
talking about...

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

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Talking About Pty Ltd

Minimising Resistance

"Self-knowledge is best learned, not by contemplation, but by action. Strive to do your duty and you will soon discover of what stuff you are made."

... **Johann Goethe**

In our last edition, we introduced the idea of conversational resistance. When we look at this resistance in more depth, we can see that it relates to certain emotions that are triggered as part of the conversation. Conversational resistance equates to establishing an emotional space that is not conducive to the outcome you want to achieve. This is generally described as aggressive or defensive behaviour.

There are many aspects to what generates an aggressive or defensive response. However these responses can largely be seen as a means to preserving what already exists for the person in whom the response is generated. When we speak of what exists, we are again referring to many possibilities, but they can largely be seen in two key groups – the story the person has about themselves and the story they have about how the world, including others, should be. Simply, the key to minimising resistance lies in an effective interpretation of what listener's stories about themselves and the world and then speaking to that person in the context of that interpretation. These interpretations are derived from our ability to listen, not just to what is said, but what might be behind what is said.

Conversational resistance is generated when we do not address the other person's concerns in the conversation. The other day, a client professed amazement at how changing a few words can generate a different outcome. Indeed few words can make all the difference. When we engage in a conversation it is critical that we are clear about what we are trying to achieve in that conversation. By listening more effectively, we can establish a better context for what we want to generate, not only for ourselves, but also for the other person. Effective listening provides us with a means of better choosing our words and thereby creating a more effective conversation.

For example, say something has gone wrong at work and the manager, Sue, has come to talk about this with Peter, who has done the work. If Sue begins the conversation with a series of questions about why Peter had done this or that, it is likely Peter will begin to feel the need to defend his actions thereby setting up conversational resistance. If however, Sue creates a context for Peter of how he could do this work more effectively next time, she is more likely to ask questions that are constructive and of benefit to both Sue and Peter. Rather than "why" questions, Sue is likely to ask questions such as "how could we improve this?", "what would make this situation better?" and so on. These questions are directed at learning and creating something better and are the stuff of the constructive conversations that minimise conversational resistance and increase the effectiveness of all involved.

From our experience, constructive conversations require a number of things to be successful - self-awareness, a genuine desire to develop people, an attitude that focuses on learning and improvement and finally conversational skills. These things are not learnt from a book rather

they involve reflection and practice. Indeed much of our coaching work focuses on developing a more "constructive" way of being, so if you want to minimise conversational resistance give us a call on (03) 9507 2464.

"I've come to appreciate that real change happens in behaviours, or at large scale in entire organizations, only when we take time to discover this sense of what's worthy of our shared attention. We don't accept an organizational redesign because a leader tells us it is necessary. We choose to accept it if, and only if, we see how this new design enables us to contribute more to what we have defined as meaningful. And we don't accept diversity because we've been told it is the right thing to do. Only as we are engaged together in work that is meaningful do we learn to work through the differences and value them. Change becomes much easier when we focus first on creating a meaning for the work that can embrace us all. Held by this rich centre of meaning, we let go of many grievances and work around traditional hindrances."

... Margaret Wheatley, Author of Leadership and the New Science

Sometimes we think we know when we don't ...

We got these from a friend. They speak to our inability as human beings to predict the future!

We don't need you. You haven't got through college yet.

Hewlett Packard excuse to Steve Jobs, who founded Apple Computers instead.

Radio has no future. Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible. X-rays will prove to be a hoax.

William Thomson, Lord Kelvin English scientist, 1899

Everything that can be invented has been invented.

Charles H. Duell, Office of Patents, 1899

We don't like their sound. Groups of guitars are on the way out.

Decca executive in 1962 after turning down the Beatles.

There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.

Ken Olson, president of Digital Equipment Corp. 1977

Who wants to hear actors talk?

H.M. Warner, Warner Brothers, 1927

I think there's a world market for about five computers.

Thomas J. Watson, chairman of the board of IBM.

This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication.

Western Union memo, 1876

I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face and not Gary Cooper.

Gary Cooper, after turning down the lead role in "Gone with the Wind"

"Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother."

... Kahlil Gibran

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