

Talk and moving furniture

One of the most frustrating and irritating experiences at work is not just the sheer number of unnecessary meetings - although they do test one's patience - but the endless talk and sharing of thoughts that seems to last forever and lead nowhere.

Human nature being what it is, many folks have an inherent and insistent (often unconscious) need to talk, teach, tell, train or otherwise get their \$.04 cents in during meetings just because they need to be seen and heard.

It doesn't matter that they're often expressing thoughts that have no direct bearing on the meeting's outcome. It doesn't matter that what they're saying isn't new, innovative, creative or pertinent. Essentially, they enjoy talk for the sake of talk.

As I began to write this, I came across a quote from the Master Krishnamurti: "Thoughts are like furniture in a room with the door closed."

So, I thought I'd take a chance and stretch this metaphor and write about meeting give-and-take from the perspective of moving furniture around in a room in order, hopefully, to support folks to stand back, and take notice of what they do, and how they are, at meetings in order to add value to their "meeting" experiences.

So, taking the quotation and the metaphor of thoughts as furniture a bit further - here goes: What often happens at meetings is folks are just moving lots of furniture (read: thoughts) — first here, then there, then here, then over there. Then folks decide to change the fabric on the furniture and proceed to move it here, there and over there. It remains the same furniture (thoughts), with different fabrics (different "takes").

Some add new colors, then, new textures and move the furniture again, here, there, here, there. However, it's the same furniture, perhaps, with variations on a theme, but nothing really "new" and still with the door closed. No oxygen. No breath of fresh air.

So, perhaps you might find some time to visualize yourself in a room with other people and your collective task is to move furniture. Rather than simply move stuff around, or change its appearance but not its substance, I propose you tug on your own sleeve and inquire into the following self-reflective questions.

The goal is to explore not only the value and worth of others' and your contributions, but to explore what you learn about yourself in the moving process, that is, to see "what I am learning about me" in the process of moving furniture, in a conscious effort to learn more about "who I am" and "how I am" while moving, or just watching others move, the furniture.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- What kinds of feelings/emotions am I experiencing as I move the furniture, or observe others moving the furniture?
- How am I managing my feelings/emotions?
- What insights am I gaining about myself as I move or observe other movers?
- Do my biases, prejudices, assumptions, inferences, preconceptions, etc. limit me in any way?
- How am I reacting to the furniture, the textures, the colors, the fabrics?
- Is my moving affecting others? How so?
- Do I exhibit a specific way of sharing or thinking that helps/hinders a healthy moving environment?
- How are others' moves affecting me?

- How do I feel about giving feedback to others' moves, choice of textures, colors, fabrics?
- Am I seeking feedback for my choice of moves, colors, textures, fabrics? Why? Why not?
- Do I find myself reflecting about me as a result of others' moves or choice of colors, textures or fabrics?
- Am I conscious of my reactions to others?
- Do I consider myself the moving expert, and the expert of colors, fabrics or textures? How do I express my expertise?
- Am I open to considering other possible moves, colors, textures and fabrics?
- If others' choices are not like mine, are they "bad"/"wrong"? Why?
- Am I attached to my own agenda for how the furniture should be moved?
- Do I lift the spirit of the other movers?
- Am I being open-minded about moves, colors, textures and fabrics?
- Am I judging others' choices?
- How is the energy of the room? Where are the blockages?
- What kind of energy am I generating?
- How would I describe my relationship with the other movers and their relationships with me?
- How do I handle difficult moves or challenging choices of colors, textures and fabrics?
- Does this experience push me past my personal boundaries and safety zones?
- Am I safe opening myself to new ways of moving, or to new colors, new textures and new fabrics?
- Do I prefer the old familiar way of moving, the familiar colors, familiar textures and familiar fabrics?
- Do I know more about me leaving this room than when I entered? Did I, in fact, learn anything?
- What would happen if we all moved the furniture to another room and left the door and windows open?

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