



The Synergies between

The 7 Habits & Crucial Conversations

The synergies between **The 7 Habits and Crucial Conversations** are **profound and impactful; together they can produce powerful results and outcomes.** To understand how this occurs, consider a theory of change.

In the late 1980s, researchers at the Covey Leadership Center developed a model for change called The Four Ps.

Paradigm, Principles, Process, and Practices. These are the four elements required to create positive, lasting change. We might define each of these elements as follows:

Paradigm. The individual's life view or the fundamental, basic assumptions a person has regarding a circumstance or a set of relationships

Principles. The fundamental laws and values that guide behavior

Process. The routines and repeated sequences that can help an individual apply principles

Practices. The skills and behaviors which help individuals enact these principles

These four elements are required to create positive lasting change in people's behavior; each of these four elements can be targets of change as well as levers for change. For example, in creating changes toward effective time management,

The *paradigm* might be "Aligning our actions with our mission, priorities, and values."

The *principles* would be "Begin with the End in Mind" and "Put First Things First."

The *process* would be weekly planning based on roles and goals.

The *practices* would be scheduling Quadrants One and Two and following your schedule.

By using the "Four Ps," an individual who is scattered and undisciplined can dramatically change his or her behavior and personal results.

By design, 7 Habits training focuses primarily on paradigm and principles. It is assumed that most people already have basic life skills and processes in their lives, and that by training paradigms and principles, which they may not understand, their effectiveness can be dramatically enhanced. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is so powerful because it teaches paradigms and principles of effectiveness that help people think in more effective ways.

The unaddressed need that often remains after people have been trained in 7 Habits is that many don't have the skills to apply what they've learned. Crucial Conversations provides the processes and skills that people need in order to enact their newfound understanding. As a companion to 7 Habits training, Crucial Conversations trains the processes and practices needed to enact Habits Four, Five, and Six. As a stand-alone training, Crucial Conversations provides the paradigm, principles, processes, and practices needed to achieve the public victory, helping people move from independence to interdependence.

Habit Four is "Think Win-Win." This is a powerful principle, but how do you actually do it? How do you put it into practice? Crucial Conversations training teaches the process and skills needed to create win-win:

Commit to seek mutual purpose.

Recognize the purpose behind the strategy.

Invent a mutual purpose.

Brainstorm new strategies.

By learning this process, and the skills to put it into practice, and by rehearsing in a variety of problem-solving settings, participants learn how to create win-win outcomes and relationships.

The Crucial Conversations skills found in Move To Action help create win-win agreements and effective decisions, and establish accountability.

Habit Five is “Seek first to understand, and then be understood,” and 7 Habits training gives an example of a skill called empathic listening. This is one skill that can be used to seek to understand. However, it is used as an example, but is not taught or practiced in the training. There is no skill building of “seek to understand.” In Crucial Conversations, four listening skills are taught and practiced in a process called AMPP:

- Ask
- Mirror
- Paraphrase
- Prime

When these four listening skills are used in conjunction, they help defuse strong emotion and seek to understand the other person’s ideas, point of view, and feelings. In addressing “seek to be understood,” Crucial Conversations teaches a process and skills that enable participants to honestly and openly share their ideas and feelings without creating defensiveness on the other person’s part. This process and these skills are called “STATE Your Path”:

- Share your facts.
- Tell your story.
- Ask for others’ paths.
- Talk tentatively.
- Encourage testing.

By learning this process and these skills, and then practicing them in the session, participants are able to effectively be understood. Listening and advocacy skills are both needed to enact Habit Five. Together the processes and practices of AMPP and STATE enable participants to “Seek first to understand then be understood.”

Habit Six is “Synergize.” The powerful idea of synergy is explained in The 7 Habits (1+1=3 or more), and is stated as a goal or an objective. It’s often described as the fruit of doing habits four and five well. In Crucial Conversations training, the ideal method of communication is defined as “dialogue.” Dialogue is creating a free flow of meaning—meaning that is equally shared and unimpeded. Dialogue is communication that is open and honest and unrestricted by fear. The target of dialogue is the creation of the “pool of shared meaning.” As each person’s meaning is communicated, it is made available to others. Everyone can now access the pool of shared meaning to understand other’s ideas, perspectives, and thoughts. Those new ideas build upon one another, allowing people to be innovative and creative,

often leading to new ideas that no one brought to the meeting. If no one brought these new ideas and innovations to the meeting, where did they come from? They came from the pool of shared meaning. This is synergy; the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. So truly, synergy is the fruit of an effective dialogue process.

One of 7 Habits’ foundational principles is “Be Proactive”: Choose your behavior based on your principles and values; don’t react to stimuli, choose your response. This is a principle of power that most participants struggle to enact. If you are in a strong emotional state such as anger or frustration, how do you have the presence of mind to choose your behavior, rather than react?

Crucial Conversations teaches the Path of Action as a model of human behavior—our emotions come from the stories we tell ourselves. It is difficult to break stimulus/response between emotion and action. It’s difficult to hold anger inside and not allow it to drive our action. However, if rather than trying to hold our emotions inside, we work on our story, then the emotion often dissipates, the brain is activated, and we are free to choose the behavior that will best serve our Mission and Values. Crucial Conversations trains participants to master their stories. When strong emotions erupt, participants learn to challenge their stories with questions, separate story from fact, and tell the rest of the story. This changes their story from a judgment into a question, such as “why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person act that way?” Judgments create the emotion of anger. Questions create the emotion of concern or curiosity that lead us to choose effective responses. The skills for mastering our stories change emotion—they enable participants to enact “Be Proactive.”

Training Crucial Conversations without connecting it to any other training creates the outcomes described in the Crucial Conversations literature.

Using Crucial Conversations as a follow-up to 7 Habits training compliments 7 Habits training and teaches participants the skills to put it into practice.



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