

In her best selling book *Fierce Conversations*, Susan Scott discusses how 'Fierce Conversations' which can: create a new degree of authenticity - a new way of communicating who you are, what you believe and what you wish to accomplish, as a person and as a leader. 'Fierce Conversations' is about achieving results - one conversation at a time. The conversations are fierce in that they are intense, profound, courageous, powerful, robust, eager and strong rather than aggressive or threatening.

The four objectives of Fierce Conversations are to:

1. Interrogate reality
2. Provoke learning
3. Tackle tough challenges
4. Enrich relationships

'Fierce Conversations' provide a structured approach to some of the everyday conversations we need to have. There are several types of structured conversations:

Mineral Rights - These conversations help individuals and teams interrogate reality in such a way that they are mobilized to take potent action on tough challenges.

Confrontation Conversations - Engage individuals and teams in conversations to successfully resolve attitudinal, performance or behavioural issues, while also enriching relationships.

Team Collegiate Conversations - Engage a team in frictionless debates that interrogate multiple, often competing, realities, resulting in excellent decisions for the organisation, which are more likely to be enthusiastically implemented.

Coaching Conversations - Engage individuals in conversations which increase clarity, improve understanding and provide impetus for change - resulting in professional development, the advancement of projects and accelerated results.

The Conversation *is* the relationship.

Burn out doesn't occur because we are solving problems: it occurs because we've been trying to solve the same problem over and over.

Leadership Paradigm Shifts

Fierce Conversations require a leader to adopt an Open Interpersonal Style.

When adopting an open style a leader accepts that:	When adopting a Closed Interpersonal Style a leader thinks that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosing what I really think and feel frees up energy and expands possibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosing my real thoughts and feelings is risky.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though I have trouble handling the truth sometimes, I'll keep telling it and inviting it from others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people can't handle the truth, so it's better not to say anything.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring multiple points of view will lead to better decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's important that I convince others that my point of view is correct.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My personal identity will be expanded as my colleagues and I exchange diverse points of view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will gain approval and promotions by exchanging my personal identity for my organisation's identity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perhaps we can change reality will thoughtful conversations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality can't be changed. There's no point in fighting it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My job is to involve people in the problems and strategies affecting them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an expert, my job is to dispense advice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My point of view is as valid as anyone else's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'll keep my mouth shut; this is a job for the experts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know what I know; and what I know, I need to act on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need to ignore what I'm feeling in my gut; just put my head down and do my job.

Collegiate Conversations

In your team meetings...

- Does each team member feel free to express how s/he sees the situation and the feelings they are experiencing?
- Does each team member feel free to interrogate another team member's view of reality?
- Does each team member engage other team members openly, without being defensive when his/her view of reality is being interrogated?
- Does each team member strive to describe reality without laying blame?
- Do your team conversations always get ground truths?

Mineral Rights – Conversation

These conversations help individuals and teams interrogate reality in such a way that they are mobilized to take potent action on tough challenges

There is an old adage. If you are looking for water its better to drill one well a 100 foot deep than a 100 wells one foot deep.

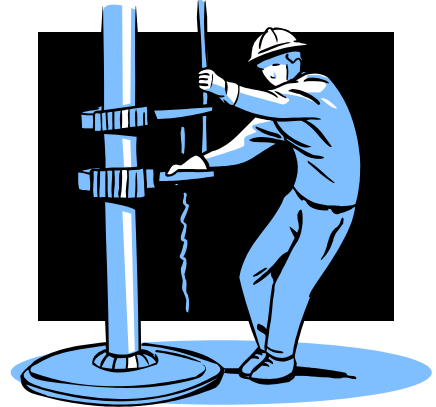
Mineral Rights – Conversation is a method for drilling down deeply into an issue for improved clarity.

Step 1: Identify your most pressing issue.

- *The issue that I most need to resolve is:*

Step 2: Clarify the issue.

- *What is going on?*
- *How long has this been going on?*
- *How bad are things?*



Step 3: determine the current impact.

- *How is this issue currently impacting me?*
- *What results are currently being produced for me by this situation?*
- *How is this issue currently impacting others?*
- *What results are currently being produced for them by this situation?*
- *When I consider the impact on myself and others, what are my emotions?*

Step 4: Determine the future implications.

- *If nothing changes, what's likely to happen?*
- *What's at stake for me relative to this issue?*
- *What's at stake for others?*
- *When I consider these possible outcomes, what are my emotions?*

Step 5: Examine your personal contribution to this issue.

- *What is my contribution to this issue? (How have I contributed to the problem?)*

Step 6: describe the ideal outcome.

- *When this issue is resolved, what difference will that make?*
- *What results will I enjoy?*
- *When this issue is resolved, what results will others enjoy?*
- *When I imagine this resolution, what are my emotions?*

Step 7: Commit to action.

- *What is the most potent step I could take to move this issue toward resolution?*
- *What's going to attempt to get in my way, and how will I get past it?*
- *When will I take this step?*

Contract with Yourself...

During this fierce conversation with myself, I've identified a potent step to take to begin to resolve this issue. I have chosen the date by which I will take this step. There will be other steps, perhaps many of them. This is the first step. I commit to taking it.

Action

today's date

Now take a break. Walk around. Breathe. Breathing is good.

Step 1: Identify your most pressing issue.

- *The issue that I most need to resolve is:*

- *How is this issue currently impacting others?*

Step 2: Clarify the issue.

- *What is going on?*

- *What results are currently being produced for them by this situation?*

- *How long has this been going on?*

- *When I consider the impact on myself and others, what are my emotions?*

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ACTION:.....

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.....today's date **Now take a break. Walk around. Breathe. Breathing is good.**

The Confrontational Model: allows us to confront tough issues with courage compassion and skill. Learning is provided and relationships are enriched.

1. **Name the issue.**
2. **Select a specific example that illustrates the behaviour or situation I want to change.**
3. **Describe my emotions around this issue.**
4. **Clarify why this is important**
– what is at stake to gain or lose for me, for others, for the team, or for the organisation?
5. **Identify my contribution(s) to this problem.**
6. **How I will state my wish to resolve this issue.**
7. **What I will say to invite my partner to respond.**

Interaction

8. **Inquire into your partner's views.**
Use paraphrasing and perception check.
Dig for understanding: don't be satisfied with the surface.
Make sure your partner knows that you fully understand and acknowledge his or her position and interests.

Resolution

9. **What have we learned?**
Where are we now?
Has anything been left unsaid that needs saying?
What is needed for resolution?
How can we move forward from here, given our new understanding?
10. **Make a new agreement and determine how you will hold each other responsible for keeping it.**

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Writing your 60-Second Opening Statement:

1. Name the issue.

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3. Describe my emotions around this issue.

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4. Clarify why this is important – what is at stake to gain or lose for me, for others, for the team, or for the organisation.

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5. Identify my contribution(s) to this problem.

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6. How I will state my wish to resolve this issue.

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Team/Collegiate Conversation

Using the collective wisdom of the group

We all have aspects of our work that are not moving as quickly as we expect or want. This process uses the collective wisdom and information in the group to view this issue from different perspectives and work differently within the dilemma.

In groups of 5 or 6

1. Prepare your issue on the Issue Preparation Form
Ensure this is a real issue and is suitable for discussion in the bigger forum
2. Spend 2 minutes each introducing your issue
3. As a group choose one participants issue to discuss
4. Spend 5 minutes introducing the issue using the information in the issue preparation sheet.
5. Spend 15 minutes asking clarifying questions
6. Spend 15 minutes discussing the issues from different perspectives and the type of leadership that would be important in this dilemma.
7. Spend 5 minutes individually reflecting and writing your 'advice'.
8. Presenting your advice
9. Spend 5 minutes assimilating the perspectives and advice – ask the person with the issues to identify what they think they might do now to move this issue forward.

Reference: Scott, S. 2002, Fierce Conversations, Viking Penguin, Harmondsworth, England

Team Collegiate Conversation Preparation Form

<p>Be concise. In 1 or 2 sentences, get to the heart of the issue. Is it a concern, challenge, opportunity, or recurring problem that is becoming more troublesome?</p>	<p>This is the issue:</p>
<p>What's at stake? For example: how does this effect students, staff, parents, learning, programs services, staff, resources, the future, or other relevant factors? What is the future impact if the issue is not resolved?</p>	<p>It is significant because:</p>
<p>What specific results do I want?</p>	<p>My ideal outcome is:</p>
<p>Summarize with bullet points: What, why, where, when, how, who, etc.; which forces are at work; what is the current status?</p>	<p>Relevant background information:</p>
<p>What have I done so far? What options am I considering?</p>	<p>What I have done up to this point:</p>
<p>What do I want from the group? For example: alternative solutions, confidence regarding the right decision, identification of consequences, where to find more information, critique of current plan, etc.</p>	<p>The help I want from the group is:</p>

Coaching Conversations - Questions for One to Ones

The following questions offer useful fuel for discussions with colleagues and direct reports.

1. What has become clear since we last met?
2. What is the area that, if you made an improvement, would give you and others the greatest return on time, energy and dollars invested?
3. What is currently impossible to do that, if it were possible, would change everything?
4. What are you trying to make happen in the next three months?
5. What's the most important decision you're facing? What's keeping you from making it?
6. What topic are you hoping I won't bring up?
7. What area under your responsibility are you most satisfied with? Least satisfied with?
8. What part of your responsibilities are you avoiding right now?
9. Who are your strongest employees? What are you doing to ensure that they're happy and motivated?
10. Who are your weakest employees? What is your plan for them?
11. What conversations are you avoiding right now?
12. What do you wish you had more time to do?
13. What things are you doing that you would like to stop doing or delegate to someone else?
14. If you were hired to consult with our company, what would you advise?
15. If you were competing against our company, what would you do?
16. What threatens your peace? What threatens the business? Your health? Your personal fulfilment?