

C-IQ Conversational Intelligence

by Cathy C. Bonczek

As I coach numerous speakers this week (it's annual meeting time somewhere in the world!), I keep reminding my clients that they should stop making presentations, and engage in what I call "heightened" conversations. By this I mean, they should use a conversational tone but rehearse the content so it comes out clearly and engagingly.

On a practical level, this means using a natural tone of voice and every day semantics - losing the business jargon and the slightly fake "presenter voice." It is so much more engaging for the audience to be "in conversation" with you than to feel as if they're attending a college lecture.

As it turns out, there's much more to having a conversation than many of us know; there's neuroscience underpinning what happens during conversations.

I've just read an excellent article: The Neuroscience of Conversations by Niklas Bilboa and Richard Glaser. I recommend you google the article and read it in full.



Photo: by Cathy C. Bonczek

Here are some of the ideas that resonated with me:

Conversations trigger the brain and set our mood, our ability to feel safe and even our ability to look forward and anticipate the future. **Conversational intelligence is known as C-IQ.**

As we engage in conversations, the brain responds physically and emotionally and starts to create hormones and neurotransmitters that either make us feel safe and trusting, or fearful and anxious.

Clearly, we want to evoke the "feel good" conversational style. When this happens the brain will produce higher levels of dopamine, oxytocin, endorphins and other biochemicals to create a sense of well-being.

There are 3 kinds of conversations:

1. **Transactional Conversations** - these involve asking and telling, confirming what we know and giving and receiving information.
2. **Positional Conversations** - these involve advocating and inquiring, defending what you know and expressing strong opinions.
3. **Transformational Conversations** - these are co-created events involving sharing and discovering. These kind of conversations lead to more innovation, insight and connection.

Our brain is wired to detect either trust or distrust in conversations. When our conversations trigger a safe space, we increase our ability to think strategically, improve our foresight and empathize more effectively. The practice of conversing with your audience, rather than presenting to them, could be the basis of a long-term, trusted business relationship.