



## *INDIVIDUAL & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT*

*“What really matter in our lives is measured through conversation.”  
-Peter Block, Stewardship*

Who we are and what is important to us are discernable in the conversations we engage in. Some of these conversations are internal and some are with other people. Many of these people are key players or “stakeholders” in our lives – peers, bosses, investors, customers, family members. They have a vested interest in who we are and the choices we make. This can be rich. It can be challenging.

On the basis of conversations initiated and avoided, included and omitted, we make choices that shape our businesses and our lives. My work is to serve people like me and you in making choices that are both purposeful and strategic; choices that contribute to outcomes that are fulfilling and supportive of our individual work and lives and of the greater communities to which we all belong. Towards that end I create programs and practical applications-based approaches for personal and organizational development.

### *Individual Development*

To learn more about individual development programs that are offered publicly please return to [www.glennagerard.net/offerings.html](http://www.glennagerard.net/offerings.html) and take a walk through the Presence Walkabout programs. All these programs may also be adapted for intact groups within organizations. For more information on that possibility please contact me at [glenna@glennagerard.net](mailto:glenna@glennagerard.net)

## *Organizational Development*

**Lessons Learned** from working for 30+ in and with organizations in for-profit and not-for-profit sectors guide my work within organizational contexts.

### **Programs must...**

- Ⓢ be linked to a clear business/organizational initiative
- Ⓢ provide skills and processes that contribute positively to a real business/organizational objective
- Ⓢ give people practical, on-the-ground skills
- Ⓢ give people the opportunity to work with real life issues in any and all learning experiences
- Ⓢ contribute to developing competency among internal professionals

With these lessons in mind I design and help implement processes and skill-based programs that enhance people's ability to communicate effectively and make thinking together a positive and useful (versus chaotic and dissatisfying) experience. A further outcome is a foundation of trust and credibility among people working together to produce specific results.

**I believe in partnering with internal professionals** to ensure the development of internal competence. This practice is firmly grounded in the assumption that internal folks will always be best qualified to do the work if they have the knowledge and skills needed.

### **Some Selected Applications**

- Ⓢ Strategic Decision Making
- Ⓢ Fostering Collaborative Trust-Based Workplaces
- Ⓢ Leadership Development
- Ⓢ Coaching as an Ongoing Partnership Conversation – towards enhanced performance, morale and retention
- Ⓢ Assessments of communication processes in the workplace – towards improved retention, morale, and productivity
- Ⓢ Project and Meeting Facilitation

**A few “stories/cases”** contributed by clients.

*I offer my deepest gratitude to the five people who have written these stories with the intention of painting pictures of some aspects of my work.*

*Glenna Gerard*

**COLLABORATION; listening; weaving ideas; drawing others out;** these are the skills that Glenna Gerard has helped Cargill's North American and Latin American leaders develop during their year long leadership development process.

Glenna has worked with over 200 of Cargill's high potential managers in their quest to build their capacity as leaders. The process is one that integrates the teachings of both courses that focus on the participant's personal leadership perspectives and

sessions that focus on interpersonal leadership. The session Glenna leads has been particularly helpful in moving the group from being a collection of learners to truly being a learning community.

As with all of the work that I've seen Glenna complete, the session is based on experiential learning. The process gives the participants the opportunity to try on a variety of conversation methodologies as well as focus on specific conversational skills such as listening, suspension of judgement, assumption identification, inquiry and reflection. Storytelling, dialogue circles and café learning are all techniques that the participants are exposed to. They are given the opportunity to struggle with moving out of their usual telling and selling mode and into one of reflection and listening. One of their key tasks is to identify when and where they can and should apply conversations of this nature. Because of the experiential design of the program, the participants receive the side benefits of exploring and learning about a topic of great interest to them, as well as getting to know each other on a deeper level.

*Amy Cullen*

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***IN THE SPRING OF 1994, I attended an Introduction to Dialogue*** training in Essex, Massachusetts co-led by Glenna Gerard. Two of my colleagues and I were attending from the Fetzer Institute, a private operating foundation and think tank based in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Even though our meetings of top-level scientists, academics, and social activists aim for an experience where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, we rarely experience it, especially when there's a lot of diversity present.

At Essex, with the most diverse group of 25 people I've ever been with, I had an experience of group synergy that blew the lid off what I thought was possible in groups. We were thinking together in a way that didn't just tolerate our diversity or even honor it. The diversity was actually essential to our synergy! And no one had to give up their identity or viewpoint to fit in. The stronger that each of us stepped forward, the stronger the group became.

In the years following Essex, the Dialogue Group, of which Glenna is a founder, has provided training for our entire staff and Board of Trustees (about 70 people). The process helped us address some difficult race relations issues within our organization, and led to the creation of a handbook of shared values, practices, and policies, "Shared Agreements for A Community of Freedom" that was co-created by staff and management.

We've also begun to integrate the principles of dialogue, with Glenna's coaching, into many of the meetings of our think tank. Slowly, step by step, the magic of Essex is finding its way into every group that I, and Fetzer, and all our partners are a part of. This is powerful, transformative stuff!

*Tom Callanan*

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***ONE OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES a large manufacturing organization*** has to face is how to simultaneously get high volume, high quality output, and do so without sacrificing the safety and health of the individuals who make up the manufacturing workforce.

In our predominately transactional culture, this challenge has been great. We work in a high-volume, high-intensity manufacturing environment that runs 24X7. Our outstanding results as an organization have come often at the sacrifice of our people. In early 1998, we began to look at ways we could continue to get outstanding and safe manufacturing results through high quality working relationships. During this exploration we sought the help of Glenna Gerard.

We knew that excellent safety results were built on a foundation of valuing each individual intrinsically. Yet we did not have a tradition of building relationships to get better results. So we began a program designed to use dialogue as a way for teams to discover each other's paradigms about safety, build relationships with one another and, most importantly, take individual and collective action toward creating a safe environment.

This was a substantial shift away from the classic engineering problem solving that our organization was so accustomed to using. At first it was tremendously ambiguous and challenging to explain how sitting in a circle and talking as a team would actually build relationships and get better safety results. Yet, dialogue took off in our organization—it filled a deeply felt need by the individuals in our organization to be heard by each other. It also helped them to see new ways of thinking and behaving with each other to create a safe working environment.

Today, dialogue is used frequently by supervisors and managers to get at challenging issues outside of the safety arena. At the outset I never would have believed that simply putting time into divergent thinking and talking would impact our organization in such a valuable way.

A big part of the success of this work has been our relationship with Glenna. The work has been systemic vs. programmatic. Additionally, Glenna has been accepted readily by our organization—a task not easily accomplished in an organization that is quite skeptical of consultants. Glenna has always been concerned about how we get the right results for our organization. She is the kind of consultant I wish I could work with all the time.

*-Leading High Tech Manufacturing Organization*

***WHAT DOES IT MEAN to truly be with a person, group or organization as a whole?*** And, how can I be with others in a way that is "real", free, alive, exploratory, ripe with new insights and breakthroughs in collective thinking and filled with effective and generative relationships?

My meeting with Glenna - her person and her work - helped me to experience some deeper answers to these questions. My exploration into deeper dialogue with Glenna took my work in organization development and coaching to a level that touched and affected me and my work with individuals, teams and organizations in a deeper, more 'real', more vibrant and, thus, a more purposeful and creative way. Whether I am with a vice-president of engineering or a general manager or a group of marketing managers or customer service representatives, the work of dialogue is essentially the same. Alone and together, we inquire into the truth of what is going on with great curiosity and open-heartedness and without judgment, preconceived notions nor predictions; we listen deeply for greater understanding and for new thinking that emerges; we observe unconditionally and name what seems to be calling for expression by us; we let the actions arise from these new discoveries with radical trust and commitment; we are open to outcome; and, we begin again.

There is a practice field that is being created through Glenna's work. It is a field that takes intention, love and mindfulness to continue to nurture and grow. In these times of chaos, change and opportunity, it is this very field that holds us and makes it possible for us to continue to live and work together in greater harmony, learning, development and creativity.

*Teresa Ruelas*

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***PARCO FOODS, L.L.C. is a specialty cookie manufacturer*** located in the Chicago-land area. Our experience with Glenna has taken two forms.

*IN THE SPRING OF 1999* our management team had been practicing the principles of dialogue based on our study of the Fifth Discipline for two years. We had experienced a lot of success in resolving a number of business issues by better understanding each person's viewpoint. We also learned to ask clarifying questions, instead of debating our opinions. However, we had arrived at a point where we simply didn't know how to continue to develop our capacity. Fortunately, someone referred me to Glenna Gerard, one of the authors of *Dialogue: Rediscover the Transforming Power of Conversation*.

Glenna came to a meeting of our senior management and led a four- hour workshop. The seminar included a number of concepts related to different aspects of conversation, which we then practiced during a dialogue session. Since then the management team has been more able to self facilitate their own meetings and participate in a wider range of conversations. Based upon concepts presented in the workshop, at each meeting we focus on one particular skill involved in quality

conversations. In addition, participants are able to identify specific communication skills they need to work on and have acquired a better understanding of the various aspects of conversation, which they have been able to apply to their day to day activities and interactions.

*IN MY ROLE AS VICE PRESIDENT OF CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT*, I facilitate and oversee the facilitation of a wide range of group activities. Glenna has been a wonderful mentor at a relatively advanced skill level. I and one of my staff members who is also a talented facilitator have worked with Glenna by phone on a monthly basis to discuss strategies using dialogue to strengthen group dynamics and build the communication skills of a number of groups, teams and departments. Since we started these coaching sessions, the design and delivery of my meeting material has greatly improved along with a greater sense of confidence that my skills have gone from acceptable to remarkable.

*Cheryl Jekel*

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