

Juice

**RELEASE
YOUR COMPANY'S
Intelligent Energy
THROUGH POWERFUL
CONVERSATIONS**

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**BASTIAN
BOOKS**

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Conversations Release Energy

Accessing the Power of Pull

A large Australian telecommunications company was exploring dialogue and team building. Amanda, a young consultant, was brought in to help Unit B with social mapping, strategic planning, and other processes. The company got more than it bargained for with this consultant. They soon learned that in her work she routinely goes beyond the processes to people. One way she did this, in this assignment, was to start up what she calls the Red Room.

Amanda had the team meet once a month in the red upper room of a funky downtown restaurant, with a standing invitation to anyone in the company who was interested.

This was their oasis for conversation – just conversation. The discussion was loosely guided by Amanda. Sometimes she would kick things off by introducing new tools or ideas that were exciting her and let things proceed from there. But the main point of the Red Room was to get people face to face to say what they really wanted to say, in a safe place of trust and honest exploration. People didn't

necessarily even talk about work, just about whatever was important to them. They would spend a whole afternoon in these conversations (and often continue them elsewhere, into the night).

One afternoon Amanda introduced an exercise, created by Loretta Rose (coracle@bserv.com), called the Team Trading Floor. In this exercise, she had team members brainstorm what they needed from one another and things they could provide to one another (work related, relational, family ... anything at all). Then they traded among themselves, matching what they needed with what they could give.

The team loved the idea so much that they tried it back at the office. One member had written down that he wanted to learn to dance salsa. To his surprise, "I can teach salsa dancing" was on the list of one of his teammates. He immediately signed an agreement with her for lessons.

A couple of weeks later, Amanda got a call from one of the VPs.

"I want to come to the Red Room," he said.

"Of course!" said Amanda. "The Red Room is open to anyone. You're welcome to come."

"I just never gave it much thought before, but now I'd like to come and see."

"What changed your mind?"

After a long pause, the VP said, "I don't get it; what *is* it you do up there?"

"We just talk."

"I don't get it," he repeated, and Amanda could almost see him shaking his head on the other end of the phone. "Last week I was down to visit Unit B. As I was walking through the cafeteria, two people were dancing salsa. And their unit's income has *doubled* in the past six months! When I ask them how they're pulling that off, all they talk about is the Red Room. What are you *doing* to them in that room?"

Conversations and Energy

What she was doing, or, rather, what everyone in the room was doing, was releasing energy through conversation. The energy

flowed personally and even idiosyncratically, which is what had the VP scratching his head. But it also flowed into the everyday processes of the company, creating better results – which is what *really* caught the VP’s attention.

Conversation Is Atomic in Nature

An atom is a small thing, but depending on how it is split, it can productively light up the city of Toronto (read nuclear energy) or destructively light up the city of Hiroshima (read atomic bomb).

A conversation is like that. Depending on how it is conducted, it can create large-scale productive results or large-scale negative results. Every conversation is a chance to release either positive or negative energy. A simple performance appraisal can leave employees feeling supercharged and ready to throw themselves back into their work, or deflated and ready to throw in the towel. Every interaction you have with someone is an opportunity to release energy inside them. And energy is very important when it comes to getting things done.

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Feeling the Energy

There are many ways to detect the presence of energy in a work environment. Most of them are things you can see with your eyes. But I still remember the tingle of excitement that prickled up the back of my neck the first time I *heard* the presence of energy.

It was several years ago and I was doing some leadership coaching inside Purolator Courier’s central hub operation in Toronto. I was shadowing supervisors on the job to understand exactly what their worlds were like. At first I was overwhelmed, as I saw an operation where twenty-four trailers simultaneously unloaded thousands of parcels onto a series of conveyor belts, with twenty-four belts converging on one massive sorting area up high in the sweltering hot building. This was the primary belt where the parcels were sorted onto secondary belts and redirected to many load-out docks all around the plant.

As I moved toward the primary belt I heard a sound that made my pulse quicken. How can I describe it? It was a deep-chested rumbling chant that rose and fell and resounded even over the deafening din of the conveyor belts: O-O-O-H – o-o-o-h – O-O-O-H, O-O-O-H – o-o-o-h – O-O-O-H, O-O-O-H – o-o-o-h – O-O-O-H.

I asked if I could see what was happening up on the primary belt. As I climbed the stairs I saw a lineup of chanting men working together like a massive muscle machine. They were pulling boxes off an endless steel slide and lifting them onto conveyor belts at different heights.

Each worker hoisted boxes of fifty to sixty pounds each every few seconds. The pace was relentless. No matter how many boxes they lifted, the slide remained packed. The plant processed as many as 150,000 parcels every twenty-four hours.

I noticed a guy in a white shirt and tie weaving in and out of the men. I learned that his name was Dino. He was keeping the energy flowing, bantering away with his men, asking them how it was going, pitching in to help here, un-jamming a bottleneck there.

It was obvious that the men were performing at a highly productive level, but what really caught my attention was the raw kinetic energy created by this amazing supervisor. There was a hum, a buzz, a spark of excitement flowing all the way up and down the primary belt. The word that comes to me when I witness this type of energy working in a team is juice. This team was juiced to be doing what they were doing, even though it was one of the toughest jobs in the organization.

I later learned that in this plant of 600 employees, with a significantly transient workforce, attendance was a brutal problem for the supervisors. Not for Dino, though. His men showed up regularly, and their productivity was outstanding. Somehow he had discovered the secret of releasing a feeling of energy in his employees, and this energy was enabling them to move smoothly through a mountain of work every night.

Interviewing and watching Dino, I discovered what his secret was: he showed respect for his men by engaging them in frequent face-to-face conversations. He was leveraging what Edward

Hallowell in the *Harvard Business Review* (Jan.-Feb.1999) dubs “The Human Moment at Work.”

The human moment has two prerequisites: people’s physical presence and their emotional and intellectual attention ... To make the human moment work, you have to set aside what you’re doing, put down the memo you were reading, disengage from your laptop, abandon your daydream, and focus on the person you are with. Usually when you do that, the other person will *feel the energy and respond in kind*. Together, you quickly create a *force field of exceptional power*. [emphasis mine]

Investing in those short human moments was paying Dino back handsomely. He spent very little time arranging for temps, grinding through discipline issues, and resolving employee complaints.

Energy Is What Gets Work Done

Look at your own productivity over a thirty-day period. Your talents don’t change much from one day to the next. Your knowledge

The one thing that can create a spike in your productivity from one day to the next is your personal energy level.

and experience grow incrementally. But the one thing that can create a spike in your productivity from one day to the next is your personal energy level.

Take your personal energy level and combine it with the energy levels of your co-workers. This produces your organizational energy level. I have had the privilege of working with some of the finest organizations in North America. You can feel a kinetic buzz as you make contact with some of their departments or teams. Perhaps this helps make sense of our high-school physics definition of energy: *energy is the ability to do work*.

Energy Unlocks Effort

When employees feel energized, they love to offer their best stuff: their discretionary effort. Discretionary effort is a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty to perform tasks and exemplify attitudes that benefit the company.

Several years ago I heard about an intriguing research project in which employees were asked, “If you were to put in 15% more effort, do you think your manager would notice?” The employees’ general response was, “No, my manager isn’t that tuned into my daily reality to notice anything like that.”

The researchers then asked the employees, “If you were to put in 15% *less* effort, do you think your manager would notice?” The employees’ response was no again.

If this dynamic is true, it means that some employees have up to 30% more discretionary effort to offer but aren’t feeling energized to offer it. What percent of your employees do you think could be offering more? Engagement studies reveal that only 20% of the North American workforce are highly engaged. Of the remaining 80%, 60% are moderately engaged and another 20% are disengaged.

When Employees Are Energized ...

What if you could enable 10% of your disengaged employees to become moderately engaged? How would that change your reality? What if you could enable 10% of your moderately engaged employees to become highly engaged? And, finally, what if you could free up 10% of your disengaged employees to pursue a career with your arch-competitor? When employees are energized, they offer their discretionary effort and that changes your reality as a leader. There’s less turnover, higher productivity, higher revenues, decreased costs, and greater profitability.

Intelligent – Not Raw – Energy

But high performance doesn’t just come from raw energy. Even a bulldozer has that. High performance comes from *intelligent energy*, a sense of:

- Focus
- Flow
- Passion
- Purpose
- Drive

We're not talking about whipping up the troops with motivational froth. We're talking about engaging your workforce with the kind of conversation that produces an intelligent, cohesive, highly aligned energy. Pull Conversation, the central concept of this book, is a specific type of conversation that best releases this kind of organizational energy, one in which a leader does the hard work of pulling out the reality of their employees. The following story illustrates how this type of conversation works. It also shows the type of energy and results that are released when leaders pull instead of push.

Pull Conversations in Action

Energizing a Turnaround

David was the VP of marketing in an international food company and he needed a breakthrough. A Canadian by birth, he had more than proved himself during his tenure in both Canada and United States. But now he found himself severely challenged. He had been parachuted into an underperforming UK branch with a clear mandate from world headquarters: "Turn this division around and get us results."

Whether it was because of UK culture, personalities, organizational history, or some other reason, David's branch just wasn't hitting its numbers. He had pushed hard for two years but it seemed that his marketing leadership team (MLT) was unwilling to be on the hook with him for results. When he wasn't there, they took very little initiative, even failing to hold leadership meetings. The rumblings from head office were getting more and more ominous.

With stress mounting, David enlisted the help of Mitch Fairrais, a colleague of mine from On the Mark, a Toronto-based training company. On the Mark and Juice formed a team and set about trying to help David achieve his breakthrough.

After a day of training the marketing team how to pull out

(understand) one another's realities in conversation, we settled into day two: using Pull Conversation to solve the substantive trust and commitment issues of David and his MLT.

Mitch and I believed that if David and his team could learn to pull understanding out of each other rather than trying to push their understanding onto each other, they could resolve the situation. For this to happen, David first had to pull from his team.

We guaranteed David, based on our experience of situations like his, that if he stepped into his leadership team's world and pulled out their reality, they would reciprocate and seek to understand his reality as well.

The MLT's Reality

As mentioned, on day one we used a series of experiences to teach the entire marketing leadership team the skills of Pull Conversation. We focused on inquiry: the ability to step into another person's world to see their reality the way they see it.

On day two, David was on the hot seat with a mandate to pull out his team's reality. It proved to be extremely challenging for him and he almost jettisoned the process, but to his credit, he pressed on. He stepped into their worlds and pulled out their thoughts, feelings, and assumptions. As he did so, he made an alarming discovery: his MLT saw him as a mercenary who wanted results with no concern for the human cost.

David fought his instinctive desire to defend himself and push his world onto them. He swallowed hard as they shared their perception of him as someone who didn't value their British culture, as someone who was only in it for the short haul, a manager who was taking the North American approach of dangling a carrot in front of them to get them to perform.

With help, David resisted the temptation to justify himself and repeatedly sought to step into their world and reflect back what they were saying in his own words.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the group began to feel understood and their capacity to hear David's viewpoint grew. Finally, at about the three-quarter mark of the second day, a clearly discernible shift occurred in the room.

One of David's leaders asked, "When you can't be here, we should still meet and keep things moving."

Someone else said, "Maybe we can help find ways to make people feel recognized and rewarded."

Others jumped in with, "Yes, and how can we get on the hook with you and give you the commitment you need?"

We witnessed the result of David's Pull approach: the release of intelligence and energy in the group.

A feeling of electricity was now coursing through the room. Mitch and I were optimistic as we witnessed the result of David's Pull approach: the release of intelligence and energy in the group. The other eleven were now turning toward David, asking him about himself and beginning to pull out his reality.

David's Reality

David and his family had paid a high price for this job, and he wasn't at all sure that it was worth it. He had never mentioned the personal costs to his team. As he saw it, he'd made choices, and they were his to own. He believed it would be cowardly to try to get his staff to understand what he was dealing with.

Now, however, he realized that he had to pull his team into his reality and help them understand his world. Because he had pulled out his team's reality, he had created capacity in them to do the same for him. He had earned the right to speak and they were ready to listen.

He told the group the story of a time when he'd been hurrying to pick up his young son Matthew from school. As he closed his office door, an employee stopped him with some questions and concerns. David answered as briefly as he could, then said he needed to go because his five-year-old son was waiting. The employee followed him into the elevator, continuing the discussion down several floors and through the parking lot to David's car.

David, aware that he was now late, tried to get into his car, but the employee kept talking. David was growing more anxious by the second but felt as the leader of the company he must listen to this employee, who clearly felt she had to get her need met, right then. When he was finally able to extricate himself, he drove all the way

to Matthew's school at twice the speed limit, his stomach knotted with anxiety, his life in danger as he roared and wove through traffic. He *had* to get to Matthew; but he also *had* to be there for his staff. It was a no-win situation.

He also shared that he and his family had moved to a new country without any friends or family or social network to support them. His team members had made no effort to make his wife and him feel included, he said. The team hadn't invited them to their homes or social functions.

David was very direct as he spoke out his reality to his staff. He could see they hadn't viewed him as a multifaceted person with a family and personal issues, but simply as a leader who was supposed to meet their needs. There was a lot of discomfort in the room as he talked, but this was part of David's reality and therefore part of the whole group's reality. Their reality as a group needed to be bigger. They needed to understand each other's contexts.

All of us in the room saw something powerful happen that day. As a leader, David used a combination of pulling out his team's reality and pulling them into his reality. But it mattered which one he did first. Pull Conversation is based on the simple hypothesis that if you do an effective job of pulling out someone's reality and making them feel deeply understood, they will reciprocate by trying to pull out your reality. This willingness to reciprocate is not restricted to understanding. When we feel respected by someone, it is easier for us to respect them. And when we feel trusted by someone, it is easier for us to trust them. This is known as the Law of Psychological Reciprocity. Robert K. Greenleaf, in *The Leader as Servant*, defines it this way: "People are impelled to return to you the feelings you create in them."

The Saint of Reciprocity

The famous prayer of St. Francis of Assisi primes us to line up our behaviors with the law of reciprocity:

Grant that we may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

Feeling understood is one of our primal needs as human beings. Meet this crucial need for others and they will respond by meeting it for you. There are exceptions, of course. However, having helped hundreds of leaders, managers, and employees work through thorny situations and achieve productive outcomes, I can confidently say that most people will try to understand you if you seek to understand them first.

A Bigger Reality Emerges

When two parties have vastly different views on an issue, there is often an underlying Bigger Reality that is invisible to both of them. I have learned that the key to releasing energy and achieving results is uncovering, or pulling out, that Bigger Reality.

Now that David had done the work of pulling out the reality of his leadership team and pulling them into his reality, he was able to move forward to uncover the Bigger Reality that was hidden to everyone. To do this, it was necessary to find the common ground that existed between their seemingly polarized viewpoints.

A question I have found to be useful in identifying the common ground is, “What is it we both want here that would allow us to move forward?” This is where David and his team began to apply their focus.

David and his leadership team discovered that they both wanted to produce great results. They both wanted to retain the distinctive elements of UK culture. They both prized family over work. There was ample common ground here from which a Bigger Reality could emerge.

Discoveries from Getting to Common Ground

Getting to common ground releases intelligence and open thinking. Here are some of the discoveries that came to the surface as a result of the progress David and his team were making:

- David realized, “This team really does want to get on the hook and pump out great results.”
- The team realized, “David isn’t here to destroy our culture – and he’s not just here for a one-year stint to bolster his CV.”
- The team also realized, “We’ve been guilty of doing to David

exactly what we accused him of wanting to do to us. We've been jeopardizing his family life for the sake of getting our work needs met."

Uncovering these discoveries was a breakthrough. David and his team now understood each other's motives, how to meet each other's unique emotional needs, how to become one, and, therefore, how to move forward. These discoveries were instrumental in uncovering the Bigger Reality, and when they achieved this, working together and reaching their goals became very simple.

The Bigger Reality

What was the Bigger Reality? It was a solid belief, a firm conclusion, embedded in a sense of possibility: "We can do this. We can

"What might we be able to achieve if we dropped the suspicion and the resistance and replaced them with focus and collaboration?"

achieve great results without working obscene hours and destroying our culture. We can work together in a different way – a radically different way. What might we be able to achieve if we dropped the suspicion and the resistance and replaced them with focus and collaboration?"

One might well respond, "What sort of Bigger Reality is that? It doesn't seem magical at all to me." Perhaps, but consider that when this team was mired in suspicion and mistrust, the prevailing mindset was, "We either adopt the insane North American work ethic and kiss goodbye to our culture or we fail to hit our numbers and kiss goodbye to our jobs." This type of mindset does not typically produce much intelligent energy.

This simple but powerful Bigger Reality had an instant effect on David and his team. Intelligent energy began to flow and high-performing behaviors began to emerge. David's team got on the hook for results. They began to collaborate freely, share resources, and leverage one another's efforts.

Some may well say, "My day is way too packed to do this Pull Conversation stuff. It takes too long. I've got no choice but to push!" But consider this: by pulling, *David was able to achieve in two*

short days what he had been unable to accomplish in two years of dogged pushing. Because the Bigger Reality produces a magical $1+1 = 5$ effect, it's worth whatever you have to expend to pull it out.

And the powerful thing about this breakthrough is that it wasn't a one-time affair. The experience changed the team. We checked back with David several times in the ensuing months and years. His team began to achieve unprecedented financial results. In fact, they doubled their growth in one year. And David was finally able to take a long-deserved holiday. Why? Because he felt complete confidence in his team while he was gone.

The point of this story is simple. Conversation, done the right way, releases intelligent energy; intelligent energy produces smart behaviors; and smart behaviors produce sustained results. You get to choose: two years of push with no results or two days of Pull with lasting results. What you'll see in this book is that the quickest way to get to sustained results is to pull out the Bigger Reality. As hyped as this may sound, we've witnessed that Pull truly is a $1 + 1 = 5$ equation.

Pull Conversation: The Model

That brings us to a fuller statement of the Pull Conversation Model, which is the essence of all the chapters to follow. This model works in all situations, whether personal or business, but we will use the language of business predominantly throughout this book. Our primary audience is the manager or leader working with a team.

Portions of the model will appear in the next several chapters as we concentrate on various steps that it lays out. Fuller statements of the steps follow each iteration of the model.

Following is how the model works, reading from the bottom of the page to the top. Note that the steps in this model are filled out in detail below this first use of the model in this book.

Pull Conversation™ Model

6 Sustained Results

- Revenue
- Quality
- Loyalty
- Innovation
- Speed
- Safety
- Retention
- Profit

5 High-Performing Behaviors

- Anticipating each other's needs
- Sharing resources & information
- Leveraging each other's efforts
- Collaborating and synergizing
- Covering each other's backs

4 Intelligent Energy

- Focus
- Flow
- Passion
- Purpose
- Drive

3 Pull out the Bigger Reality

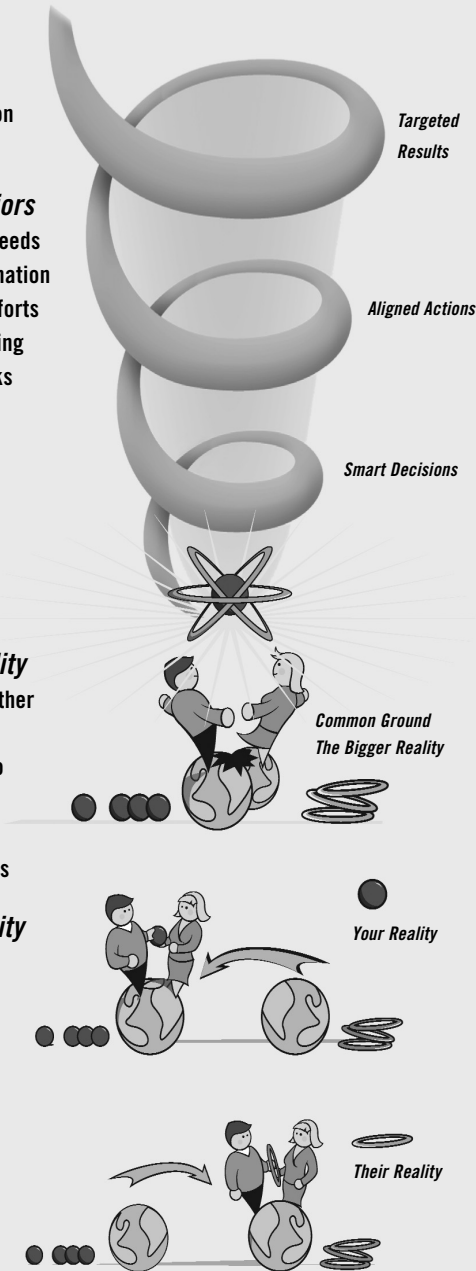
- Bring your two worlds together to find the common ground
- Look for a Bigger Reality to emerge – a solution that works for both of you
- Sum it up in your own words

2 Pull them into your reality

- Invite them into your world
- Help them see your reality
- Ask them to reflect back what they've understood

1 Pull out their reality

- Step into their world
- See and feel their reality
- Reflect it back in your own words



1 Pull Out Their Reality

A Step into their world: Temporarily set your judgments and fears aside and inquire deeply into the way they see things.

B See their reality: Using the power of your mind's eye, see what it's like to be them in this situation. Pull out the assumptions that they are operating from.

C Reflect back what you've understood in your own words to ensure that they feel understood.

2 Pull Them into Your Reality

A Invite them into your world: Make them curious by using the power of story and finding language that makes it easy for them to relate to you.

B Help them see your reality: Speak your truth productively and draw out the assumptions that you are operating from.

C Ask them to reflect back what they've understood.

3 Pull Out the Bigger Reality

A Bring your two worlds together to find the common ground. Do this by asking, "What is it we both want here?"

B Look for a Bigger Reality to emerge. Ask yourselves, "Is there a Bigger Reality here that would allow us to move forward?"

C Sum it up in your own words.

4 Intelligent Energy

Getting to the Bigger Reality releases intelligent energy. People's attention becomes focused. They move into a flow state where they are completely engrossed in their work. There is a strong sense of passion as they do what they are juiced to do. They are deeply in touch with the purpose of their work. This creates an empowering sense of drive that fuels high-performing behaviors.

5 High-Performing Behaviors

Intelligent energy fuels the types of behaviors you dream of as a leader. Employees begin to understand and anticipate one another's needs. They freely share resources and information. They leverage one another's efforts, investing

moments of effort that save hours of time for their co-workers. They collaborate and synergize. They have one another's backs.

6 Sustained Results

High-performing behaviors produce sustained results such as increased revenue, greater quality, customer loyalty, brilliant innovations and speed to market, *and* improved safety, retention, and bottom-line profits.

How to Pull Out Their Reality

Like David, you will have to do everything in your power to inquire into the other person's or group's reality. You will have to step out of your world and let go of your assumptions, judgments, and fears and listen intently for a significant chunk of time in order to step into their world. You will have to use the power of your mind's eye to see their reality – to picture what it is like to be them in this situation. Then you will have to reflect back what they are saying in your own words to demonstrate that you really understand what they are saying.

How to Pull Them into Your Reality

When you pull out the other person's reality, you will build capacity and desire within them to understand and care about what you have to say. It's at this point that you pull them into your reality by sharing a story like the one David did of racing to pick up his son, Matthew. Use stories to invite others into your world. The graphic image of David weaving through traffic at breakneck speeds to get to his son had a lasting impact on his team.

Speaking your truth productively in a very direct, respectful way will enable others to see and feel your reality. After you have done this, help them reflect it back to you until:

- They really get what you are trying to say.
- They don't walk away with anything you aren't trying to say.

Conversation: An Organizational Operating System

Conversation is the operating system of your organization. What is an operating system? Let's say you needed to create a PowerPoint presentation. You can't communicate with the PowerPoint application in your computer without a translator. In many computers, that translator is Windows. Windows is simply an operating system that enables an application like PowerPoint to store and display itself through your hardware.

In the same way, the needs of your organization and the applications that will meet those needs require an operating system to link them and enable them. Conversation is that operating system. For instance, your organization needs to receive orders from your customers. The "application" that will produce that work is an order-entry process. The operating system that links the customer's order to that process is a conversation between a call taker and the customer. The quality of that conversation dictates the quality of service to your customers.

Ultimately, every facet of your organization runs off this operating system of conversation: recruitment runs off hiring conversations; performance runs off training conversations; and revenue runs off sales conversations.

Conversation translates employees' talents to the needs of the organization.

Conversation translates employees' talents to the needs of the organization.

What percent of your day do you spend conversing? Edward Shaw, a corporate training expert, makes some interesting observations in his book *The Six Pillars of Reality-Based Training*. According to Shaw, studies show that in white-collar workplaces, people spend their time doing just four main activities:

<i>Conversing</i>	60–95 %
<i>Reading</i>	20–50 %
<i>Writing</i>	10–45 %
<i>Thinking/planning</i>	0–15 %

If conversation is the activity you spend up to 95% of your day doing, then every minute or dollar you spend fine-tuning this

operating system will go a long way toward leveraging your effectiveness. As the following stories illustrate, when the operating system of conversation is undervalued and underused, you end up weakening all of your other systems.

Poor Communication: Pull the Plug

In 2001, a grocery giant pulled the plug on a \$49-million IT implementation. That's stunning. Picture yourself walking away from an investment of that magnitude just to cut your losses. And this company is by no means alone. A litany of thousands of other IT heartbreaks could be cited if one had the time and the stomach for it. Thousands? Yes, in their *Chaos Report*, 1994, the Standish Group estimated that \$81 billion would be wasted on cancelled software projects the following year. In their *Extreme Chaos* report of 2001, they reported that in the year prior, 23% of the 30,000 technology-driven implementations failed completely and another 49% were "*challenged* – a term encompassing cost and time overruns and missing features."

What is one of the key reasons that IT implementations fail? The same report attributed the failures to poor communication skills of the project manager and primary users.

I could cite scores of other such examples. I have personally witnessed organizations investing many thousands of dollars on Balanced Scorecards, 360° leadership surveys, and performance-management systems that only delivered a fraction of what they promised. And the common denominator that truncated the effectiveness of every one of these programs was the lack of skilled face-to-face conversation. For example:

- A leader gets 360° feedback indicating that she isn't providing inspirational leadership. Instead of going face to face and pulling from each employee what specific adjustments she could make to meet their specific needs for inspiration, she makes her own guesses about how to be more inspiring. Her modified behaviors after the 360° process are at best a good guess and at worst inappropriate and damaging.
- An elaborate performance-management system is implemented

- that puts managers in the role of populating multiple screens of performance data. In the process, little meaningful conversation occurs to identify the obstacles to performance or inspire the employee to higher levels of performance.
- A wellness program has been kicked off in your organization. Because there's no "budge-factor" on the results employees have to achieve, the only way to reduce spillover between work and home is to give employees more job control and flextime. This automatically opens the door to chaos as employees who can't work from home start resenting the ones who can, and employees who have to be at work at core times compare themselves with the ones who get to take advantage of flextime. If managers are not equipped to work through the chaos and have the tough conversations, your wellness program is going to be a little sickly.

Conversation and Goal Clarity

Smart leaders find innovative ways to use the operating system of conversation to drive the most important applications of their business. Here, from *Communication World*, July–August 2004, is a unique story of a scooter company that begins every day with conversations designed to focus the entire organization on the goals that will move the business forward.

Huddles begin each day at 8:30 A.M. Within an hour, every employee will have communicated up, down and across the entire company.

For 15 minutes, frontline employees meet as a department with their managers. Then managers leave for a second 15-minute huddle with their directors. Directors then meet with vice presidents. Finally, vice presidents huddle with the CEO and finish by 9:30 A.M.

People in the field participate by telephone. The most any one person dedicates to the process is 30 minutes, and it gives everyone a daily connection to the CEO.

They talk about the day's business priorities, anticipate problems and put rumors to rest. Each department has quarterly goals, and at every huddle, each employee states what he or she will do that day toward achieving goals.

“We go around the group, which may have as many as 10 people, for each person to give his or her number one focus for today, given the clear quarterly focus,” says Jeff Austin, human resources vice president. “It’s a chance to talk about any bottleneck you think you might encounter.” Managers address bottlenecks at that time or in the next-level huddle. Managers also ask each individual if he or she completed yesterday’s number one goal.

By identifying what an employee can accomplish today, and what an employee accomplished yesterday, quarterly goals break into doable chunks. “It’s a great exchange of information and sharing time. Sometimes people will get into a side discussion that turns out to be critical,” says Debbie Featherston, vice president of PeopleWerks – Celebrations and Communications.

What Are We Really Saying Here?

- It is the release of intelligent energy that produces results for your organization.
- By pulling, it is possible to achieve in two days what you couldn’t achieve in two years of pushing.
- Conversation is the operating system that energizes and runs all your other systems.
- When trying to get people to buy in, invest time and pull out their reality before pulling them into your reality.

Want to Make This Happen?

- Create your company’s ***Red Room***.
- Get your supervisors creating more ***human moments*** with their employees.
- Get your leaders pulling out the realities of their leadership teams to help them ***get on the hook*** for results.
- Ensure that Pull Conversation, performed face to face, is integrated with the systems you have already invested in (Balanced Score Card, 360° Measurement, Performance Review, Wellness Program).
- Implement fifteen-minute huddle relays.

Juice at Home

Marked for Life

I remember the conversation that marked me for life. When I was thirty-nine, my dad contracted bone cancer. He was lying on what turned out to be his deathbed. The air was heavy with meaning – not the time for light talk. Dad turned to me and talked about how death was close beside him.

For all kinds of reasons that would take up too much space and time to describe, I could never really understand that my dad loved me or was proud of me. He had a hard time conveying his feelings and I had a hard time believing I was lovable or worthy of his pride. I spent many frustrating years trying to win his approval; I even ended up following in his footsteps into the optical industry (he was an optometrist), doing everything I could to make him believe that I was worthy of his love.

I had never invested the energy to understand my dad's reality. But as I sat beside him in those moments, I wanted to understand him more than anything. There was something inside me that wanted to pull out all the understanding I could. I was a thirty-nine-year-old vacuum that needed filling in a very big way.

I began to pull out my dad's reality. I asked him how the pain was. I asked him what it was like to be so close to death. I asked him if he was afraid. His lip quivered and he nodded, saying, "Who in their right mind would think they are good enough to get into God's heaven?" There was a pause, and he said, "But I have faith." He looked at me and said, "You have to have faith."

But those weren't the words that marked me for life. I knew that faith in God was crucial. It was what he said next that left an imprint on me.

He spoke a simple message – words I had never been able to understand: "I love you and I'm proud of you." Weighty words landing on a soft heart make a deep imprint. In a moment of instant clarity, I was vaulted from twisted perceptions to reality, from misunderstanding to understanding, from self-doubt to confidence, and from "I feel like a failure" to "Maybe I can succeed."

How did that moment happen? My hunger to understand my dad made me want to pull out his reality. When he saw my receptivity and my need, he pulled me into his reality. This dynamic of the need to understand and the need to be understood caused us to turn together. I turned toward my dad and pulled out his reality. He turned toward me and pushed out his reality. Turning together created a life-changing conversation. (Interestingly enough, the word *conversation* means just that: *to turn together*.)

But we went beyond just turning together. In this brief moment we stepped into each other's worlds and experienced each other's realities. When I stepped into my dad's world, I felt what he felt: "This is my last chance to let my son know that I love him and I'm proud of him." As for me, feeling this reality for the first time recalibrated my beliefs: faulty beliefs were replaced with reliable ones. As Dad stepped into my world, he could see that I was finally getting what he wanted to give me all along – a sense of his love and

Unity is one of the primary goals of communication.

blessing. Seeing each other's realities made the way for a Bigger Reality to emerge.

I believe unity is one of the primary goals of communication. If you separate the word *communication* and put it together from back to front, you come up with a definition that goes like this: communication is *the action of becoming one with*. If that definition is accurate, it's easy to see why conversation is so vital to communication. It's only in turning together that we can become one with another person. In those moments of deep communication, I finally felt one with my dad.

This pivotal conversation released **juice** inside me: an intelligent energy that came from having some of my deepest needs met. An energy that came from the belief that I could finally become successful – that I was worthy of my dad's pride. That energy still empowers and juices me today, nearly a decade later, enabling me to achieve results in areas I never could before.