



Corley Hanson Associates Newsletter

Making Your Business a Team Sport!
March 2007

Greetings!

March has been a busy month hence our newsletter just slipped in before March slipped away! Two very important articles are in this newsletter on Designing and Fierce Conversations. Two key area for Managers and Leaders to be aware of and get good at!

We've spend a lot of time working with virtual teams and companies with multiple offices. We want to collect some of your best practices for keeping communication open and how you keep the "Water Cooler Conversations" happening in multiple offices.

Please---send us your best ideas and we'll publish them in April!

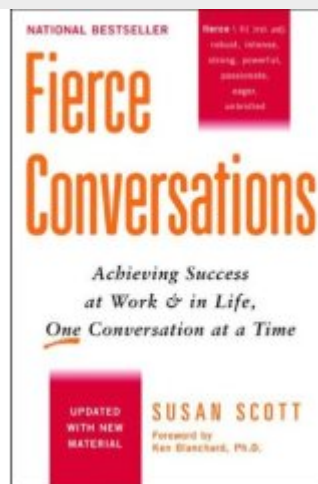
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It's All in the Design

Daniel Pink, in his book, *A Whole New Mind*, cites design as one of seven primary skills that are required in this new age of automation and outsourcing to Asia. Joseph Michelli in his book *The Starbucks Experience*, cites design as being the key to what we experience at Starbucks. Their attention to detail occurs by design not by default. Great design is such a competitive advantage as Apple has demonstrated creating the iPod experience.

Book Review: Fierce Conversations



by Susan Scott

*Achieving Success at Work and in Life
One Conversation at a Time*

Ken Blanchard says in the Forward:

"Our lives succeed or fail gradually, then suddenly, one conversation at a time. While no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a marriage, or a life, any single can. The conversation is the relationship."

[To order this book](#)

Quick Links...

Design is the big difference maker.

As managers and even as individuals in our own lives, we are responsible for designing experiences every day. The good, the bad and the ugly - you choose. We can design a one-on-one performance review or a weekly staff or team meeting. We can design presentations and pitches. We design conference calls and we can even design chats at the water cooler. We can design pretty much any event. I say "can design" but it would be more accurate to say we "do design". As one of my favorite painters, Douglas Martin, said "Questions about whether design is necessary or affordable are quite beside the point: design is inevitable. The alternative to good design is bad design, not no design at all."

When was the last training you attended that was designed well? I didn't say organized well. Generally, the PowerPoint is well laid out with the appropriate number of bullet points to make the information easy to remember. That's all well and good. And it isn't enough any more. Those experiences are generally bad ones reminiscent of high school where the only compelling reason to pay attention is to pass the test.

We're so used to "no design" ie bad design, that we've come to accept it as normal. And this is great news for those of us who are experience designers. The bar is set low and there is lots of room to stand out and impress and pickup gains in productivity and positivity in the workplace. Imagine having your team walk out of the next project kickoff meeting feeling confident, inspired, and excited and to dive in. That's what I'm talking about.

So, how do we design the experiences that shape our days? Where do we start? A good place to start is by becoming an observer of your own experiences. What is the emotional tone of going to a spa? A doctor's office? Start noticing what works and what doesn't. Once you start to look, you'll realize designed experiences are everywhere.

And, like graphical design, experience design is a craft that must be learned with practice. So,

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developing a healthy attitude about failure is probably a pretty good place to start. Once your feeling ready to experiment, find a time to sit down with a pen and a blank sheet of paper. If you don't feel comfortable starting with a meeting or other shared experience, start with an experience of your own. Perhaps a Saturday afternoon activity. There are plenty of experiences to design, so just start somewhere.

Design is about function, form, and emotion so we'll start with these broad strokes. On the front, write these three questions spaced out equally down the page.

1) What is the function of this experience?

Form follows function so we start with form. Have you ever been to a website with sensational imagery but that leaves you feeling like you need to be an insider to "get it"? A cornerstone of good design is a clear function. You want people to leave your experiences understanding why they were there.

What is the purpose of this experience? If you forget everything else, what is this experience about? Write a few sentences and then condense it down to the essence, maybe a phrase or a sentence or at most a line or two.

Now write down two or three outcomes you want from the experience. What do you want to have happen after the experience is over? What will be changed? What will happen and how will you know?

2) What is the emotional tone I want to create?

The emotional tone of the experience is like the color palette of graphic design. It is the thing that will stand out the most and will be most memorable about the experience.

What is the flavor you want to create? You may want to move through a series of emotions: from a feeling of steady progress to one of fevered excitement for example, but make sure the emotional tones are complimentary to each other. That they feel good next to each other.

Start building your vocabulary of emotional words. Write down words when you hear them. Start developing a sense for nuance and intricacy. It will bring depth into your experiences.

3) What is the form of the experience?

This will depend largely on the answers to #1 and #2. It includes where the experience will be held, time and physical location. How long it will last. Will you use a microphone or not. Notes or a PowerPoint or will you speak extemporaneously? Who will be there? Where and how will they sit?

Some of this will be in your control, some may not. How can you arrange the details to support the function and emotional tone you are trying to create?

Map out a rough time line for the experience. Include the emotional tone you want for each section. Does everything support the function? If not, get rid of it.

Walk through the experience in your mind. Get creative and brainstorm unconventional ways you can add flare to your design.

Once the experience has been completed, get feedback. Get feedback from yourself and others who shared the experience. Were you successful at achieving your outcomes from the Function section? How did you experience the emotional tone? How did others experience it? What worked about the form? What would you do differently next time? We only get better at design by practice and reflection, so find a way to reflect that works for you. Possibly with a coach or mentor or just by sitting and jotting down your thoughts.

And, then once you've received the feedback from yourself and others. Let it go. Take it easy on yourself. Becoming an expert at design takes time and practice. But the pay off is more than worth it.

By Jeremy Stover - Corley Hanson Team
Member from San Francisco, CA

Principles of Fierce Conversations

"Fierce Conversations", by Susan Scott is a very valuable book for managers and leaders, the people who really need to learn to have "fierce conversations" with their teams.

The Seven Principles of Fierce Conversations

Principle 1: Master the courage to interrogate reality. No plan survives its collision with reality, and reality has a habit of shifting, at work and at home. Markets and economies change, requiring shifts in strategy. People change and forget to tell each other that it changed. This relates to colleagues, customers, spouses and friends. We are all changing all the time.

Principle 2: Come out from behind yourself into the conversation and make it real. While many fear "real", it is the unreal conversation that should scare us to death. Unreal conversations are expensive, for the individual and the organization. No one has to change, but everyone has to have the conversation. When the conversation is real, the change occurs before the conversation is over. You accomplish your goals in large part by making every conversation you have as real as possible.

Principle 3: Be here, prepared to be nowhere else. Our work, our relationships, and our lives succeed or fail one conversation at a time. While no single conversation is guaranteed to transform a company, a relationship, or life, any single conversation can. Speak and listen as if this is the most important conversation you will ever have with this person. It could be. Participate as if it matters. It does.

Principle 4: Tackle your toughest challenge today. Burnout doesn't occur because we're solving problems; it occurs because we've been trying to solve the same problem over and over. The problem named is the problem solved. Identify and then confront the real obstacles in your path. Stay current with the people important to your success and

happiness. Travel light, agenda-free.

Principle 5: Obey your instincts. Don't just trust your instincts-obey them. Your radar screen works perfectly. It's the operator who is in question. An intelligence agent is sending you messages every day, all day. What we label as illusion is the scent of something real coming close.

Principle 6: Take responsibility for your emotional wake. For a leader, there is no trivial comment. Something you don't remember saying may have had a devastating impact on someone who looked to you for guidance and approval. The conversation is not about the relationship; the conversation is the relationship. Learning to deliver the message without the load allows you to speak with clarity, conviction and compassion.

Principle 7: Let silence do the heavy lifting. When there is simply a whole lot of talking going on, conversations can be so empty of meaning they crackle. Memorable conversations include breathing space. Slow down the conversation, so that insight can occur in the space between words and you can discover what the conversation really wants and needs to be about.

Movie Review: The Secret

There's been a lot of buzz around "The Secret" since Oprah brought it to the American forefront! The Secret is about the Law of Attraction and how to use the principles to make a difference in your life. We have the power to create what we focus on. This movie is a series of interviews with highly successful people and how they have used the law of attraction in their life. We strongly recommend it!

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