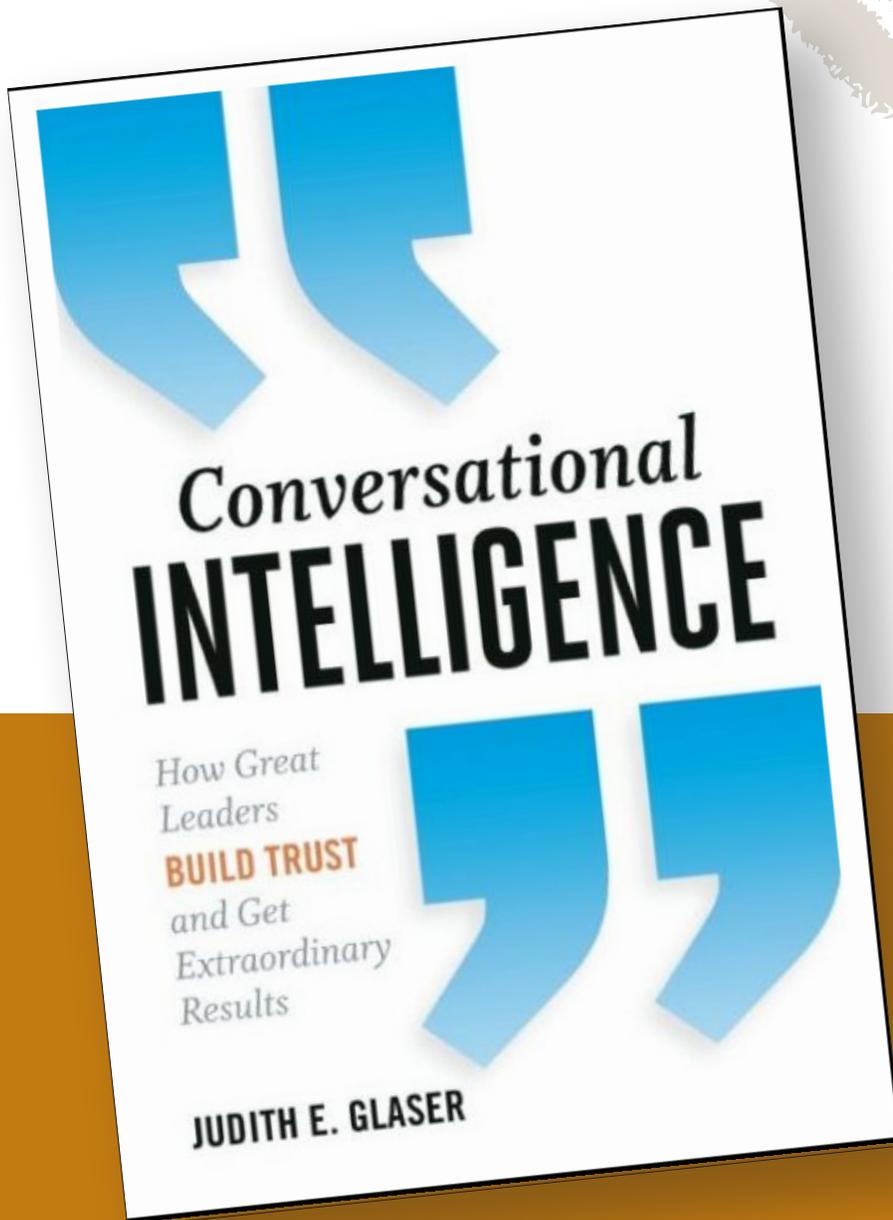


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Conversational Intelligence | *Judith Glaser*

Conversational Intelligence: How Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results
 Bibliomotion: Brookline, MA, 2013. 256 pages.

Conversations are not what we think they are. We've grown up thinking they are about talking, sharing, information, telling people what to do, or telling others what's on our minds. We are now learning, through neurological and cognitive research, that a "conversation" goes deeper and is more robust than simple information.

Conversations are dynamic, interactive, and inclusive. They evolve and impact the way we connect, engage, interact, and influence others, enabling us to shape reality, mind-sets, events, and outcomes in a collaborative way.

In *Conversational Intelligence*, author Judith E. Glaser translates the wealth of new insights coming out of neuroscience from across the globe, and brings the science down to earth so people can understand and apply it in their everyday lives. The book contains a framework for knowing what kind of conversations trigger the lower, more primitive brain; and what activates higher-level intelligences such as trust, integrity, empathy, and good judgment.

The premise of *Conversational Intelligence* is: *To get to the next level of greatness depends on the quality of our culture, which depends on the quality of our relationships, which depends on the quality of our conversations. Everything happens through conversations.*

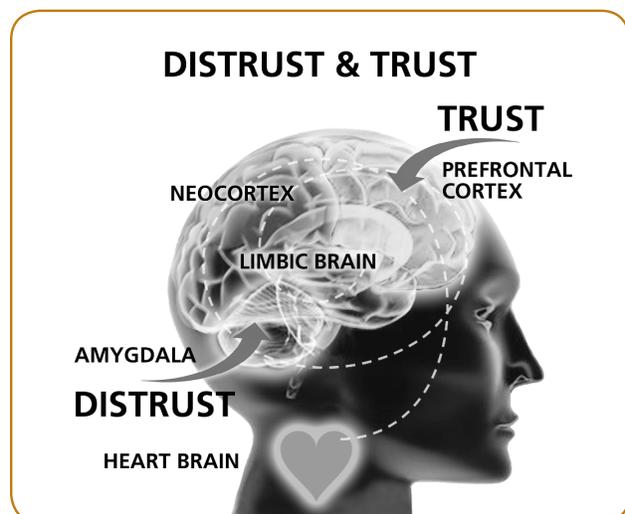
1 Part One: Defining Conversational Intelligence and Why We Need It

What Can We Learn from Our Worst Conversations

Conversations are multidimensional, not linear. What we *think*, what we *say*, what we *mean*, what others *hear*, and how we *feel* about it afterward are the key dimensions behind Conversational Intelligence. Though conversations are not simply "ask and tell" levels of discourse, we often treat them as though they are.

Conversations are the golden threads, albeit sometimes-fragile ones that keep us connected to others. Human beings have hardwired systems exquisitely designed to let us know where we stand with others; based on a quick read of a situation, our brains know whether we should operate in a protective mode or be open to sharing, discovery, and influence.

When we are out to win at all costs, we operate out of the part of the primitive brain called the amygdala. This part is hardwired with the well-developed instincts of fight, flight, freeze, or



Conversational Intelligence | *Judith Glaser (cont'd)*

appease. When we feel threatened, the amygdala activates the immediate impulses that ensure we survive. Our brains lock down and we are no longer open to influence.

On the other side of the brain spectrum is the prefrontal cortex. This is the newest brain, and it enables us to build societies, have good judgment, be strategic, handle difficult conversations, and build and sustain trust. Yet when the amygdala picks up a threat, our conversations are subject to the lockdown, and we get more “stuck” in our point of view.

Protecting ourselves is hardwired in our brains. Fear and conflict not only change the chemistry of the brain, they also change how we feel, how we behave, and how others perceive us. In a nanosecond we can move from being seen as a trusted friend and advisor to being seen as a frightening threat, a person deeply distrusted, because fear has tipped the scales that way.

Worse yet, when the amygdala goes into overdrive, it activates the limbic area of the brain, which stores all of our old memories. Once triggered, this part of the brain begins to remember other similar hurts and threats, and lumps them together into a “movie” that we unconsciously replay. Without our even realizing it, the moviemaking mind can take old memories and edit them into a new scary movie, giving our current situation a meaning for us that our bosses and colleagues and employees might see very differently. Trust is difficult to sustain when we build a rich inner world of drama that we do not share with those around us. Put another way, trust is difficult to sustain when we are afraid to share our inner world; that’s the only way to close the gap between what we’re thinking and what others are thinking about what’s real, not to mention what’s smart, right, and fair.

Conversations are the social rituals that hold us together, the fabric of culture and society. Sometimes when we as leaders are marching forward, furiously achieving our goals and objectives, we fail to see the impact of the minute, yet powerful interactions in conversations on others. Yet once we do, we can change the interaction dynamics and change our future forever.

When We Lose Trust, We Lose Our Voice

Being in sync with others is vital to healthy relationships. And it’s not just a metaphor. Research indicates that when we are comfortable with someone, our heartbeat becomes more coherent, sending signals to the brain to relax, open up, and share with that person. When gaps arise between what we expect and what we get, we become uncertain of our relationship and our fear networks begin to take control of our brains.

As a result, we find ourselves lacking the neurochemical and hormonal support for placing trust in others. Our good judgment gives way to defensive aggressive, or passive-aggressive behaviors that have a huge impact on our ability to be effective at our jobs. Our challenge, therefore, is to find ways to head off our fears, or, at the very least, understand where they may be coming from so we can work backward to find a solution.

Moving from Distrust to Trust

When we are in a fear state, our conversations are shaped by the neurochemistry of fear. We can only think about protecting ourselves. The best antidotes to the brain’s fear state are trust, empathy, and support.

Conversational Intelligence | *Judith Glaser (cont'd)*

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Part Two: Raising Your Conversational Intelligence

Conversations are rituals we embed into our culture and our relationships, and which give us a way to successfully structure our engagements with others. Part II focuses on what you can do to shape conversations for success.

Breakdowns happen when you and I think we are talking to each other but we are really talking **past** each other. We are so engrossed in what we have to say that we don't realize we are carrying on our own monologues, not dialogues. When we are conversationally blind, our conversations often go off track because we see the world from our own perspective and not from other person's.

Level Setting Conversations

How do we become more conversationally intelligent? One way to understand how to level set our conversations.

The following conversational tool, called the Conversational Intelligence™ Matrix, enables you to recognize the quality of your interaction dynamics, the level of trust you and others are operating with, and the outcomes produced by each level of conversation. As you learn to use the Conversational Intelligence™ Matrix, you can begin to eliminate Conversational Intelligence blind spots and engage in healthy conversations at Levels I, II, and III.

Conversational Intelligence™ Matrix

| | LEVEL I TRANSACTIONAL "Exchange Information"  | LEVEL II POSITIONAL "Exchange Power"  | LEVEL III TRANSFORMATIONAL "Exchange Energy"  |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| What Do We Exchange? | "Exchange Information" | "Exchange Power" | "Exchange Energy" |
| Interaction Dynamics | Ask-Tell | Advocate-Inquire | Share-Discover |
| Space | Closes Spaces | Limits Space | Creates Space |
| Focus | <i>CONFIRM what you know</i> Giving and taking information | <i>DEFEND what you know</i> Exploring others' positions seeking a win-win solution | <i>EXPLORING what you don't know</i> Exploring others' perspectives; joining with others to transform reality; innovating; co-creating |
| Blindspots & Overuse | "Tell-Sell-Yell Syndrome" Tendency toward telling more than asking | "Addicted to Being Right" Tendency to ask questions for which you have all the answers | "All Talk No Action" Tendency for too much talk and no action |
| INTENTION | INFORM | PERSUADE | CO-CREATE |
| Listen | To protect | To accept or reject | To connect |
| I-WE | I-centric | I & We-centric | WE-centric |
| Success | My success | Win at all cost | Mutual success |
| Trust | Low trust | Conditional trust | High trust |
| Influence | Not open to influence | Desire to influence | Open to influence |
| Skills to Develop | Ability to ask open ended questions and foster 'give and take' | Ability to share the conversational space with others; expand power | Ability to ask questions for which you have no answers; co-creating |

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Level I: Transactional

Conversations can be categorized as “Tell and Ask” interactions dynamics. People are exchanging information, updates, and facts that help us align our realities or **confirm we are on the same page**. There is not a lot of trust, and people are focusing more on what they need to get from each other to validate and confirm their view of reality.

Level II: Positional

These conversations are characterized by “Advocate and Inquire” interaction dynamics. In a Level II conversation I am advocating for what I want and I am inquiring about your beliefs so I can influence you to my point of view. However, if I feel that you are not going to be fair or are lobbying at my expense, I will retreat into protective behaviors.

Level III: Transformational

Transformation conversations are marked by “Share and Discover” interaction dynamics. When I share first, my brain receives a cue that I will be vulnerable with you and that I will open up my inner thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Others in the conversation receive the signal that you are willing to be influenced, that you are about them, and that they can trust you to experiment and innovate with them.

To raise your Conversational Intelligence, you need to become master and co-creator of conversational rituals that enable the greatest expression of ideas, feelings, hunches, thoughts, and aspirations possible.

| POWER & INFLUENCE | | |
|---|---|--|
| | INTERACTION DYNAMICS | IMPACT |
| LEVEL I  | “TELL & ASK” <i>Telling what is on your mind (I-centric)</i> | TRANSACTIONAL INFLUENCE <i>Influence through information sharing</i> |
| LEVEL II FINITE  | “ADVOCATE & INQUIRE” <i>Influence others to your position</i> | POSITIONAL INFLUENCE <i>Influence through personal or positional power</i> |
| LEVEL III INFINITE  | “SHARE & DISCOVER” <i>Releasing energy to co-create influence</i> | TRANSFORMATIONAL INFLUENCE <i>Influence through energy shifting</i> |

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Priming for Level III Conversations

The best communicators learn to align their intentions with their impact. While intention is what someone wants to make happen or plans to accomplish, the impact involves the quality of the experience from the perspective of the receiver – and that impact may not correspond with what the communicator intended.

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Part Three: Pulling It All Together

To help you elevate your culture to Level III interaction dynamics, start engaging in the seven vital conversations outlined below. Each one facilitates your ability to access Conversational Intelligence and to enhance your powerful ability to co-create with others.

- **C**o-creating Conversations – catalyze functions in the prefrontal cortex that stimulate mirror neurons, which enable you to see the world through others' eyes
- **H**umanizing Conversations – catalyze functions in the prefrontal cortex that stimulate higher levels of empathy and candor
- **N**avigating Conversations – catalyze functions in the prefrontal cortex that stimulate higher levels of collaboration
- **G**enerating Conversations – catalyze functions in the prefrontal cortex that stimulate learning from mistakes
- **E**xpressing Conversations – catalyze functions in the prefrontal cortex that stimulate higher levels of judgment and voice
- **S**ynchronizing Conversations – catalyze functions in the prefrontal cortex that enable you to close the gaps between reality and aspirations

Ask yourself: What CHANGES are you willing to make to elevate your culture to Level III?

The keys to successful change lie in understanding change from a Conversational Intelligence perspective. Change is more a process that “we” do together than “I” do alone. When leaders honor and respect how our WE-centric brains respond to change, they will become champions of a new level of leadership fueled by applying all three levels of Conversational Intelligence at the right time and in the right way.

Conversational Intelligence gives us tools for letting go of the past and transforming the future.

Everyone can become a master of Conversational Intelligence. It teaches us to see differently – to listen differently – and to process what we perceive differently. When we do that, we act in the moment in ways that create energy, activate energy, and help guide energy toward more productive and more powerful ends.

Adapted with permission from *Conversational Intelligence: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results* by Judith E. Glaser (Bibliomotion, October 2013).



Conversational Intelligence | *Judith Glaser (cont'd)*

Recommended Resources

1. **Read** what Auxano Founder and Team Leader Will Mancini has to say about the “invisible walls” that often keep your ministry team from working together – walls that can often be broken down with intentional conversations.
2. **Read** about the power of conversations from author Judith E. Glaser.
3. Have you found yourself in a situation of escalating conversations, maybe even an argument during a staff meeting? **Read** why author Judith E. Glaser thinks your brain has been “hijacked.”
4. Understand the Three Dimensions of conversation **in this article** by *Conversational Intelligence* author Judith E. Glaser.

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Go Ahead Actions for Vision Clarity

by Mike Gammill

Vision Clarity Connection

Judith Glaser's *Conversational Intelligence* can help take your leadership to the next level by showing you how to increase the quality of your conversations. Moving from conversations from the amygdala (fight, flight, freeze, or appease) to the prefrontal cortex (share, discover, partner) can make the difference between the relational distrust that can sabotage productivity and the corporate trust that can generate new horizons of productivity.

Go Ahead

1. Use **Conversational Redirecting** to help your team move from a stagnant ministry practice to a place where it can see new opportunities.

- First, identify a ministry area that could benefit from a fresh perspective.
- Second, create a temporary micro-team tasked with researching the ministry practices of three other churches, selecting one to learn from in a first-hand ministry observation and creating a report that includes the best of what was learned and new opportunities for that ministry area.
- Third, invest 30 minutes in a key staff meeting to discuss how to best implement the discovery from the team.

2. Use **Double Clicking** to help team members understand one another, empathize with each other, and minimize unnecessary conflict.

- Divide your selected team into groups of 3-5 individuals for a group sharing exercise.
- First, give each individual a piece of paper. Ask each person to draw a large circle on his paper with the word "success" written into its center. Next, have them draw twelve spokes around the circle so that it looks like a clock. Ask each participant to write one word on each spoke that represents what "success" means to him.
- Next, ask people to share with other in their small group the twelve ideas that represent success to them.
- Finally, move back to a larger group discussion and allow individuals to share what they learned about each other's motivations, dreams, and values.

3. Develop your team's conversational intelligence checking the **Five Conversational Blind Spots** in team interactions and decisions.

- First, review and discuss five conversational blind spots for understanding.
- Second, develop into team self-awareness and identify a time when a team member intuitively checked one of these blind spots during a recent interaction. Likewise, identify a blind spot that the team is prone to miss.
- Finally, discuss, as a team, ways to effectively address the Five Conversational Blind Spots in team interactions and decisions.



More About Mike Gammill

As Lead Navigator for Auxano, Mike Gammill is passionate about using Vision Clarity to help the local church find its unique place in the Kingdom of God. Mike has fifteen years of experience serving the local church in multiple capacities and has a demonstrated ability to walk alongside pastors and leaders to uncover innovative ways to strategically implement vision through Christ-like leadership.

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Auxano is the only vision clarity consulting group that will guide your team through a God-ward and collaborative process called the Vision Pathway. To learn more, visit auxano.com or check us out on [Twitter](#) and our [Auxano](#) and [VisionRoom](#) Facebook pages.

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