



**The 15 Conversations That Count**

**Wise Leaders Playbook #2**

**By Ian Berry**

## **Personal Conversations**

### **1. Heart-flow**

Your heart knows.

Learn to listen to your heart first and your head second.

We all have a unique rhythm. Understanding its flow is a key to living our essence (unique personal wisdom).

### **2. Process-practice review**

Our routines and rituals, the processes we follow and the practices we keep. All of these are worth continuous reflection and self-conversation.

### **3. Self-talk**

Imagine the leader who announces to her team/community/constituents:

"I've heard myself say to myself lately that I haven't really connected with you on X.

I believe I can explain my intentions, feelings, and thoughts much better.

I'd really appreciate your help."

Do you feel/think most people would respond positively to such statements? I reckon most people would.

## **Relationships Conversations**

### **4. Aspirations/Appreciation/Accountability**

When we have shared aspirations with others and show genuine appreciation to one another, as well as helping each other to be accountable, we enable others to feel valued.

### **5. Feedforward**

And so the door is now open for feedforward which is of far greater value than feedback.

Feedforward is a great concept from Marshall Goldsmith. Feedforward is suggestions from others that provide insight and foresight for you to change your behaviour.

### **6. Feedback**

I believe it's the least most important conversation, yet it is still important. "We've listened to your feedback" say the politicians, business, and other leaders.

How well you've listened will be determined by your actions.

Feedback is about the past. Often it's biased opinion based on self-interest. In my case I'm from the Alan Weiss school - I ignore feedback I didn't ask for! yet I really value feedback from people I trust and who have my best interests at heart.

### **7. How's things going?**

I highly value answering the phone and a friend or colleague says "I just called to see how you're going." I know when I make these calls there is always deep appreciation on the other end of the line.

## **Relationships (continued)**

### **8. Just being there**

Some of the best conversations I'm involved in are when I don't need to speak just listen and understand. When I'm on the receiving end of these conversations I am always deeply grateful.

### **9. Values Behaviours**

When there are values on the wall that aren't lived in the hall performance is less than what's possible. When values are behaviours and not just words optimum performance follows.

## **Organisation Conversations**

### **10. After Action Reviews**

These are structured conversations that appreciate what was remarkable, great, good, bad, and ugly about a specific action; imagine what can be next time; create/update plans or processes in ways that reflect agreed personal and business behaviour changes, and stay, stop, start actions.

### **11. Mentor Moments**

Wise leaders have mentors and are being mentors for others and so Mentor Moments are integral to conversations.

Mentor Moments are informal and unstructured as well as formal and structured conversations.

If you aren't yet enjoying the high value of Mentor Moments as both a mentor and a mentee then get started today if not sooner!

### **12. Peer group**

The vast majority of successful people I know are part of one or more peer groups (people mutually committed to each others' success who meet regularly).

The most successful teams are peer groups. Is yours?

## **Organisation (continued)**

### **13. Peer Review**

Feedforward helps to make peer review conversations more candid and convivial. Peer review is the daily conversations you have with your peers that ensure alignment.

Having focusing tools is paramount. Role Clarity Statements and individual plans-on-a-page or processes-on-a-page or Process Maps are examples.

### **14. Value exchange and delivery**

Candid, convivial, compassionate, conscious and compelling conversation that lead to agreements in writing on the must haves, should haves and nice to haves (value) of working relationships and how these are exchanged and delivered, and in what formats, is one of the most profound of conversations.

### **15. Weekly Check-ins**

Weekly Check-ins ritualise conversations.

These are short, sharp, weekly conversations online and/or in person where individuals and/or teams review what's happened and what's next, and agree on actions and accountability for the coming week.

Weekly Check-ins are also great for continuous celebration of what's going well and to explore what can still be better.

**The most profound insight about making these 15 conversations that count your own is that you will never ever have to participate in another meeting for the rest of your life.**

Wise leaders have stopped having meetings and instead engage in conversations that count.

And there's something else too, a gem that I learned from Bernadette Jiwa: marketing is just helpful conversations. Since adopting this wonderful insight into my work and focusing on being helpful I've found that outcomes are no longer a focus in my life and that I'm content to follow processes knowing that outcomes are a natural consequence.

## Take a moment to review your performance in these 15 conversations that count

Please place an X where you are now and a ✓ where you believe you need to move to

	Good i.e. basic standards of performance are being achieved	Great i.e. above average; better than basic	Remarkable i.e. "conspicuously extraordinary"
Heart-flow			
Process-practice Review			
Self-talk			



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Aspirations/Appreciation/Accountability			
Feedforward			
Feedback			
How's things going?			

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Just Being There			
Values Behaviours			
After-action-reviews			
Mentor Moments			

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Peer Group/s			
Peer Review			
Value exchange and delivery			
Weekly Check-ins			

# **The Foundations of Wise Conversations - Candid, Convivial, Compassionate, Conscious and Compelling**

## **Suggested practices**

### **1. Be Candid**

I think the first words that came out of my mouth were candid. They caused a bit of a stir apparently!

I've never been backward coming forward. I think life's too short for BS. Being candid is one way to stand out because most people aren't candid.

Not everyone appreciates candour however and therefore being candid can be tricky.

I've worked very hard to make sure that my candour means I'm also kind.

Knowing and acknowledging that there's more than one way forward keeps being candid in context, inspires careful choosing of words, and helps to make kindness the focus.

Being candid in kind ways helps you to stand out, show empathy, and shine a light for others on their path.

### **2. Be convivial**

Being convivial as well as candid has taken my communication and conversations to a whole new level.

We all take ourselves too seriously. In presentations, conversations and communication in general I use a lot of self-deprecating humour. It deepens, adds value to and strengthens relationships.

Some synonyms for convivial: friendly, genial, affable, amiable, congenial, agreeable, good-humoured, cordial, warm, sociable, outgoing, gregarious. We're all capable of these character traits when we're being the best version of ourselves.

Being convivial in kind ways enables you to take yourself less seriously, delight others, and laugh a lot!

## Suggested practices (continued)

### 3. Be Compassionate

There's a lot of truth for me in the following attributed to Fred Kofman, a leader in the conscious business movement:

*"Wisdom without compassion is ruthlessness, and compassion without wisdom is folly."*

One of the Apostles of the Christian Church is reported to have said, *"Faith without works is dead."*

A lot of faiths are dead, dying, or in trouble today because the actions of a few of the faithful betray their stated beliefs. I meet a lot of people more interested in being right than being compassionate for example.

Compassion for me is at the truthful heart of all the world's religions. Compassion is not a belief, it's a behaviour.

If we are not living and breathing a compassionate life we render whatever we believe as null and void, regardless of what we say.

A new world is being born. Compassion is a key component. There is a place for faith in this new world. For me belief is personal and therefore deserving of respect. What really matters in this new world though is behaviour.

Some people have asked me what has compassion got to do with the future success of my business? My answer is - Everything! particularly in a world where being purpose driven and people focused, and seeing technology as an enabler and enhancer of the human experience, is the leading edge.

Being compassionate brings out the best in you, other people, and makes the world a better place.

Being candid, convivial and compassionate are keys to all great relationships.

## **Suggested practices (continued)**

### **4. Be Conscious**

Conscious leadership, conscious business, conscious capitalism are just three current trends. I recommend a google search on consciousness. In my world all conversations are embracing consciousness and particularly focusing on who we are, why we're here, and why understanding our interconnectedness with all living things, including our planet and the universe, is crucial to being the best we can be.

### **5. Be compelling**

I put together a short paper about compelling conversations with my friend and colleague Gary Edwards. We say in the paper that every conversation has two aspects: the Task (should we do this thing?) and the Relationship (are you someone that I can trust?). [Learn more by downloading our paper here.](#)

## **Follow the Five Fundamentals**

1. Of the five primary ways of communicating (cliche or everyday, opinions, facts, feelings, and optimum (it's just a look) master feeling language above all.
2. Use feeling language such as I feel ...; So you're feeling ...
3. Share opinions and facts when asked or when the gathering/person has these expectations.
4. Focus on ensuring that the other person or people feel valued, heard and understood.
5. Ask for clarification to ensure the effectiveness of the messages you are sending and receiving.

## Who and Why More Than What And Do

In conversations in our Wise Leaders Peer Groups and first and third Wednesday conversations we focus more on personal development and purpose more than we do on what to do and how to do things.

This comes from a central philosophy that people know what to do and how to do it. What people need and want from leaders is support, encouragement and appreciation and honing their own one-of-a-kind leadership.

There are a myriad of ways to lead. Only your way will work for you.

The world needs more of this one-of-a-kind leadership in the service of others.

There are proven principles to adopt in your own best way. This playbook contains some of them.

I'm confident that you will delight in the performance improvement that follows when people are enabled and empowered to lead in their own one-of-a-kind way.

Use this playbook to hone your own one-of-a-kind way of conversing and become the wise leader you want to be.

Sing out should you love some help [please check out the five ways this is possible here.](#)

*Ian*