

# Smart Conversations

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## Discovering a New Intelligence

Conversations are not what we think they are. It seems we've grown up with a narrow view of conversations, 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 much more robust than simple information sharing.

So says Judith Glaser, who is credited as being something like the founder of "Conversational Intelligence".

So when you think about a recent conversation with a colleague or a boss or a partner, it might be worth thinking about how well you did. We're all familiar with IQ, and increasingly EQ (emotional quotient) ([click here to read more about EQ](#)), and maybe even SQ (spiritual quotient). But how can we figure out our level of conversational intelligence and what can we do to improve it?

Judith Glaser explains that conversations are dynamic, interactive and inclusive. They evolve and impact the way we connect, engage, interact and influence others, enabling us to shape reality, mindsets, events and outcomes in a collaborative way. Conversations have the power to move us from "power over" others to "power with" others, giving us the exquisite ability to get on the same page with our fellow humans and experience the same reality by bridging the reality gaps between "how you see things and how I see things."

She goes on to assert that Conversational Intelligence is what separates those who are successful from those who are not — in business, in relationships and even in marriages. By understanding how conversations trigger different parts of our brain and how they either catalyze or "freeze" our brains in protective patterns, you can develop the conversational skills that propel individuals, teams and organizations toward success. Conversational Intelligence is learnable, and it is necessary to build healthier, more resilient organizations in the face of change.

This field of study on conversational intelligence breaks interactions down into three levels of conversations: Level I — transactional (how to exchange data and information); Level II — positional (how to work with power and influence); and Level III — transformational (how to co-create the future for mutual success).

Essentially, most of our human interaction boils down to the currency of trust - is it growing, is it diminishing etc. And our conversational agility goes a long way towards building or reducing the level of trust in the relationship. When there is trust, as Stephen Covey once said, it makes our

communication so much easier and our meaning is understood, even if our words don't come out right. An of course the converse is also painfully true.

Body Language expert and Social Psychologist, Amy Cuddy says that when confronted with a new person, there are 2 primary questions:

Can I trust this person?

Can I respect this person?

Psychologists refer to these dimensions as warmth and competence, respectively, and ideally you want to be perceived as having both. Interestingly, Cuddy says that most people, especially in a professional context, believe that competence is the more important factor. After all, they want to prove that they are smart and talented enough to handle your business.

But in fact, warmth, or trustworthiness, is by far the most important factor in how people evaluate you. You can find her Ted Talk [here](#)

So, next time you reflect on a conversation you've been having, you might stop to ask yourself; "Just how smart was that conversation and what would have made it smarter?"