

“The practice described in this book will transform your conversations—and deliver high performance. It’s that powerful.”

—Jay Campbell, SVP of Products
and Content, The Ken
Blanchard Companies

How to Build Your
Conversational Capacity,
Do Meaningful Work, and
Make a Powerful Difference

INFLUENCE IN ACTION

CRAIG WEBER
AUTHOR OF CONVERSATIONAL CAPACITY

PRAISE FOR
CRAIG WEBER
and
INFLUENCE IN ACTION

Every so often, I come across an idea that's so simple yet so powerful that it instantly changes my perspective. The sweet spot model within *Conversational Capacity* had this effect on me, describing how the best conversations and collaborations live in the paradoxical middle ground between passive and aggressive dysfunction. The methods described in *Influence in Action* will change how you behave in conversations ranging from chatting with peers to facilitating large high-stakes meetings. It's that powerful.

—**Jay Campbell**, SVP of Products and Content,
The Ken Blanchard Companies

Craig Weber has written a book everyone must read! It is a crazy world we live in, and we need a very different set of tools, techniques, and principles to navigate the unpredictable terrain and actually contribute positively to solving tough problems and shaping organizational life and our wider world. Craig draws on his experience working with thousands of executives from a broad array of institutions on the demands and requirements for making a sustainable difference. He presents a framework for leadership and change that is intellectually rigorous, extremely actionable, and delightfully inspiring. These are exciting and compelling ideas that you can use immediately to be a force for good and a dynamic change agent in business, government, or community life.

—**Dr. Dean Williams**, Faculty Chair, The Global Change
Agent program, Harvard Kennedy School, and author of
Real Leadership and *Leadership for a Fractured World*

Craig Weber has done it again. Following up on his first book, *Conversational Capacity*, Weber reminds us that conversation is perhaps the most powerful tool we have at our disposal in creating positive relationships and productive teams. Too often we take talk for granted, and we do not pay attention to what we are creating together. *Influence in Action* offers concrete steps that empower us to be mindful in our relationships and teams so that we can make a meaningful difference when and where it counts.

—**Frank J. Barrett, PhD**, Professor of Management and Organizational Behavior, Global Public Policy, Naval Postgraduate School, and author of *Yes to the Mess: Surprising Leadership Lessons from Jazz*

Craig Weber makes a convincing case that the most important skill we can cultivate as leaders—the most game-changing, life-changing, world-changing thing we can learn—is the ability to have better conversations in difficult circumstances. Then he shows us how to do it. *Influence in Action* is a practical guide for turning dialogue into a discipline, a map for finding the sweet spot where unspoken biases, hidden agendas, and entrenched positions yield to healthy, productive collaboration. I can't imagine a more essential read for complex times.

—**Chris Koch**, Chief Marketing Officer, Banyan Communications

I've known Craig for years through our work developing engineering leaders. His ideas and skills for having effective leadership conversations in challenging circumstances were a central part of engineering leadership development. If you're looking to gear up your ability to work well with others under pressure, have greater influence when it counts, and make a big difference in your team or organization, you must read this book!

—**Dr. John J. Tracy**, retired Chief Technology Officer and SVP of Engineering, Operations, and Technology, The Boeing Company

I count myself among those who loved *Conversational Capacity* and, after rereading it a few times, was looking for more. Craig delivers it in this book. He expands our understanding of the sweet spot and provides us with invaluable tools for taking our conversational capacity and our ability to be a positive influence in the lives of others to new heights.

—**Leo Bottary**, coauthor of *The Power of Peers* and author of *What Anyone Can Do*

The lack of self-awareness and purposeful communication can ruin any business. Craig established himself as the foremost thought leader on these issues in his seminal book, *Conversational Capacity*. In his new book, *Influence in Action*, Craig ups the ante with additional tools that empower leaders to transcend productive conversations to inspirational leadership. A personal game-changer, *Influence in Action* is a must-read for any current, or aspiring, leader.

—**Drew Fortin**, SVP of Sales and Marketing, The Predictive Index

Since reading *Conversational Capacity*, I have applied the concepts of candor and curiosity in my professional and personal life over the past five years and have seen the positive difference it has made. In *Influence in Action*, Weber illuminates the reality that progress and success depend as much on effective collaboration and communication as on resources and strategy. These truths inspire a renewed commitment to intentional leadership, focusing on what is possible, thoughtfully bringing your team on the journey, and remembering to have some fun along the way.

—**Maya H. Pack, MS, MPA**, Associate Executive Director,
South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health

Everyone wants to make a difference. *Influence in Action* will help you build the skills you need to make a difference that matters.

—**Karina Forrest-Perkins**, CEO, People's Center Clinic & Services

Influence in Action provides a simple, practical, yet incredibly powerful methodology for building your conversational capacity while making a profound difference in your teams, organization, or community. This book will transform the way you think about leadership and how to build a strong, adaptive, sustainable, visionary, high-performance organization.

—**Andy Restivo**, President and CEO, Creative Channel Services

Business leaders can fall in love with strategic planning and flavor-of-the-month leadership approaches. Yet, without active communication, the best intentions can stall and team dysfunction often takes root. *Influence in Action* provides CEOs and key executives the tools and a pathway to become leaders of engaged teams.

—**John Surge**, President, The A|E|C Agency, and Chair,
Think Tank Roundtable

Influence in Action delivers. As a practitioner who not only uses *Conversational Capacity* in my work but also teaches it, this new book is exactly what I've needed. It's not one of those follow-up books that simply repackages content from the first: *Influence in Action* provides both deeper insight into the basic discipline as well as foundational how-to practices to help you build and strengthen your conversational capacity. The insights and skills you'll learn will make you more effective in all your relationships, and you might just find the motivation and confidence to work on those difficult, important issues you've been avoiding.

—**Chris Soderquist**, President, Pontifex Consulting,
and creator of SysQ (Systemic Intelligence)

Craig's first book, *Conversational Capacity*, helped me to better understand myself and improve my interactions with others to such a degree that I recommend it as the singular most important text for institutional leadership of any kind. *Influence in Action* takes the ideas and skills he shared in *Conversational Capacity* a step further by providing action steps and opportunities for practice. Weber's work is deeply impactful on an individual level, but more important, it has the ability to transform institutions into places where growth and learning are cherished, and which yield better outcomes for all parties involved. The work isn't easy, but it's worth it!

—**Krista L. Taylor**, 2015 Educator of the Year for Cincinnati
Public Schools and coauthor of *Angels and Superheroes:
Compassionate Educators in an Era of School Accountability*

Communication is the cornerstone of culture. I spend over 1,000 hours a year with CEOs in private conversations. The top issue in almost every case is the avoidance of the most important conversation. *Influence in Action* is like a highlighter for *Conversational Capacity*. This book opens doors to successful relationships, enhanced effectiveness, and leadership growth using clear, real-world techniques.

—**Tom Cuthbert**, Vistage® Chair and CEO Coach, San Antonio, TX

Influence in Action is a critical next step into the sweet spot of conversational capacity. In this new book, Craig details the mental software necessary to eliminate dysfunctional interpersonal behaviors and to bring out the best in each individual. I recommend *Influence in Action* to everyone willing to embrace the daily leadership opportunities that await them and who would like to take their seat as part of a high-performance team.

—**Tom Van Dorpe**, President and CEO, VCA Consultants, Inc.

This book applies to all aspects of your life, professionally and personally. In fact, once you start practicing Craig Weber's *Conversational Capacity* model, you'll become more effective in all your relationships. It's work—real introspection and growth always is—but you have nothing to lose (except your dysfunctional need to be “right”) and everything to gain!

—**Lynn Marmer**, retired Group Vice President for Corporate Affairs, Kroger Co., and former Executive Director, The Child Poverty Collaborative of Cincinnati

For the past 30 years my mission has been to help build leadership capacity in line leaders and executives, helping them to create environments where people and their organizations can flourish. Somewhere during the last few years, I lost sight of my purpose. Exercising leadership has been replaced with learned silence. *Influence in Action* has helped me reframe my thinking and reexamine my skill set by providing a structured guide for doing meaningful work and making a powerful difference. This book has given me the desire, courage, and specific actions needed to expand my ability to stay in the sweet spot and get myself back in the game! Thank you, Craig, for such a motivational and practical guide!

—**Dr. Tony Herrera**, Chief Learning Officer and SVP of Learning and Development, LPL Financial

When we launched the Child Poverty Collaborative, we knew we needed to have deep, meaningful community conversations about an often controversial, even divisive subject: the causes and solutions of poverty. Craig Weber taught our 40-person Steering Council how to develop our conversational capacity. Craig's content was so strong and his style so inviting that I asked him to train our entire 120-person United Way staff team in several sessions. Diving into Craig's new book, *Influence in Action*, I was reminded of how important Craig's trinity of awareness, mindset, and skills are to the development of conversational capacity, while I picked up some great new tips for continuing to develop my conversational skills. If you can't have Craig guide you in person, reading and using *Influence in Action* is the next best thing. Better yet, do both!

—**Rob Reifsnnyder**, President, RCR Philanthropic Solutions, LLC, and retired President, United Way of Greater Cincinnati

Craig has written another masterpiece that addresses what I believe to be one of the most critical and important leadership/human functions: to communicate clearly, collaboratively, and effectively and influence others to do the same! Since most issues seem to revolve around human beings interacting with one another, the communication concepts and best practices that Craig has so expertly covered will make anyone willing to apply these have more success in their relationships, business, and life!

—**Bob Dabic**, Vistage Master Chair for Orange County
and Best Practice Chair for Los Angeles

Success in today's complex world requires agile and resilient teams. Craig Weber's work on conversational capacity provides practical tools to develop and empower people to meet these adaptive challenges. It's an immensely powerful framework for leaders building collaborative teams and organizations. *Influence in Action* takes the tool sets from his first book several steps further, equipping leaders and teams with additional skills and skill-building to shift their thinking and their behavior to better meet the messiness of tomorrow's challenges.

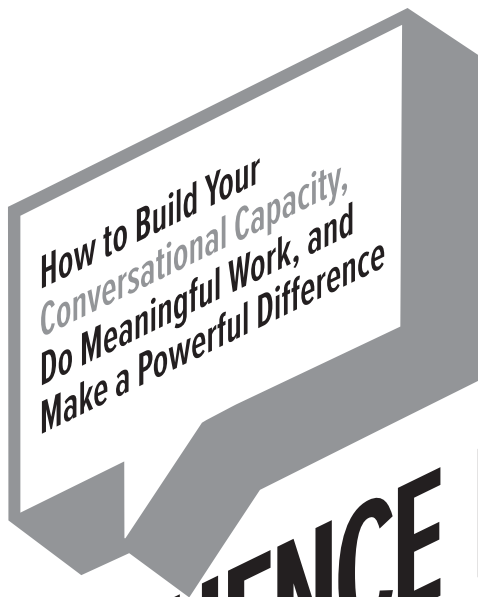
—**Lee Davis**, General Manager, Rheinmetall Defence Australia

Finally, it's here! As a student of conversational capacity for the past five years, I have been hungry for more ways to learn and practice. *Influence in Action* is just that—a practitioner's guide to sharpening your conversational capacity and getting the most out of your interactions in work and in life. I appreciate all the practice exercises, especially the personal plan worksheet, that help me get clear on the skills I want to improve by creating a focused road map—and accountability tool—to improve my thinking and my actions.

—**Rachel Ferencik**, MPA, health policy professional

Once again, Craig continues to write in a manner that is accessible to all readers, presenting ideas that are extremely practical. If you want to learn methodologies that you can employ to help you develop your teams, then this book will provide many of the tools that will help facilitate this process. Based on excellent research and relevant to current leaders, this book will help you build the conversational capacity of your team, ensuring future success in their performance.

—**Brendan Newell**, General Manager Competency Training,
Logicamms Australia



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CRAIG WEBER



New York Chicago San Francisco Athens London Madrid
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INTRODUCTION

The World Needs People Willing to Stand Up, Speak Out, and Make a Difference

*... insist on taking part in what is healthy, generous, and responsible.
Stand up, speak out, and when necessary fight back. Get down off
the fence and lend a hand, grab a-hold, be a citizen—not a subject.*

—EDWARD ABBEY

Inspiring and leading constructive change is never easy. Due to the organizational equivalent of Sir Isaac Newton's first law of motion, the status quo is preserved unless acted on by an *intervening* force. Put differently, when it comes to our teams, organizations, and communities, little progress is possible unless people stand up, speak out, and make a difference.


There is a growing need for people willing to do this. The soaring rate of technological, climatic, economic, social, ideological, and political turbulence makes the ability to foster constructive change more vital than ever. There is a surging need, in other words, for people willing to exercise leadership.

But let me be clear. By leadership I don't mean someone with all the right answers who steps in and takes charge. Real leadership isn't about position, expertise, or authority. *It's about the kind of work you're doing.* As Dean Williams puts it, someone exercising real leadership is working to "expand boundaries, cross divides, and build bridges to address shared challenges."¹ Seen this way, leadership is about helping people and groups solve tough problems by spurring adaptive learning. It's less about answers and more about questions. It's less about building silos and more about breaking them down. It's less about stroking your ego and more about stoking change.


This work may sound appealing, but there are a couple of sobering factors to consider. First, inspiring and leading such work is *difficult*. To facilitate meaningful change, you must get groups who tend to pull apart

to start working together, raise issues others would prefer to avoid, and encourage people to think and act in new and unfamiliar ways. As you do all this you must also deal with defensive people standing in the way of change because their egos—and often their livelihoods—are tied to the status quo. Real leadership, therefore, is awkward, stressful, and scary. It puts you in situations where your good intentions are easily overwhelmed by your need to *minimize* or “*win*.”* It’s challenging work.

But this work is not just difficult—it’s *dangerous*. The sad reality is that the people trying to make the biggest difference often pay the steepest price.



*The people trying to make the biggest difference
often pay the steepest price.*



Try to spark adaptive learning and meaningful change, for instance, and you risk being labeled a poor team player, a troublemaker, or a heretic. When the status quo fights back, you’re often demeaned, demoted, demonized, or worse. Threaten a sacred cow, and the villagers pick up their pitchforks.



Threaten a sacred cow, and the villagers pick up their pitchforks.



So our world needs more than people with noble intentions willing to exercise leadership; it needs people who can do so with mental and social dexterity, people able to provoke more learning than defensiveness, more head-nodding than eye-rolling, more focusing on the problem and less killing of the messenger. It needs people who can keep their behavior and their intentions aligned under pressure.

This book will help you build that competence. As you work through the chapters, you’ll learn to strengthen your mental, emotional, and social

* There is nothing wrong with winning. If you are playing tennis or chess, competing to win is what makes it fun. But in a conversation, the need to “*win*”—to be right, to get your way, to get people to adopt your point of view—is often counterproductive. It turns the conversation into a zero-sum contest that cripples learning. So, when I talk about the “*win*” tendency I always use quotation marks.

agility so that when you choose to exercise leadership—whether from a position of authority or not—you’ll be less defensive, mercurial, and scatterbrained and more open, purposeful, and clearheaded. You’ll learn to strengthen your conversational capacity so you’re better equipped to deal with those prickly villagers and their pointed pitchforks.

What You’ll Get Out of This Book

In the famous “marshmallow tests” conducted by the late Nobel Prize-winning psychologist Walter Mischel, a child was provided a choice between one treat right away—a marshmallow, cookie, or some other tasty snack—or two treats if the child waited 15 minutes or so. The tester then left the child alone in a plain room with a single treat sitting on the table in front of him or her. Many kids wolfed down the single tasty tidbit, while others mustered the self-control to wait for an additional goody. Simple enough.

But here’s what’s interesting. Longitudinal research found that the kids who set aside immediate gratification in pursuit of the greater reward (the second marshmallow) had significantly better SAT scores, higher levels of education, greater physical fitness, and lower rates of divorce. It turns out that people with greater self-discipline—who can set aside short-term gratification to achieve loftier objectives—*lead better lives*.

This is an important point to consider as you dive into this book. Every conversation about an important issue is, in essence, a “marshmallow test.” It provides you the choice to indulge your immediate desire to *minimize* or *“win”*—the ego-satisfying equivalents of the first marshmallow—or to exercise restraint and focus on balancing candor and curiosity—the purpose-driven and learning-focused equivalent of the second marshmallow.


By working through the pages that follow you’ll build the discipline to wait for that second marshmallow in the conversations that matter to you. More specifically, I have two main goals for this book:

- First, to help you build your *personal* conversational capacity—your ability to remain smart, steady, and purposeful under pressure—so that you’re increasingly adept at exercising real leadership when it counts.
- Second, to show you how to do all of this as you work to build a healthier and more productive workplace.


Your Personal Work

I've never met anyone who enjoys incompetence, relishes mediocrity, or dreams of lacking influence. Nor have I met anyone who revels in being manipulated, seeks out opportunities to react defensively, or delights in seeing their behavior and their intentions part ways. But while no sane person seeks these experiences, everyone falls prey to them from time to time (often more frequently than that). One big reason: They're all consequences of low conversational capacity.

This book will help you avoid these unpleasant experiences by strengthening your ability to keep your intentions and behavior aligned when it counts. And, unlike many books on the market, it'll take you beyond good ideas to provide clear and tangible skills for putting those ideas to use.



Whenever you choose to exercise leadership your conversational capacity is a pivotal variable that determines whether you make a constructive difference or a bigger mess.



Treating Work as Your Dojo

Like any competence worth acquiring—whether it's playing the piano, performing brain surgery, or flying a plane—building this discipline takes practice. Fortunately, if you know where to look, then places to practice are easy to find. Your workplace is full of them. Do you see policies that subvert your organization's strategy or decrease your team's effectiveness? Do you see a manager behaving in a way that makes their team dumber when their job is to make the team smarter? Is there an opportunity for improvement that is being missed or ignored? Are your meetings unproductive? Are there "baton passes" between people and groups where the baton keeps getting dropped? Are there interpersonal or intergroup relationships in need of repair? Is the decision-making in your team unclear and inconsistent? Are major problems continually downplayed or avoided? Is your organization facing hard new realities that people refuse to confront? Are people clinging to the status quo when major change is required? Are there festering conflicts that generate lots of heat and dysfunction but little light and progress?

If you answered *yes* to any of these questions, congratulations; you've got a place to practice, learn, and grow. By rolling up your sleeves and addressing these kinds of issues, you'll learn to do the following:

- Make any meeting, team, project, or conversation *smarter* than it would be without you.
- Exert greater *influence* and help good ideas get the traction they deserve.
- Boost your *competence* and *confidence* for dealing with tough issues and stressful circumstances.
- Remain *levelheaded* and *learning-focused* in frenzied circumstances that cause most people to shut down or go ballistic.
- Strengthen your *emotional* and *social intelligence*.
- Increase your *mental toughness*.
- Participate in your teams, projects, and organizations in a way that *cultivates the higher aspects of your humanity*—candor, curiosity, courage, humility, conviction, and compassion.
- Transform your workplace into a *dojo* by treating problems as precious opportunities for practice.
- Earn far more than just an income from your work by developing skills you can use in every aspect of your life.

How to Use This Book

This book will help you think differently, acquire new skills, and take more effective action, even when circumstances conspire against you. But it's a two-way street. For this book to help you, *you've got to work with me*. To that end, here are a few suggestions for how you and I can work together to make this the most useful experience possible.

Read My First Book

For starters, please read my first book, *Conversational Capacity: The Secret to Building Successful Teams That Perform When the Pressure Is On*. If you have read it, but it's been a while, I'd strongly suggest a thorough review.

Partner Up

I suggest teaming up with at least one other person who is interested in building their own competence. Then help each other along by sharing

insights and goals, holding each other accountable, and keeping each other focused on moving forward.

Pace Yourself

Like a smart new runner, don't try to cover too much distance at once. Focus on a couple of high-leverage practices to bring more balance to your *current* behavioral patterns and then slowly adopt more practices. This is important, for in the same way that novice runners can burn themselves out by pushing too hard too fast, you can limit your long-term learning by trying to do too much in a hurry. It's best to build up your conversational capacity slowly, steadily, and resolutely.

Get Curious When You Fail

Face it. You're going to trip up. You're going to fumble the ball. Sometimes you'll drop candor when you should speak up and take a stand. Other times you'll ditch curiosity when you ought to keep quiet and listen. It's going to happen. Just admit it. When you do slip, the important thing is not to waste the experience by getting overly self-critical and beating yourself up about it. It's better to treat the experience as an opportunity to learn by getting curious and exploring it. "How interesting? In our meeting today I triggered into '*win*' mode and called the sales guy a 'hypo-frontal halfwit.' What triggered me? And what would be a better way to manage my reaction next time I find myself in a similar situation?" Treat your lapses and slipups as opportunities to learn rather than occasions for self-flagellation.

Be Patient

Accept that progress will be deliberate and cumulative, not effortless and instant. You'll do a brilliant job in a meeting in the morning, only to lose discipline and snap back to old habits that same afternoon. Don't worry about it. Adopt the long perspective and focus on the trend over time.

Be Persistent

"Permanence, perseverance and persistence in spite of all obstacles," said Thomas Carlyle, "distinguishes the strong soul from the weak." The ability to remain candid and curious under pressure is a discipline that takes practice to achieve. You must have the mental toughness to stick with it.

Practicing for a week before giving up will yield the same result as practicing tennis for a week and then putting down your racket or practicing the piano for a week and then never again touching the keys.

Use Your Context

You don't learn these skills in a vacuum, so look for opportunities to improve a process or relationship and use them as practice. At the very least, you'll build your skills. At best, you'll also inspire meaningful progress on an issue that matters.

Maintain "Structural Tension"

In his book, *The Path of Least Resistance*, the composer Robert Fritz suggests that creative energy comes from focusing on two things at once: Your *current reality* and a *clear vision* of where you want to go. Both are essential. So be brutally honest with yourself about your tendencies and your current ability to manage them well, while at the same time keeping a sharp focus on the conversational competence you want to achieve.


Take Your Ego to the Mat

To use it to its full advantage, take your ego to the mat and read the book in a humble, curious, compassionate way.* Focus on stretching the boundaries of your conversational competence and on how much you are learning, rather than inflating your sense of self-importance or how much you think you know.


Look in the Mirror

This is as much a *warning* as it is a suggestion: Beware of the urge to use the frameworks for blaming or shaming. Avoid the temptation to critically assess the behavior of *others*, and, instead, look in the mirror and critically assess your own. Yes, you need the ability to recognize when others are out of balance, but *only so you can respond in a balanced way*, not to judge them, mock them, or feel superior. Remember, as you build your conversational capacity, a sure sign of progress is that *your humility is going up and your arrogance is going down*.

* For a short refresher on the concept of "taking your ego to the mat," see *Conversational Capacity*, pages 118–120.



*As you build your conversational capacity, a sure sign of progress
is your humility is going up and your arrogance is going down.*



Have Fun

Adopt a serious yet playful attitude as you work through the pages. Then apply what you learned.

Make It Your Own

Experiment. Read other related material. Share what you're doing and learning with others. Be creative. Use this book well and by the time you reach the last page it will be as much yours as it is mine.

Where We Go from Here

*You cannot get through a single day without having an impact
on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and
you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.*

—JANE GOODALL

To build the discipline to remain in the sweet spot—both candid and curious—in an important conversation, you'll need to strengthen your competence in three interrelated areas: disciplined *awareness*, a guiding *mindset*, and a practical *skill set*. This book will help you cultivate all three areas.

To kick things off, in the next chapter I'll share a story that will set up the rest of the book by reviewing a few basic concepts from *Conversational Capacity* and introducing you to a few new ones. From there, I'll move into the three main parts of the book in which you'll explore ways to sharpen your *awareness*, transform your *mindset*, and build your *skill set*.

Awareness (Chapters 2–5)

This section will focus on the relationship between conversational capacity and three kinds of awareness:

1. *Disciplined awareness.* The ability to direct your attention and hold it on the object of your choice.
2. *Personal awareness.* The ability to train your mindful awareness on your internal state so you quickly recognize when you're at risk of being triggered. This ability, you'll see, is the key to three mental activities: *catching*, *naming*, and *taming*.
3. *Situational awareness.* You'll also learn to focus on people, patterns, and purpose; on what your team or organization is trying to accomplish; and whether behavior—yours and that of others—supports or subverts that goal.

Mindset (Chapters 6–9)

The mindset is the key to building your conversational capacity because it *refocuses* your attention on clear values and goals that you *choose* to make more important than feeling comfy or being right. In this book, I'll not just show you how to remain more learning-focused under pressure, I'll introduce an expanded set of characteristics that bring more power and concentration to your conversational North Star.

Skills (Chapters 10–14)

The skill set consists of four basic behaviors for making the conversational capacity mindset active, skills that help you keep your actions and your intentions aligned under pressure. To be clear, these behaviors won't rid you of your knee-jerk emotional reactions. They'll just help you act more deliberately and effectively despite them. Put differently, you'll be less a victim of your habitual defensive reactions because you'll be able to *replace* them with the proper skills for staying balanced. I'll therefore help you dramatically improve your understanding of these skills, as well as your ability to employ them.

You'll also explore a variety of ways to turn your workplace into a space for regular practice, a dojo for practicing these behaviors while you're doing meaningful work. Finally, to wrap it all up, I'll help you put together a personal plan for making the learning stick.

One Last Thing

I'm not writing this book as the perfect master of my tendencies, but as a practitioner repeatedly humbled by the power of his *min* and "*win*" reactions to subvert his good intentions. I offer this book as someone who works hard at better managing my emotions every day of my life, and I'm encouraging you to do the same. It requires serious effort, but it's worth it. Why, you ask? I'll give you five reasons:

- First, learning these skills is easier than not learning them. When you lack the ability to stay balanced and non-reactive under pressure, the world is a far more intimidating and frustrating place.
- Second, by learning these skills you'll bring more meaning to your work. You spend a tremendous amount of time in the workplace to earn a living. Wouldn't it be nice to get far more out of your time than just a paycheck?
- Third, even if the organization never improves you'll still bolster your personal effectiveness. In this sense, the workplace becomes your own personal gymnasium for building your conversational capacity; it is something you'll take with you everywhere in life—to your home, friends, community, new roles, or future places of employment.
- Fourth, as you grow more socially intelligent and emotionally disciplined you'll set a constructive example that sets you apart from your more volatile, less disciplined associates.
- Fifth, when you think about it, what else are you going to do with your time at work? I mean, really. If you have to work, you might as well get more out of it than just remuneration, a cynical attitude, a facial tic or an ulcer, and the depressing sense that you're wasting a big chunk of your life. It is better to put in the additional effort to build your ability to converse in the sweet spot, and, in the process, increase your strength, balance, and resilience. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

My main point is this: While it's possible to avoid the work of building your conversational capacity, *it's impossible to avoid the consequences of not building it.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CRAIG WEBER is the founder of The Weber Consulting Group, an alliance of experts committed to helping people build healthy, engaged, and adaptive organizations. He shows people and teams how to improve their performance by treating dialogue as a discipline. An award-winning consultant, advisor, and speaker, he has worked with leaders and teams from 40 different countries and from such diverse organizations as: Boeing, Kaiser Permanente, Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), Ingram Micro, Pfizer, SAP, Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (PanCAN), The Medical University of South Carolina, Clif Bar, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), NASA, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Air Force, and Vistage International, among others. He is the author of *Conversational Capacity: The Secret to Building Successful Teams That Perform When the Pressure Is On*.

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