



Interactions and conversations



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While thinking about the concept 'interaction' it is important to understand that the traditional business view and the real world's view on the interaction do not really match. When businesses interact, they want to achieve something. When people interact, they want to understand something.

Interactions are no process steps

In order to understand the importance of an interaction, it is mandatory that you understand the meaning of the term 'interaction' correctly. More importantly, you have to learn to understand and to value this meaning from a customer or a partner perspective.

In general, when we talk about interactions in a business context, interactions are planned for. They have purpose. Therefore, organisations have the tendency viewing them as regular steps in a process. Most often, steps somewhere at the end of the process, but still process steps. Step y delivers product x to customer z. There are some variables such as delay and accuracy, but in essence, that's it. Product x successfully delivered to customer z.

However, that's not the real world's view on things happening. Interactions in the real world always bring **context**. Not a single customer buys a book to check whether your business processes will deliver the book on time at their premises. People buy books because there is some personal, emotional thing that makes them want to have this book.

Of course, the fact that you deliver the correct book on time is important, but it is not enough. All the fuzzy, emotional things that go with the complete sequence of ordering and receiving are the things that will determine whether or not this customer will buy again. Did the organisation fulfil his/her desire to acquire this book in the most appropriate way?

Making that you fulfil this desire (and not simply the order) in the most appropriate way is the greatest thing a company can do. It also is the only thing. All the rest is of little value. And this is what makes the difference between a good and a really great company.

Now, all of this might seem obvious, but it isn't.

Interactions bring understanding

As said, interactions are important because they bring context and understanding. In above example, they convey the understanding that you are merely a good versus a really great company. They determine whether or not your company will be allowed again in their comfort zone.

As [David Bohm](#) once stated in 'On Creativity', instead of having formal meetings to solve problems, people should have conversations.

Typical examples of such conversations are the traditional indian gatherings where every participant seems to chitchat over seemingly irrelevant personal views on things happening. Nobody seems to address a specific problem, let alone come up with a solution. Yet, this interaction of individual views brings understanding for the group. It seems like a bizarre way to solve problems, but it works. It is decision making by automatic consensus.

The same type of value creation occurs during the coffee breaks at seminars or other gatherings. People that do not know each other meet accidentally. There is no planned agenda for the discussion. They just talk about the stuff that is on their mind. Yet, most attendees will tell you that these informal interactions are the best part of these events.

Interactions are like conversations. The formal thing that is achieved during the interaction is not the most important one. The understanding is. It is about what people value. Therefore, interactions are the mechanism behind word of mouth.

Last Friday, a taxi drove me home. The ride took only 10 minutes. I had some chitchat conversation with the driver. He now wants to buy my old car.

Never underestimate the potential of interactions.




[On creativity](#)
[David Bohm](#)

About the author



Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.


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