic Discourse™** on results, not on pre-established positions, not on compromise or consensus, and not on individual agendas.

The next problem with consensus is that it is usually the lowest common denominator – which usually means the least inspirational, the least engaging, the least new and the least creative. An example of consensus is below:

My friend had a dilemma with his children. His daughter wanted to take ice skating lessons and his son wanted to play football. The only problem was he could not take both to each practice as the times overlapped.

- **Consensus Solution:** Since his daughter obviously liked ice, and his son obviously wanted to play a sport, he simply enrolled both children in hockey.
- **Consensus Solution II:** Since both children wanted to play each sport, he decided to have each one miss every other practice so he could take one or the other child to practice.

In a consensus solution everyone loses, as they get part of what they wanted. In these two examples it is obvious neither solution would actually work. Each child is getting part of what they want, and they are compromising, however the outcome is a lose-lose for everyone.

Neither child will buy-in to this solution, and the outcome of the solution is far from the best possible solution.

In real life no kids would tolerate this nonsense and neither should we at work. What would happen in the example above is that the family would figure out a way to make it happen, they would think-out-of-the-box and scratch and claw to figure it out. They would collaborate with other families, seek alternate solutions, listen to “crazy ideas” from the children, and in the end you can bet both kids would get to where they needed to go.

Because the children were a part of the solution process they will buy-in to what it takes to get the job done. You can imagine the reaction if my friend announced to his daughter without any dialogue, “yes you can go to ice skating but you will need to ride your bike twice a week.” If she is like my daughter she would freak out.

Now imagine, his daughter had been a part of examining all of the options and understood the challenges the family was up against. Imagine if it was her idea to ride twice a week? In this example, the direct correlation between how a solution is arrived at and the consequent long term motivation and acceptance is obvious. It is the same in the workplace.

Getting part of what you want does not motivate people. Inspirational ideas that work do motivate people. Consensus sends the wrong message. It implies we have not done any of the hard work to truly understand other people's positions, and to build ideas. It implies we only thought about we want, and what we think, and when forced we conceded our best thoughts to "get a solution". Well that's no solution at all. We aren't "moving the chains forward" or getting any closer to an actual solution. None of our team building challenges can be solved by consensus because they all have an actual answer or best possible solution. Consensus is a form of team *rational dysfunction*, where you are under the illusion that if everyone in this room can agree on something it must be right.

Where a real world solution is required it doesn't matter what people think or how they feel, what matters is putting the pieces together in the right way and figuring it out. Drivers, don't confuse this with a license to "not care about what people feel." Quite the opposite, **Dynamic Discourse™** and creative human dialogue is only possible when our feelings do matter – the point is that the **focus of your discussion** should never be on simply getting agreement – especially to appease people. The focus should be on getting agreement by finding the best possible solution. Done correctly, people will agree because the solution is better.

Consensus also usually means at least some people are afraid to voice their opinions; either because they do not have the personal courage, or because the environment is not conducive to sharing their ideas, or a combination of both. It can also mean people do not care enough to take the time and energy required to have an opinion, or that they think it is futile to express an opinion so why bother.

And finally, consensus shows a lack of real leadership. It is safe to say no great invention throughout all of human history was discovered through consensus. What more is there to say?

Getting the most out of people requires buy-in. The process of engaging people in the solution process, having a diverse set of ideas heard and debated, and then getting a quality outcome all encourage buy-in. With buy-in comes long term motivation, and increased performance. If we can all get behind a project, all rowing in the same direction, anything is possible!

STEP 6

Building Trust

The foundation of a creative environment

Trust is an invisible force with real life impact. You can't see trust, and it's hard to pin point it, but in general we know who we trust and who we don't. That seems to be the bottom line with trust. There is very little middle ground.

Trust is the foundation of a creative environment because it frees up people to be spontaneous, giving, engaged, and open. People are very savvy and smart when it comes to protecting themselves, and this is exactly what is at stake with trust. We need to have trust that we will be protected in order to perform at our best.

How can we truly expect to engage in **Dynamic Discourse™** if people are limited and self-censoring because they are more worried about saying the wrong thing, or giving up too much information, or making themselves vulnerable to attack? We need to build a solid foundation of trust, and implement an ongoing system for keeping trust.

There are two distinct types of trust in the workplace.

1. Trust between workers that they will not back stab each other, tell you one thing and do another, sabotage each other, hurt each other's feelings, etc.
2. Trust that when I hand off a project to you, that you will complete your part to the highest quality, or trust that each team member will correctly complete their part of a team project.

Some people we may trust them in one area completely, and not in another area: "I am positive John will complete the assignment, but I'm not sure if he will be on time today (or ever)!" The team trusts John to complete his assignments, as he obviously has a great track record, and we don't trust John to be on time, as he obviously has a consistent track record here too.

As the example above indicates, trust is based on observed behaviors. A consistent record of completing things on time will lead to people trusting that you will finish things on time. The number one way bosses lose trust is when they say one thing, and do another thing. All leaders need to “do as they say they will do” to have credibility, and a consistent record of following through on what you say you will do is the best way to build credibility with your constituents.

In real life we are often confronted with tough choices that challenge us to remain consistent. Sometimes competing interests make the right decision unclear, or difficult, and in these cases sometimes we will go wrong. We are human after all!

In addition to these instances, there are many behaviors that go on at work on a daily basis that would make a junior high student cringe. Some people in your workplace just don’t get it, or perhaps your organization rewards people who behave poorly – trust is not taken seriously. What is pleasantly surprising is that when I ask my classes to list trust building behaviors and trust breaking behaviors they are universally very consistent. We seem to know exactly what builds trust, and exactly what compromises or destroys it.

Because of this it is helpful to have a tool to keep trust building and trust breaking behaviors out in the open. The better we all understand and agree what builds trust, the easier it is to follow through on those types of actions and behaviors. Likewise, it is helpful to have a tool that helps us to communicate clearly with each other about trust, and one that makes policing trust behaviors a shared job held by everyone. We happen to have just such a tool!

The Trust Bank

The Trust Bank is like the bank where you keep your money. You can make deposits or withdrawals. The more deposits you make the more trust you build, and the more withdrawals you make the less trust you build.

Creating a *Trust Bank* is an easy interactive activity you can do with your team. The goal is to create a large poster that can be placed in the workplace, and/or copied and sent to everyone

to put up in their workstation or office. Make sure to use ideas from the group and NOT your own or ones from a book.

Draw a circle (or Bank) on a large piece of paper. Ask people to put behaviors that build trust inside the circle and behaviors that break or ruin trust outside the circle. Because these ideas come from your group, the group will “buy-in” to the final document. It is critical to allow people to challenge any of the items for further discussion, or for clarity. The more lively the conversation, the better buy-in you will get.

Three important things about the *Trust Bank*

1. It must come from the group without your or anyone’s manipulation
2. It creates an objective standard by which anyone in the group can ask “When you did X was that something that was inside or outside of the circle” and let them answer.
3. It makes people accountable to each other and not only to the boss

This last point is very important to an on-going “trust policy” because it allows people to work out their own differences, which builds trust in itself.

I noticed an interesting phenomenon playing in a recent adult soccer game. Normally we have a referee and two assistant referees that work our games. As per (bad) tradition, grown men yell the most nasty and inane comments at the referee during the game, and they act aggressively towards each other – they do what they can get away with from the referee.

One recent game the other team showed up late and it was ruled a forfeit. The referees left the field, however both teams decided to go ahead and play anyway. We were there, so why not. Instead of the game going to chaos, people were actually cordial towards each other and – get this – voluntarily called their own fouls! It was one of the more enjoyable outings we had all season. Often a point of discipline gives people an excuse to behave poorly, whereas a credo that is pervasive makes us accountable to ourselves, and to those we count on.

The *Trust Bank* can significantly simplify difficult conversations between teammates. “Do you think your actions were inside or outside of the trust circle?” is a powerful question, and it also invites a more neutral conversation than attacking or accusing someone. Since the document reflects how people really feel about trust, you can bet it has meaning. People who are “trust” challenged must face their behaviors without the usual drama, and they are held accountable by their teammates – all of their teammates – not just the boss.

One additional use for the *Trust Bank* once you have it made, is that you can create specific trust banks between individuals. Two people who have issues with trust can keep a customized trust bank for each other, recording together behaviors that added or subtracted from the trust bank. Using the objective model created by the group as their standard, this will dramatically improve both communication and understanding between the two individuals. They have a clear path to work towards building trust, and avoiding behaviors that take it away.

Like most things in life, trust behaviors have both obvious boundaries, and in some cases very blurry boundaries. The *Trust Bank* sets a clear standard for obvious behaviors, and it encourages an on-going discussion around trust behaviors that will benefit your team when things get blurry. It should be a living, almost breathing, part of your environment.

The *Trust Bank* is an excellent way to keep a dynamic conversation going around trust. Likewise, teams need to have ongoing systems to “Keep the Team.” Introducing and practicing the first 6 STEPS is critical to developing the ability to engage in *Dynamic Discourse™*, however, to keep your team over time, and through the myriad of challenges that await, there are other important aspects to consider before completing our journey.

STEP 7

Keeping the Team

Keeping the team is about repairing and accounting for the collateral damage that happens when people work intensely together, and finding ways to inspire those that we work with daily or interact with regularly. Even when we all have the same goals, we may have different ideas of how we should get there, and most certainly different styles.

The key to keeping to the team is humanizing team members so that we can better understand each other, and so we can build some forgiveness, trust, faith, and tolerance into our daily habits. Think of the latitude we give to family members. This is possible only from a series of experiences that build familiarity. Keeping the team is not necessarily a difficult science, but it must be authentic, and it does take effort.

You must invest in people to reap the rewards they are capable of giving. People need to be appreciated, and they need to be understood. This is where a Glue person is invaluable. They can often fill in the gaps that Drivers, Motivators, and Thinkers leave open.

Each of us has a work persona, and we have a more human side. In some cases they are almost indistinguishable, and in other cases they are wildly different. Spending time outside of work can help us understand where our team members are on this spectrum, and it can help us to get to know each other better.

For better or worse, we are much more forgiving of people we know better. We almost naturally look for points of empathy, and we will naturally draw similarities between us and them. Once we do that, we are open to the next step which is seeing that person through our own eyes. Since most of us have the most empathy for ourselves, we begin the process of becoming tolerant, and open to absorbing more of the inevitable collateral damage.

In some cases we actually begin to appreciate the person and like them more. When we like people, we are much more motivated to perform better, and we take personal responsibility for letting them down – we become emotionally invested in not disappointing them.

We also feel a strong sense of loyalty to people or teams we feel positively about. The more we like our team the more likely we are to go above and beyond the call of duty, and the less likely we are to cut corners and “cheat” the team.

I have heard from dozens of teams that don’t like their company or organization, but do like their team – and that’s enough. People are motivated by teams they like!

My mother changed careers late in her life and went back to school to become a marriage and family counselor. Along the way she worked several years for an organization that helps women in distress. She covered a hotline that included potentially suicidal people and people in serious distress. She worked in a very demanding environment.

Although the organization provided an incredible service to people in need, it was not a nice place to work. It was a highly dysfunctional organization that got worse each time they hired a new executive director. The people who ran this organization were hired because of their prowess to raise money – period. Ironically, these same people were put in charge of the organization which meant they were also responsible for the work environment, managing the staff, and setting policies.

The result was a work environment completely unsupportive of the people actually doing the hard work. As challenging as the clients were, the bosses were more challenging! My mother survived for two reasons: her passion for the work she was doing, and the people she worked alongside.

In fact, even after she had her degree it was extremely difficult to leave because she was so fond of her colleagues.

I have a good friend that is in the military. He is young and has served two tours in Iraq and is now in Afghanistan. He has more loyalty to his team than any other thing in his life. When he was at home recovering from an injury all he talked about was how frustrating working in the military can be AND how much he missed his teammates. The happiest he is in life is with his “brothers”. He is frustrated with many of the decisions he sees being made, by the bureaucracy, by the inefficiencies, and by the sheer hell of war, but none of that matters more to him than his bond with his team.

I have another good friend that is around my age. He has had a string of several jobs that have not worked out because of personal reasons. Now he is in a job he really likes, he is committed to, and he seems like a totally different person. He has been there several years now. The difference is not in what he does – he is doing the exact same job, nor in his pay or his schedule. In fact his schedule is worse than it was before.

The difference is in the fact that he has personal relationships with the people he works for. He rides bikes, drinks beer, goes to sporting events, shoots guns, and does other things with the people he works with. This time when the same thing that usually happens to him – a supervisor singles him out as a “problem” – a different result happened. He was able to talk through what was really going on with his boss, and his work mates, and likewise his boss and work mates went “to bat” for him.

What could have been another in a series of bad results, turned out differently. What I have noticed in him is predictable. He gladly goes the extra mile for his boss, and for his team. I recently went on an adult field trip with him out in the field to see what he actually does. What struck me was how much the people he worked with genuinely liked him. He had a great rapport with his clients. By being genuinely motivated and happy at his job, he is genuinely friendly and helpful with his clients. He treats them like he treats people he cares about in his real life ... except better because they are clients.

Once again, this change I have witnessed in him has nothing to do with the company he works for, the products they sell, their “core values”, the amount of money he makes, or his job

duties. The change is solely due to his relationships with his close circle of people he works with.

I have a female client that works in a small office. There are two bosses and five support staff. They have a really great rapport at the office, and I asked her why that was? She mentioned a few things that she notices about her bosses that she felt really contributed to the feel around the office. One key for her was something simple, and yet very significant. When the bosses leave early, everyone leaves early.

She is very motivated by the fact that the bosses do not put themselves above the support staff on visceral matters. In other words, she was quite sure they made considerably more money than her, however in many ways they showed that they appreciated their staff as integral parts of the success of the team. Not leaving early without also letting the staff go was one way they made this very clear through their actions.

Conversely, I have a client who was *disappointed* by receiving a raise. How could that be? She works in a high powered law firm as a legal secretary. There is a pool of secretaries, and other staff that make the firm run. As the economy slowly turns around and business picks up the firm decided to give everyone on the staff a 2% raise. Great! Maybe not?

The problem was that my client had completed projects well above and beyond her normal duties, including an intensive project that gathered data and created a tracking system for helping to eliminate unneeded overtime. She did this because she is very motivated, talented, cares about her office, and wants to get ahead. The problem is she received the same raise as everyone else on the staff. When she found this out how do you think she felt?

If the firm's goal is to encourage people to be average and just like everyone else then their strategy worked. However, if they want to encourage people to go above and beyond, to save the firm money or provide exceptional service, then they must take the time and effort to reward those people taking those types of actions. They must make rewards personal and meaningful.

This brings up a very critical point in keeping the team – **authentic is good – fake is harmful!**

Bestselling leadership authors Kouzes and Posner distilled thousands of real case examples to get to the bottom of what makes great leadership. They came up with just five “Practices of Exemplary Leadership” that have since been confirmed and reconfirmed literally thousands of times.

One thing they found is that celebration of successes leads to more success. Kouzes and Posner call it “Encouraging the Heart” (*The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner, 2003) and it is one of the five practices. They go into great detail about right and wrong ways to *Encourage the Heart*.

At the core of the “right way” to *Encourage the Heart* are three principles:

1. It is personal to the individual
2. It is connected to actual positive performance
3. It is authentic and real

They write an especially poignant description about the fine line between celebration and embarrassment:

“It’s part of the leaders job to show appreciation for people’s contributions and to create a culture of celebration ... celebration (is not) about pretentious ceremonies designed to create some phony sense of camaraderie. When people see a charlatan making noisy affections, they turn away in disgust. Encouragement is curiously serious business. It’s how leaders visibly and behaviorally link rewards with performance.”

A great example to this point comes from a story I heard from a colleague of mine. He worked with a guy named Stan that loved the “bobble head” dolls many sports fans collect. His cubicle was decorated with several dozen bobble head dolls. He was also the type of person that did not like public recognition. Presenting him with a certificate or present in front of people would not have been a positive experience for him. Instead his boss got creative.

He was talking with the Stan one day about nothing really when Stan mentioned a particular bobble head he was missing from his collection; one that was hard to find. The boss took note of this and waited until Stan went on vacation. He researched on the Internet and managed to find one on EBay. He spent the time to win the bid, purchase the item, and then slipped it into Stan's collection when he was gone. You can imagine how Stan felt when he returned, and one day looked up and noticed the bobble head he coveted in his collection.

This story is telling for many reasons. Most importantly, it was a gift that was personal to Stan. It showed that the boss not only listens to Stan but also understands his reluctance to be in front of people. It shows the boss appreciated the personal attention Stan gave to his work, and it took real human effort to complete. There was thought and effort put into the gift, not just money. It was most certainly not an afterthought.

This story reminds me, and hopefully you, that the people we work with are human beings, and that they can be influenced positively by real human connection and meaningful consideration. Keeping your team over time requires that you make human connections.

You must understand where your teammates are coming from when they say or do things that fluster or frustrate you, and everyone must have some buffer where they can say "Oh, that's just John, he will come around it just takes a while" or "There goes Sally again, just give her some space and let Tom talk to her later" or "Sam will be here, trust me, he is late sometimes but he always shows up" or "I'll cover for him, I'm sure he's at home with his child again" or "You don't know Sheila, she seems cold at first but once you know her she is really nice." The nice thing is that when your employees are connected and treated like human beings, they will naturally treat your clients like human beings – and that is priceless!

Dynamic Discourse™

Like winning, ***Dynamic Discourse™*** comes about by doing all of the little things correctly. If you implement and activate the 7 Steps that led us to this chapter you will have prepared your team to engage in the ultimate problem solving and creative thinking machine available.

How does it all come together?

Imagine your team of 5 to 8 people enters a meeting room and sits down at your standard table all facing each other. Each of you has gone through the process of understanding yourself. You are aware of how your own beliefs limit the data you are able to intake, and you are prepared to listen to ideas that go against your own beliefs. You are excited to see how your team will react to your own ideas, not because you are looking for affirmation so much, as you are looking for what you didn't or couldn't see on your own: how will my team take my idea even higher, make it even better?

At the same time you are prepared to abandon your idea should something even better come about from the sparing and jousting of ideas. Your ultimate concern is not to take credit, but to take part in the process that will create something greater than the sum of the parts in the room.

You may not like all of your teammates, or necessarily agree with where they are coming from, but you do understand your teammates. You know what they value in life, you know what their personality tendencies are, and you know some personal information about them so that they are humanized.

Your team is equipped with a specific tool chest of problem solving techniques that you are used to using – that you outwardly verbalize to each other. “What are we not seeing here team?”; “Let’s verbalize this out – come on ideas, ideas?” or “Let’s get our hands dirty here and fail forward.”

It's understood by everyone that our goal here is to get buy-in from everyone, and that takes additional effort, time, and energy. We must speak up if we disagree or have concerns, and the team knows they must address these concerns to move forward. One step back to take many steps forward is always worth it because we get people engaged for the long haul.

Although we argue and may adamantly disagree with each other, we know there are rules and behaviors that are critical to building and keeping trust between us. We have our *Trust Bank* on the wall of the meeting room for easy reference, and it is an active document we all bought into because we created it. We took the time to address concerns before completing the *Trust Bank*, everyone spoke their mind and nothing was agreed upon until we all agreed. The time and energy we put into the document then, has served us well when issues of trust arise.

Over time, we have been able to humanize each other. The issues that seemed like Berlin Walls, have slowly softened over time, as we gained a deeper and wider perspective about each other. Linda Liberal and Kurt Conservative will never agree on politics, but they both root for the same football team and both have kids struggling with math.

All of this hard work allows us to actively engage in **Dynamic Discourse™** and obtain results far greater than we could on our own. We know that if we are leaving the room with solutions that any one person could have arrived at alone, we are wither wasting our time together and/or not engaging in **Dynamic Discourse™** to the best of our abilities.

What follows is an engaged, spirited, respectful, and dynamic conversation that keeps as it's main goal solutions, not appeasement or compromise. We are all looking for something greater, more creative, then we are capable of a apart. It is a meritocracy – where the best ideas take precedence over rank and politics – and where it taking credit doesn't even make sense.

People are free to challenge the assumptions of ideas to get to the root of the reasoning, to find out what is behind the idea, and how it may be limited by where it began. We use our

knowledge of each other to keep an aggressive but respectful atmosphere, where we understand the value of lasting relationships but don't allow that to limit our idea factory.

We strike a delicate and dynamic balance between challenging each other and building each other up, of tolerating and celebrating our differences, and of challenging and affirming our most core beliefs.

Our discussion is a "discourse" because it refers to a formalized way of thinking and speaking. We aren't "just" talking, we are following a formal and informal set of rules – *The Seven Steps* – and all of the nuances and customized dynamics your team creates. It is also a verbal interchange of ideas through conversation, and a mode of organizing knowledge, ideas, and experience for the purpose of getting results.

It is "dynamic" for many reasons: it is energetic and vigorous, it is flexible, it is marked by continuous and productive activity and change, it looks to find the underlying causes - the root of the problem or limitation, and it involves an interaction between people that involves more than the language - a "group dynamic."

Dynamic Discourse™ begins with an analysis of ourselves, and the limitations each of us has to being a great teammate, a great listener, and to sharing our ideas with others. It ends with a deep connection to others. Once you have climbed the *Seven Steps to Dynamic Discourse™* you will find your team at the top of the stairs, in a level area with room for ideas, and the potential for greatness.

And keep in mind, the greatest respect you can give to another is respect itself: a balance between civility and passion, understanding and difference, and consistency and flexibility. With the proper foundation, guidelines and concepts, and dedicated practice, **Dynamic Discourse™** can be an immediate reality for your team.

One last piece of advice before you begin your journey. Make sure you don't miss a Step because it doesn't agree with your beliefs. Trust me on this one.

Benefits of *Dynamic Discourse™*

There are many benefits to implementing *Dynamic Discourse™* in your workplace. The potential increase in profit is exponential from both new growth and cost cutting efficiencies.

The ability to look at things from new perspectives and the tools to turn these insights into practical solutions or *out-of-the-box* new products and services is the core benefit from *Dynamic Discourse™*. With this you can innovate, and as many of you have already experienced in today's global economy its "innovate or die" – it's not really a choice anymore.

The days of cranking out the same business model for decades has gone "rotary phone" on us, and in its place is a nimble economic arena where Apple can become the most valuable company in the world, the big three automakers can go from near extinction to super profitability in 2 years, and Blockbuster may soon be just a name for a hit movie.

Perhaps even more important is that *Dynamic Discourse™* is rooted in authentic human interaction, and in making real connections between the people you work with most. It finds its strength equally in respect and innovation, in challenge and understanding, in values and ideas, and in people and results.

We have been so inundated with false and fake messages, so used to hearing nonsense and hallow charters and mission statements, that we expect it *and* we have a keen sense of sniffing it out. People know the difference between words that have meaning, promises that are kept, and actions that match proclamations, and the opposite.

At the heart of *Dynamic Discourse™* is treating people like human beings, expecting the best from them and rewarding them accordingly, and passing this human treatment on to our customers so we can all live in a better world.