

## POWERFUL CONVERSATIONS

### LEADING AND COACHING FOR BREAKTHROUGHS IN ACTION

This provides an overview of Powerful Conversations, a leadership and coaching development program. Our focus is on growing leaders to produce breakthrough results in a high performance culture.

We support leaders to face their most difficult situations with practical, powerful leadership skills. It has been used extensively to develop advanced influencing skills among leaders and change agents.

### Benefits

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Powerful Conversations is effective for experienced leaders and coaches because it:

- ◆ Develops advanced skills while addressing real-life business issues.
- ◆ Engages participants in active practice. Learning is inductive, and experimentation, reflection, and feedback lead to conclusions about what is effective and what is not.
- ◆ Draws on an extensive tool kit that is taught and applied “just-in-time,” so that theory is immediately translated into practice.
- ◆ Works extremely well in a virtual environment. Bi-weekly telephone conference calls and Learning Partner calls make participation efficient and convenient.
- ◆ Includes role modeling and mentoring by an expert Course Leader who customizes each learning session to the emerging needs and desires of participants.
- ◆ Builds competency through continuous practice. Unlike most “event-based” training programs, Powerful Conversations works precisely because it encourages regular practice over a period of months in the participants’ own environment.
- ◆ Builds a community of support among participants, who quickly come to see each other as learning partners and allies.

## Structure

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Powerful Conversations is a four-month program with 8-10 participants per group. The basic structure is:

- ◆ Program launch – usually a one-day face-to-face session with all participants.
  - ◇ The morning provides an orientation to Powerful Conversations by demonstrating dramatically how most leadership conversations fall short of their potential. New models and tools are introduced.
  - ◇ The afternoon provides live practice sessions using two real cases brought by participants (prepared in advance).
  - ◇ If a face-to-face meeting is not practical, an alternative launch design is a virtual launch session (a 2-3 hour bridge call) to provide an overview of the program and its methods.
- ◆ Conference calls with all participants (2 hours each, twice per month for 4 months.)
  - ◇ These calls are led by the Course Leader and include all participants.
  - ◇ The first 90 minutes of each call features a brief teaching piece, followed by a case study prepared by one of the participants. The case illustrates a difficult situation that the case presenter would like to resolve or improve. See more details below.
- ◆ Regular phone meetings with a Learning Partner.
  - ◇ The last 30 minutes of each biweekly call is an opportunity for each Learning Partner pair to generate insights from the session, plan how to apply new skills to their own immediate situations, and review recent actions and lessons learned.
- ◆ A coach mentoring session with each pair of Learning Partners, 60-90 minutes duration, provided by the Course Leader.
  - ◇ During the mentoring session with each pair, the Course Leader will coach each participant on specific situations of the participant's choosing, while also deepening the learning from the toolkit.

## **More about Live Coaching and the Case Method**

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The heart of the program is eight two-hour conference calls, about two per month. Each call features an actual problem case that illustrates a significant “stuck moment” – when the case presenter is not getting the result that he or she desires.

Our focus is NOT to solve the case...that is mere problem-solving. Rather, we use the case to generate live leadership coaching and to face the problems and opportunities that arise from our real-time experience.

Thus we work with the case on three levels:

- ◆ Our main focus is on setting up, conducting, and debriefing live conversations between a volunteer participant (the “leader as coach”) and the case presenter (the “leader as coachee”). After each live segment of the conversation (about 10 min.), we discuss what happened, what worked and didn’t work, and what opportunities were missed for more powerful leadership and coaching.
- ◆ During the debrief, the Course Leader points out moments in the live coaching conversation that illustrate opportunities for getting a better result. As appropriate, the Course Leader also teaches advanced tools and demonstrates how to put them into action.
- ◆ Through the real-time conversations and mentor coaching, we gain insight into the leadership dilemmas described by the case and develop ideas about how to coach someone through them.

## **Applications for Leadership Development and Coach Development**

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Powerful Conversations is effective to learn how to better provide stronger leadership in a wide variety of situations.

- ◆ Coaching to shift mindset – how to open new possibilities for others, even if they “resist” change.
- ◆ Thinking strategically – how to get out of the weeds and address the big picture.
- ◆ Taking initiative with tough problems – how to move out of complacency into ambitious action.
- ◆ Confronting others firmly and with support – how to confront firmly in a way that builds trust and credibility while generating new action.
- ◆ Motivating others – how to shift someone’s identity from victim to owner.
- ◆ Making conscious choices – how to work with competing commitments.
- ◆ Building trust – how to deal with distrust and how to generate trust by others.

- ◆ Increasing rigor – how to set higher standards for someone who is reluctant to take risks or stretch.
- ◆ Leveraging diversity – how to make the most of the differences in backgrounds, cultures, and views among team members.
- ◆ Managing promises – how to manage your plate, delegate to others, and decline requests (say no).
- ◆ Improving accountability – how to get someone to deliver on commitments.
- ◆ Increasing support – how to enroll someone who is constantly critical or judgmental.
- ◆ Clarifying vision – how to provide a compelling vision that enrolls others.
- ◆ Working with moods – how to shift someone from a negative mood (resentment, resignation) to a positive mood (ambition, acceptance).
- ◆ Improving leadership presence – how to speak and act with greater credibility and true self-confidence.
- ◆ Improving listening – how to listen at a deeper level and suspend interruptive thinking.
- ◆ Creating flexibility – how to help someone with rigid ideas to broaden their thinking.
- ◆ Empowering people – how to develop others as leaders.

## **Possible Audiences**

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We have used this method with many organizations in diverse contexts. Examples are:

- ◆ Intact leadership teams that strive to be more effective among themselves.
- ◆ Individual leaders (open enrollment) who seek advanced skills in developing others and leading through difficult situations.
- ◆ Staff professionals, such as HR Business Managers and internal consultants, who want to be more effective coaches of leaders.
- ◆ Other professionals who want advanced leadership and coaching skills.

## **Next Steps**

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- ◆ We customize the method to meet the special needs of each group. To explore the possibilities, please contact us at 650/851-3641 or at [steve@leadingchange.net](mailto:steve@leadingchange.net).