

# Leading Dialogue Processes to Build Commitment and Reach Shared Understanding

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## Introduction

*Actionable dialogue is the accumulation of parts – insights, ideas, observation, awareness, and so on – leading to shared understanding and committed action.*

In the relentless effort to accomplish objectives and achieve results, the most common complaint you hear from leaders is that “nothing’s happening” or “things aren’t moving fast enough.” Creating and maintaining action is central to success. There is the kind of action where people go through the motions and things get done yet there isn’t much energy behind it. This yields going-along type action where you may get what you ask for but seldom more and often less. To get whole-hearted action for an initiative where people are energized and behind a plan involves a process which builds commitment and generates action. Moderating dialogue processes builds understanding and support across critical stakeholders and creates committed agreement for action. In effectively moderating actionable dialogue everyone gets involved quickly and you achieve appreciative understanding and results far beyond business as usual. Learning to conduct and moderate dialogues is a critical leadership tool. The process is simple, but putting it into practice is not.

*“We should not attempt to change people’s behavior. Rather, we should reach an understanding over how the relations that determine our behavior can be changed.”  
- Wolfgang Schnelle*

## BACKGROUND

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 (“The Change Champion’s Fieldguide: Strategies and Tools for Leading Change in Your Organization”, 2003, Best Practices Publications)*

Rhythms and patterns of daily life in organizations today have changed. The tempo of business innovation has increased toward discovering new rules and rapidly applying vast resources to play the new or better game. Executives and leaders today must dare to break up in-rooted ways of thinking and attitudes to find these new pathways. With today's business environment made of increasing partnerships, alliances, technological advances and innovation leaders are challenged to manage increasingly complex relations and a rapid pace of problem solving and execution. This can leave even the best of today's executives disoriented with very often a splintered community of followers.

As innovation becomes a rising force in accelerating the need to understand and meet business challenges, it requires changes in the opinions, values, thinking and working patterns of individuals and companies. The prized ability to sense, respond and rapidly create meaningful new forms and strike alliances to drive business growth is now a coveted source of competitive edge. Deal making of various forms - mergers, acquisitions, all types of strategic alliance activity - continues at a fever pitch. Now, it has become even more important to lead tasks across departments, across businesses and alliance networks and to achieve cooperation and committed action.

This requires business leaders collaborate on complex problems in a structured way to tackle business issues, generate new insight and create new possibilities for action. For this reason it becomes even more important to be able to reach a shared understanding with other people. A vital attribute of any business leader today is the ability to *build understanding and support* across critical stakeholders and create committed agreement for action. This process and skill set is critical for successful implementation of projects and initiatives relying on interdependency between players without hierarchical subordination.

This requirement drives one of today's greatest challenges faced by every leader - building commitment to initiatives and generating action. In companies today, it is critical to build the quality of decisions made and rapidly develop a critical mass of supporters who understand and appreciate what needs to be done then do what is necessary to succeed.

### **The Cost of Loose Coupling Between Talk, Decision and Action**

The typical requirement for laterally leading a project or initiative in today's organizations is marked by cross-departmental cooperation, networks, flat hierarchies, teamwork and group work. Much costly time can be spent making sure that people in a targeted community are aware of the challenge and decided action steps. This typical condition is made even more difficult where bringing about a shared understanding and commitment for action is with other people we do not command, where there is no direct authority to influence. For many practitioners and leaders in today's organizations, the traditional approach to laterally leading cross-business teaming is establishing common ground and building consensus. The thinking is admirable and simple: if we build support for our initiative, and communicate what needs to be done, contributors will "get it" and execute according to plan. Yet often this doesn't occur; "face agreement" is reached in meetings, that is, heads are nodding yet no real action results.

A second pitfall that some practitioners or meeting leaders develop is a zealous attention to establishing "appreciation", or building consensus, without any theoretical rhyme or reason to their approach. Promoting appreciation or support for an initiative where there

has been little, can itself, generate a wave of energy and enthusiasm that will go away just as quickly as the next challenge or trauma to the system rears its head. The issue is raised to caution against the indiscriminant application of a facilitated discussion process which lacks a theoretical basis and structured method to its practice. Leading dialogue processes to build commitment and reach shared understanding calls for a disciplined and reasoned approach to its use.

A moderated dialogue process for complex problem solving is a form of active consulting which creates new practices/ideas/images that aid in the developmental change of a system. If you want to go down new paths with people, you need visions that can be changed as new developments arise. Leading dialogue processes structures your debates, within your company or with your business partners, to develop a shared understanding and appreciation for action-oriented solutions and improve creative problem solving skills. A structured dialogue process promotes the infrastructure that enables people to work together effectively and accomplish the expected results.

Dialogue techniques for leading and moderating discussions bring structure to the complexity of unpacking a wide variety of challenges for a central business issue. The process enables all players to constructively interact and evaluate the problem or issue at hand. The dialogue leader, or moderator, provides each party the ability to maintain their power and contribute actively to the development of ideas and solutions. The complex business challenge and issues are collectively discussed in order to create new, generative ideas or images that aid in developmental change of the collective group discussing them. The result is appreciative and shared understanding rather than a circular dispute, or worse yet, nodding heads signaling consensus and no action to follow.

This chapter is meant to encourage critical reflection about the role of discursive dialogue for helping leaders advance complex problem solving and committed action. It is not that difficult to defend an opinion; it is much more difficult to really understand one. An approach had to be identified to enable the stakeholders themselves to understand and sustainably solve the problems and bring commitment to action. An approach where to be successful there is occasion to lead laterally across cooperation partners to be brought to take steps together in a desired direction.

The chapter is organized by three main parts. The first part, the background, describes the challenge and explains why leading dialogue processes to build shared understanding continues to draw attention. The second part defines how dialogue differs from discussion and outlines the main characteristics of the unique methodology and technique to carry out an actionable dialogue session. The third part challenges you to think beyond the moderated dialogue process, to understand the latent issues impeding progress in the organization. The fourth part summarizes the value and outcomes you can expect from a practice of dialoging on differences offering key insights and lessons learned.

### **It Is Not That Difficult to Defend an Opinion; It Is Much More Difficult to Really Understand It**

#### *Moderating Actionable Dialogue*

Derivations of words often help to understand a deeper meaning. Participation means both ‘to partake of’ and ‘to take part in’. If we could be taking part in communicating and creating a common meaning, that would be participation. In this type of participation a common mind arises. ‘Dialogue’ comes from the Greek word dialogos. Logos means ‘the word’, or in our case the ‘meaning of the word’. Dia means ‘through’, it does not

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(“*The Change Champion’s Fieldguide: Strategies and Tools for Leading Change in Your Organization*”, 2003, *Best Practices Publications*)

mean two. A dialogue can be among any number of people, not just two. The image this suggests is of a *stream of meaning* flowing among and through a group of people and between them. (David Bohm) This makes possible a flow of meaning in a whole group out of which emerges some new understanding. It is something new that may not have been conceived of at the starting point. It may be a new idea, strategy, understanding of business threats and opportunities, or a set of actions necessary to achieve market dominance. In any case, it is something new and creative. This new shared meaning, shared understanding is the cement that holds people and groups together and committed to a cause.

In a dialogue session, individuals might hold a separate opinion but that opinion is expressed and then absorbed into the group and one's meaning would be seen. Insofar as people have opinions or assumptions they defend, there is something that interferes with innovation. If you are defending an assumption, you are pushing out whatever is new. Differences in opinions and assumptions must be shared and understood so that something can move between them and the collective group can move beyond them in another direction toward coherence – into something new and creative. The product is something created, agreed to and owned by the collective party.

Dialogue is often used interchangeably with discussion – as in “Let's have a dialogue.” Yet in group meetings where there is only discussion, issues are typically broken up for analysis and batted back and forth until somebody wins enough points to get their way. Very frequently in the case of a discussion a few ideas are emphasized where one person picks up someone else's idea to back up their own and the end result is not very much further beyond the various points of view. Problem solving sessions or meetings of this sort conclude with perhaps, at best, trade-offs or a negotiated solution lacking the cement of new appreciation for what needs to be done and serious commitment. Those who take part are not really open to questioning their fundamental assumptions and rather end up trading off minor points.

Problem solving discussions and decision making often leaves out active reflection. Leading a structured dialogue process which visually captures an argumentation flow, forces reflection points, uses inquiry to challenge the participants on assumptive thinking styles and propels the group beyond limited thought styles (i.e. why they actually do something) to arrive at an appreciative understanding for what needs to be done, stretches decisions and agreement on action steps. It is making individual and group thinking visible. Within the disciplined process, one intellectualizes the idea, clarifies their thinking, reflects on what has been revealed then are challenged to inquire more deeply and break closed thinking before moving to action. This brings the increased structure needed for addressing a wide-variety of challenges around a complex, central business issue and builds a convergence of interests.

Companies do not only pursue economic aims. There is a mixture of varied, often diverging aims, values and interests which are either created by the organizations themselves or already in existence, but which are in a constant state of flux. Leaders at companies try to represent this mixture of aims and interests in strategy documents yet in full knowledge that varying objectives, values and interests cannot be reduced to a common denominator, and this is not in fact necessary for performance. This creates tension and conflicting interests between departments, functions and individual players.

Leaders aware of natural and healthy tensions in organizations take this as a driving force rather than an impediment for progress. They set themselves the task of engaging a communication process for bringing these incompatible viewpoints to light to enable *Leading Dialogue Processes to Build Commitment and Reach Shared Understanding* 4 (“*The Change Champion's Fieldguide: Strategies and Tools for Leading Change in Your Organization*”, 2003, *Best Practices Publications*)

power and action. Structuring a targeted communications process to involve all viewpoints and diverging interests lifts these factors from a latent state and triggers a productive problem solving process. The achievement is shared understanding and sincere agreement. It makes the invisible thinking, of individuals and functional areas, visible. This results in appreciative decision-making and action.

To make the needed changes, the company's leadership would be required to focus beyond the boundaries of their more traditional silos and business units and work together with internal and external partners to create environments where higher levels of performance are more easily achieved and sustained. They would now have to focus well beyond the one-on-one encounters and management of their own groups and develop broader and deeper skills in strategy and scenario development, building engagement with stakeholders who may have competing interests and agendas, as well as deal with complexities that could not be addressed by traditional problem solving approaches.

### **What Makes This Approach Different, Interesting and Innovative?**

The consulting procedure is a process of group dialogue. In discussions with groups of people from affected areas, the problems are brought to light which become the focus of the dialogue process. The suggestions for solving these problems are also elaborated in group discussions and workshops with those involved. The group moderator is able to make people feel safe so that participants allow their viewpoint and thought structures to be challenged. This builds a common foundation for leaders to focus on issues and challenges and creates a climate for team learning and action. The necessary communication for building shared understanding and commitment is accelerated.

A structured dialogue process creates opportunities for leaders to think together to resolve complex organizational issues in order to do more intelligently what is necessary. Naturally in discussions, each participant focuses on their own objective, interests and agenda. The moderator organizes communication between players and intellectually influences the patterns of thinking of the group. A moderator is not neutral. She will give structure to collective thought, will generate new insights and create new possibilities for action. By skillfully searching for differences of opinion or assumptions, the moderator is able to turn hidden or unchallenged issues into manageable problems to be prioritized and solved.

During a workshop, the dialogue moderator intervenes in the group discussions either indirectly or directly. 'Indirectly' means that they formulate the questions and propositions which the discussions are about and architect the blended flow of inquiry, dialogue and challenge throughout the session. They intervene directly by taking part in the discussion with their own opinions and recommendations in a provocative manner. They always do this if the indirect method is not successful in breaking closed thinking. These indirect and direct interventions are the points where consulting takes place: they are simultaneously both moderators and consultants. Skillfully using questions to trigger doubt and contradictions opens critical dialogues to analyze and bring to light what is really is behind the problem.

In leading dialogue processes one of the end goals is supposed to be "reaching of an *appreciative understanding*." This means the challengers and the challenged arrive at an agreement which favors new ways of acting. Reaching an understanding can certainly be a complete agreement, a consensus, but in most cases this is unlikely. For this reason *Leading Dialogue Processes to Build Commitment and Reach Shared Understanding* 5 ("The Change Champion's Fieldguide: Strategies and Tools for Leading Change in Your Organization", 2003, Best Practices Publications)

effective moderators take a whole systems approach and do not direct their interventions towards creating a consensus as a specific objective of the moderation. During the process of reaching a shared understanding, it is perfectly possible and legitimate for participants to accept disadvantages and losses if this opens up ways of acting that help to avoid even greater disadvantages and losses. This is why it is termed – *appreciative understanding*.

In order to reach this objective, it is necessary to remove mental blocks and guide participants towards new insights and openness of mind. To achieve this, one must lead the discussions to participants' differences and "blind spots." Even if the consulting procedure focuses on the communication between those present, it still needs both prior and accompanying diagnoses to select the dialogue topics and tailor them. These are topics which the practitioner or leader bring in to the communications or – even better - the participants bring up themselves. For this to happen the organizational patterns and structures have to be investigated.

Generally it does not take long to identify the obvious patterns or structures. The organization charts, plans and available statistics/data are used in the assessment. Yet, the hidden organizational structures are mainly identified in exploratory discussions with groups from the various areas and levels of the organization. The insights gained are complemented by active observation and studying texts (self-descriptions, minutes of meetings, specialist articles, etc).

To find the hidden structures, the practitioner pursues certain question sets which are suitably formulated and put to the relevant parties in the exploratory meetings. Mostly these are questions on *differences*, i.e. unearthing discrepancies between talk, decision and action. Examples of such are as follows:

- Why is action not taken, although a decision has been made? Or why are decisions made even though people know that no action will be taken? Or even, why are decisions made so that no action will be taken (e.g. by setting up a working group, or task force, which nobody then consults)?
- What three key influencers may have a *different* opinion than you on the issue(s)? Talk with them.
- What key influencers may share your opinion on the issue(s)? Talk with them.
- Which views (people's own rationale) do certain people put forward to the others?
- Why is there so little cooperation even though there is so much coordination?

It is important to encourage interests that are not easily convergent with that of another in order to create distinctions. Distinctions create a deep, ingrained awareness that automatically changes the way you think and act. Distinguishing the various perspectives and interests enables you to create possibility, action, and relationship. With each new distinction comes new power for understanding and new effectiveness for building solutions to successfully transform thought patterns into actions. Through the dialogue process, and building on differences and distinctions, evolution of the solution is created and shared by all. In this way, the outcome has a much higher frequency of impact

because there is an intense coherence of understanding and all are “in phase”. This is the way to get whole-hearted action behind it.

## **Metallic Briefcase Or A Brown Roll of Paper**

### *Visualization*

When working in companies, we usually do not take space into account as a key factor for empowered thinking. A successful use of a moderated dialogue approach requires a different use of space: i.e., each participant needs 60 square inches for a group size of 5 to 25 people. This means that if you work with 20 participants, they will actually occupy 200 out of 1200 square inches (with the seats). What is the remaining surface used for?

The purpose is to have enough space to spread out on large boards, covered with brown “butcher-block” paper, the thinking process of that group. Information inputs and interaction contents (individual ideas) become visible on posters as we lead the dialogue process. After two hours, you may have 10 such boards/posters visually capturing the thinking of the group: everything available in front of you to deepen reflection, allowing connecting ideas and encouraging participants to find their own solutions. This allows for areas and ideas to be clustered and more immediately identified and selected for next steps. Some ideas spring to light; some cook. Visual argumentation capture is one way to literally bring the relevant issues to light in order to find the explanations and ideas which move the group forward.

Visualization is a well known creative tool to draw maps of your thinking on a given topic to get the overview. Metaplan’s contribution to leading active dialogue processes was to define practical solutions to use this powerful technique, with 20 people simultaneously, by connecting an interaction method and a visualization system. Coming back to our example of 20 participants, in a room of 1200 square inches with 10 boards/posters filled with ideas in front of them, it is interesting to note: these 10 boards account for a “thinking space” of almost 20 square inches each. Or, said differently, our group is using a vertical surface of 200 square inches to develop its thinking graphically over 2 or 3 hours! This process can go on for 2 days which is what ultimately makes it a powerful instrument for working on highly complex issues that span multiple stakeholders. This demands that a structured flow be used so that the dialogue moderator and participants do not get lost in the meantime. In the Metaplan approach, such a flow is called a “dramaturgy”.

The Metaplan group work method is a moderated dialogue program where all the participants are actively involved in the discussion. This affords each person an opportunity to develop his or her reasoning pattern in-depth. Using data from the diagnostic phase, the practitioner or leader identifies the things that may distort or limit participant views. What this means is that it is important to see the different opinions held that are a result of past thought, experiences, what others have said and whatnot. In this way the practitioner uncovers the myths, dogmas and fictions participants believe in and which support and can limit thought structures. The objective of a spirited dialogue process is not to definitely know or define something, but to see it in all its dimensions.

For example, organizational myths is the label given to legends which have been passed down and which people take for granted. These myths can limit new thinking and consequently new actions which may result from innovative thinking. Similarly dogmas

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(rules which go unquestioned) and fictions (beliefs for actions which lack evidence) can be thought limiters when assumptions remain uncovered and thinking unchallenged. In this way the moderator acts as an *agent provocateur*: there to inject the group with a unique perspective to stimulate thoughts and drive active dialogue.

In this way the moderator serves in the following role:

- To facilitate the expression of divergent viewpoints, reserves, clarify contradictions, enabling convergence to be built.
- As ideas are formulated in detail, the moderator team writes up the thought and places them in order; in this way we can follow the development of the reflection as a whole. Participant frameworks become vivid and clear.
- To focus discussion on the key points: the consultant-moderator leads it towards the aspects that must be debated to reach the stated goal.

A thorough and structured preparation of the workshop is crucial to achieve a result-oriented outcome and to prevent and overcome numerous obstacles that are difficult to tackle. The moderator must give very careful consideration to develop the meeting scheme, or dramaturgy, that will warrant active participation, open up perspectives, make the group discussions more effective and lead to a shared understanding. Here, “effective” has a double meaning: on the one hand it implies saving time. In workshops moderated with dialogue techniques results are achieved faster than by traditional methods. On the other hand, it also implies that the participants are more deeply involved in the group process, in considering all opinions, and in working towards jointly supported results.

Certain rules governing the dramatic process assist the moderator in thinking over the course of the discussion in advance, in order to lead the group down a continuous path to a conclusion. Workshop planning involves design in the following areas:

- How to reach a shared understanding by planning meeting dramatics
- How to trigger appropriate reactions from a group
- How to compose an argument
- How to formulate questions eliciting interactions

For a discussion using the Metaplan approach, visualization tools are needed to make the group members’ thoughts and arguments visible to all. Visualization helps participants follow the oral discussion more easily. Propositions, comments, criticisms, doubts, objections, difficulties are all rapidly captured visually and clustered by theme/issue/relevance real-time. This works to focus the group, force reflection and advance the discussion toward weighted areas of dialogue. At the end of a workshop, the entire flow of the discussion is represented as a record in photominutes. This not only ensures accurate representation of the meeting discussion, making all frameworks and possibilities vivid and clear, but also captures the atmosphere of the discussion and demonstrates the methods used to achieve those results. Photominutes are produced to reduce the large posters to a standard, useable A4 format that is handier for follow up work.

### **Flashmarks: Highlighting the Hot Spots**

If you object: flash. There are various visualization techniques for creating a visual image of the discussion, interaction and dramaturgical planning tools and techniques the moderator relies on for designing a results oriented dialogue session. A critical interaction technique is termed a “flashmark”.

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Flashes are catalysts for reaching a shared understanding. Qualifying additions or objections to a statement are called out and marked with a lightning bolt on the respective card. Flashmarks denote areas of controversy or distinction that warrant more discussion time. At these points, there is a need for debate or to understand each other better. The participant that flashed then adds his argument or clarification to the debate. In this way flashmarks open up the dialogue to other people's argument and encourage participants to express deviating opinions.

Questions about a card may also be posed with a flash. Flashing alone is not enough though; the moderator should be careful to precisely extract the arguments behind the flashes. Those arguments, as well as any ensuing sequence of replies and additional arguments need to be captured and clustered next to the original statements. This way various viewpoints are visibly juxtaposed where they are written down and made objective. The participants come to terms with the contribution of others and can integrate them better into their own way of thinking. Flashes help formulate more precisely the idea and express it exactly; they also reveal weaknesses in concepts.

Through chains of contradictions, the idea is developed further. Others' arguments are complemented and tested by contradiction and participants contribute something to the idea. An individual recognizes his or her contribution, and the flashmark brings a sense of relief where a participant can see that he has contributed to an idea and to some extent made it their own.

### **Using Questions for Helping the Birth of Ideas**

Effective dialogue schemes use questions to open a debate among participants. Each group member should be curious as to what the others in the group will say, and be stimulated to also take a stand and explain it. It is critically important to get the group to diverge on the topic or related issues before moving toward convergence of agreed-to solutions. Diverging allows all participants to share their expertise, convictions and interests so they all contribute to development of solutions.

To trigger interaction in the group a good question has to meet certain criteria:

- ***It should ask for opinions or suggestions***, not for expert knowledge. Each participant should be able to provide answers. A question that only an expert can answer will not result in a group dialogue.
- ***It should be open, allowing several answers*** from each participant. It is always wrong to ask a question answerable with "yes" or "no", because the discussion would quickly be over. On the other hand, blatantly leading questions such as "Why is piece-work the only way?" or any question that might insult the participants should be avoided. A question that "strikes home" will be accepted by the group and will result in a stimulating discussion.
- ***It should challenge and concern***. The question should be relevant to the personal experience of the participants, it should not ask for information anyone can read about in the newspapers. If it concerns me directly I am much more interested in contributing answers. In a discussion with manufacturing managers a question such as "What difficulties are inherent in participative management?" should not be used, but rather "What difficulties could arise if we let our workers have more of a say in our decisions?"

- ***It should guide in the intended direction.*** When phrasing a question, possible answers should already be anticipated. The direction of the discussion triggered by the question should be in accordance with the goals for the meeting. The moderator decides whether to pinpoint problems in a work area, ask for ideas and solutions, or collect pros and cons to a known suggestion. These considerations help to decide whether the expected answers will lead towards the discussions intended results.

There are different types of questions. One must consider in advance with what question one will trigger the desired interaction. Below are examples of types of assertions and/or questions formulated for different responses and interactions:

Proposition	Best Brand Company is broadly recognized as an industry leader in sales and marketing! (using dots, opinions are rated on a scale)
Call-out question	What are current shortcomings that impede our ability to grow talent?
Card Question	To be excellent in 2004: What are the topic areas in which we could impact performance further? What characterizes excellent ‘customer insight’?
Weighting question	If business unit effectiveness today = 100, where will it be in 2004? (scale provided)

To keep an active dialogue session going, a moderator must consider how to intervene, provoke and mediate the discourse at the right times. Once well phrased questions are identified, there are many and varied techniques for using questions effectively in the dramatics and architecture of a lively dialogue session.

There are traditional problems with leading dialogue processes as well. Limitations can emerge which stall an intended lively, healthy problem solving session. To a skilled moderator, these limitations typically point to latent issues in the organization which can be symptomatic of a greater problem. This provides the opportunity to address bigger challenges which are impacting high performance. For example, an active dialogue session will reveal the conditions that influence behavior. Identifying these latent issues in the organization affords leaders the opportunity to change conditions so others can behave differently. In the end, leaders gain deeper insight in to their own structures to change conditions for a better result.

### **An Open Process**

The type of changes that result from leading dialogue processes have a character of social transformations that take place within the organization or across professional communities. Such a process of change is often described by professionals as being an open, contingent and political process. *Open* because the target, or goal, may evolve

during the project and room is left for all interdependent players involved to contribute and influence the project. This is a priority for leading the dialogue session.

Leading a dialogue process is also *contingent*, in the sense that there is not one perfect way to organize a given change. For effective sessions, it must be understood and expected that large parts of the solution, or what will be achieved, are left open to being defined. Generating new insights and breakthrough thinking can produce explanations, paths and ideas unthought-of.

Often a desired outcome for leading a dialogue process is to construct some temporary arrangements between players who may have diverging interests and ideologies. The process has a political dimension to stress the public debate of those involved representing views and interests of their group. There must be enough room for the far superior form of spontaneous order to arise than decided order. Decision makers may easily get tempted to define plans well in advance in small committee. Leaders of dialogue processes grow in confidence that there are alternatives that will emerge that follow a certain rationality and special form of intelligence involving all and which does not mean that they run the risk of losing control. This is the path to achieving a common understanding.

### **Overall Summary**

Mastering the skill of moderating dialogue not only enables you to lead more effectively, it gives you access to areas in organizations that many struggle to influence and change. Creating and attending to things that exist in language is the work of a leader because it is words, conversations and actions that motivate people and drive most behavior. For example, you can gain access to the things such as culture through organizational language.

Moderating towards shared understanding removes conflicts, develops room to act and encourages venturing into new territory. Managers and leaders in companies tend to underestimate the ability of other's to find solutions, to place trust in others. Yet people need to feel confident with what they are doing. Engaging actionable dialogue, working together, building buy-in and appreciated understanding produces enthusiastic and energized people. When you need good answers, you must ask the right questions through a constructive dialogue process. Fostering buy-in and committed action through dialogue will help build a new future for yourself and your business.

**Associates**, a training and consulting firm specializing in the creation and application of dialogue processes that lead to shared understanding and committed action. Jodi has extensive experience and training in strategic leadership development specializing in behaviorally-focused executive coaching for leaders. Bringing significant industry experience to her consulting work, Jodi has designed and implemented new communications and dialogue approaches for action and developed talent strategies and tactics to meet demands for business required talent. With a strong bias towards results, Dr. Knox has conducted practical research with Fortune 50 companies on retention in development programs to evaluate and measure the outcomes and business impact



of such initiatives. Jodi collaborated with world-renowned authors demonstrating the power of storytelling to convey leadership and learning in *Learning Journeys: Top Management Experts Share Hard-Earned Lessons on Becoming Great mentors and Leaders* (Davies-Black). Other publications include: *Global Leadership Development, Action Learning & 360 feedback: A Case Study, Action Dialogue: Developing Leadership Effectiveness at the Individual and Organization Levels Through Action Learning*. You can reach Jodi at [JKnox@actiondialogue.com](mailto:JKnox@actiondialogue.com) or (888) 237-5634.