



## Productive Conversations

*Productive Conversations provides the capability to respectfully challenge the assumptions of others, effectively question others to uncover their knowledge, and skillfully defend their own findings. The interaction skills are critical tools in the quest to function as a learning organization.*

Collaboration within a team or across divisions depends on the willingness of individuals to expose their own reasoning behind their conclusions and to invite others to challenge their thinking. But that vital competence is only rarely displayed in daily organizational meetings and encounters.

*Participant: "I am now able to get a better understanding of others' position – I know how and what to ask."*

Too often in meetings and one-on-one conversations people talk past each other with both people leaving the conversation feeling frustrated and unheard. This workshop teaches the skills of inquiry - to respectfully probe the other person's thinking; and the skill of advocacy - to clearly make your own position clear to others. The faculty, Dr. Dixon, Kaplan and Minahan, have taught Productive Conversations within DIA to both senior executives and to many groups of analysts and other frontline professionals.

*Participant: "I have been surprised a lot, I thought I was inquiring of others effectively, but actually I was using very leading/controlling questions of others – and they knew it."*

### Workshop Design

The workshop involves three days over two months, with individual coaching sessions held between each meeting. The workshop days are highly interactive, functioning as collaborative work sessions dealing with participants' daily interaction challenges. Participants bring to the workshop cases based on their own work situations and engage other members to help them see how they could have been more effective. Between workshop sessions participants apply their growing interaction skills in their own setting.

### Three full days

- Preceding the first day
  - each participant holds a discussion with one of the faculty about the workshop, their own communication skills and difficulties and issues the team/organization is facing
- Each participant writes a case for each meeting; a conversation they've had that did not go as well as they would have liked
- Small group discussions of the cases (5-6 participants with a faculty member)
- Coaching calls/visits are held between days one and two and again between days two and three.

*Participant: "The productive conversations workshop is structured well and gives people time to learn and apply what they learn over a few months time. It helps us to slow down and analyze what we think and what we say to people to allow deeper and clearer communication."*