

## **'Conversation for Change'.**

It was a catch 22 situation! If I did not do it I knew that the job cannot be done; if I did it then I knew that I was trading into an unknown territory where risks of failure, I feared, were not exactly modest.

Let me not talk in riddles, and explain it to you. I was planning a program for a client company where VPs and GMs were invited to attend. They were successful individually, but they worked not as a team, but in compartments. In my pre-training session they recognized it as the biggest organizational issue. I proposed that we must attack it first since it was the biggest pain area. They agreed.

While planning the session I realized that the trick was to get them to talk about the issues between them and their role in building invisible walls. But it does not take great intelligence to realize that they would shy away from it, they would not talk about it unless we somehow created an environment conducive for it. That was a tough call.

I began my session presenting 'what I had heard them say' in which I reproduced verbatim the statements of VPs and GMs about the organizational issues. Lack of teamwork and integration figured as the top issue, very predictably so. The group decided that it must be sorted out.

It is at this stage I introduced to them the Peter Block's formula called 'Conversations for Change'. Put briefly, it says that we should get people to stop having the old conversation. Tell them to talk about the agenda but ask them to have conversation they have never had before. If the conversation is not new, ask them to stop it and be silent. The group got into 'new conversation' cautiously and then with a lot of energy. The result was that they had demolished the invisible walls between them.

Try it. My experience is that it never fails!

I am happy that I took the bold step to experiment with a new approach; I am delighted that it worked so well. Somebody has said 'Every great inspiration is but an experiment and every experiment, great inspiration!' I now know, it is true, I have experienced it.

Vivek Patwardhan