

# Mature Workers Matter

## MasterClass 2: Successful conversations



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## MasterClass 2: Successful conversations

### Overview

- This module is for senior managers, HR managers and line managers.
- In this module we provide a structure for successful conversations for topics like return to work, workability, flexibility, retention or job redesign.

### Outcomes

- A structure to apply to conversations with mature individuals
- An understanding of the importance of advocacy and enquiry to get a positive and productive outcome

### Duration

- Quick guide: 20 minutes
- Completion of all activities: 2-3 weeks

### Pre-requisite

- Module one provides a good background to why successful conversations are important
- A list of the strategies and activities you would like to pursue in your organisation, the stakeholders and the conversations you may need to have



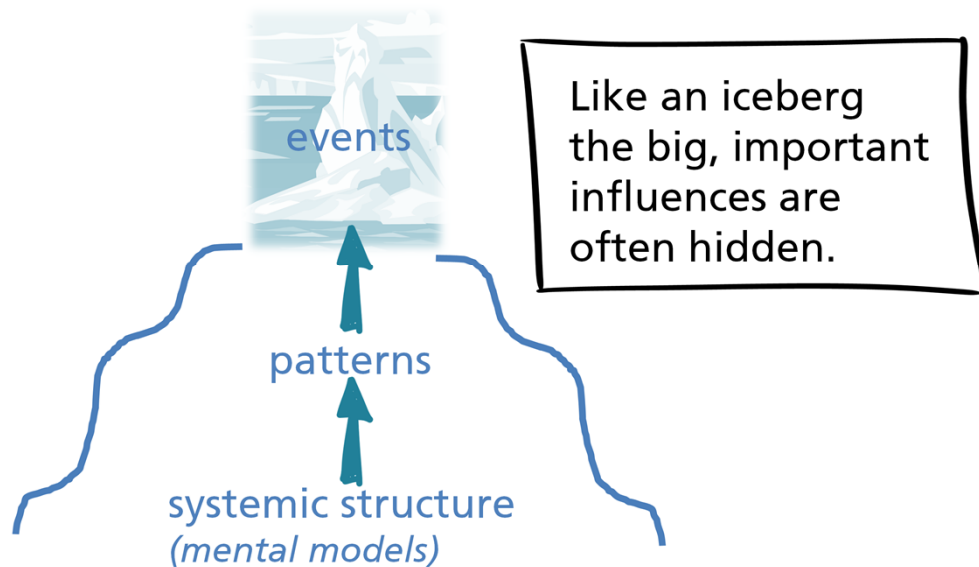
## Leadership conversations



- Require us to challenge the way we think about things
- Move from *communication* with others to *engaging* others
- Require us to be proficient in advocacy AND enquiry
- Create the conditions for successful culture change

Senge, P. et. al. (1994) *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*  
Senge, P., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R., Roth, G. and Smith, B. (1999) *The Dance of Change: The Challenges of Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations*, New York: Doubleday/Currency).

## Systemic thinking: the iceberg



By thinking systemically we.....

- See the big picture and understand long term vs. short term
- Begin to appreciate interdependencies
- Anticipate unanticipated consequences
- Focus on structure, not on blame
- Identify high leverage interventions that solve problems so that they stay solved

To do so we need to challenge our assumptions – To Change our Minds

## It takes a change of mind

From	To
Assuming your point of view is complete	Assuming your point of view misses some aspects of the situation
Regarding your point of view as an obvious fact	Your point of view is an hypothesis to be explored
Proposing options in either-or, win-lose terms	Searching for integrated possibilities that meet competing interests
Inventing ways to bypass others options	Inventing ways to test or explore options together
Searching only for data and views that confirm your opinion	Searching for data and views that might alter your opinion
Assuming changes can't be made	Assuming change is possible

If we truly adopt a systems way of thinking, our mind changes. Assumptions we relied upon are less certain. Better conversations are possible – the conditions for true engagement are improved.

## Communication to engagement



**COMMUNICATE:**  
*to share or exchange  
information or ideas; convey;  
pass on; transmit; receive.*

**ENGAGE:** *to attract or involve;  
to participate; to commit or  
pledge.*

*Oxford English Dictionary*



- Mature workers particularly value collaboration and consultation.
- Communicate - closely related to management and process/procedure
- Engagement - more closely related to leadership and human emotion/behaviour
- Engagement requires us attracting people into conversations using strategic questioning and by making our own thinking transparent. That is good quality inquiry (questioning) and good quality advocacy (statements)

## Advocacy tips

1. Clearly state your opinion, idea, desire **What's my point?**
2. Reveal your thinking and reasoning **Why am I saying it?**
3. Engage others by asking what they think **What's your response?**
4. Genuinely listen **(not wait to speak)**

Advocacy is good but we're not good at it – we have a tendency to get into “advocacy wars”. Here are some conversation tips and sentence starters for improving advocacy:

I propose that...

Here's an idea..

Here's how I got to that thinking...

The reasons for my opinion are...

Here's an example of what I mean...

## Inquiry Tips

1. Inquire into other person's views  
**What do I want to know?**
2. Tell why you're asking the question  
**Why am I asking?**
3. Seek to understand **Be prepared to be influenced and experiment**
4. Genuinely listen

Here are some conversation tips and sentence starters for improving inquiry:

How do you see...?

What leads you to conclude...?

What evidence...?

What are your thoughts...?

I'm coming to a different conclusion and I want to understand your view better....

I keep thinking x but now I'm not so sure. Help me understand your point of view....?

Say more about...

Can you give me an example of what you mean?

Would you be interested in trying....?

What might be a different perspective on this?

## Practice session

### Players:

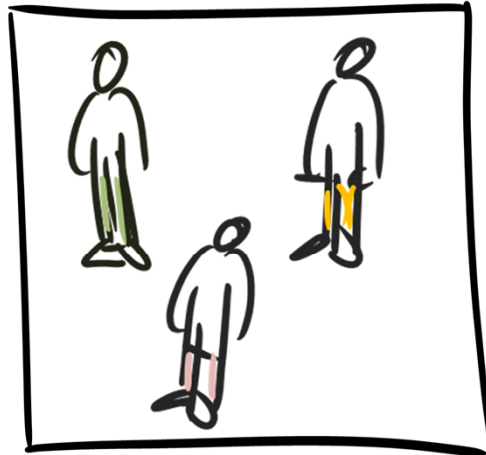
- Observer
- Manager
- Employee

### Subject options could be:

- Return to work
- Retention
- Workability domains
- Job design
- Flexibility

### The Point:

- Action learning (iceberg thinking; advocacy and enquiry)
- Have a go!



Groups of 3

Observer

Manager

Employee

Using the retention interview guide or any one of the domain factors or a situation you have in mind back in your workplace

Remember the iceberg

Advocacy and enquiry

Have a go!

## What are my next steps...

*masterclass  
resource*

To successfully implement your strategies and activities, you will need to have successful conversations and you may need to train others to have successful conversations.

- List the likely conversations you may need to have eg who, what about, why, when
- Prepare your advocacy statement and your inquiry
- Find some trusted colleagues to practise having conversations
- Schedule the conversation!

What are the risks of doing nothing?

You can have all the tools, strategies and frameworks in the world, but unless you're prepared to have the conversation, nothing will really change.