



Let me tell you a story...

The Essence of Effective
Leadership Communication

Bob Galen | May 23, 2018



A surprise for everyone...

“The next big skill for today’s
agile leaders...
the ability to communicate--
when needed, clearly,
transparently, honestly, and
effectively”

imagine that...

Agenda

- 1 The challenge
 - Let me tell you a few “bad” stories
- 2 Where CAL fits
- 3 Focal points
 - Leader Conversations
 - Storytelling
- 4 A good way to improve...

Leadership Stories – The Bad

- A Sr. Director of Testing role. The team is dysfunctional and we want you to fix it. We'll be behind ANY decisions you make.
 - Crucial Conversations
- A site Director driving an agile transformation. The CEO is initiating it. The compelling story as to why
 - We're doing it because the CEO says we should do it.
 - Storytelling about Why
 - Connection

HBR article

2/3 of Managers
are
uncomfortable
communicating
with employees

More Stories – The Bad

- An Enterprise-level coach was unwilling to challenge leadership teams. The quote was simply – I don't have the energy for it...
 - Commitment to clear communications
 - <http://rgalen.com/agile-training-news/2016/2/20/is-it-worth-the-energy>
- Agile transformation where the leadership team was not aligned. However, no one wanted to talk about it. Instead, teams were being given conflicting constraints, goals, and direction. The agile results stalled. Eventually failed.
 - Leadership crucial conversations
 - Inconsistent storytelling

It takes...

Energy

Commitment

Focus

Courage

Risk



Where this fits in my CAL I?

- A focus on Leadership communication, via:
 - Frameworks
 - Conversation
 - Storytelling
 - Courage, intent, and effort
 - Practice

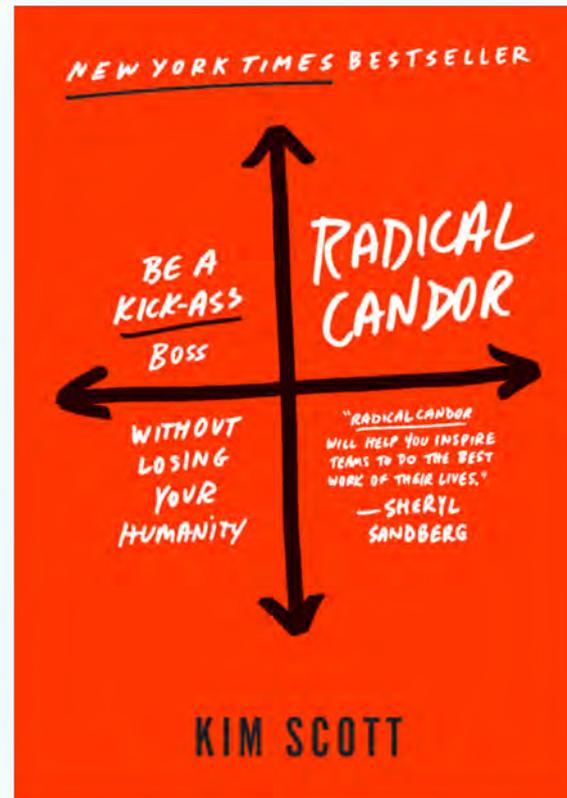
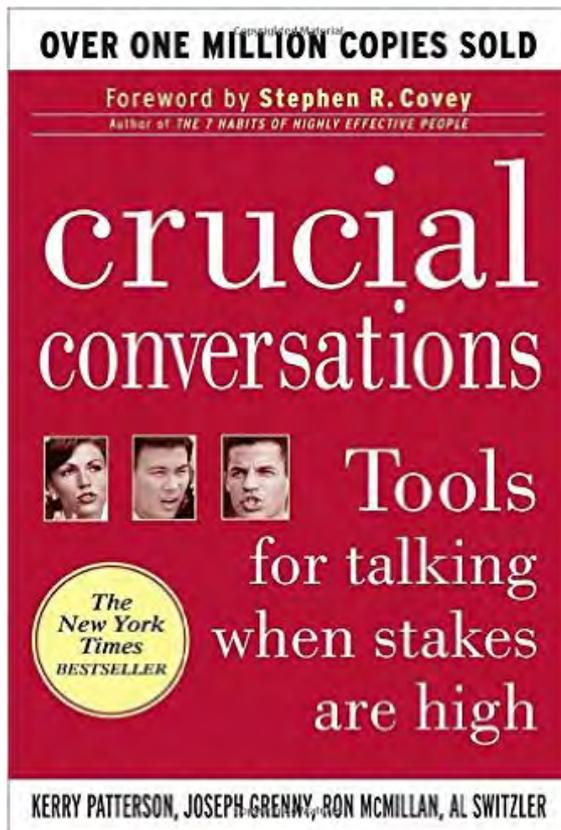
Directional Awareness

Team centric
(down)

Leadership
centric (up)

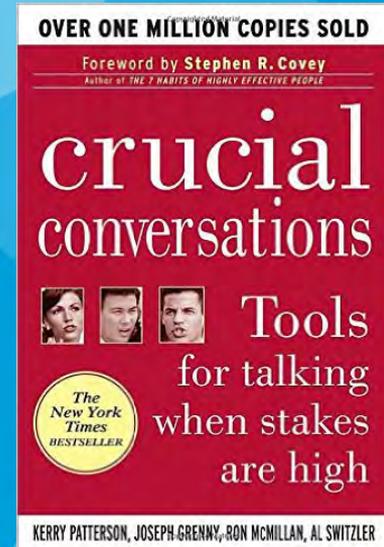
Peer centric
(laterally)

Conversation Frameworks



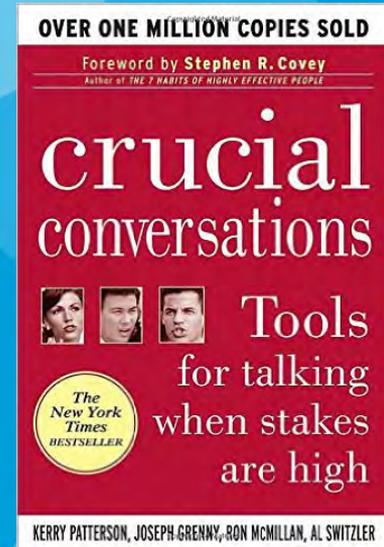
Crucial Conversations

- In agile contexts, leadership feedback is essential
 - Sprint & Release reviews
 - 1:1 meetings
 - Real-time opportunities
- I have a view that Pareto Principle rules here in that only 20% of leaders are willing to give 80% of the feedback
- And it needs to be honest...



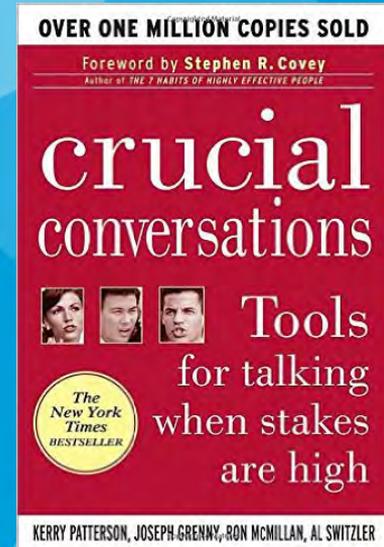
7 Key Steps

1. Start with the heart
 - *Open minded, empathetic, and positive intent*
2. Stay in dialogue
 - *Keep talking, don't shut down, engage*
3. Make it safe
 - *Listening, clarifying, observing body language*
 - *Intentions*



7 Key Steps

4. Don't get hooked by emotion
 - *Name it, acknowledge it, don't allow it to dominate*
5. Agree on a mutual purpose
 - *Goals, clarity, roles, outcomes*
6. Separate facts from story
 - *Allow feelings, stories, perceptions; but focus on / return to facts*
7. Agree a clear action plan



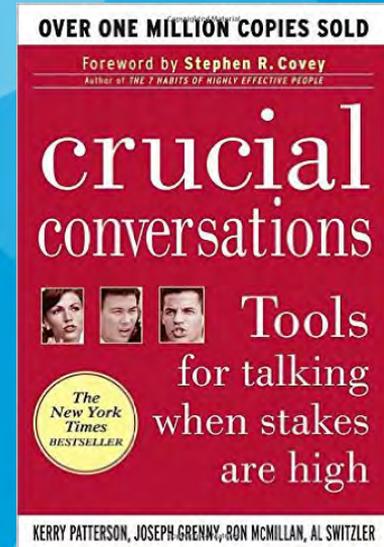
The 1-Thing

When it comes to risky, controversial, and emotional conversations, skilled people find a way to get all relevant information out into the open.

That's it. At the core of every successful conversation lies the free flow of relevant information. People openly and honestly express their opinions, share their feelings, and articulate their theories.

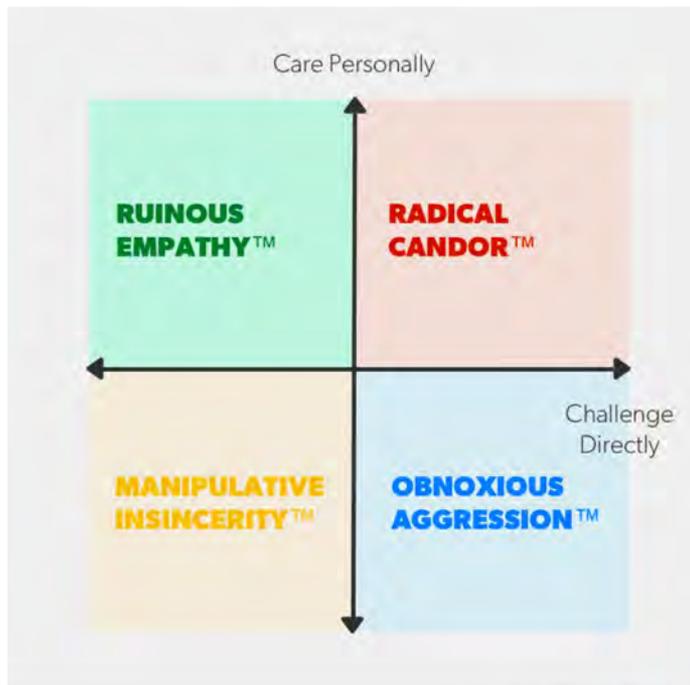
They willingly and capably share their views, even when their ideas are controversial or unpopular.

-- Crucial Conversations: Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler

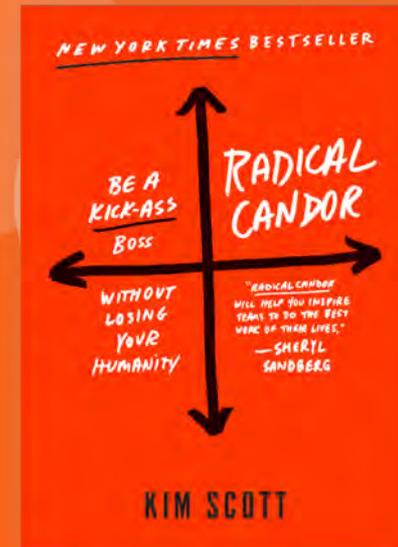


Radical Candor

- Kim Scott published Radical Candor in late 2016
Central story from Google w/Sheryl Sandberg
- Intro video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yODaILQ2IM>



Courtesy of 



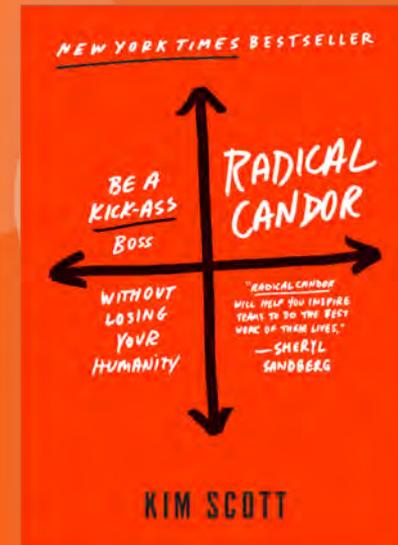
Radical Candor

- HIP-tool
 - Stay humble. Be helpful
 - Immediate. In person
 - In private (criticism), in public (praise)
 - Don't personalize

Practice giving feedback - don't hold it in

Don't dish it out if you can't take it. In fact, demonstrate your ability to take radical candor

Deeply care





Context Matters

- What steps have you taken before
- Maturity – Shu-Ha-Ri
- Culture and norms
- Business implications
- Safety implications
- Team implications
- Your skill & comfort zone
- Organizational support

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Coaching Conversations

A Simple Model

Opening Moves

- Permission
- Exploration
- Clarification
- Questions
- Listening
- Direction

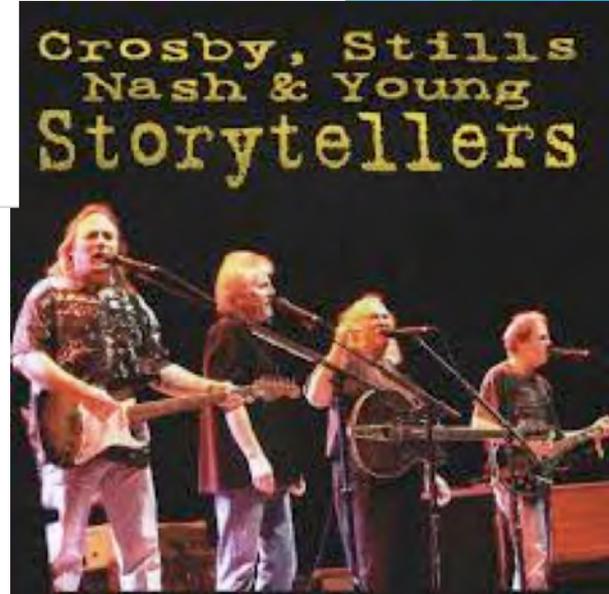
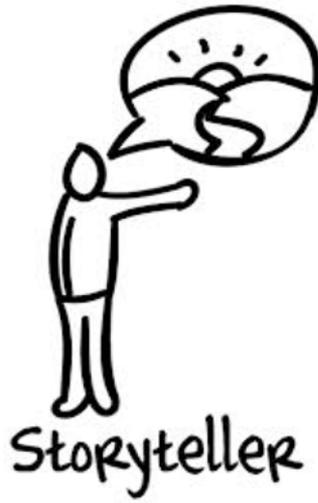
Middle Game

- Widening / brainstorming
- Options
- Strategies
- Ownership
- Actions
- Narrowing / planning

End Game

- Closure
- Next steps
- Action plans
- Who does what
- Repeat, confirmation
- Schedule

Storytellers



A Leadership Guide to Storytelling

8 Narrative Patterns

1. Motivate Others to Action

- *Using narrative to ignite action and implement new ideas*

2. Build Trust in You

- *Using narrative to communicate who you are*

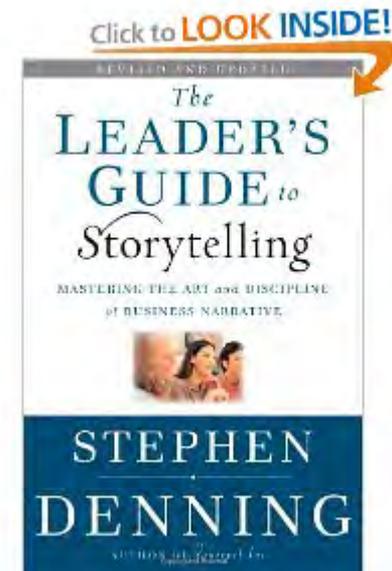
3. Build Trust in your Company

- *Using narrative to build your brand*

4. Transmit your Values

- *Using narrative to instill organizational values*

This can be a



A Leadership Guide to Storytelling

8 Narrative Patterns

5. Getting Others Working Together

- *Using narrative to get things done collaboratively*

6. Share Knowledge

- *Using narrative to transmit knowledge and understanding*

7. Tame the Grapevine

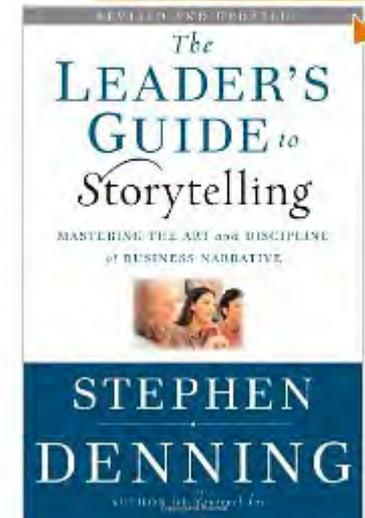
- *Using narrative to neutralize gossip and rumor*

8. Create and Share Your Vision

- *Using narrative to lead people into the future*

This can be a

Click to **LOOK INSIDE!**



Basic Framework

- Tell them what you're about to tell them
- Tell them
- Tell them what you just told them

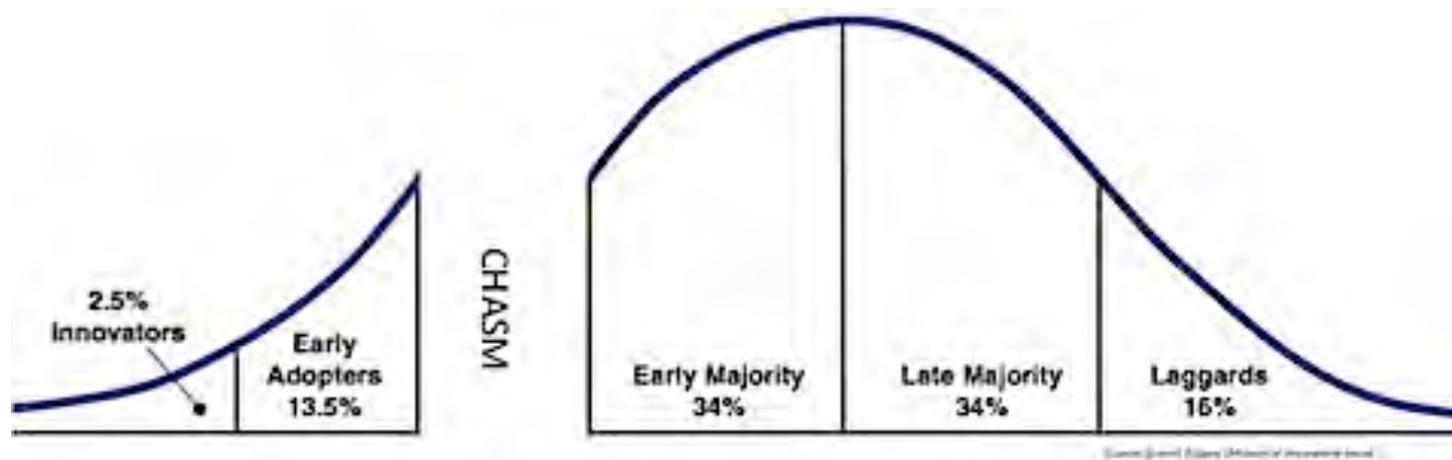
- Oreo Cookie Model (sandwich)

- From a Planning and a Strategy perspective, consider:
 - **Opening Moves**
 - **Middle Game**
 - **End Game**



The Pareto Principal Crossing the Chasm

- Communicate mostly to the 80%
- Communicate mostly to the Early Adopters and the Majority
- Tailor your message to these folks; reach out to their interests, connecting to them



Connecting to your Audience

- Reference their context & perspectives
- What would you want to hear IF you were in their shoes
- What sorts of history relates to your topic
- Provide imagery / paint a picture, visualize

- Walk about, make eye contact
- Talk about what you'd like to help the audience do, how you'd like to serve them
- Keep the Servant Leadership mindset in mind throughout





Leadership Communication

- First, shared tools
- Next, CAL I surfaces our challenges, via:
 - Ongoing reflection & journaling
 - Self-awareness
 - Situational awareness
 - Mining for real world communication examples and opportunities

Directional Awareness

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(laterally)



Leadership Communication

- After reflection & self-awareness, comes...
 - Practice!
 - **Coaching Dojo's** as a practice vehicle
- Situational conversations
- Situational storytelling
- Situational coaching
- Multi-directional scenarios

<http://rgalen.com/agile-training-news/2016/6/12/coaching-dojo-with-a-twist>

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Leadership Communication

- Coaching Dojo Dynamics
 - Triad: Sender, Receiver, Facilitator/Scribe
 - Time boxed
 - Role based – driven by a scenario
 - Role play (Key)
 - Get your “De Niro and Streep” on
 - Safe, peer-level critique & feedback
 - Practice, practice, practice

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Example Coaching Scenario

Mark is one of your finest managers. He has tremendous domain experience, you trust him, and has been with you for a long time. It's been escalated to you though that he isn't letting go with respect to trusting his agile teams. Every time the teams have a challenge, Mark engages to help them solve it. The ScrumMasters have even coined a term for it, they call it "swooping". As in – Mark swooped in five times today and interrupted how the team was handling their work. Of course, he is well-intentioned. However, it's severely impacting several team's ability to drive their own solutions and accountability.

-

- ✓ *What does your coaching conversation with Mark look like? And how do you confirm things are getting better?*



Example Conversation Scenario

You are the VP of Technology in a 500-person organization. You have a Product organization peer and you both are trying to work thru the CTO's directive to “go Agile” as a strategic play for the next year. The challenge is that you are not aligned. The CTO is expecting a near immediate 3x capacity increase by simply adopting agile methods. The VP of Product agrees and in some cases, is “doubling down” on that forecast. However, the capacity of the organization is “fixed” and you’re trying to show the VP leadership team the real-world capacity so that you can plan (and commit) more realistically.

- ✓ What does the pivotal conversation look like between you and the other VP leaders?
- ✓ What does the conversation with the CTO look like if all the leaders are aligned except you?

Wrapping Up

- In every private CAL I I've conducted so far, the last half day has become focused on:
 - Applying the learnings to leadership adjustments in the organizations strategic agile plans.
 - In other words, “Bob, move back...”
- And the focus has also been on:
 - Better vision/mission setting
 - Better conversations & storytelling
 - Improved leadership coaching

For example: “Let’s stop using the term ‘Agile’ in our C-Level and Board-level conversations. Instead, let’s focus on goals, and expected outcomes & results.”

CAL I Leadership
AHA!

We need to weave improved conversations, storytelling, and communication in general into the rollout of our strategic agile initiatives.

It will improve their “stickiness”

Q&A



Thank you for attending

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