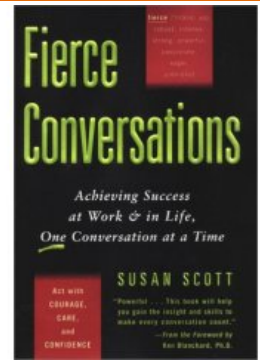


Book Summary:

Fierce Conversations

*Achieving Success at Work & in Life,
One Conversation at a Time*

By Susan Scott ISBN: 0-425-19337-3



Over ten thousand hours of one-to-one conversations with industry leaders, as well as workshops with men and women from all walks of life confronting issues of relationship and life direction, have convinced Susan Scott that our work, our relationships and in fact our very lives succeed or fail gradually, then suddenly, one conversation at a time.

This book is a guide to tackling your toughest challenges and helps you enrich relationships with everyone important to your success and happiness through principles, tools, and assignments. Each component is designed to direct you through your first fierce conversations with yourself on to the most challenging and important conversations facing you.

The Premise: “A fierce conversation is not me telling you what I think. A fierce conversation is one that is passionate, effective, direct, thought provoking, intense, powerful, robust, untamed, unbridled.” A fierce conversation is a memorable one that challenges ideas and builds relationships.

Scott takes you into a deep understanding of how to make your one-to-one conversations with your direct reports effective. She provides you with the tools and guidance to start making a difference in your conversations as soon as you get back to the office.

The 3 BIG Ideas

1. **Our lives succeed, or fail, one conversation at a time.**

Conversations with people either bolster relationships, reduce relationships, or keep relationships at status quo. And, always, *one conversation at a time*. She also takes the perspective that leadership is a “one conversation-at-a-time” act.

2. **The Conversation is the relationship.**

The conversations we have aren't really about our relationship. Those conversations are the relationship. They're the defining component of relationships. She notes that the most valuable currency an organization has are relationships and emotional capital.

3. **All conversations are with myself, and sometimes they involve other people.**

Each individual has his or her context and lives his or her life accordingly. It gets interesting when the content in our lives includes the meaning and intent of every conversation we participate, and therefore, the outcomes. *All conversations are with myself, and sometimes they involve other people* is true in the sense that we all unconsciously, automatically put our own interpretation or spin on the words of others. We are constantly interpreting everything we hear others say, and constantly being interpreted in return.

The 7 Principles

1. **Master the courage to interrogate reality.**

No plan survives its collision with reality, and reality has a habit of shifting, at work and at home. Markets and economies change, requiring shifts in strategy. People change and forget to tell each other – colleagues, customers, spouses or friends. We are all changing all the time. Not only do we neglect to share this with others, we are skilled at masking it even to ourselves.

2. **Come out from behind yourself into the conversation and make it real.**

While many fear “real,” it is the unreal conversation that should scare us to death. Unreal conversations are expensive, for the individual and the organization. No one has to change, but everyone has to have the conversation. When the conversation is real, the change occurs before the conversation is over. You will accomplish your goals in large part by making every conversation you have as real as possible.

3. **Be here, prepared to be nowhere else.**

Our work, our relationships, and our lives succeed or fail one conversation at a time. While no single conversation is guaranteed to transform a company, a relationship, or a life, any single conversation can. Speak and listen as if this is the most important conversation you will ever have with this person. It could be. Participate as if it matters. It does.

4. **Tackle your toughest challenge today.**

Burnout doesn't occur because we're solving problems; it occurs because we've been trying to solve the same problem over and over. The problem named is the problem solved. Identify and then confront the real obstacles in your path. Stay current with the people important to your success and happiness. Travel light, agenda-free.

5. **Obey your instincts.**

Don't just trust your instincts – obey them. Your radar screen works perfectly. It's the operator who is in question. An intelligence agent is sending you messages every day, all day. Tune in. Pay attention. Share these thoughts with others. What we label as illusion is the scent of something real coming close.

6. **Take responsibility for your emotional wake.**

For a leader, there is no trivial comment. Something you don't remember saying may have had a devastating impact on someone who looked to you for guidance and approval. The conversation is not about the relationship; the conversation *is* the relationship. Learning to deliver the message without the load allows you to speak with clarity, conviction, and compassion.

7. **Let silence do the heavy lifting.**

When there is simply a whole lot of talking going on, conversations can be so empty of meaning they crackle. Memorable conversations include breathing space. Slow down the conversation so that insight can occur in the space between words and you can discover what the conversation really wants and needs to be about.

Susan Scott's firm, Fierce Inc., is an internationally recognized leader in cultural transformation and executive education, providing Fierce Conversations, Fierce Leadership, and Fierce Coaching programs to a diverse and growing client base. For thirteen years, Scott ran think tanks for executives through TEC (The Executive Committee), an organization dedicated to increasing the effectiveness and enhancing the lives of Chief Executives. Previously Scott served as vice president of the Pace Network, a search firm in Seattle,

and also as a regional manager for Context Associated, a training organization headquartered in San Francisco. Raised in Tennessee, Scott now lives in Seattle.

Carlos