

## Conversational Capacity – Craig Weber

- Only 15% of mergers/acquisitions succeed. 9 of 10 strategic initiatives fail (p. 14).
- Aim of conversational capacity is the “sweet spot” ...balanced between candor and curiosity (p. 16).
- **Two symptoms that reveal conversational capacity is lacking:**
  - Undiscussable issues
  - Unproductively discussable issues (p. 18)
- **Its never enough to have just:**
  - Proper structure
  - Good relationships
  - Technical expertise
  - High commitment
  - Good strategy
- “Skilled incompetence”: when mindless reactions work against good intention (p. 35)
- The good intentions of one part of the brain are often hijacked by another part of the brain [upper vs. lower] (p. 37).
- Flight [abandon candor] <<<< Sweet Spot >>>> Fight [lose curiosity]
- When we need our behaviors most aligned with our intentions is often the very times it is the most difficult (p. 38).
- Flamethrowers “win at all cost” (p. 47).
- Being technically smart but conversational dumb can kill capacity (p. 49).
- When we are triggered by our need to win, we become overly attached to our view, unable to subject it to the scrutiny because all our mental effort goes to selling the perspective (p. 51).
- **“Win” (at all cost) Behaviors:**
  - State positions as fact
  - Dismiss alternatives
  - Solicit support
  - Little genuine listening
  - Don’t inquire
  - Interrupt
  - Aggressive body language
  - Dismissive body language
  - Reject feedback
  - Demoralize
  - Use hyperbole
  - Pontificate
  - Pull rank
  - Use belittling questions
  - Unilaterally control (p. 52)
- Under what circumstances in life do I find myself minimizing at the expense of my effectiveness?

- Under what circumstances do I let go of curiosity and argue to win at the expense of my good intention? (p. 55)
- **Triggering factors:**
  - How much I care about the issue;
  - Position of hierarchy;
  - Status in group;
  - Expertise;
  - Behaviors of others;
  - Personality;
  - Culture;
  - Risk of speaking up;
  - Risk of not speaking up (p. 56).
- Awareness does not equal skill (p. 59).
- **A new focal point is created by:**
  - Making informed and effective choices;
  - Expanding our awareness;
  - Generating internal commitment;
  - Establishing joint control (p. 63).
- Internal commitment directly correlates to energy enacted into the decision (p. 68).
- **In the sweet spot, aim to:**
  - Express positions [provide structure];
  - Explore thinking [provide structure];
  - Test perspectives [bring curiosity];
  - Inquire about perceptions [bring curiosity]. (p. 79)
- “Minimizing” (low candor) <<<<< Sweet Spot >>>>> “Winning” (low curiosity)  
OR
- Position & Thinking (candor) <<<< Sweet Spot >>>> Testing & Inquiry  
[curiosity]
- **Clear position statements are important to avoid misinterpretations caused by:**
  - Guessing incorrectly;
  - Assuming negatively (p. 81).
- **Test questions to open inquiry:**
  - Is there a better way to make sense of this?
  - Do you see it differently?
  - How does what I am suggesting feel to you?
  - What’s your take on this issue?
  - What does this look like from your angle?
  - What’s your reaction to what I’ve just put forward?
  - What does the problem look like from your perspective?
  - Are you seeing something I’m missing? (p. 88)
  - What are you seeing that leads you to that view?
  - Can you provide a couple of examples that illustrate your position?
  - How are you making sensing of X? (p. 97)

- To become more effective, don't water down an existing strength; build new skills to balance it out (p. 105).
- Trust isn't the prerequisite for effective conversations; it's the product of effective conversations (p. 112).
- Starve old habits; feed new ones.
- Thinking + doing = being (p. 114).
- Ego is the enemy of effectiveness (p. 118).
- **Obstacles to genuine learning:**
  - Blindness
  - Attachment
  - Resistance
  - Uncertainty
- Hold ideas, views, perspectives as hypothesis to be tested (p. 159).
- **To make lasting change:**
  - Recognize tendency for triggers;
  - Practice replacement behaviors;
  - Mindfully manage reactions (p. 162).
- Practice requires preparation (p. 172).
- **Types of problems:**
  - Routine: there is a routine or prescribed solution in place;
  - Adaptive: no easy solution or proven route exists (p. 182).
- Authority does not equal leadership (p. 191).
- **Single versus Double Loop Learning** (p. 145):
  - Problem: Problems, Issues, Challenges, Opportunities, "Stuff"
  - Assumptions: Maps or "reality," Inferences, Mental Models, Assumptions, Beliefs
  - Action: Actions, Strategies, Behaviors, Plans
  - Result: Outcomes, Results, Impact, Consequences, Effects
  - **Single Loop Learning:** Problem > Assumptions > Action > Result [Loop back to Action > Result].
  - **Double Loop Learning:** Problem > Assumptions > Action > Result [Loop back through Assumptions > Action > Result].