



Enhancing Engagement and Performance through Respectful Work Assignment Conversations

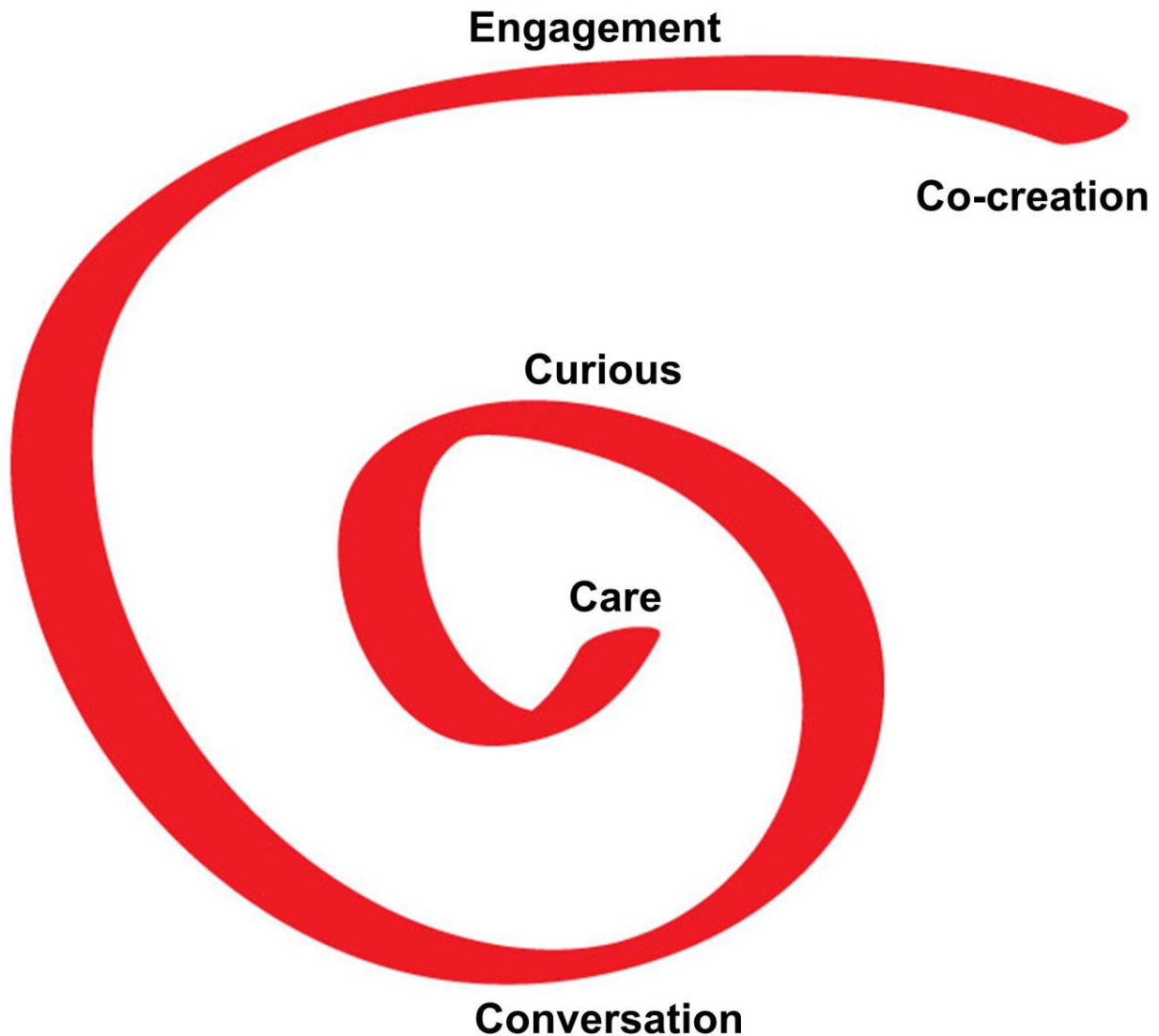
A Dialogic Leader[®] Performance Guide



The Dialogic Leader[®]: Resources for creating engagement and performance founded on respectful conversations that generate trusting relationships
– a **Dialogic Leader[®]** publication.

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The Dialogic Leader[®] Model



The Dialogic Leader[®] model is simple but powerful. It is based on engaging in respectful conversations. A Dialogic Leader[®] first and foremost cares about the people and the world around her. If she cares, she then is curious about what is going on around her. If she is curious, she then is willing to participate in a conversation and when she participates in a conversation, she is engaged with the people and the world around her. Only through engagement will she be given the permission to be in trusting relationships that lead to the co-creation of the solutions needed to transform our world. This is the work of The Dialogic Leader[®].

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**The Dialogic Leader[®] Publications
Seattle, Washington**

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Introduction

The concept of delegation comes with a lot of baggage. It is rife with fear, ego, and power. The result is often supervisors who do not let go of work and employees who when asked to do work deliver results that do not meet the expectations of the supervisor. Time, energy, morale, engagement, trust, and relationships are compromised leading to lower productivity and profitability (think dollars, mission, community, culture, or another other measure of value delivered) for an organization.

I cannot even recount how many courses I have attended and articles that I have read telling me how to delegate, why I should delegate, what the roadblocks to delegation are, and what the positive outcomes are if I do delegate. I am not going to regale you with any of this. Why? Because work assignment is a core business function and is simply a conversation that takes place to insure that the work assigned is delivered as expected; without the emotional and relationship damage that often accompanies delegation. It is for this reason that this conversation focuses on work assignment as a concept. Being able to assign work effectively is a core management skill. Organizations simply would not survive if work was not assigned.

Organization cultures are co-created one conversation at a time. The content, context, tone, frequency, and intent of those conversations either create healthy cultures or those that are not. We as leaders have a vested interest in letting go of ego driven conversations and start to engage with our team members so that we can co-create a future that is healthy for organization leaders, stake holders, team members, and the world within which we are embedded. This is the core of The Curious Leader[®] model. Assigning work is one such conversation.

If work assignment conversations are healthy and collaborative, trust will develop, work will be delivered that meets or exceeds the expectations of the supervisor, and team members will feel empowered. Outcomes include better performance, better relationships, trust, more competent and confident team members, and a more competitive organization. What's in it for you personally: Less stress, more fun, and fulfillment for a start. Let's look at the process.

The following work assignment conversational process is simple and straight forward. It takes a mindset shift away from something that you do to someone to something that you do with someone. This is a conversation, not a directive. If barking directives is more comfortable and if being questioned is taken as an attack on ego, it may take a while to get comfortable with this process. Here is how I recommend moving forward, regardless of the relationship you have with those who will accept a work assignment.

Each person will have a different relationship with a supervisor. So not all work assignment is the same. Rather than change the process, change the type of work assigned. If there is less trust or competence, assign tasks until trust is build in the relationship. If there is already a high degree of trust and competence, assign projects or processes. The length and complexity of conversation may change but the basic conversation does not. Assigning a task may take a minute and assigning a process may take an hour meeting. One may not need a formal document and the other may need a work assignment form and a full project defined.

One thing for sure, if this simple conversational format is followed, trust will increase, work will be delivered as expected, micromanagement will decrease, empowerment will increase, engagement will increase, relationships will improve, and performance will improve. Not bad for one simple conversation. Call me if I can help you infuse this and other conversational models into your organization. This is not complex. Conversation is a core leadership function.

Improving Communication when Requesting Work

Assigning work is a conversation, not a directive. In an effort to reduce the inherent miscommunication when receiving a request for work or when requesting work, use this outline to help facilitate asking the questions necessary to insure that all expectations are managed and met.

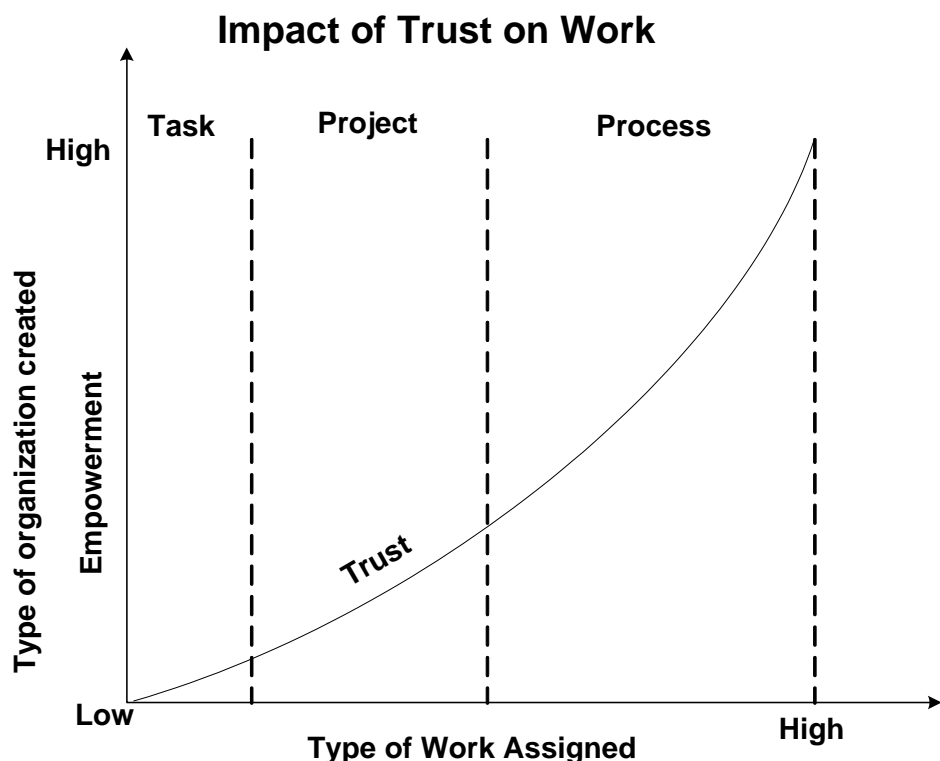
Objectives:

1. Insure the request for work accepted is consistent with the results expected by the person requesting the work
2. Prevent miscommunication
3. Provide the blanks that should be filled in to insure the communication is clear
4. Reduce the rework created when delivered work does not meet expectations
5. Provide an easy-to-follow process for accepting and requesting work
6. Provide questions to ask as we often forget to ask the important questions
7. Improve relationships between internal suppliers and clients
8. Improve organization internal processes
9. Reduce the stress we feel when we do not understand the expectations placed on us or deliver work that is not what was expected

How to use?

If asking another team member to provide you information, a service, or a product, simply use this form to quickly go over the expectations. Either the person receiving the request or the person requesting the work would fill out the critical information to insure the expectations will be met when the

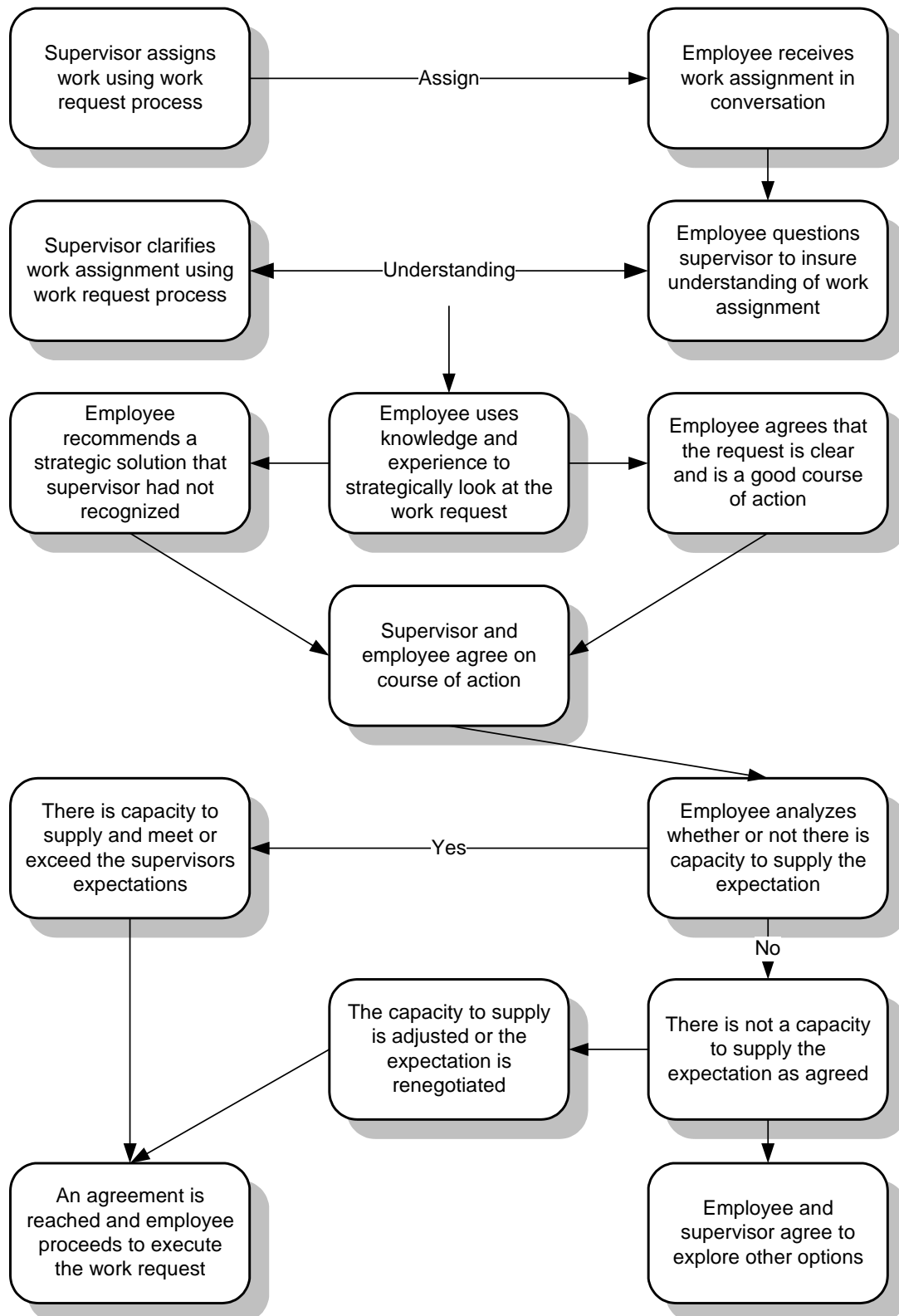
work is delivered. On a simple request, i.e. a task, this may take no more than a minute or so and certainly may not need the form; if the request is a project or more extensive process improvement work, the conversation may be substantially longer to insure that a full understanding is reached. The key is to create understanding through the use of conversation and to insure that the conversation happens.

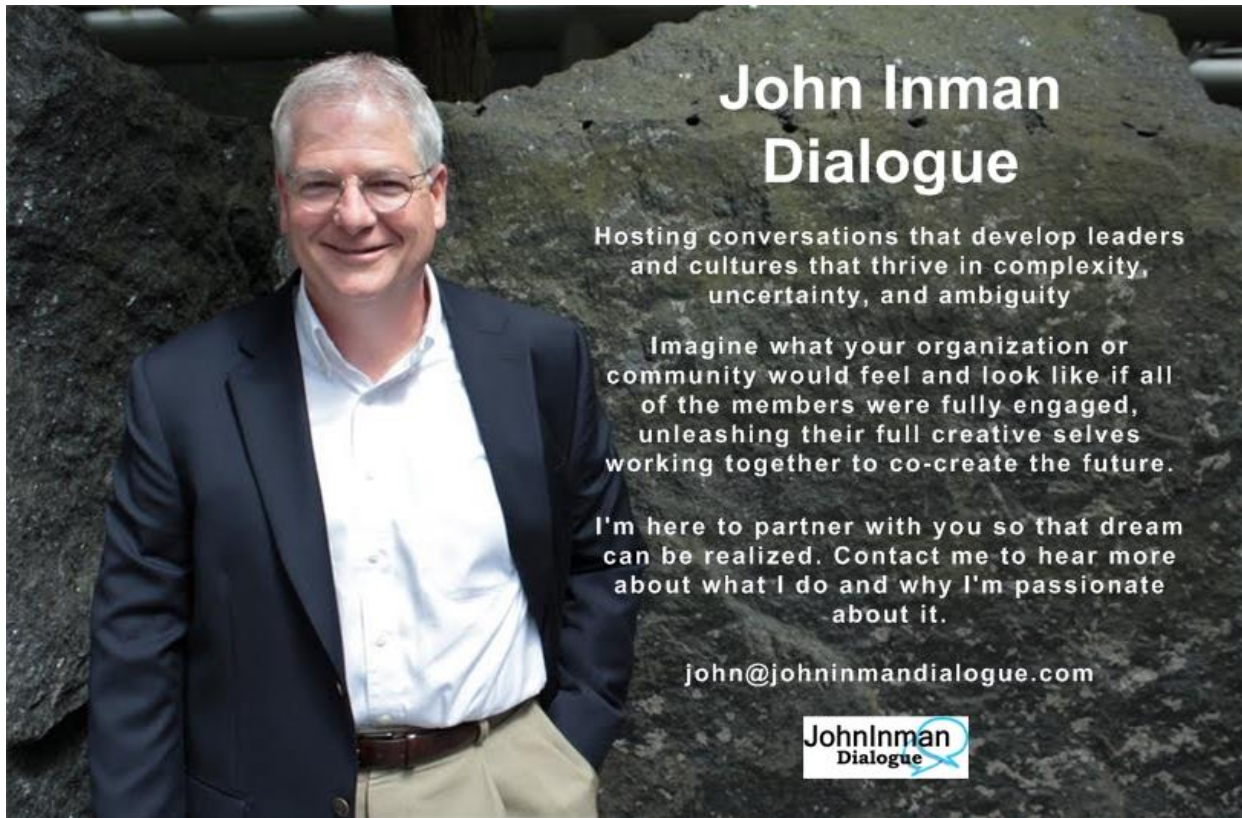


Requesting Work

Date:	
Assigned From:	
Assigned To:	
Work Requested:	
Type of Work:	<input type="checkbox"/> Task <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Process
Envisioned Result: (What does it look like)	Example or Description?
Objectives: (Why is it important)	1) 2) 3) 4) 5)
Resources Available: (\$, People, Materials)	
Constraints: (\$, People, Materials)	
Time-line:	Begin ←————→ End
Others who need to be informed:	
Review Dates:	1 st Review _____ 2 nd Review _____ Final Review _____
Other:	

The Anatomy of a Work Assignment Conversation





John Inman, Ed.D., M.A., Ed.M., DDPE is the founder and principle of John Inman Dialogue, an international consultancy focused on designing containers for, convening, and hosting transformative conversations for organizations and communities of all types. His passion is developing healthy and productive social systems where all individuals are able to thrive in the current world of complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity.

As a long standing organization leader and developer of leaders in technology, financial, non-profit, government, scientific, and service firms, focusing on the local conversations that enact organization and community cultures provides his clients with the mindset shifts necessary to lead in these challenging times.

John has a bachelor's degree in business management, an education master's degree in adult education and organization development, a master's of arts degree in human and organization systems, and a doctorate in education leadership for change. He is internationally certified in Dialogue, Deliberation, and Public Engagement.

John lives with his wife and two children in Seattle Washington and enjoys walking, road biking, researching, and time with his family. He can be reached at john@johninmandialogue.com, 425-954-7256, or at www.johninmandialogue.com.