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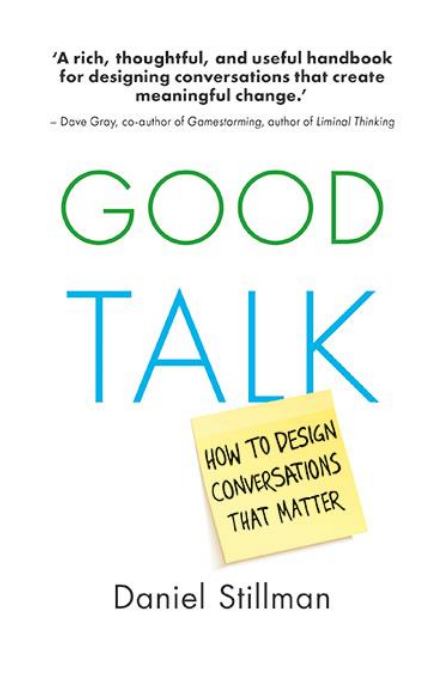
Daniel Stillman - Good Talk

How to Design Conversations That Matter

COMMUNICATION | LEADERSHIP | MARKETING

'A rich, thoughtful, and useful handbook for designing conversations that create meaningful change.'
– Dave Gray, co-author of Gamestorming, author of Liminal Thinking

GOOD TALK

HOW TO DESIGN CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Daniel Stillman

Leadership is the art of designing transformative conversations.

Real change is needed, now, more than ever. This change can't happen through force, edict or persuasion. The future will be built through conversation – and *Good Talk* will show you how.

Good Talk is a step-by-step framework to effect change in your personal and professional conversations. With dozens of tools and interactive components, *Good Talk* is a handbook to navigate the conversations that matter.

What's Inside:

How to see the structure of conversations.

Life is built one messy, slippery conversation at a time. While conversations feel hard to hold onto, ebbing and flowing, back and forth and into eventual silence, they each have a structure. The first step to changing your conversations is seeing what's going on between the silence.

What is your Conversation Operating System?

Who gets invited to the conversation? Who speaks first? Where does the conversation take place? What happens if someone messes up? In every conversation, there are elements that guide the exchange. The nine elements of the Conversation OS Canvas can help you to shift the direction of your conversations.

What is your conversational range?

Conversations are more than dialogue. From the conversations in your head to the complex conversation that is your organization, you need to design conversations that matter across a huge range of sizes. Learn to master conversations from the boardroom and beyond.

How to design conversations that matter.

The world needs fresh, creative conversations that are alive, and that work for all the people involved. How can you design conversations that matter? Leadership means designing the conditions for these conversations to happen. Learn the patterns and principles to make change possible.

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- Full English manuscript available
- English edition published by Management Impact
- Audio book published by Audible

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Stillman designs conversations for a living, and insists that you actually do that too. As an independent design facilitator, he works with clients and organizations of all shapes and sizes to help them frame and sustain productive and collaborative conversations, deepen their facilitation skills, and coach them through the innovation process. His first book, *The 30 Second Elephant and the Paper Airplane Experiment* is about origami and teams and yes, it's as strange as it sounds. He hosts The Conversation Factory podcast where he interviews leaders, changemakers and innovators on how they design the conversations in their work and lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

'A rich, thoughtful and useful handbook for designing conversations that create meaningful change.'

Dave Gray, co-author of *Gamestorming: a playbook for innovators, rulebreakers, and changemakers*

'How do you design better conversations in the workplace? I can think of no more important skill for a leader (or for anyone trying to improve the world of work for that matter) than the conversation skills this book unpacks in an incredibly practical and hands on way.'

Didier Elzinga, CEO/Founder & People Geek, Culture Amp

'Conversations with customers, teams, and stakeholders are at the heart of everything design leaders do. *Good Talk* gets to the core of the matter, bringing awareness to our ability to intentionally design our conversations, and create the best outcomes for all involved.'

Purvi Shah, Head of Global Strategic Design Operations, Visa
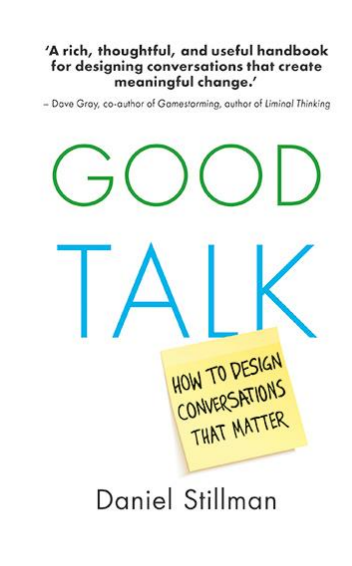
'Conversational Leadership is a new approach to aligning teams and leading change - which is more critical than ever – and has transformed how I lead Sprints and train Sprint Masters at Google.'

Kai Haley, Head of Design Relations and Lead of Sprint Master Academy, Google

'Every project's success depends on conversations. Critiquing, facilitation, presentation, strategy, etc. all depend on an ability to objectively and collaboratively communicate. Good Talk unpacks ways that we can be intentional in our communication and collaboration – and build them into a more effective product design process.'

Aaron Irrizary, Design Director, Capital One

'*Good Talk* is a playfully written invitation to each of us to challenge conventional thinking about conversation. You'll walk away with greater awareness of how your natural tendencies support or limit possibility, as well as practical tools to positively shift the way you engage with others.'

Elise Foster, co-Author of *The Multiplier Effect: Tapping the Genius Inside Our Schools*

'*Good Talk* is a practical reference and an essential playbook – it offers a powerful framework and wide-ranging material to make explicit all of our choices when we're interacting with people.'

Steve Portigal, User Research consultant, author of *Doorbells, Danger, and Dead Batteries* and host of Dollars to Donuts

'*Good Talk* is an essential guide to the awarenesses and skills that are the magic collaborative glue to mending the rifts between us so we can move forward. Daniel gifts us with this beautifully well written book at exactly the moment when we all most need it!'

Dawna Markova, Ph.D. author of *Living a Loved Life, Collaborative Intelligence* and *Reconcilable Differences*

'*Good Talk* is an intriguing book and presents a powerful concept. By using the principles of design thinking, Daniel Stillman teaches you to design impactful conversations.'

Tendayi Viki, author of *Pirates in the Navy* and co-author of *The Corporate Startup* and *The Lean Product Lifecycle*

'A rich, thoughtful, and useful handbook for designing conversations that create meaningful change.'
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GOOD TALK

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'In order to be successful, leaders need to acquire the mastery of designing conversations. With so many of our days spent in meetings, conversations are a crucial tool for any team – aligning on a vision, debugging a problem, or creating a creative and inclusive team culture. Daniel offers a unique perspective on how to make this work better for your organization as well as the 1:1 connections you develop daily. *Good Talk* helps leaders acquire the mastery of designing conversations. Frameworks in this book will help successful teams align on a vision, debug a problem, or create a creative and inclusive team culture.'

Tin Kadoic, Design Lead at Airbnb

KIRKUS REVIEW

A design consultant applies his expertise to the art of conversing with others.

The notion that a conversation is the most important form of communication may seem a stretch to some, but Stillman makes a convincing case that "Each and every conversation is an opportunity to change your life." In this absorbing and stylishly designed book, he explores every aspect of these back and forths: why they matter, how they're structured, and what goes into a good exchange of ideas. The book is divided into several sections anchored around a cleverly labeled "Conversation OS," or operating system.

The Conversation OS consists of nine elements, about which Stillman goes into considerable detail; some are easy to grasp (such as "Goals" and "Invitation"), but others are more subtle and deserving of extra attention (such as "Threading" and "Cadence"). Stillman's insights about each element are intriguing; for example, about "Threading," he writes, "Skill in weaving the threads of a conversation is the ability to change the story of any interaction. It's a potentially dangerous power." In comparing conversational "Cadence" to music, Stillman keenly observes that one can "shift the patterns and rhythms" of a dialogue, suggesting that "If we can feel the shifts in conversational cadence, we can assist or resist them, making conscious choices."

Stillman's ability to dissect dialogues and expound on their tiniest details may weary some readers, but one can't help but marvel at conversations' complex nature. In one of the most engaging sections, Stillman covers coaching, mentorship, and group facilitation, among other concepts, and puts forth the idea that product design and even organizational change can, in the broadest sense, be conversations of their own.

The final chapter concentrates on improving the reader's interactive skills, with a focus on answering a key question: "What conversations, relationships or interactions are broken, dysfunctional or missing in your life?" The author also includes useful examples and questions for reflection throughout the book.

An intriguing examination of a form of communication that's often taken for granted. – *Kirkus Reviews*

GETABSTRACT SUMMARY

Conversations shape almost every moment of your day. Unfortunately, many conversations and meetings are unproductive. What's more, reluctance to tackle difficult conversations often hampers personal and professional relationships. Fortunately, you can learn the rules, tools and strategies for improving self-talk, group talk and corporate dialogues. In this useful text, conversation coach Daniel Stillman provides an excellent blueprint for building meaningful conversations, and offers a strong case for honesty, awareness and courage.

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