THE THREE CONVERSATIONAL LEVELS

“To get to the next level of greatness depends on the quality of the culture, which depends on the quality of relationships, which depends on the quality of conversations..."

LEVEL I: TRANSACTIONAL
Transactional, Level I, is about ‘exchanging information’ to keep people in the loop, updating, or getting things accomplished. While this level of conversations is useful to actively direct people and processes to get work done, it often focuses on compliance and includes rewards and punishments. Our Interaction dynamics are that of Telling and Asking. When we rely on too much ‘telling what’s on our mind’, with low levels of listening to ‘what is on other’s mind,’ we have the potential to move others into a position of fear and reluctance to change. Questions may be closed-ended and designed to confirm and protect what we believe is true, which causes others to move into their own protect behaviors. Level I Trust is low.

LEVEL II: POSITIONAL
Positional, Level II, is about ‘exchanging power,’ influencing others to our point of view using our personal power and influence skills. There may be win/lose or win/win outcomes. Frequently we influence to bring others to our point of view and our interaction dynamics are Advocating and Inquiring. When we use more advocating, we are asking questions for which we already know the answers, and we are inquiring into others points of view mostly to win them over to our perspectives. Too much advocating with low levels of listening can move people into protect behaviors. If others believe you have their interest at heart they will become open to the exchange, and if they feel you are driving an agenda they will close down and move into distrust. Level II Trust is conditional.

LEVEL III: TRANSFORMATIONAL
Transformational, Level III, is about ‘exchanging energy’, co-creating and transforming ideas and outcomes with others. Our interaction dynamics are Sharing and Discovering, which opens us up to broader insights and wisdom than either of us now has. We ask ‘questions to which you have no answers,’ thereby inviting others to participate in answers that are co-created. This creates a sense of co-creating shared success and empowers everyone involved to participate fully. We are engaging with others in high levels of openness, candor, curiosity and wonder, stimulating provocative questions that enable us to partner to elevate our thinking to new thoughts and ideas for innovation. However, if the partnering aspect of the interaction dynamic begins to dissipate, the uncertainty can cause us to fall back into the ‘groupthink’ or consensus. Level III has high trust.