

Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center presents

Partner Follow-Up Circles

Engaging Community, Narrating Change

May–November 2013

Partnership in the *Engaging Community, Narrating Change* conference would not include any financial contribution.

What we invite forward through your partnership is:

1. **Attend the *Engaging Community, Narrating Change* conference**, held 7–9 p.m. on Thursday, April 4, and 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m. on Friday, April 5, where a simple methodology of conversation will be modeled for and experienced by all participants.
2. Commit on the part of your organization to **host six monthly conversations that matter between May 2013 and September 2013**. The topic of these would be the creation of sustainable, abundant community. The overall premise of the six conversations is:
 - Build the social fabric and transform the isolation within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole.
 - Shift conversations from the problems of community to the possibility of community.
 - Commit to create a future distinct from the past.The purpose of these conversations is to call forth a collective capacity to connect people with people in order to transform the current conditions of community, wherever community exists. These conversations may occur within your organization with your staff as participants, or beyond your organization with others throughout the greater Cedar Rapids community and beyond. We desire NOT to create more work for you, but to offer a simple, clear methodology to assist you in naming and co-creating what you already do and to connect you with others whose mission is also about providing for the greater good!
3. **Participate in an opening webinar on May 22 at 3 p.m. with Peter Block** and engage ongoing communication via blogs, conference calls, Skype sessions, etc. with other circles of conversation occurring as a result of this conference.
4. **Attend an inspirational, culminating, day-long conversation in October or November 2013 with Peter Block** to highlight insights gained and actions taken and to surface new possibilities that have arisen.

Partner Convener:

- Create a space, a context that nurtures an environment based on gifts, generosity, accountability and commitment.
- Name the Question—initiate and convene conversations that shift people's experience, which occurs through the way people are brought together and the nature of the questions used to engage them.
- Listen and pay attention.

Six Conversations That Matter

Who is Invited? Powerful gatherings create a field of learning long before the participants arrive. The first step is a personal invitation. The sooner you have a clear idea of who will be in conversation, the easier it is to design and plan a purposeful gathering that will meet participant needs.

Where Shall We Gather? How do we make the best use of place as a means to deepen our inquiry and learning? Clarify the gathering's purpose and create its space with plants, simple art and circles of chairs—no tables.

How Do We Prepare to Participate? The first task is to connect with one another and the broader community to explore participants' hopes and aspirations for the gathering.

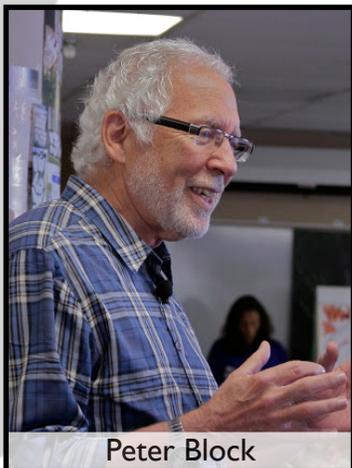
Six Conversations That Matter: A Quick Review

These community-building conversations are pointedly designed to confront the issues of accountability and commitment. To open the community to an alternative future, start with the invitation conversation.

1. **MAY: Invitation Conversation** Transformation occurs through choice, not mandate. Invitation is the call to create an alternative future. What invitation can we make to support people to participate and own the relationships, tasks and processes that lead to success?
2. **JUNE: Possibility conversation** This focuses on what we want our future to be as opposed to problem solving the past. It frees people to innovate, challenge the status quo, break new ground and create new futures that make a difference.
3. **JULY: Ownership conversation** This conversation focuses on whose organization or task this is. It asks: *How have I contributed to creating current reality?* Confusion, blame and waiting for someone else to change are a defense against ownership and personal power.
4. **AUGUST: Dissent conversation** This gives people the space to say “no.” If you can't say “no,” your “yes” has no meaning. Give people a chance to express their doubts and reservations as a way of clarifying their roles, needs and yearnings within the vision and mission. Genuine commitment begins with doubt, and “no” is an expression of people finding their space and role in the strategy.
5. **SEPTEMBER: Commitment conversation** This conversation is about making promises to peers about your contribution to the success. It asks: *What promise am I willing to make to this enterprise? What price am I willing to pay for success?* It is a promise for the sake of a larger purpose, not for personal return.
6. **OCTOBER: Gifts conversation** Rather than focus on deficiencies and weaknesses, we focus on the gifts and assets we bring and capitalize on those to make the best and highest contribution. Confront people with their core gifts that can make the difference and change lives.

These six conversations are vital to shift to a future in which each citizen, each neighbor, each individual chooses to take responsibility and own his or her role in shaping the future.

—Adapted from *Community: The Structure of Belonging* by Peter Block (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2008)



Peter Block



John McKnight



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