

INTERACTION CHOICES

DEBATE

POLITE
DISCUSSION

SKILLFULL
DISCUSSION

DIALOGUE



DEBATE:

- Intent is to win.
- Listening to be understood (find the flaw).
- Power struggles.
- Competition, "turf" is a driver.
- Ideas judged by the person who said them (power in the group).
- Influence is limited to the "loudest" voices.

POLITE DISCUSSION:

- Intent is to "protect"—self and others, avoid conflict.
- Appears more "surface friendly."
- Ideas judged by who said them (relationship/friendship).
- Limited active or empathic listening.
- Impulsive decisions based on little data, lowest risk.
- Influence is used "in the parking lot" not the meeting.

SKILLFUL DISCUSSION:

- Intent is to come to closure with well-informed decisions.
- Balances advocacy (seek to influence) and inquiry (seek to understand).
- Focuses on issues not personalities.
- Reasoning is made explicit.
- Asks others about assumptions without being critical.
- Influence is based in logic and data.

DIALOGUE:

- Intent is to build mutual understanding.
- Listening to understand both head (thoughts) and heart (feelings).
- Able to suspend assumptions.
- Energy directed to finding the right questions.
- Creating a "container" in which collective thinking can emerge.
- Influence is found in the shared meaning created by the group.

Adapted from the work of Peter Senge.