

North Star Insights

Vol 1, Issue 1

Guiding Organizations to Success

To support you—our friends, colleagues and clients—this is part of our series of articles designed to help you improve your execution on strategic topics. As strategy consultant we are continuously developing plans with clients and are passionate about using the best tools and research to implement these plans.

The articles are based on recent research—both original research conducted by North Star Strategies and SchellingPoint and supported by the work of acknowledged experts in this field. Each article will include simple ideas that you can put immediately into action.

We hope you enjoy the articles and find them useful.

-Tracy

Dialogue vs. Discussion

What's the difference, and why does it matter?

If you have never seen a well-conceived plan fail, the following will be of little help to you.

For the rest of us, identifying the barriers to reaching our goals is as important as defining the destination.

This article unpacks one of the most common roadblocks. A commonly held belief is that discussion of a topic will lead to buy-in. The truth is that ownership demands a deeper means of communication.

So what's the difference between **discussion** and **dialogue**?

- **Discussion** emphasizes the speaker.
- **Discussion** pits one person against another.
- **Discussion** is about convincing.
- **Dialogue** focuses on the listener.
- **Dialogue** is a team sport.
- **Dialogue** is about understanding.

Most decision making occurs through discussion, which empowers the strongest personality and the best speaker. The result? Tolerance is mistaken for ownership, and acceptance for buy-in. The unspoken yet real disagreement leads to conscious and unconscious sabotage.

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Action Items

The next time you perceive conflict in a group discussion, ask a clarifying question rather than promoting our position. For example, "That's an interesting point, could you describe that in more detail?" or "We are seeing this from a different angle. What do others think?"

Dialogue rests on the proven truth that disagreement is approximately 70% definition of terms, 25% information, and only 5% inadequate information. Dialogue surfaces miscommunication, identifies differences in understanding, and results in genuine buy-in.

To learn more about the power of dialogue in creating truly aligned teams, please contact Tracy Morgan at tmorgan@north-star-strategies.com.