



# 6 conversations every leader should be having with their team...

by Karen Green

## YOU CHANGE YOUR TEAM BY CHANGING THE CONVERSATION.

Leaders who are required to deliver growth and innovation often have to help their teams shift from 'I' focused behaviours and move toward deeper connections and care. Care for more than just the immediate outcome, care for the people, care for customers and care in a new future. A resource that is often underutilised by leaders is the power to change the conversations that are fueling your team.

Conversations are a vital tool in your ability to build understanding and awareness. It gives us a place to gather people together and

build cohesion which is critical for an effective group to function. Transformation and growth in teams are as much about the human systems as they are about business design. The best conversations are the ones that give people room to explore and align their mindsets but also the time to grapple with the deeper strategic issues that are essential for discovery.

Transformation happens as we work to shift the context. By moving beyond the traditional conversations that are focused on explanation and analysis, we can move into the realm of curiosity and creation, which is the engine of innovation. Does powerful conversation drive your meetings?

### Six powerful conversations you can have with your team



**Invitation** - This is a conversation that honors the role of choice and acknowledges that genuine accountability and change will come from a place of willingness. If there is no risk that people might say no or safety in decline, then it is not an invitation but a mandate. Getting this right is the foundation to cohesion and commitment to transformational change. What choice did people make in attending or choice in how they participated? **Action - Write a personal note that highlights a specific thing you would value from a person's involvement at meeting.**



**Dissent** - A conversation of dissent is how you gather a diversity of thinking, build respect for alternative views and challenge unconscious bias that seeks to reinforce our mental models. A critical part of leadership is to create space for the expression of doubts and dissent. As a leader, you will benefit from getting interested in dissent, not to solve it or suppress it but to understand why it matters to the person expressing it. **Action - Connect with three people this week that have expressed doubt or dissent on work you lead with the goal to understand why it is important to them? What did you learn?**



**Ownership** - An ownership conversation is about personal accountability and the need to see the story we telling ourselves that might be reinforcing the current environment. What are the payoffs that you get in maintaining the status quo? How much risk will you take in the change process? Ownership is a conversation that lets us acknowledge our impact and doesn't let us shift it away to anyone else. **Action - Schedule a conversation that explores what work patterns might limit our ability to adapt and what might need to shift or alter.**



**Gifts** - Conversations about the gifts people bring to a team should be normal practice. It is a critical skill for any leader who wants to develop a person's skills. As leaders, we get to change the story on the value of unique strengths and we need to be first to acknowledge when we have seen them in action. To call out when they bring something to the group that is needed and why their gifts add meaning to the group. **Action - Get peers to verbally recognise specific gifts and contributions they experienced that week from each other.**



**Commitment** - Commitment conversations are promises that come without expectations. If the commitment is dependent on the actions of others, it is not a commitment; it is a deal or a contract. This conversation gets to the heart of what measures and behaviours, results and outcomes others will see as you deliver on your promise. **Action - Create time each month to let team members express what commitments others with be able to observe from them.**



**Possibilities** - A possibilities discussion is one about the future that is currently beyond reach and involves discussion and thinking that moves us to declare a future that could be co-created together. It explores the crossroads that might need to be navigated — building a vision that doesn't just pull current and old thinking and try to make it new but looks for options that go outside and beyond. **Action - Schedule a 2 hour session to explore the future of what if?**

The power of questions is in the ASKING not in the answers.

1. The six conversations are adapted from Community: The structure of belonging by Peter Block