

Choice-creating and Dynamic Facilitation

There is a “movement in the air”—an exciting renaissance of interest in conversation as a transformational tool, and its potential as a well-spring for much-needed social change.

Rosa Zubizarreta

*S*ocial philosopher Tom Atlee recently began a talk by asking the audience five questions:

1. How many of you have been in a really productive conversation where the people involved were seeing the topic in new ways and seeing options and possibilities that none of you had thought of before? (About half raised their hands.)
2. How many of you know of groups or organizations where you find LOTS of that kind of conversation? (About a fifth raised their hands.)

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3. How many of you know of an elected democratic government whose decisions you feel are truly wise? (A few—Denmark and Iceland were mentioned.)
4. How many of you think we will survive the 21st Century if we don't put a lot of wisdom into our collective decision-making and problem-solving? (None.)
5. How many of you believe it is possible for ordinary people to generate wisdom together? (Everyone.)

Tom's questions laid out the issue beautifully. We know it's possible to have Choice-creating conversations, where creativity and wisdom happen among ordinary people and where decisions get made jointly. We long for it in small groups, in large organizations, and in nations. But it doesn't happen very often.

Recently, a young woman was telling me how frustrated she was with Congress—how childish and argumentative elected representatives seem, and how they don't address the truly important issues. Then she ended by apologizing. I asked her why she apologized and she said, "I don't like to talk about politics because I don't like that way of talking."

She's right. Our official collective way of talking, thinking, and deciding issues is not pretty. It's a battle rather than a collaboration. As Deborah Tannen says in her book, *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's War of Words*, we have a "pervasive warlike atmosphere that makes us approach public dialogue, and just about anything we need to accomplish, as if it were a fight." But this combative style arises, not because people are selfish or that our culture is argumentative, as many people think, but because we have structured it that way. Majority rule, for instance, pretty much guarantees a back and forth argument between two positions, rather than thoughtful reflection.

When we don't structure for Choice-creating, it is difficult to achieve. It's not just a matter of everyone trying harder. So instead of

seeking this creative, wisdom-generating conversation, people often strive for second best, to be dispassionate, logical and under control. But this means blocking our true feelings, undermining our relationships with others, and risking that our emotions work against rather than with us.

But, as the answers to Tom's questions suggest, we need for ordinary people to generate wisdom together, something most of us believe is possible. How do we do it? And how does the Citizens Amendment help us?

Two Kinds of Talking

To understand how to generate wisdom, we need to recognize the difference between two ways of talking: transactional (TA) and transformational (TF). TA talking is a transmission of information between sender and receiver. It is as though bits of information are exchanged and added to a database each person carries inside. TF talking, on the other hand, is a heart-to-heart experience where people and concepts evolve together. Participants in a TF conversation might be "moved" by the experience or find it "deeply meaningful."

A friend of mine told me a story that illustrates the difference. She was in a movie theater and noticed a young girl and her mother sitting directly behind her. After awhile, she felt something touch her hair and, eventually, she discovered that the young girl had deliberately stuck gum in it. When the movie was over, my friend confronted the child and parent. The girl's mother was horrified to learn what had happened, turned to her daughter, and demanded she apologize. A dutiful "I'm sorry" was all she got. This apology meant little under the pressure of her mother's insistence. It was a transactional communication.

Outside the movie ten minutes later, as my friend was about to get into her car, she heard a child's voice call to her. Apparently, the girl had time to think about what she had done, and on her own ran over

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and said, "I'm really sorry." They were almost the same words, but this time they came from the heart. My friend's frustration melted. Both people were moved. It was a transformational communication.

Each mode has value and engenders a different sort of thinking. With TA talking, we spark critical thinking, judging, analyzing, sorting, combining, storing, and relaying information. With it we can influence others toward predetermined goals. In a TF conversation, outcomes are reached spontaneously, through breakthroughs, insights, or changes of heart. The whole person is involved—creativity, reason, emotions, body, and spirit.

The word "apology" only has meaning in a TF conversation. This is also true of "consensus," "community," and "democracy," because these words require the genuine involvement of people. The word "involve" comes from the root "to turn inside of." To be involved means engaging fully with others in a process that creates trust, relationship, meaningfulness, and shared commitment. It is more than just providing input, being listened to, or voting. It requires a transformational, authentic conversation.

Nobel Prize-winning quantum physicist David Bohm uses the words "discussion" and "dialogue" to point to a similar distinction. He explains that "discussion" has the same root as "percussion" and "concussion." The root "cuss" means "to strike" or to "break things up." In his book, *On Dialogue*, Bohm says, "Discussion is almost like a ping pong game, where people are batting the ideas back and forth and the object of the game is to win points for yourself."

The word, "dialogue," on the other hand, derives from the roots "dia" which means "through," and "logos" which means "the word" or "the meaning of the word." Thus, in dialogue, shared meaning emerges through words. Dialogue elicits shared understandings, personal growth, and group coherence.

Bohm taught a particular practice of dialogue, with twenty to forty people assembling on a regular basis, with no purpose or agenda. They suspend judgment and inquire into a topic, watching the

Chart #5

Two Kinds of Talking

Transactional (TA) Transformational (TF)

- Focus: *What* is said ... the content.
- Transmitting information—where concepts and information are exchanged, modified or evaluated.
- People remain the same, although they improve their skills or have new understandings.
- People remain detached from the “things” they talk about and the people they talk with.
- The process can be predetermined, step by step, as with an agenda.
- The results (knowledge, skills, decisions, etc.) are measurable.
- Associated words: Discussion, input, training, team, compromise, agreement, and decision-making.
- Focus: *How* it is said ... the process.
- Creating new information—where concepts, information, and people all evolve together.
- People are “moved” by the experience, and become different in a meaningful way.
- People are fully involved—builds trust and a sense of “we”.
- The process is necessarily *dynamic* (e.g., you go with the flow).
- Measurable results are often far greater than TA results, but measuring them can diminish them.
- Associated words: Dialogue, involvement, education, community, consensus, and Choice-creating.

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group's process and challenging assumptions. It can sometimes be a frustrating two hours, because it often doesn't seem like the group is getting anywhere, but at the same time, an exciting new form of group coherence and collective intelligence also can emerge.

Another form of dialogue is the more heartfelt approach of the *Guild for Psychological Studies* in San Francisco, which has been conducting seminars since the 1940's. In this form, a facilitator takes more of a leadership role, asking evocative questions and encouraging participants to speak only what they are discovering in the moment, not what they already know. There are other forms of transformational talking as well, including psychotherapy, prayer, personal sharing, and Choice-creating.

The two different modes of talking and thinking, transactional and transformational, are analogous to ways in which physicists view nature. The traditional physicist sees the universe in a transactional way as a machine which can be measured and analyzed by objective observers. But quantum physicists and cosmologists see the universe more as a living process with fields of energy and the potential for spontaneous change. "Discussion" fits with Newton's mechanical universe, and "dialogue" belongs to the quantum view. Bohm suggests that when people engage in dialogue and, presumably, other forms of transformational talking, they are actually changing the "nature of thought itself." He says about dialogue, "When you listen to somebody else, whether you like it or not, what they say becomes part of you."

The distinction between transactional and transformational talking may not seem apparent or important to us today, but it was always important to ancient peoples. Native Americans, for example, used the peace pipe, the kiva, the talking stick, the vision quest, and sacred dances to call forth the spirit of transformational talking. They structured their lives so that important decisions, particularly for the tribe, would always be made in this spirit.

Today, we do the opposite and structure TA thinking and talking for those big decisions. In politics, in our education system, in corporations, and in most organizations, we focus more on measurable results and deny the existence of this deeper way of talking. We take TF concepts like “involvement” and “democracy” and redefine them so that they fit into the transactional mold. For instance, we say that citizens are “involved” because they can vote and, therefore, the country is a “democracy.” This simplistic perspective limits the magical possibilities.

Choice-creating vs. Decision-making

Wise decisions and true democracy arise from TF talking but not necessarily from dialogue. Bohm and the practitioners of his form of dialogue suggest that a group should use dialogue to build a foundation for decision-making, but switch to discussion for making decisions. The word to “de-cide” means “to cut away” the bad alternatives, leaving the good. Choice-creating is different, offering us a way to reach joint conclusions through TF talking. Chart #6 describes the two different styles.

To illustrate how Choice-creating can be structured instead of decision-making, let me describe an old role-playing exercise used in business training sessions. (See *Supervisory and Executive Development*, by N. R. F. Maier, A. Solem, and A. A. Maier, ©1957 by John Wiley and Sons.) Four volunteers are chosen. Three play the role of employees in a manufacturing company, with three different jobs, while one plays the boss. The workers are happy in their work, taking turns on the three jobs. But in private, the boss is given some new information: A 50% gain in productivity would be achieved if, rather than rotating between jobs, each employee stayed on the job he does best. The exercise begins when the boss calls a meeting to discuss this new possibility.

Chart #6

Two Kinds of Thinking

Decision-making

- It's a critical thinking process ... e.g., choosing the best from a set of different options.
- This process can be codified into a procedure, agenda, or set of criteria. The process can be managed so that people stay "on task."
- Decision-making meetings are rarely satisfying. The real issue often goes unaddressed. People don't feel heard, their passion is squelched, creativity is muted, and vital energy is squandered on agree/disagree discussions. It takes a long time to reach agreement.
- Decisions get reached through logic, compromise, power plays, or a voting. True consensus, win/win decisions, or high levels of commitment are rare.
- There is emotional safety because you don't let go of your role.

Choice-creating

- It's a creative thinking process ... e.g., seeking a breakthrough option that is better than available options.
- This process must be dynamic. You have to "just know it" when it happens. It must be facilitated, not managed.
- Choice-creating meetings are satisfying once people get used to this approach. The real issue is addressed. People are authentic, open-minded, open-hearted, learning, engaged, efficient, creative, and respectful. And it takes less time to reach joint conclusions.
- Decisions get reached via shifts of mind and heart. Breakthrough results are expected. Byproducts are: trust, understanding, consciousness, empowerment, community, etc.
- It feels risky because you are emotionally vulnerable.

The role-playing goes one of two ways. If the boss *proposes the new approach* and asks the employees what they think, they will have a transactional conversation. They will do “decision-making,” discussing back and forth whether to try it or not. In the end, they will decide yes or no—or some half-measure, like trying it for a while to see.

If, however, the boss *presents the new information* and asks the employees what they think, the resulting conversation will usually be Choice-creating. The four will seek to understand the issue, listen to one another’s feelings and needs, and will become creative in addressing them. Most always, they will discover or invent some new alternative that suits everyone. Some of these solutions are: two people switching jobs while one remains; each of the three alternating among his two best jobs; all switching jobs for unequal periods of time; or the boss helping out.

So with decision-making, people tend to go back and forth agreeing and disagreeing, trying to influence one another. When a decision is ultimately reached, it is to a preformed option for which there may be little enthusiasm or commitment. But with Choice-creating, there is an engaging conversation. Trust builds, relationships strengthen, people grow, breakthrough solutions emerge, and a consensus evolves for which there is natural commitment. It almost makes you wonder why we’d ever do anything else.

Overcoming a Crisis

To engage in Choice-creating is like encountering a crisis. You face a problem that you really care about and to which there is no satisfactory answer. It is not a negotiation between two positions or a selection among alternatives. It’s messier than that. It requires that you open yourself, be creative, and trust that, in the end, something will happen that allows for committed consensus. This kind of openness can be threatening if there is any risk of judgment present.

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In the same way that judgment stifles the creativity of people who are brainstorming ideas off the tops of their heads, it also stifles the heartfelt creativity of Choice-creating. People cannot be open and authentic, or grow and change in their views if judgment is present.

In Choice-creating, crises are overcome through different kinds of breakthroughs, new inventions, new understandings of the problem, new feelings and attitudes, or through an elevation of consciousness. The great Swiss psychiatrist, Carl Jung, talked about these breakthroughs in consciousness: "All the greatest and most important problems of life are fundamentally insoluble. They must be so, for they express the necessary polarity inherent in every self-regulating system. They can never be solved, but only outgrown. . . . This outgrowing proved on further investigation to be a new level of consciousness. Some higher or wider interest appeared on the patient's horizon, and through this broadening of his outlook the insoluble problem lost its urgency. It was not solved logically in its own terms, but faded out when confronted with a new and stronger life urge. It was not repressed and made unconscious, but merely appeared in a different light, and so really did become different. What, on a lower level, had led to the wildest conflicts and to panicky outbursts of emotion, from the higher level of personality now looked like a storm in the valley seen from the mountain top. This does not mean that the storm is robbed of its reality, but instead of being in it one is above it."

Most meetings are aimed at decision-making rather than Choice-creating. We prepare agendas, define goals, and use step-by-step techniques to keep people on track—all of which seem like common sense. However, by structuring this form of talking, we unknowingly narrow our thinking, diminish ourselves, and limit the possibilities for change.

Consider what happened at a meeting I recently observed. A group was organizing itself and the moderator suggested that there were two alternatives for how people could decide issues: voting or

consensus. Then he defined “consensus” as when everyone votes “yes” with no more than two people abstaining. Unknowingly, just by presenting these two well-defined alternatives he was assuring a transactional rather than a transformational conversation. And worse, if the group adopted either of these two proposals, it was structuring future conversations to be transactional as well.

The group went back and forth over the two options. Everyone wanted consensus, but knew something wasn’t right with these options. In the end, they didn’t decide. They changed topics. If the moderator had been on the ball, he might have realized that this was the group’s decision and that it was an example of true consensus. A skilled facilitator might’ve jumped in and said, “It seems that you all want to decide issues in a less formal way than has been proposed, through talking things over and just seeing where people stand. Is that right?” In response, the group probably would have replied, “Yes!” in one unanimous voice.

Choice-creating encourages this in-the-moment, “sense of the meeting” type of conclusion which captures what everyone wants, but which may not fit into predetermined box-like expectations. With Choice-creating, the aim is not for people to stay on topic within some set of boundaries, but to follow group energy to a point where everyone looks at one another, knowing they want the same thing. When this occurs, it’s unbelievably powerful.

Choice-creating is when people *address an issue they care about deeply* in a way that allows them to be:

- *Authentic* — There are no roles or hidden agendas.
- *Open-minded* — People are interested in new and different ideas.
- *Open-hearted* — People are listening deeply to the feelings and perspectives of each person and they are being influenced in response.

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- *Learning* — Each person is interested and seeks out new understandings.
- *Engaged* — Everyone is involved, wants to participate, and offers his or her talents.
- *Respectful* — Each person's ideas and uniqueness are appreciated.
- *Creative* — Breakthrough insights and changes of heart are frequent.
- *Efficient* — Consensus decisions are arrived at with relative speed and ease through naturally-occurring breakthroughs.

Unfortunately, many people have not experienced this kind of meeting. In the "My Turn" Column of *Newsweek* magazine (Sept. 9, 1985), Isadore Barmash described the extent of the problem by concluding: "After a lifetime of work, I've never seen a meeting end happily." One counterexample is that, for over three hundred years, the Quakers have been holding business meetings aimed at transformational talking, at true consensus. Called "meetings for worship for business," they rely on participants sharing two religious assumptions: 1) Every person has "that of God" within, and 2) He or she is "seeking God's Truth." For the process to work, everyone must adhere to these assumptions. Consensus is sought, not so much as a polling of the collected wisdom of those present, but as a collective discernment of God's will. (See "An introduction to Quaker Business Meetings" by Eden Grace.) Besides requiring that all participants share one religious perspective, Quakers also use a "clerk of the meeting" to act as a kind of facilitator. She asks for moments of silence, reflects on group progress, and proposes postponements on difficult topics.

The Dynamic Facilitator Assures Choice-creating

One way to generate group Choice-creating that works better than relying on a shared belief system is with the help of a “Dynamic Facilitator.” Unfortunately, the word “facilitator” is another TF term that has been given TA meaning. Most people have come to expect that a facilitator keeps them to an agenda, holds them on task, or helps them to follow a step-by-step procedure. I distinguish this kind of facilitation, which is aimed at helping people do decision-making, from Dynamic Facilitation, which supports people to do Choice-creating. The Dynamic Facilitator helps people make progress in jumps, creative insights, and spontaneous changes of heart.

I’ve developed a specific approach to Dynamic Facilitation that will need its own book. But for our purposes here, twelve principles are described below.

1) *Distinguish between process and content.* The group determines the content—*what* is talked about. They generate the results. The facilitator focuses on the process—*how* people talk. She assures Choice-creating rather than decision-making.

2) *Help people attend to the issue, not other people.* The Dynamic Facilitator uses a flip chart or large screen to direct the attention of participants toward the front of the room. In this way, everyone works on the issue, not each other.

3) *Help the group assume ownership of the issue.* People in the group should be working on what they care about, regardless of whether or not it seems impossible to solve. In transactional conversations, the tendency is to pick something that is solvable or some issue that has been assigned. But here, the Dynamic Facilitator helps people choose what they most care about.

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4) *Use reflection.* The Dynamic Facilitator reflects back to people what they are saying or seem to be feeling. She does this by using flip charts to paraphrase or capture the points made. This active listening process eliminates miscommunication and, more importantly, stimulates breakthroughs. Through reflection, for example, people discover what they really want and grow from this discovery.

5) *Orient the conversation to numbered lists of Solutions, Problem-statements, Data, Concerns, and Decisions.* Lists help people to think generatively and let go of points once they are made. For instance, the Dynamic Facilitator might begin by asking, "What are some of the issues we *might* address?" as opposed to, "Does anyone have an issue?" This suggests that there are an infinite number of issues rather than one or two.

In particular, four lists are crucial: Solutions, Concerns, Data, and Problem-statements. With these, the facilitator can turn every comment into a contribution. If someone starts to criticize an idea, the Dynamic Facilitator would rephrase the criticism as a concern and get it down on that list. Then she might say to that person, "It sounds as if, behind your concern, you have a different idea for how to solve this." Usually there is another idea that can be added to the list of possible solutions. Once a consensus begins to emerge, it can be added to the list of Decisions (or Conclusions, or Next Steps).

6) *Purge initial answers.* When confronted with a big issue, most people already have some kind of opinion. These opinions must be fully expressed and captured, usually on the list of Solutions, in a way that people know they have been heard. If not, creativity will be blocked. In traditional meetings, it is easy to become polarized into agree/disagree camps when people express their ideas. Here, the Dynamic

Facilitator heads this off by helping each person express their views fully, and then to seek more options.

7) *Protect people from all forms of judgment.* When people are being creative, judgment in any form is harmful. For example, if someone is expressing his view and is cut off by a comment about why his idea won't work, the facilitator must act quickly to keep him safe. She captures the original idea as one possible solution and also captures the criticism as a concern. She makes sure both people are fully heard and both views are respected.

8) *Go with the energy of the group.* In a transformational conversation, new solution ideas can come to the minds of participants at any moment. The Dynamic Facilitator must "go with the flow" and encourage this spontaneity. She can use the lists to help build energy. By capturing all comments, she helps people see that whatever comes to mind and whatever anyone says is an asset to the group.

In a Choice-creating conversation, there is often a pattern to how energy unfolds. Once people purge their initial solutions, they tend to become more circumspect. They start noticing other aspects of the problem and do more problem-solving. The facilitator should be sensitive to this change in group energy and, on occasion, help this shift to happen. Then, someone is liable to say, "I'm not sure we are solving the real problem."

This questioning attitude can spark breakthroughs. Everyone stops for a moment, often realizing that interests and perspectives have changed, and that the group's issue may now be different.

9) *Diverge/converge.* In Choice-creating, the facilitator helps people generate many ideas and then helps them narrow the list down to one, or just a few. Diverging and converging may happen a number of times before the group consensus

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becomes apparent. The best way to converge is not through deciding on one option, but via a breakthrough that everyone supports.

10) Orient the group toward creating versus deciding. In Choice-creating, it is important that people make minimal use of judging. When narrowing down the list, for instance, instead of having the group decide from among three possibilities, it is better if the facilitator can help them create a fourth idea, which combines all three, or which works even better.

11) Suggest different activities and venues. To be creative, people must think in different ways, using different parts of the mind. At times, the Dynamic Facilitator may suggest that everyone pause to stretch, or to write down responses to a question, or to talk together in small groups. These different venues can help maintain group energy and spark new insights. Even when people break into small groups, the spirit of Choice-creating remains; for example, the decision-making words “agree” and “disagree” are not heard.

12) Highlight and celebrate progress. It is more difficult for people to assess progress in a transformational meeting than in one that is transactional, since breakthroughs cannot be foreseen or their importance readily measured. People change in TF sessions, so when a group resolves what was once thought to be an impossible-to-solve problem, they tend to discount their amazing progress. Looking back, everything seems so obvious they often berate themselves for not seeing it sooner. The facilitator should act as a kind of historian, recounting how the group's thinking unfolded, reminding everyone how exceptional they have been, and helping them to celebrate progress.

At the end of each meeting, the group's progress should be captured in clear statements. These statements serve as

symbols of the group's work that can carry momentum forward.

How Dynamic Facilitation Works

The Dynamic Facilitator begins a Wisdom Council by asking, "What are some of the issues you *might* like to talk about?" She helps the group develop a list and narrow it to what they want to work on first.

The selected issue need not be well-defined and, in fact, can be just be a statement of feelings or even a couple of issues combined. Rather than trying to define the problem further, the Dynamic Facilitator helps people express whatever it is they have to say about it. Often they express a frustration, like "we can't do anything about this," or a particular solution approach like, "government should just get off people's backs," or "the key is education," or "people just need to respect one another."

Instead of trying to direct people to defining the problem, as logic would dictate, the Dynamic Facilitator helps them to express whatever point they are making. Usually this point can be added to the list of Solutions. She will invite them to flesh out their thoughts by asking, "How would you suggest we do that?" followed by, "What would be the next step after that?" until the person has expressed the point fully. We call this "the purge."

Once the points are fully expressed and people feel they've been heard, they are more able to open their minds, listen to the points of others, and try out new perspectives. When the issue is a difficult one, the frequent result of the group's purge is for everyone to see that all known answers are inadequate. Energy is less lively at this point, maybe with periods of silence and anxiety that nothing can be done. Then someone will mention a curious bit of new information, or ask a question. The energy will shift to become more like solving a puzzle than reeling from a crisis.

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One form of breakthrough that often happens at this stage is when the group realizes that there is a more fundamental question or problem than the one with which they started. Someone will say, “the real problem is . . .” and energy will build. Someone will wonder “what do we really want here?” or “what would happen if . . .” and the group is on its way to a breakthrough.

One group from my seminars was concerned about the loss of traditional family values. Several people started expressing their frustration with parents who rely on schools or television to raise their kids. Others complained about the media teaching violence and sex. One person stated strongly that one of the parents should stay home with the kids. Another said that we need to make sure there are enough high paying jobs so that one parent can stay home. Another thought that religious institutions held the key. Still others felt that it was important to educate parents in how to raise their children. Each view was fully heard, but the Dynamic Facilitator made sure no one view became the focus. Instead, as each person’s perspective was expressed, the group arrived at a difficult, empty stage where the problem seemed overwhelming.

Then someone began to talk from the heart about their own family, their own upbringing, and how difficult it was for them to raise children with the same quality of support they had received from their parents. Others in the group responded by sharing on a deep level as well, and began to talk about their struggles with time, increased financial pressures, and the lack of a supportive community. These heartfelt remarks changed the tone in the room. As people shared their experiences, group members became curious about the differences between yesterday and today. They considered the impact of cell phones, the media, and the Internet. The conversation became lively again. At one point, everyone arrived at the realization that today’s challenges are quite different from those in the past. It was a breakthrough for them that maybe what was needed was a different kind of family. At the end of the hour, they had redefined the

problem. Their collective energy had shifted to this larger, more ambitious issue: “How can we create a society where everyone feels included, as though belonging to one family?” Interestingly, to them this bigger issue didn’t seem as overwhelming as saving the traditional family, and they felt excited to continue working on it.

With a traditional facilitator aimed at decision-making, it is unlikely that either issue—the loss of family values or the creation of a global family—would have been addressed in the first place. Equipped with only logical thinking and control-oriented approaches, traditional decision-making gives us a limited range of problem-solving capability. It avoids emotional issues, impossible-to-solve issues, and problems that are outside our area of expertise or responsibility. But with Dynamic Facilitation and the prospect of Choice-creating, people can address what is really important to them, regardless of how hard it seems—and expect breakthroughs.

Because people grow in perspective and capability when they do Choice-creating, the process itself often becomes the solution. For example, many times I’ve facilitated groups working on the issue of “low trust in the organization.” Over the course of just three or four meetings, after people have expressed their frustrations and worked together to find new solutions, they usually look around the room and realize they don’t have that issue anymore. They all trust each other and often can hardly remember why the problem originally came up.

The Constitution Establishes Decision-making

Despite the huge benefits to be gained from Choice-creating, its use is relatively rare. This is largely because decision-making is imposed on us by the system in which we live. Consider the constitutional system with its balance of power, rule of law, elected representatives, voting, majority rule, adversarial legal structure, and Parliamentary Procedure.

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Elected representatives can't engage in a transformational conversation because, for the most part, they must adhere to the party line or to a set of predefined positions. They can't be open-minded or open-hearted on these issues or they will lose the support of key constituents. So they take pride in *not* changing their minds, in being consistent, and they become masters of Parliamentary game playing.

Voting sets up decision-making very much like the foreman did in the exercise when he presented his proposal, rather than sharing the data. In voting, specific ideas are presented, people debate them back and forth, and then they make their decision. Those in the minority are overruled, no consensus is sought, and creative thinking is discouraged.

Of course, the judicial system is entirely transactional. It is an adversarial process where decisions are made according to preset standards. The whole process is a competition. The kinds of questions it addresses are: Did this person break the law or not? Or, is this law constitutional or not? There is no concern about what would be best for everyone, for what people really want, or for reaching consensus. It's combat within the rules.

Parliamentary Procedure is transactional as well. In its time, it was a wonderful innovation, laying out publicly, for the first time, exactly how decisions were to be made. But the process is so inefficient that no corporation would make decisions this way. It's another case of trying to be rational and straightforward, but getting something far less. With it, there is no room for breakthrough insights. If one did miraculously occur, it would be ruled out of order and immediately squelched.

Furthermore, our official transactional mode of talking extends far beyond politics. It affects town council meetings, school board meetings, courtroom proceedings, Hollywood scriptwriters, and how businesses operate. It drives away TF by assuming agendas, measures, and the methods of control. Any time we are measured against set standards, like the threat of lawsuits, conversations

become transactionalized. Gradually, this systemic effect has come between doctors and patients, teachers and students, and employees and management in companies.

Of course, TA talking has value. There are many times when conveying information or engaging in decision-making is appropriate. But it causes problems when it is used inappropriately, when TF is needed. When people are in conflict, when people seek meaning or the involvement of others, or when problems seem overwhelming, TA talking cannot produce the desired results. It doesn't work when we need to go straight to the heart of the matter and talk about what is really going on.

Equipped with only transactional talking, we do not face the most important issues. We ignore them and, instead, focus on the kind of smaller issues that TA talking can address. It's like the old story of the man who loses his key and looks, not where he loses it, but under the lamp because the light is better there. Author and physicist, Fritjof Capra, describes the situation: "The Earth's forests are receding, while its deserts are expanding. Topsoil on our crop lands is diminishing, and the ozone layer, which protects us from harmful ultraviolet radiation, is being depleted. Concentrations of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere are rising, while the numbers of plant and animal species are shrinking. World population continues to grow, and the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. And yet, while public awareness of all these problems is rising dramatically everywhere, they are strikingly absent from the American political dialogue."

With the Citizens Amendment, the old TA structures in our system—like representatives, voting, the legal system, and Parliamentary Procedure—all remain. It's just that the Citizens Amendment adds a TF conversation and places it in a position of overall importance.

It assures the shift from decision-making to Choice-creating through simple structural devices—like the father adding the word

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“please,” or like the foreman presenting the *problem* instead of the *solution*. The *random sampling process*, for instance, brings together ordinary people who speak only for themselves. Unlike representatives, they can grow and change in their views. When they do, it's exciting and cause for celebration. Also, because the Wisdom Council is enacted as *an amendment to the Constitution*, the people it gathers are not a special interest group. They are placed outside of politics to form We the People, a general interest group. The *required unanimity* of the Wisdom Council disallows competition or power plays, and promotes cooperation. This assures that everyone's views will be heard and respected.

These seemingly small changes may be enough to make the necessary difference. But in addition, a *capable facilitator* is provided who, even if this person is not skilled in Dynamic Facilitation, can pretty much guarantee Choice-creating instead of decision-making.