team dialogue | indicator

Great conversations power great teams

Feedback Report

Sample Team

Date xx

t-three group

The Right Conversation
Improving Organisational Performance, One Conversation at a Time

REPORT CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

Why conversations are important

Conversations are the most basic aspect of human interaction – it is through conversations that people create shared meaning and so can co-ordinate their actions. And nowhere is this more true than when looking at the conversations that take place within teams.The fundamental idea behind a team is that several brains are better and safer than relying on one person's point of view – but that model relies entirely on the team having effective conversations. In other words, the quality of conversation in a team will all but determine the effectiveness with which any collaborative task or activity is carried out.

Research carried out by The Right Conversation amongst a cross-section of leading UK organisations confirmed the well-known management insight that the quality of conversations in a team is one of the biggest factors affecting its performance. However, the research also showed clearly that many organisations and leadership teams struggle to find a sensible way of having a 'conversation about conversations' because what happens behind closed doors amongst management teams is notoriously difficult to analyse and yet, is one of the most crucial activities that takes place in any organisation.

"In the new economy conversations are the most important form of work"

Alan Webber, *Harvard Business Review*

The Team Dialogue Indicator™

The Team Dialogue Indicator™ measures six dimensions of typical conversations that a team has to give team members the data to discuss and act on their conversational habits and so improve effectiveness. These six dimensions are based on established and well-proven theories of dialogue.

Six dimensions of conversation

There are three 'core' dimensions and three 'influencing' dimensions.

Core Dimensions

1   **Voicing**– how comfortable are team members to express opinions and to challenge each other

2   **Inquiry** – how keen are team members to understand the views of others. How skilled are they at listening

3   **Productivity** – how useful and productive are conversations on the whole

Influencing Dimensions

4   **Power** – what is the role of power and hierarchy in typical conversations

5   **Structure** – how tight and focused are typical conversations. How much scope is there for flexibility

6   **Attentiveness** – how attentive and present are people in conversations

2 HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

This section is designed to help you to read and understand the data in this report. It is structured in three parts.
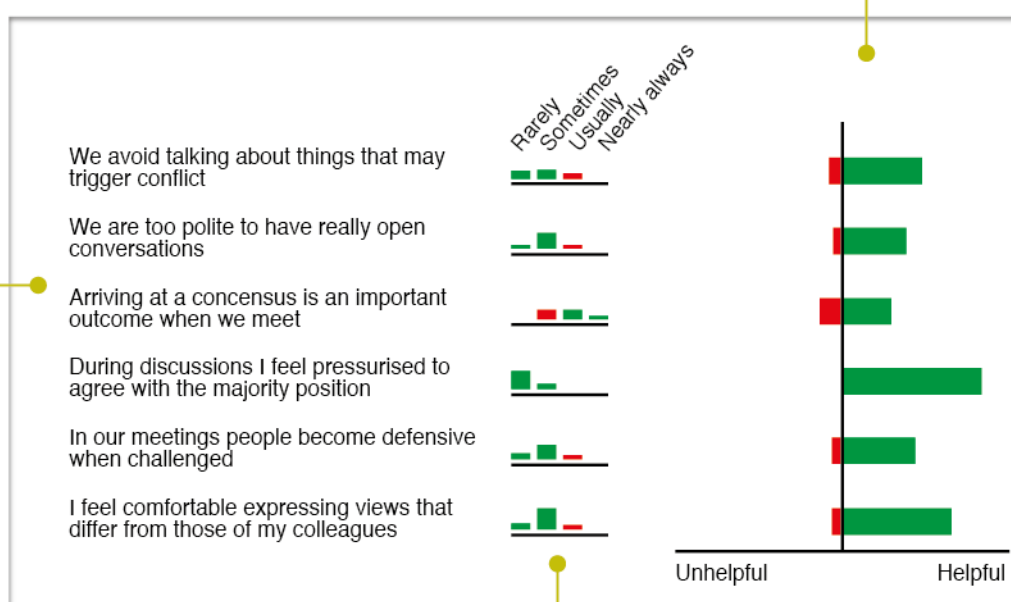
i) Detailed data for each dimension

Bar chart

A more visual overview is provided by the bar charts.

The bar to the right, shown in green, represents the proporton of respondents who scored the particular question helpfully – the bar to the left, in red, shows the proportion who scored the questions unhelpfully.

The stronger the sentiment the further the bar extends from the central line.

Questions

We avoid talking about things that may trigger conflict

We are too polite to have really open conversations

Arriving at a concensus is an important outcome when we meet

During discussions I feel pressurised to agree with the majority position

In our meetings people become defensive when challenged

I feel comfortable expressing views that differ from those of my colleagues

Rarely Sometimes Usually Nearly always

Unhelpful   Helpful

Actual spread of responses

For each question the actual spread of responses by the team against the four standard possible answers is represented in the form of a mini bar chart.

Results shown in green indicate responses that make a helpful contribution to the dimension, those shown in red make an unhelpful contribution.

Please note that depending on how a question is phrased, "Rarely/Sometimes" may be considered to be a helpful or an unhelpful contribution.

3   YOUR FEEDBACK

Total number of respondents = 7

3.1   VOICING

Definition: How comfortable are team members to express opinions and to challenge each other?'

Voicing is about saying what needs to be said and is motivated by two basic forces - i) Advocacy, which the desire to express an opinion and for this to be understood by others, and ii) Challenge, which is the desire to test the robustness and validity of the arguments made by others.

Your Voicing Data

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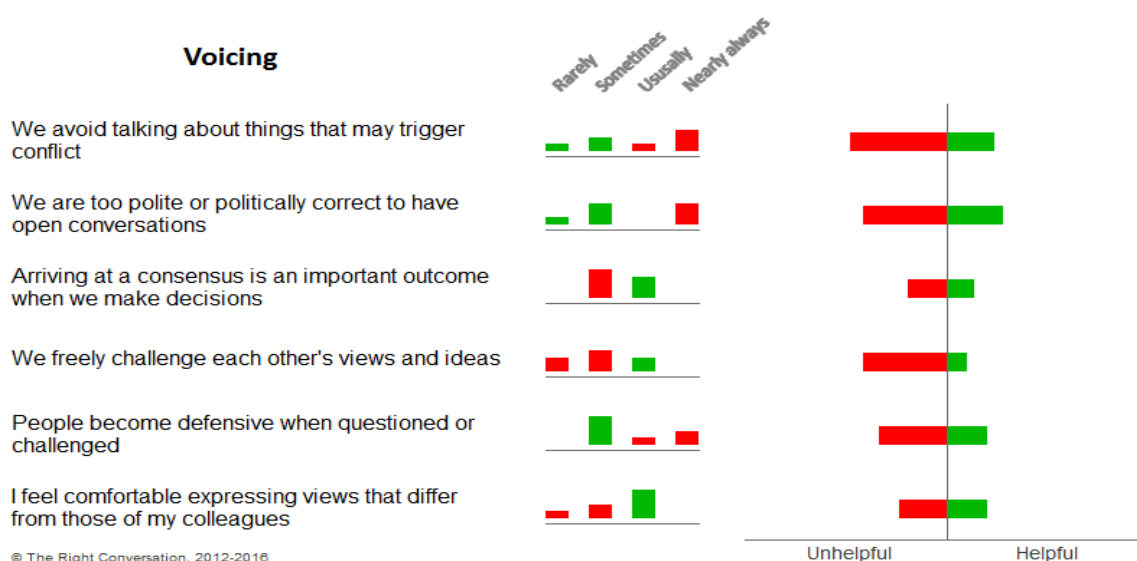
What strikes you?

3.2 INQUIRY

Definition: How keen are team members to understand the views of others. How skilled are they at listening?

Inquiry is the salt to Voicing – it is about paying attention to what is being said and why. Inquiry is what moves conversation beyond social exchanges or polite listening. It is about empathy, deeper understanding and synthesis – the capacity to integrate different perspectives so that everyone understands something better than they did before.

Your Inquiry Data

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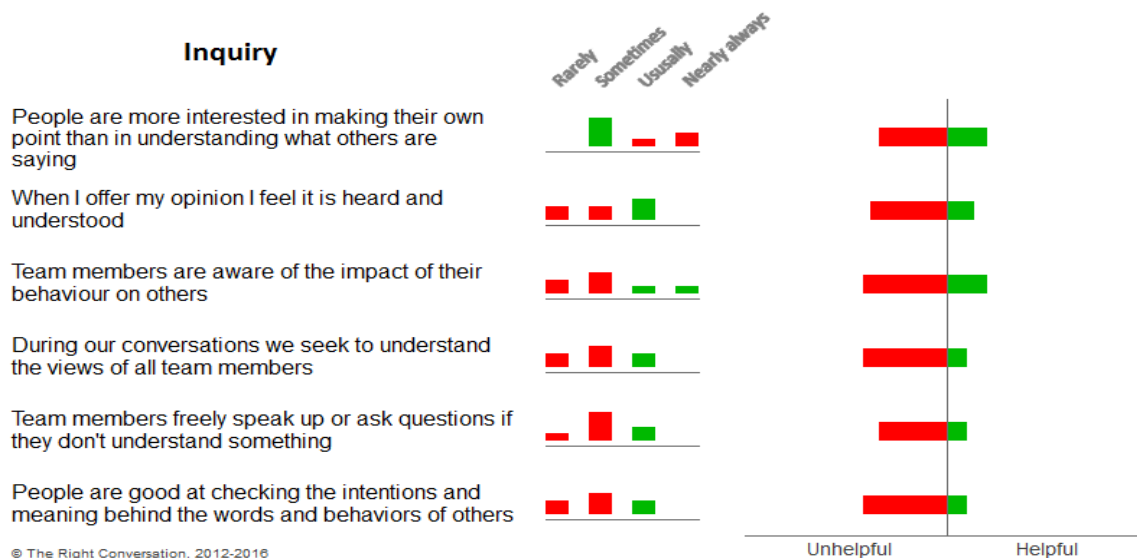
What strikes you?

3.3 PRODUCTIVITY

Definition: How useful and productive are conversations on the whole?

In the workplace conversations always have a purpose – implicit or explicit – and productivity is defined by how well they meet that purpose. Productivity can be measured on two connected but separate dimensions – i) Insight: Does the team see the world differently as a result of the conversation), and ii) Output: Will anything happen as a result of the conversation?

Your Productivity data

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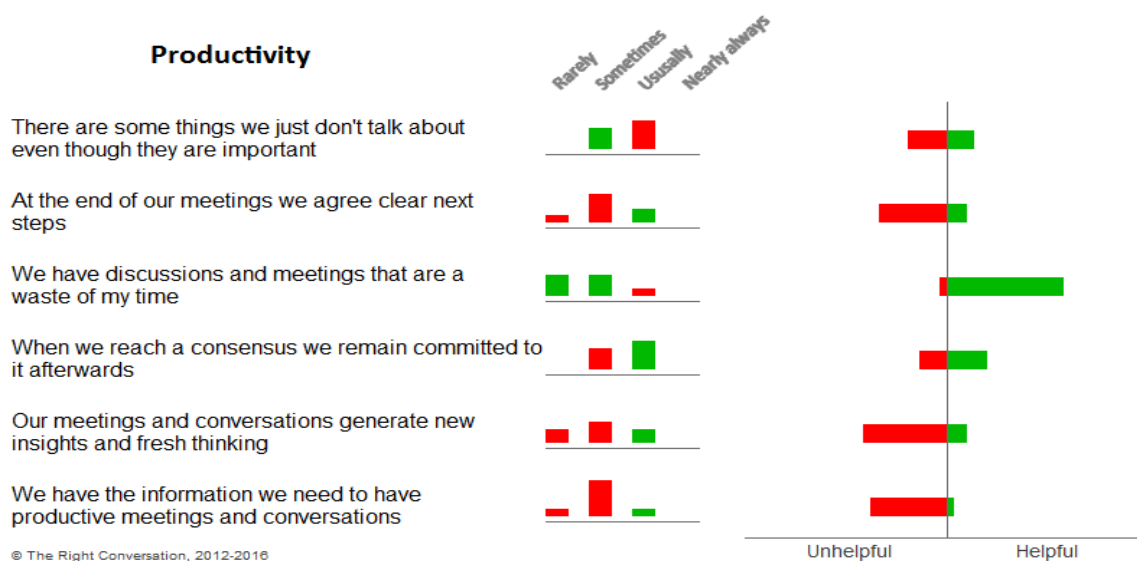
What strikes you?

3.4 POWER

Definition: What is the role of power and hierarchy in typical conversations?

Power in the form of people with different levels of influence, status and access to resources, is always present in conversation. The issue is not to deny this but to ensure it is used in a constructive rather than destructive way. Power's role in conversations can be understood in terms of how it is used to encourage Inclusion - i.e. everyone feels able to contribute, while at the same time ensuring Respect and judgement on the other – i.e. everyone feels valued.

Your Power Data
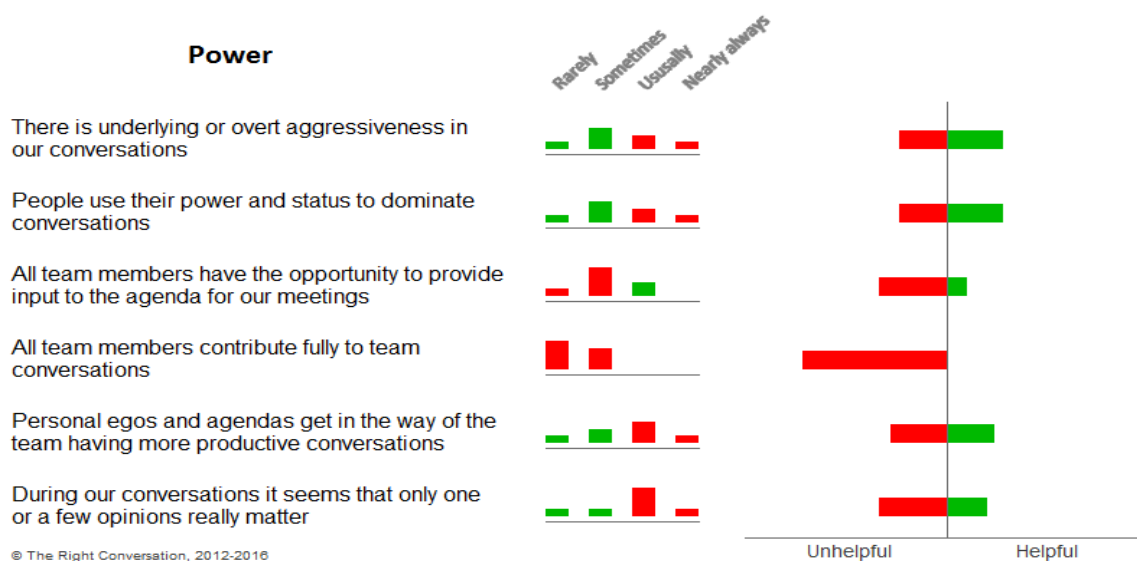
What strikes you?

3.5 STRUCTURE

Definition: How tight and focused are typical conversations. How much scope is there for flexibility?

Structure is a necessary part of having conversations in a business environment. It is used to ensure that conversations have a beginning, middle and end and deliver some tangible outputs. However, it is a double-edge sword – too much structure and conversations run the risk of becoming turgid rituals with the main emphasis on completing a pre-determined agenda; too little and conversations can ramble and roam with little focus, causing participants to lose interest and disengage.

Your Structure Data

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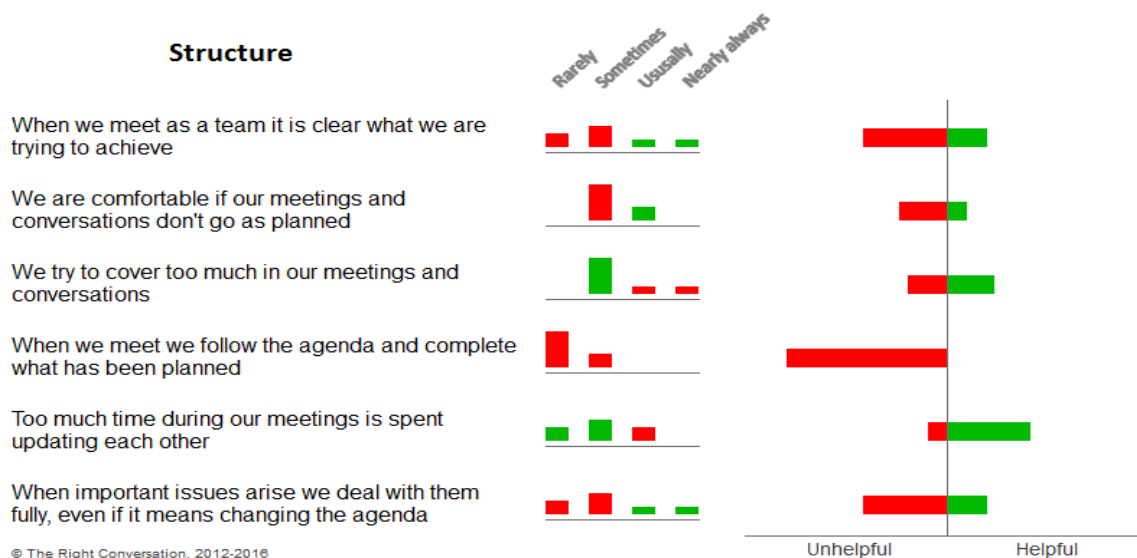
What strikes you?

3.6 ATTENTIVENESS

Definition: How attentive and present are team members in conversations?

For any conversation to be effective participants need to be fully 'present' and engaged. Presence is often taken for granted but for various reasons people often find themselves distracted or preoccupied and thus unable to focus or participate fully in team discussions.
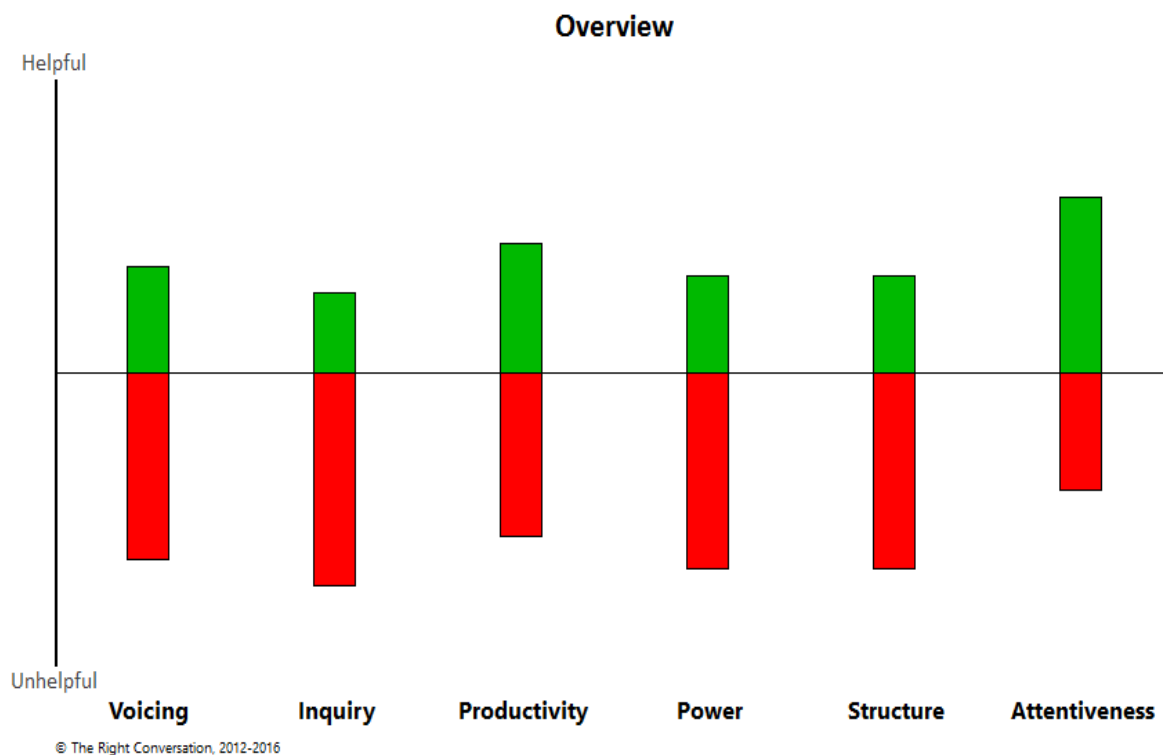
Your Attentiveness data
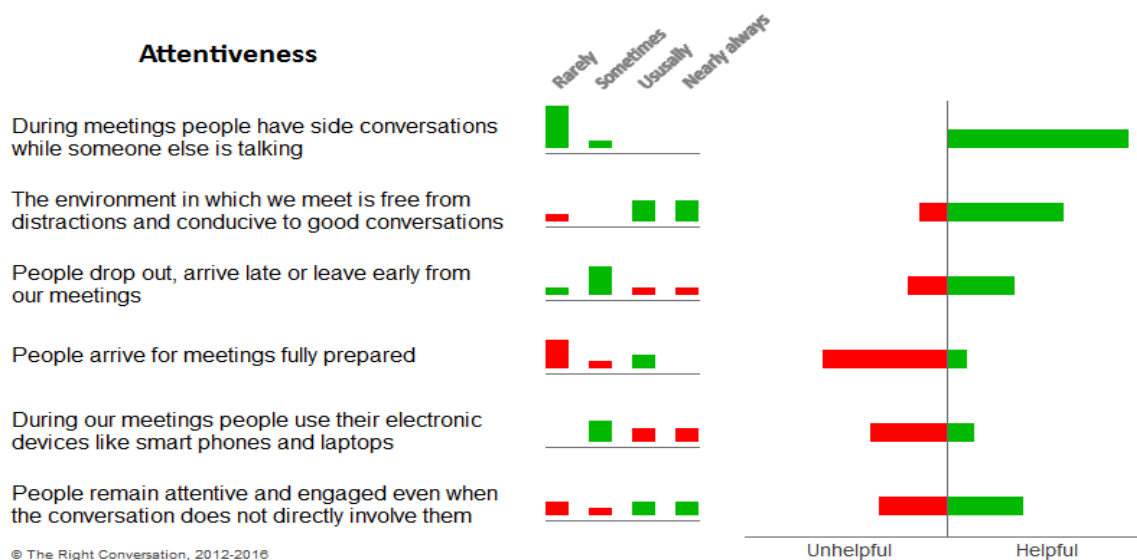
What strikes you?

3.7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Number of respondents = 7

This is an overview chart showing a summary of the team's responses for all six dimensions of the model.

The green bar represents the total number of 'Helpful' responses to the six questions that make up the dimension, the red represents the total number of 'Unhelpful' responses.

Overview

Helpful

Unhelpful

Voicing   Inquiry   Productivity   Power   Structure   Attentiveness

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Overall

3.8 VERBATIM COMMENTS

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It doesn't function as a team. Their is very little listening as it feels more important to be heard than to understand. Sometimes it feels like the meeting has gotten in the way of what else people are doing.

Listening to each other

Meetings tend to involve minimal prior engagement, preparation, agendas, materials etc and would benefit from a disciplined approach to defining the subjects and outcomes in advance.

Over the past month, there are definitely improvements to the quality of conversations we are having as a team.

Smartphone/Laptop question can be misleading if being used to take meeting notes. Some conversations can be dominated by XXX, but this is often necessary to provide leadership, guidance and management updates.

Things have improved but we need to break through the barriers of the team in order to have high energy, constructive conversations.

3.9 TOP 5 'UNHELPFUL' AND 'HELPFUL' SCORING QUESTIONS

Top 5 'Helpful' scoring questions (i.e. most 'Green)

1.	During meetings people have side conversations while someone else is talking	Attentiveness
2.	The environment in which we meet is free from distractions and conducive to good conversations	Attentiveness
3.	We have discussions and meetings that are a waste of my time	Productivity
4.	Too much time during our meetings is spent updating each other	Structure
5.	People remain attentive and engaged even when the conversation does not directly involve them	Attentiveness

Top 5 'Unhelpful' scoring questions (i.e. most 'Red)

1.	When we meet we follow the agenda and complete what has been planned	Structure
2.	All team members contribute fully to team conversations	Power
3.	People arrive for meetings fully prepared	Attentiveness
4.	We avoid talking about things that may trigger conflict	Voicing
5.	When important issues arise we deal with them fully, even if it means changing the agenda	Structure

4   ACTION PLANNING

Dimension	Action steps
Voicing	
Inquiry	
Productivity	
Power	
Structure	
Attentiveness	
Overall	

APPENDIX A: **Where to go for further information**

If you want to find out more the subject of dialogue and how to improve it, here are some well-known models, frameworks and books that we in The Right Conversation have found very useful to help teams to hold more effective and productive conversations.

Recommended reading

- Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together by William Isaacs
- On Dialogue by David Bohm
- Conversation: How Talk Can Change Our Lives by Theodore Zeldin

Other models

- The Myers Briggs Type Indicator
- The Advocacy/Inquiry Framework
- Heron's Six Categories of Intervention
- The Three Levels of Listening Model

ABOUT THE RIGHT CONVERSATION

We help organisations to do three things:

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership team conversations;
- Equip line managers with the skills to have more productive conversations with their direct reports; and
- Enable more authentic and frequent dialogue between senior leaders and the rest of the organisation.

Better Performance through Better Conversations

Contact us on info@therightconversation.co.uk

BETTER PERFORMANCE

THROUGH BETTER CONVERSATIONS

ATTENTIVENESS

POWER

PRODUCTIVITY

INQUIRY

VOICING

STRUCTURE

www.therightconversation.co.uk