

EFFECTIVE CONVERSATION ON SENSE MAKING AND VALUE CREATION FOR CLIENTS

The case of Effective Conversation for Business consulting

Prepared by: Dr Firew Beshah

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1. INTRODUCTION

The word conversation is derived from the Latin forms of *conversāri* (to associate with) and *conversō* (to turn around or ponder). Conversation often denotes to multi-sensory, multi-faceted communication that shapes social lives. The prefix 'con' promotes a common act, and the origin 'versāre' or 'versari' advocates turning, pouring, discovering, and being (Moore, 2012).

Conversation is a way of being and participating in community, in which all parties pour out their viewpoints, understandings, and desires, hence permitting a multi-faceted way of being together and turning beliefs and action together.

The challenge would be to create a [sense making](#) conversations in which people assimilate internal conversation, boundary-crossing, relationship-building, and question posing in a manner where the portions make a whole (Moore, 2012).

McCloskey (1985) convincingly claims that 'decent science is good conversation.' Good management science, correctly speaking motivates good conversation in the strategic management field.

Thus, in the consulting business, to make a difference and bring about effective solutions to client's problem, conversation is the first key part to connect and establish [relationship](#) with client organization. In line with this, the purpose of this report is to assess, evaluate and reflect the power of sense-making conversation to positively [impact](#) and ultimately propose value to client organization during the business consulting process.

2. AIM OF REPORT

To assess, research and reflect the power of conversation on consulting [capability](#) and how it can be applied in practice to positively influence the client organization and ultimately propose and deliver value for client organisations.

3. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

In order to address the above stated broad objective the following assessment/research methods were employed:

- As desktop assessment/research study was conducted focusing on the relevant conversation related business literatures.
- The conversation topic was perceived from [design thinking](#) perspective using the "The Double-Diamond Model" to enumerate what are the possible options for

effective conversation to influence client and propose value for client organization during business consulting

- Some of the available conversation structures were also screened and reviewed for the purpose of choosing a conversation frame that can make sense with client organization

4. DISCUSSION

Many conversations are intentionally designed for a particular purpose and they are best done with some planned structure and understanding of desired outcomes (see figure1).

All individuals engaged in a conversation need to appreciate the effort of the conversation and to align their thinking and behaviour so as to attain such active sense making and participative action.

A well simplified conversations initiate progress on key aspects such as tangible outputs, intangible outcomes, benefits and beneficiaries.

4.1. Conversation for sense-making

Sense making aids as a facilitator into action, it implicates changing situations into a condition that is understood clearly. Conversation creates engagement for sense making and through discussion it creates [insights](#) and understanding and how these supports to realize Emergence, Culture, and Information making and transfer of knowledge (Weick, 1995).

In the consulting industry, it is critically important that the consultant should believe in what he/she is providing to the client, in so doing he/she will inspire and attract people. It is essential to first introduce the key inside out message, in other words the sense making should first start with why we doing the service, rather than how we doing it.

It is the recognition that no one individual is smart enough to provide solution to the complex problems organizations facing. Now is the time for drawing on the combined intelligence of the organization to create strategy and action aligned with the process of design for a strategic conversation (See Figure 1).

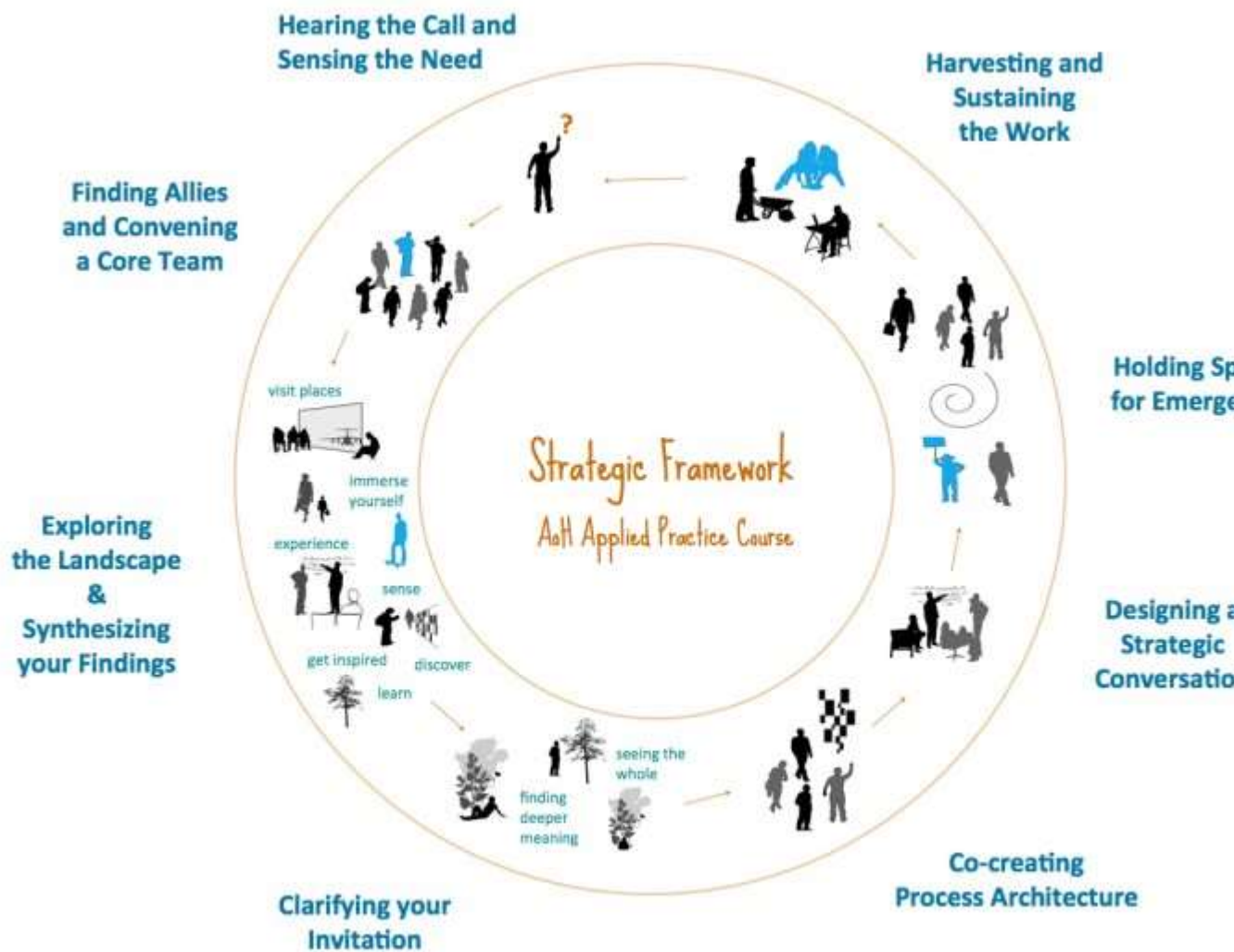


Figure 1 Depicts the process design for a strategic conversation, from developing a clearly defined shared purpose to steps to creating value. Source: (May, 2013). <http://aoh-ap.com/projects/module-6/module-6>

4.2. Conversation Structure to create value

Conversation structures and [design thinking](#) technique promotes the active participation of stake holders, it can greatly assist to discover, define the problem as well as develop and deliver the best potential option to the client organization. These all happen through active dialogue and sensible engagement in conversation.

In addition to this, in business consulting, it is true that [people](#) interact and communicate with people through effective conversation, here the who aspect of what we are providing also

important in order to build [trust](#) between the consultant and the client, and this will help to explore the problem and create sustainable [values](#) for the client over time.

Often, it is important to create the aim of the conversation among members, a fast confirmation of which element including the [output and outcome](#), [benefits and beneficiaries](#) this conversation will assist to emphasize the attention and dialogue on the priority. A conversation should make sure that all the four elements are adequately covered (See Figure 2).

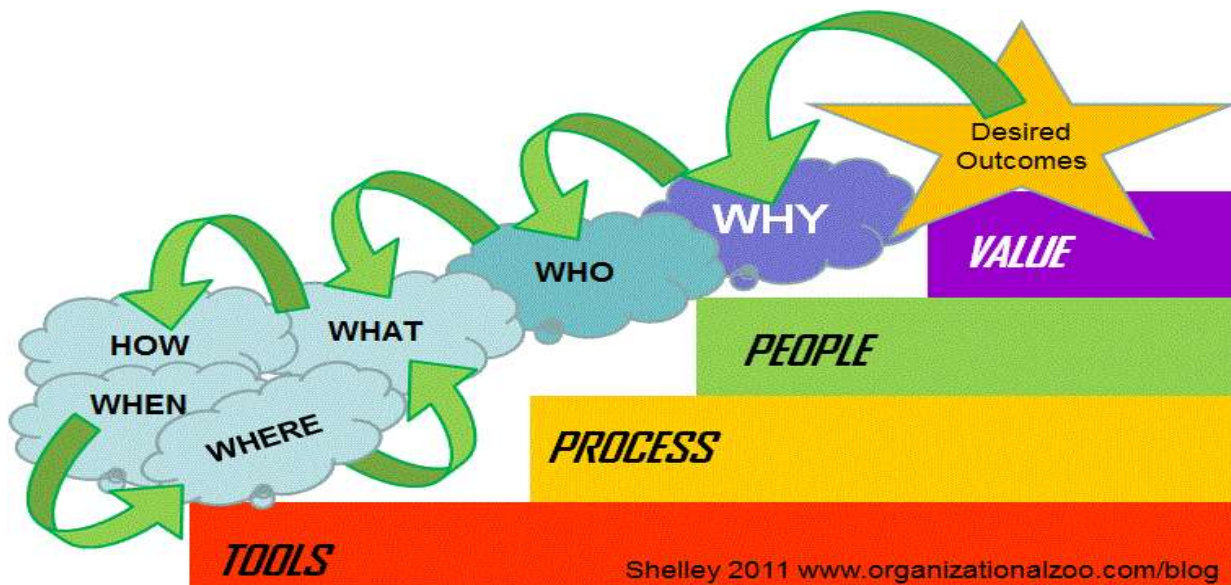


Figure 2. The finest order of conversation questions to define priority of possible initiatives, Source: Shelly, (2013) <http://www.organizationalzoo.com/blog/wp-content/themes>

4.3. Conversation effect on Decision Making

Bohm's (1991) important work has proposed much about the ways in which [people](#) communicate, whereas Schwartz (1996) also suggested the most accurate definition of strategic conversation when he stated, "A strategic conversation is a cautiously thought-out but loosely facilitated series of in depth conversations for crucial decision makers in an organization.

The goal of strategic conversation is the evolution of ideas within an organization that is, in turn, set by developing a common language, working toward aligning ideas, and being willing to critique and be critiqued among the majority of people in an organization (Thomas et al 2007).

It appears reasonable that Trust between client and consultants can be viewed as critical success factors in business management consulting.

The early creation of trust between client and consulting firm may prove the client to renounce special screening activities, such as inquiries regarding the consultants' skills, competences or expertise (Bergen et al. 1992). To facilitate such a situation from the beginning, a consulting firm can make signalling actions in the form of confidence-building measures by, for instance, becoming associate member in a renowned consultant association (Bronnenmayer, et al, 2016).

4.4. Conversation That Matters

Nancy Dixon (2014) focuses on the people side of [knowledge](#) management, where conversation need to be considered as knowledge sharing device. "The language, words we choose, the questions we ask, and the metaphors we use to explain ourselves, are what define our success in creating knowledge, and sharing with each other".

Conversations are an essential instrument through which people engage in a dialogue of thoughts and ideas for a wide range of purposes. Most people need to engage with another person before making any substantial decision (Gurteen, 2014).

In the consulting business courageous conversations around problematic and [challenging](#) issues and chances can be enormously fruitful for the individuals and groups involved. They can motivate important influences to the broader community.

Clarity of persistence establishes the framework of the conversation and enables aligned thinking and behaviour which is essential as for conversations similar to creative divergent thinking associated with engaging [behaviours](#) which creates the finest outcomes (Gurteen, 2014).

In [creative dialogue](#), rationality focuses attention on data and their inter-relationships. Emotions on the other hand are holistic and less amendable to such disaggregation. They deal with feelings and ideas, thus the most creative, insightful and energizing conversations occur when the two are combined (Linda and Sumantral, 2002).

It is also critically important to create the right environment for a conversation that involves different cultures, groups and the social connection networks (see figure 3). Viewpoint of

participants (beneficiaries) is also critical to what can be attained in conversations (Gurteen, 2014; Shelley, 2009).

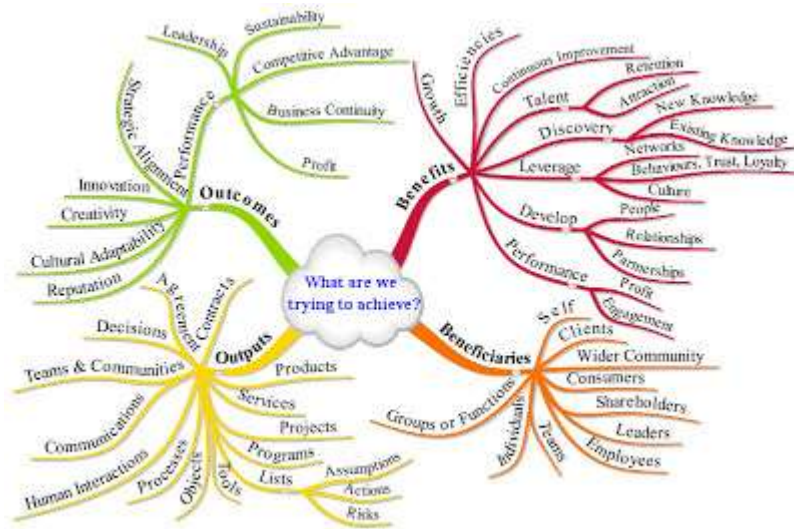


Figure 3 Conversations That Matter: the structure of effective dialogue (Shelley, 2009)

During discussion, differing views are opened and protected and team pursuits for the best opinion to aid make a team decision, however, in dialogue, people easily and [innovatively](#) discover issues, listen genuinely to each other and suspend their own views in search of the reality, here the principal drive is to explore options and expand ideas (See Table 1 below).

In this regard, Consultants-Clients need to balance dialogue with beneficial discussion. In dialogue, diverse interpretations are explored where as in a vigorous discussion that follows, conversations modestly come together into a mutual decision about the correct action to take (Kristin Arnold, 2013).

Here, my overseas experience is that, in most cases of the time, clients in the places where I have worked, genuinely expect a magic bullet solution for the intricate problems they are facing, thus frequently there were debates rather than dialogue/discussion. I would like to emphasize that a structured and designed conversation that can really make sense and pave the way to co-create [sustainable](#) value for clients can be part of the solution.

Table 1 Describes and compares Dialogue and Discussion during conversation

Dialogue	Discussion
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Starts with listening• It is about speaking with• Focuses on insight• Is collaborative• Generates ideas• Encourages reflections• Encourages emergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Starts with talking• It is about talking to• Focuses on differences• Is adversarial• Generates conflicts• Encourages quick thinking• Encourages lock in

Source: <https://stepsandleaps.wordpress.com/2012/10/11/organizational-conversation/>

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conversation need to be about the issues that matter most, during the process of business consulting, the first thing should be to inspire the client organization through effective and sense-making conversation, it must be focused on the most vital topics confronting the organization.
- Conversation has to be collective, public and participative directed towards solving a specific strategic problem. it is advantages to initiate change through conversation one pace at a time, to bring about efficiency and solve organization's barriers to performance.
 - It's essential to create an environment where different perspectives are hailed and then discovered, with a focus on effective conversation rather than presentation, this further helps to establish connections before content
- Trust during conversation is the centre of operative and sustained relationships in the consultancy-client business

6. CONCLUSIONS

In order to ultimately propose and deliver sustainable value for client organisations, active and participatory conversation should be able to create connections, establish descent relationships and trust between business consultants and client organization.

Therefore, based on the discussions and analysis, the following conclusions were made

- It is necessary to create an environment where diverse perspectives are received as positive and discovered in detail and converge to the possible potential solutions that can possibly address clients' problem

- A range of diversified perspectives and interpretations within the client-consultant relationship need to be positively associated with the generation of novel ideas and innovative problem solving solutions.
- The increase mutual values, shared conceptual frameworks and shared communications, behaviours need to be associated with knowledge transfer in the client-consultant team.

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