



talking about...

October 2007

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

Building a Bridge

"Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks."

... Gloria Evangelina Anzaldua (1942 -) US-Tejana-Chicana poet

One of the hallmarks of our modern society is a belief that things should happen now. More and more, we want instant gratification and quick results. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, many people live with the view that we can, or should, resolve any issue we choose to address with one attempt. One conversation will fix everything.

Yet somehow many issues stay unresolved. In organisations, people find themselves in meetings that regurgitate the same issues, with no apparent progress. In personal relationships, people find themselves having the same conversations about their concerns over and over, again without resolution. All of this in spite of the belief at the end of each conversation that something is going to change. How can these people create the change they are seeking?

The first step is to realise that issues, particularly where they are linked to human behaviour and relationships, are generally not resolved through one interaction. It may take many conversations for something to be resolved or behaviour to change.

The next step is to ensure that we link our conversations to achieve our desired outcome. The way in which this is done is through the generation of promises. One way to look at this is to imagine the conversations to achieve an outcome as islands in an ocean. Our outcome is at the other side of the ocean. Each island (conversation) represents a step along the way. For us to get to each island, we must build a bridge. These bridges represent the promises made in the conversation. The process is then a simple one. In every conversation, make sure that you have built a bridge to the next one by ensuring clear promises are made. At the following conversation, ensure the bridge is completed by following up the promises made to ensure they are done.

If you find yourself in the same conversation about an issue, you can bet that one of two things did not occur. Either no bridge was built in the first place or the promises have not been kept. In our experience, it is often the case that no clear promises have been made - no bridges are built. Rather there are just assumptions made that something is going to be done. If we want things to change, we can look at how well we are ensuring that promises are made with a sense of commitment and followed up. We can all be bridge builders!

"Conversation would be vastly improved by the constant use of four simple words: I do not know."

... Andre Maurois (1885 - 1967) French "biographer, novelist, essayist"

One for the aging golfers!

Thanks to our friend Greg Stephenson for this one ...

Arthur is 90 years old.

He's played golf every day since his retirement 25 years ago.

One day he arrives home looking downcast.

"That's it", he tells his wife. "I'm giving up golf. My eyesight has got so bad... once I've hit the ball, I can't see where it went."

His wife sympathizes, and makes him a cuppa.

As they sit down she says, "Why don't you take my brother with you and give it one more try."

"That's no good", sighs Arthur. "Your brother's a hundred and three. He can't help".

"He may be a hundred and three", says the wife, "but his eyesight is perfect".

So the next day Arthur heads off to the golf course with his brother-in-law.

He tees up, takes an almighty swing and squints down the fairway.

He turns to the brother-in-law. "Did you see the ball?"

"Of course I did!"

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"Where did it go?" says Arthur.

"I can't remember".

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