

# The C4 Dialogue Navigator®

## Mastering the skills of dialogue



The C4 Dialogue Navigator® was created to support *mastery* in every type of dialogue. Whether brainstorming, discussing, confiding or conflicting, when you are confident in your dialogue skills, fewer conversations feel 'difficult'. We constantly need to talk to one another to get things done at work, yet few of us have been trained in dialogue. C4 helps us become more aware and more agile in conversation. This is crucial as every conversation is an improvisation (even if we prepare and practice what we want to say, we can't script how our counterpart replies)! C4 stands for **Connection, Curiosity, Courage** and **Clarity**. These four orientations help us choose how to pay attention when we listen, and how to construct what we say. The C4 Dialogue Navigator® is a diagnostic model for what is and isn't working in a dialogue. It also has a set of practical tools for each

orientation – a kind of Swiss army knife for dialogue from small talk to a big deal.

When mastered, parties in a dialogue can simultaneously be 'actors' immersed in the scene, and 'directors' who can evaluate the scene from the outside. The C4 Dialogue Navigator® enables you to map your conversation in real time, identifying your location within a discussion. Working with what's spoken and unspoken, you can see alternative routes through the conversation, and navigate around obstacles to a successful outcome.

### Efficient or Effective?

Many workplace conversations are sabotaged by an over-emphasis on *efficient* dialogue (reaching a rapid conclusion with minimal investment of time). This is often not *effective* and comes back to bite us through lack of alignment, poor motivation, hidden agendas, damaged relationships or confusion about the task. An effective dialogue covers all four orientations to deliver positive progress for action on tasks *and* enhance the parties' relationship.

### The Model in Practice

Dramatic Difference built the C4 Dialogue Navigator® and its toolkits in response to clients' practical 'How?', 'What?', 'When?' and 'Why?' questions. It is founded in decades of research from the fields of coaching and counselling, neuroscience, positive psychology, mediation and hostage negotiation. It has been workplace-tested across cultures and industries with hundreds of clients working on the areas of leadership communication, conflict resolution, team management and executive presence.

**CONNECTION** is both cognitive and emotional. It demonstrates close attention to vocabulary, meaning and feelings - whether explicit or unspoken. It is fundamental for trust.

**CURIOSITY** is a spirit of genuine enquiry, discovery and learning. It demonstrates a commitment to exploration for understanding individuals, ideas and situations, and shows a growth mindset.

**COURAGE** is about candour, creativity, disruption and disclosure. Combining bravery and vulnerability. It brings depth and momentum into a conversation.

**CLARITY** is about precision in both form and content. It requires unambiguous and succinct expression; validation of shared understanding, and explicit, agreed commitments.



Our work on effective interpersonal and team dynamics is underpinned by our C4 Dialogue Navigator® model. We've developed and tested the tools, techniques, materials and methods with thousands of executives for more than two decades and we love them because they work! Distilled from research and experience, they produce powerful, enduring results in the laboratory of real life.

*"I've been in this difficult dialogue about a critical business need on and off for a year. I couldn't find a way to do it successfully. I'm naturally direct – courageous and clear – so this time I focused on how to connect and be curious. I prepped my C4 language: 'I'm so curious about...'; 'Can you help me understand...'. It sounds so simple but it worked! Each 'C' is a crucial component, so I'm now building word banks on curiosity to help me hold back from giving directions. It really helps."*

WY – Quality Manager, Consumer Goods

## Why “C4”?



### CONNECTION

C4 is a protein crucial to building tolerance and antibodies in the immune system. So, C4 represents the ability to bond, forge positive working relationships and create psychological safety. It is the skillset and mindset that supports inclusion, compassion, empathy and collaboration in everything from conflict resolution to performance conversations.



### CURIOSITY

C4 is a vertebra in the human spine that is vitally important for movement in all directions – forwards, backwards and sideways. It is also a vital component in our breathing mechanism. So C4 represents presence, agility and mental flexibility in dialogue. It's the crucial ability to bring an open mind and an open heart to explore, listen, discover, adapt to and build on ideas.



### COURAGE

C4 is a general-purpose plastic explosive that's pliable and easy to mould. It's used in commercial blasting, demolition and even certain military applications. It can move mountains, or surgically remove the lock from a door. So C4 represents the willingness have candid, creative and disruptive conversations.



### CLARITY

C4 is a way of documenting software models that recognises multiple views and organises them by level and structure, defining containers and components. So C4 represents the ability to overcome ambiguity, capture ideas, emotions, inputs and outputs, and organise them for further discussion and action. It is cognitive accuracy, focus, structure and discipline in dialogue.

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Why does mastery of dialogue matter? Because it's how we work!  
From hiring to career planning, from performance feedback to building informal networks,  
from CEO townhalls to Q&A in meetings, from product design to solving client problems,  
we talk together to think together.

Let's explore how the C4 Model could help you, your teams and your leadership  
build the core skills of Connection, Curiosity, Courage and Clarity.

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