



People-Powered Development **and** Change

## Nine Conversations in Leadership™

Developing a world of leaders,  
one conversation at a time.



For organisations responding to the needs of marginalised communities around the world, strong leadership is vital.

Challenges are many: complex operating environments, scarce resources, impossible targets, high staff turnover: it's a tough brief for senior managers.

So how can organisations build great leaders who will deliver on outcomes, at scale, with integrity and commitment to learn?

And how can you help them build confident and high-performing leadership teams at all levels?

**It's not easy.  
But it's what we're  
good at.**

## Introduction

At People Zone we design and deliver engaging interventions which address the myriad challenges of aid and development work. Key to our approach is using participatory processes which involve staff in exploring challenges and finding solutions.

Our flagship programme is Nine Conversations in Leadership™ - a uniquely powerful intervention which promotes leadership throughout the organisation, catalysing people to step up as leaders, and supporting their long-term development.

The intervention consists of nine facilitated conversations that occur within a small peer group (a leadership "cell" of around ten people).

In each conversation delegates learn from each other's leadership challenges and successes, and they share ideas, discuss solutions and support each other to take action.

“changes in people's behaviour brought growth in our results... In our most difficult channel our results were phenomenal! A big influence was the Nine conversations in Leadership - it kicked off the team commitment, passion and joint effort that you need for tough challenges.”

Most leadership programmes are usually public courses which take place away from the leadership context.

There are limitations with this approach; however:

- delegates struggle to apply what they've learned on their return to the office;
- there's limited follow-up or accountability; and
- it often widens the leadership divide.

Our Nine Conversations in Leadership intervention is different. Since the intervention takes place within the operational context the leadership learning is directly relevant.

## Organisational benefits

- Leadership** competencies: Enhanced leadership knowledge and skills
- Organisational **Culture**: building understanding, trust collaboration and learning
- Driving change**: delegates take actions to tackle dysfunctional elements.

The introduction of the Nine Conversations in Leadership™ intervention to an organisation offers benefits that impact the organisation, teams and individuals:

- Builds engagement around the organisation's vision, values, purpose and strategy.
- Aligns the organisation through consistent leadership messages at all levels.
- Enhances agility - the organisation becomes able to respond quickly and coherently to strategic shifts, contributing to enhanced performance over time.
- Supports talent management.
- Increases team cohesion through the development of leadership and inter-personal skills.
- Enhances organisational effectiveness as the vision, strategy and team dynamics are continually examined in an open, structured environment.
- Delegates become role models for others - reinforcing the new leadership culture.



The programme explores, in turn, seven dimensions of leadership effectiveness through structured conversations.

The curriculum flows through three broad levels of leadership competence:

-  Leading Organisations (Strategy, Vision, Values, Purpose, Community, Culture, Alignment).
-  Leading Others (Groups, Teams, Serving and Leading, Coaching, Mentoring, Developing Others).
-  Leading Self (Energy Management, Developmental Journeys, Emotional Development).

The logical flow - from Leading Organisations, through Leading Others, to Leading Self - is designed to allow cell members to develop the trust, respect and deep levels of engagement needed for the profound personal sharing in the final “Leading Self” conversations. By the end - “Moving On” delegates have reached a level of maturity, competence and trust to commit to sustaining the learning and expanding it more widely.

We use experiential learning principles throughout, challenging delegates to grow their knowledge (Head), values (Heart) and behaviours (Hands) required for success.

The conversations include activities and dialogue that work in the realms of:



#### **Head - Knowing**

Builds knowledge of the elements of leadership.



#### **Heart - Being**

Prompts values-based reflection on the elements of leadership



#### **Hands - Doing**

Encourages behavioural changes to improve performance.

**The nine conversations take around a day each. The schedule allows an interval between each conversation, or bloc of conversations, when the action projects enable the practical application of learning in the delegate’s own leadership context.**



## Getting started

Explores the Nine Conversations in Leadership™ journey and begins to develop a shared vocabulary and common understanding of leadership. Leaders choose to be a leader, and choose to grow as a leader in the organisation.

## Vision

Deals with the challenge of crafting an inspiring vision and strategy for the organisation. Leaders choose to create and communicate a vision that is shared by the community, and gives meaning to the work performed.

## Community

Explores the meaning and importance of communities on which leaders depend to achieve their vision. Leaders choose to recognise the power, value and importance of their whole community of followers, and to work towards developing and empowering their community to achieve the vision.

## Alignment

Examines alignment as a critical component for harnessing the community's resources to achieve the organisation's vision, and is central to leadership and organisational performance. Leaders choose to make their community's work meaningful by aligning individual efforts using both intangible methods of influence and tangible, structured alignment mechanisms.

## Teams

Explores the importance of teams for organisational and individual growth and success. Leaders are involved in building teams, leading teams and participating in teams. Leaders choose to take a role in team evolution, empowering teams and helping them to develop.

## Developing individuals

Deals with one-on-one developmental relationships in which a leader focuses on developing the competencies and supporting the growth of another person. The ability to develop individuals is critical to personal and organisational success, and is a key element of the leader's role. Leaders consciously choose to become developers of individuals.

## Energy

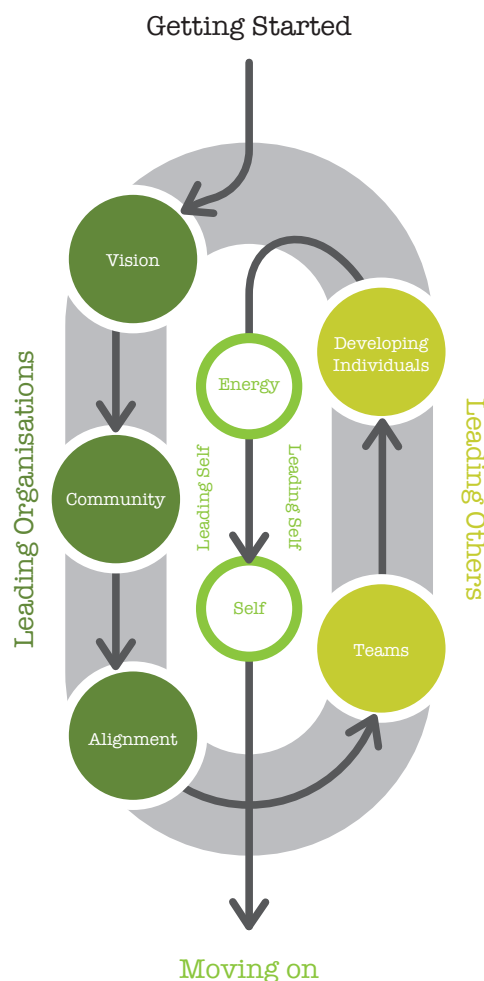
Explores current thinking around wellness and energy as the fuels for performance. Leaders choose to take responsibility for their energy and its impact on the quality of their organisational and personal lives.

## Self

Explores self-leadership, the conscious and purposeful mastery, development and nurturing of our inner selves. Growing self-leadership requires that leaders accept the power of choice and accountability for creating the life and results they want, rather than enduring what life brings.

## Moving on

Synthesises the learning from the Nine Conversations in Leadership™ journey. Celebrates the journey.



## Creative dialogue

The Nine Conversations in Leadership™ intervention draws on an old southern African practice called *lekgotla* which fosters better communication. Over time this enhances the group's ability to discuss and resolve issues:

- individuals are encouraged to express their personal opinion clearly and concisely
- groups build a shared understanding and become teams
- teams make decisions and take action towards common goals.

Value of lekgotla for...	
Building Communication Skills	Facilitating Creative Dialogue
Active listening - without judgement or feeling the need to rescue or validate; Assertiveness: choosing to contribute one's own perspective; Communicating clearly and concisely; Building on the thinking of others; Synthesising multiple viewpoints; Taking responsibility for managing group process.	Enabling people to speak without fear of reprisal; Valuing both shared and different perspectives, ways of thinking and communicating; Valuing the group's collective wisdom over a reliance on 'solo command'; Moving away from 'the loudest voice wins'.

## Personal development plans

The Nine Conversations in Leadership™ intervention requires delegates to log their learning and growth in a personal development journal.

## Assessment mechanisms

A 360° feedback system allows delegates to get valuable feedback from managers, subordinates and peers on their development as a leader.

## Pre-reading, assignments and action projects

Prior to each conversation delegates read the relevant chapter reflect on the relevance to their leadership context, and share their insight with the group.

These ideas are explored during the session, each delegate identifying concrete actions they will lead on to address misalignment challenges in their own sphere of influence.

## Measuring Impact

Our work with partners in recent years has yielded rich anecdotal evidence of impact each time we run the Nine Conversations in Leadership intervention. Because of this we are committed to exploring, in collaboration with our partners, efficient ways of collecting both quantitative and qualitative evidence of change at each of Kirkpatrick's four levels - from level 1 (participants' reaction) to level 4 (impact on the organisation's results).

## Scaling & Sustaining

We encourage organisations to develop internal capacity to facilitate this programme, alongside an experienced external facilitator. Our facilitator development journey is carefully designed to ensure a manageable progression from trainee to competent facilitator capable of leading the entire intervention on their own.

This is a key element of our work: we are committed to developing internal capacity for sustaining and scaling up this intervention throughout an organisation's global portfolio.

## Accreditation through Middlesex University

The Nine Conversations in Leadership™ intervention is accredited as a formal university qualification through Middlesex University in the United Kingdom. Middlesex University is a champion of learning in the workplace and this accreditation acknowledges the robustness and academic underpinnings of this intervention, and reflects that its value in development is comparable to formal university programmes. Through the partnership with Middlesex University, graduation from the Nine Conversations in Leadership™ can count towards an academic degree. Please contact us for more information.

What delegates are saying:

- “**This leadership programme works really well for complex operations in a difficult environment where you want people to take responsibility.** As a Country director you often feel you're on your own. Nine Conversations in Leadership brings creates a common language, and this new language is when the culture starts to shift.”
- “As an internal auditor you often face resistance due to misunderstandings. **This programme helped clarify why audit is important and what's expected** - and it highlighted that we share the same vision and goals.”
- “**We've made great strides in pulling down the communication barriers that used to exist.**”
- “This programme has helped me appreciate the huge depth of experience and knowledge we have within the organisation - **resources that I now feel I can tap into.**”
- “From the very start - as soon as we identified the changes we wanted to see, that's when it all started to shift. **The process helps groups take collective ownership of the change process. It can be led from within.**”
- “The intervention allowed us to talk openly about the different issues inside our country programme. **It has showed us that dictatorship has no place in leadership!**”



### How else can we help you?

People Zone exists to help senior managers in international not for profit organisations address a range of organisational challenges. These include:

- 🍏 Organisation development assessment and strategic change support
- 🍏 Learning & Development
- 🍏 Strategic Planning
- 🍏 Action Planning
- 🍏 New Manager Bootcamp
- 🍏 Team building
- 🍏 Facilitation skills training

### Who we work with:

- 🍏 International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and United Nations (UN) organisations
- 🍏 Civil society organisations (CSOs) and networks
- 🍏 Corporate social responsibility (CSR) teams
- 🍏 Multi-agency consortia
- 🍏 Campaign groups, movements for change

### Foundations

People Zone was founded by Lesley Adams, whose experience within the disaster recovery and development sectors exposed the lack of attention to dysfunction and misalignment within the internal organisational environment.



After retraining in Human Resources Development and Management, and acquiring essential tools and skills to facilitate exploration of organisation development challenges, she established People Zone to support leaders in transforming the organisations from within.

People Zone is a platform which partners with a number of associates who share her vision of rebalancing power and who offer complementary skills.



**People Zone**

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