

BELIEFS AND CONVERSATIONS IN LEADERSHIP



A TRUE LEADER starts conversations. It's a soft skill that makes an organization, regardless of its size and scope. A good organization understands that a great leader makes a huge difference in operational and project-based activities. This skill can be learned through practice.

By “conversation,” it's not about conversing with others. By “conversation,” it refers to making people think, being aware of certain issues, discussing and executing ideas. Above all, a great leader makes people believe.

A business relies on belief more than we previously thought. Customers must believe that a product or services would deliver as promised. Employees must believe the company is good enough to exist tomorrow, so one can keep working for them. Managers must believe subordinates have enough skills and motivation to do their jobs. Shareholders must believe the business would earn profits. “Belief” is the foundation shaping our thoughts and dictating our actions. Thus, a leader who can influence beliefs is the best leader. However, not every leader is aware of this. Thankfully, a belief can be formed and influenced with conversations.

First, things we do are based on decisions. And decisions are made based on what we believe and desire. The stronger the belief and desire, the more likely the decisions will be made faster and with stronger conviction. In the business world, it can translate into customer and staff loyalty.

Second, human nature is primarily driven by emotions, contrary to popular belief that an objective reasoning is key to a successful decision-making. Studies found that even the most logical decision is influenced by emotions.

Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio made an important discovery while studying individuals with damaged brains. The damaged part of the brain was where emotions were processed, thus could not feel any emotion.



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Interestingly, not being able to feel anything, they couldn't even make a simple decision, like deciding when or what to eat. Damasio found that emotions are crucial in making decisions, including simple ones that most take for granted. For complicated decisions, requiring more complex considerations and reasoning skills, emotions are also strongly involved, he found. Thus, a good leader should inspire and motivate by evoking emotions associated with positivity, to increase the possibility of good decision-making.

Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates and Jack Ma became as successful as they are today because they are great conversationalists who are aware of the power of storytelling. Top managers can also be great writers, like Tony Hsieh of Zappos, Sophia Amoruso of #GirlBoss and Sheryl Sandberg of Facebook.

When this leadership skill is used in negotiations, it's an extremely valuable asset. Start with what help the other party needs, use their perspective. See the pros and cons from their side. Influence them using their visions and objectives, which are meaningfully aligned with yours. A conversation can be simple, but the effects can be long-lasting. A leader can deliver insightful stories and ideas that trigger emotions. Influence positive emotions whenever possible. Anything is possible with the right words. 

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