



Inside this issue:

Book Corner—	1
<i>Difficult Conversations...How to Discuss What Matters Most</i> , by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen; and <i>Fierce Conversations...Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time</i> , by Susan Scott	
Leadership Styles	2
Leadership and Vineyards	3
Managing Up	4
Contacting Us	4

Book Corner

***Difficult Conversations...How to Discuss What Matters Most*, by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen; and**

***Fierce Conversations...Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time*, by Susan Scott**

I'm currently designing a workshop with a colleague, Gary Winters, to help people learn to have conversations that they may be avoiding or handling badly. Two resources that I found helpful are *Difficult Conversations* and *Fierce Conversations*. Since they are essentially about the same topic and I found them both useful, I decided to review them both.

Both books make it clear that you are the key to your conversations. You need to understand yourself, your emotions, and your motives for the conversation. You also need to take the conversation to a positive place rather than creating a blaming conversation.

Difficult Conversations tells us that each difficult conversation is actually three conversations: 1) the what happened conversation, 2) the feelings conversation, and 3) the identity conversation. The authors help us understand each of these conversations and how to manage each.

Fierce Conversations teaches 7 principles to use in your difficult conversations. They are:

1. Master the courage to interrogate reality
2. Come out from behind yourself into the conversation and make it real
3. Be here, be prepared to be nowhere else
4. Tackle your toughest challenge today
5. Obey your instincts
6. Take responsibility for your emotional wake
7. Let silence do the heavy lifting

Each chapter expands on a principle with specific examples and techniques for using the principle effectively.

Both books also place an emphasis on listening skills. *Difficult Conversations* talks about shifting from "I understand" to "help me understand." *Fierce Conversations* reminds us to change "but" to "and." Both of these are useful listening tools.

If you need to improve your skills to better handle difficult conversations, both of these resources are helpful. If you are interested in learning more about the new workshop, send an e-mail to sgerke@sbcglobal.net or call me at (949) 831-7088.



Leadership Styles

Question: Different leaders have different styles. Is there one “most effective” style of leadership – and what is that style?

Collaborations Response: In leadership circles you have asked the question of the ages! The short answer is there is no one most effective style of leadership. There are many styles and each has its appropriate time and place. As you think about that, it only makes sense.

If the building were on fire you would not expect me to convene a meeting; lead a lengthy discussion outlining the pros and cons of various courses of action; ask everyone to take the pulse in their different areas of responsibility; and be prepared to jointly make a decision next week.

On the other hand, if we needed to carefully consider options and make some decisions about the future course of our business; whether to completely change our business model; to consider out-sourcing our supply chain; and, which branch offices to close, you would not expect me to make those decisions without considerable input, discussion, and thoughtful investigation.

The most effective style of leadership is driven by the situation and the people involved, including the leader. And to make matters even more complicated, each of us sees the situation and the people involved a little differently - sometimes very differently! That complexity is probably the primary reason that “leadership” is such a challenging, and intriguing subject.

To further complicate the problem, each of us as leaders has our own personal preferences, biases, skill sets and strengths born of experience. Most of us have gotten where we are through considerable experience, hard work, good decisions, learning from our bad decisions, etc. And the list goes on. The point is that the leader also has his or her own strengths, weaknesses, and learned behaviors.

Much has been written about assessing both the situation and the people involved and then utilizing the most effective style for any given set of circumstances. Many labels have been applied to various leadership styles: “authoritarian, director, telling, selling, integrator, laissez-faire” etc.

Possibly the most common phrases used in leadership training are “well rounded” and “flexible.” The former

generally refers to having a full compliment of skills so that faced with various sets of circumstances you have the ability to respond most appropriately and effectively. The latter means actually recognizing the differences in sets of circumstances that would require different responses in order to be most appropriate and effective.

Typically entry-level employees are hired for specific skills or technical expertise. The further they progress in an organization the more important their managerial and leadership skills become.

Many people lead out of habit or necessity without a lot of thought or preparation. It just kind of happens. Who do you make the leader of your auto-cad techs? If you are like most people, you probably choose the best auto-cad tech in the shop. In many of the organizations where we work, the individual that is promoted into the leadership position is left to sink or swim with little or no training in management or leadership! Well there is a world of difference between being an auto-cad tech and the supervisor of the auto-cad support group.

We all learn by trial and error. However, your question is to be applauded. There is an enormous amount to be learned by inquiry, observation and reflection. “What will work best in this situation?” “What has worked well in past situations that were similar?” “What has not worked well in the past?” “Why?” “What have other leaders done, and how did they make those decisions?” There are numerous books and articles available to the student of leadership – which is to say the student of people.

Learning by inquiry, reading, and observation is relatively straight-forward. However, reflection is a disappearing skill. Generally our lives are so hectic and crammed with activity that we rarely take time to reflect on what has happened and why. More and more we are learning that organizations are like self-correcting complex adaptive systems. In other words, it is not possible to control and direct everything and every detail. We need to give appropriate guidance and trust that the system will respond most appropriately. Taking time to reflect on circumstances, past successes, and failures will best prepare leadership to be effective in the future.

The exact answer to the question is: The most effective leadership style is the style that is most appropriate and effective for the circumstances at the moment. There’s the rub. What factors comprise the circumstances, situation, people, repercussions, desired outcomes, etc.? How well are you able to recognize it?

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

You are probably quite effective and comfortable in some sets of circumstances, giving instructions; praising good work, for example. On the other hand you may be ill equipped and very uncomfortable in other sets of circumstances such as holding people accountable for high quality work or discussing and taking action on poor performance issues.

Clearly recognizing that different situations require different approaches means that you are recognizing the need to be flexible. Those areas where you are uncomfortable are your opportunities for growth and development. They are your opportunities to further develop your skills – toward becoming a more well rounded leader.

Leadership and the Vineyards

This spring, I (Susan) spent a long weekend in Napa and Sonoma with my husband and good friends. While we've taken trips to many wine regions and spent lots of time in wineries and vineyards, on this trip, I got to thinking about my experience in a different way.

One morning, we visited Pride Mountain Winery. Russell was our host and tour guide. After tasting some excellent wines, Russell took us on a tour of the caves and then on a walk through the vineyards.

Pride is located on a mountain top between Napa and Sonoma counties. The land is very interesting in that there are 6 different types of soil in a fairly small, hilly area. As Russell showed us the soil and different slopes, he explained what they have learned over the years. Each combination of soil, sun and runoff creates a particular environment. They have discovered over time which varietals (e.g. merlot, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, etc.) grow better in each area and have planted accordingly.

As I listened, I began thinking about how organizations also have unique characteristics that create an environment that is a better fit for some people than others. (We discussed what organizational climate is in our Fall 2007 issue of Collaboration, so we won't go into depth here.) How much attention are you paying to the elements of your environment that most impact your business? And, then are you "planting" the right people in the right places?



Russell explained to us how the pruning and trellising of the vines is unique to each varietal. This reminded me of how effective leaders help their people grow – by understanding what is unique about the person and then giving them specific opportunities to learn and thrive. Are you taking time to understand the unique strengths and learning needs of your people? And, then, are you creating learning opportunities for them to enhance their value to the organization?

We can see ways to understand leadership and organizations in many aspects of life. I found it especially enlightening to think about leadership and organizational climate with a delicious glass of merlot in my hand!

Managing Up

This topic might also be called – Managing Your Manager. The topic of managing one's boss has been coming up frequently lately as we interact with individuals in organizations. People are looking for guidance in this area for a variety of reasons, including: "my boss is driving me crazy," "I can't get my boss to pay attention to me or my work," and "my boss is micro-managing me." You may have another reason.

Your relationship with your manager is the key to your success, since he or she is a critical resource for your achievement, recognition, promotion, and success.

(Continued on page 4)

Susan Gerke

is the president of Gerke Consulting & Development and “helps people work better, together.” Susan's focus since 1989 has been in designing, customizing and implementing leadership and teamwork programs meeting the needs of executives, managers, and employees in a wide number of companies and industries.

Application of her skill and knowledge has been in facilitation, consulting, curriculum development, and coaching. Susan has developed and delivered experiential programs in the areas of *group dynamics, team basics, mentoring, and facilitation skills*. She has worked with global teams and has certified facilitators around the world to deliver management, leadership, and team offerings.



A recognized expert on remote leadership and teaming, Susan is the co-author of *The I in Team ... Accelerating Performance of Remote and Co-located Teams*, and *Quick Guide to Interaction Styles and Working Remotely*.

SUSAN GERKE
Gerke Consulting &
Development L.L.C.
28782 Jaeger Drive
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677
Voice: 949.831.7088
Fax: 949.831.0502
sgerke@sbcglobal.net

Dave Carey

is a sought after motivational speaker, organizational consultant, and coach. As a motivational speaker, Dave relates his experiences as a P.O.W. with intensity and humor, inspiring others to overcome seemingly insurmountable difficulties and gain a renewed sense of purpose, satisfaction, and control over their circumstances.

As a consultant and coach he focuses on *helping people work together more effectively*. He is an expert in team building, organizational & leadership development.

A graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Dave is a retired Navy Captain. As a Navy pilot he was shot down and spent 5 & 1/2 years as a POW in North Vietnam. His book *The Ways We Choose: Lessons For Life From A POW's Experience* is in it's third printing.



DAVE CAREY
402 Dawson Trail
Georgetown, TX 78628
Voice: 512.819.9481
Fax: 512.819.9482
dave@davecarey.com
<http://www.davecarey.com>

Managing Up—continued

So, what does it take to manage your boss? Here are some keys:

1. Understand your manager's goals. What is he measured on? How does that align with your objectives?
2. Know your manager's three key priorities for a given week or month. You may be surprised to find that what you are working on, while important, isn't a top priority right now. This may explain why you have trouble getting time on her calendar.
3. Learn to accept feedback from your manager. Defensiveness will not endear you to him and may cause him to avoid giving you timely feedback on your performance and behavior.
4. Bring solutions when you bring problems to her. Demonstrate that you are a helpful resource, not a drag on her time.
5. Pay attention to your manager's style and rhythms. Is there a time of day that he is most receptive? Does he like to think things over before making decisions? Does he prefer talking to you directly over reading an e-mail from you? You have a better chance of getting his attention if you pay attention to and honor his needs.
6. Find out how your boss likes to be updated on your accomplishments. Does she like interim updates or does she prefer to hear about a task or project when it's complete? Does she prefer progress reports that are short and to the point, or does she prefer more detail?

If you'd like to contribute to Collaborations or if you have a question or topic for us, we'd love to hear from you. Just send an e-mail to sgerke@sbcglobal.net.