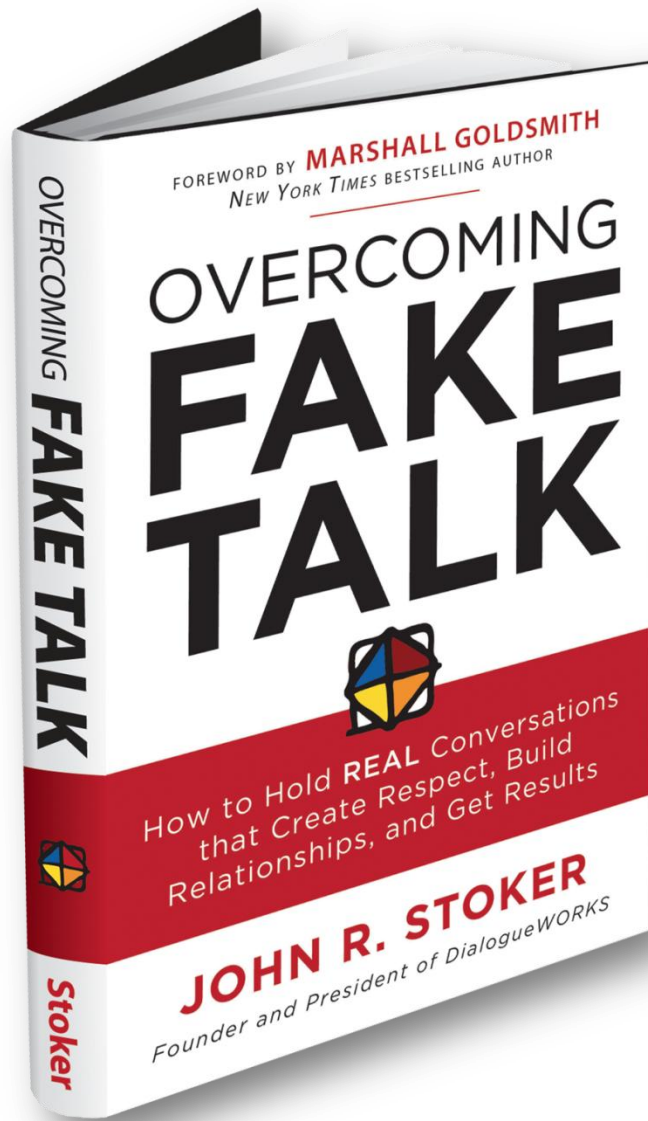


# PRESS KIT



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## A Quick Overview: OVERCOMING **FAKE TALK**

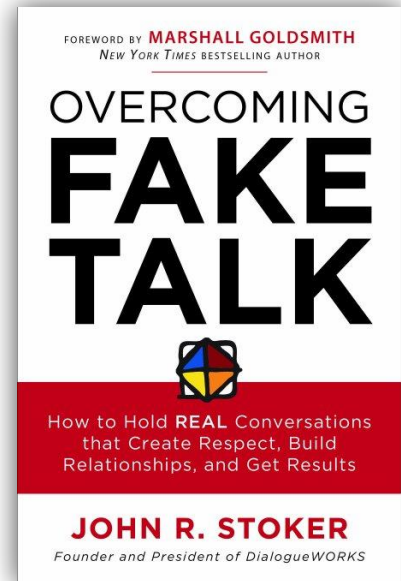
**Practical ways to turn any sensitive, emotional, or confrontational workplace conversation into a positive exchange that benefits all.**

*Overcoming Fake Talk* explains why we often fail at our most important communications and offers proven advice for turning challenging confrontations into rewarding exchanges that foster collaboration, improve performance, and achieve results. You will develop an understanding of the skills for holding a real conversation, including both the "said" and the "unsaid" elements present in any conversation; discover the framework for preparing and holding difficult yet meaningful conversations; and learn to no longer avoid the tough conversations they need to hold. This book is particularly applicable to managers, executives, and business professionals.

In *Overcoming Fake Talk*, business communication guru John R. Stoker offers proven advice for turning challenging confrontations into rewarding exchanges that foster collaboration, improve performance, and achieve results.

Easy to remember even in the heat of tough conversations, Stoker's communication skills model is based on the principles **R**ecognize and **S**uspend, **E**xpress, **A**sk, and **L**isten and **A**ttend.

John R. Stoker is the founder and President of DialogueWORKS, LC. In these roles John has worked extensively with numerous organizations, helping them increase their capacity to enhance effectiveness and improve results. The author has served as a consultant Honeywell, Cox Communications, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Payflex-Aetna, Comcast Cable, Comcast Cable, Lockheed Martin, American Express, Boystown, and Banner Health, and dozens of other major corporations.



**Make every  
conversation a  
REAL Conversation  
that creates respect,  
builds relationships,  
and gets results.**

## Contents of OVERCOMING **FAKE TALK**

REAL conversations can only take place in an environment of respect where there is a willingness to understand as well as to be understood. The eight universal principles taught in *Overcoming Fake Talk* will ensure conversational success.

### Chapter 1: **What Keeps You Up at Night?**

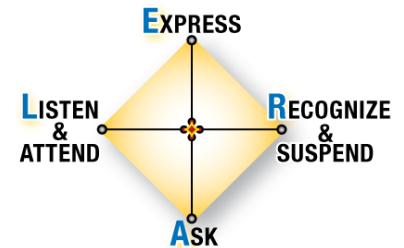
If you ask yourself, “What’s keeping me awake at night?” your answer may be different than the person you’re sleeping next to, but almost everyone’s answers center on one very fundamental concern:

*I am not getting the results I want!*

The introductory chapter of the book discusses how your conversations affect your results and possible reasons why your conversations have not been working. We often fail to recognize is that we are dependent upon others in achieving results, and we can’t talk about improving results without considering the impact that respect and our relationships have on results.

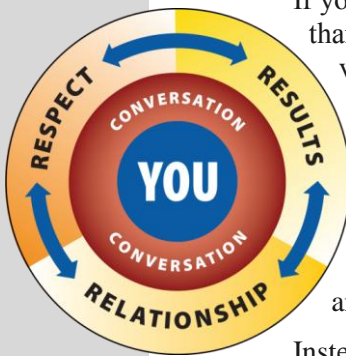
Instead of participating in fake talk, we should be holding REAL conversations. The REAL in REAL conversations is an acronym for the conversational skills that are used in all effective conversation. These four skills include the following:

- ✓ **R**ecognizing and suspending your thinking or judgments
- ✓ **E**xpressing your thoughts, feelings, experience, or opinions without creating resistance in others
- ✓ **A**sking questions to increase your understanding
- ✓ **L**istening and attending to the messages that others are expressing verbally and nonverbally.



REAL conversations get results. REAL conversations change things. The parties to REAL conversations not only understand, they come away feeling valued and respected.

REAL conversations are specific, direct, open, insightful, solution-oriented, respectful, accountability-based, and encouraging or complimentary. The eight principles of effective conversation covered in the remaining chapters of the book teach the reader the basics of REAL conversation.



## Chapter 2: The Awareness Principle

It is essential that we see and understand the dynamics of a conversation in which we are involved. This requires that we expand our “conscious” awareness of what is happening in the conversation. We must learn to be “consciously conscious” in the moment. If you can’t see the dynamics of the conversation, then you can’t manage them. In this chapter you will learn to be both a participant and an observer in the conversation.

## Chapter 3: The Knowledge Principle

We must not only understand the skills and the process for holding any difficult conversation, but we must also apply what we know. We really don’t know what we know, until we use it. It is in doing that we come to know what we know or don’t know. We each are responsible to know and use what we know if we really want to improve our results. You will learn to deliberately increase your knowing by doing.

In this chapter, Stoker further highlights the definition of REAL Conversation by exploring its opposite: the *Fight* or *Flight* behaviors that are typical of fake talk. Instead, you will be taught how to use the **Initiate-Discover-Connect-Build** sequence to provide a framework upon which to build any deliberate conversation.



## Chapter 4: The Reflection Principle

We reflect ourselves in conversation. What we reveal to people, they reflect back. For example, if you ask questions, your listener will usually ask questions back. Remember the first time you shared something really personal with a friend, and they responded by sharing something really personal about themselves? Did you wonder what happened? People will reflect what you reveal to them.

Likewise, respect in conversation is either a reflection of our own respect reflected back to us, or a reflection to us of how people want to be treated.

Generally we don’t set out to intentionally sabotage conversations or interactions with others. We simply want to be ourselves... but so does the other fellow. We are different, and those differences in style can often cause problems we would rather avoid.

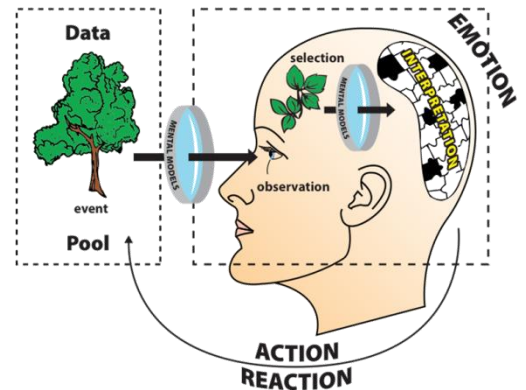
This chapter introduces four basic “interaction styles.” Stoker explains in detail how to recognize these styles in others and how to adapt your own style to interact more effectively and respectfully with others.



## Chapter 5: The Perception Principle

We are continually making assumptions and interpretations about people and situations. In fact, our thinking is one main culprit in creating fake talk. For example, we think we've been clear, but we don't find out until we get poor results that we weren't. We think there will be negative consequences for speaking up, so we don't. We have good intentions, yet people take offense anyway. We think that if we ask questions, we will look stupid, so we don't ask and end up looking stupid anyway. All of these scenarios are the result of how we think.

In order to enjoy effective dialogue, it is important to **Recognize and Suspend** our own thinking (recognize what we are thinking and how we are behaving, then set our thoughts aside to allow greater objectivity). In this chapter you will learn fascinating information about the way the human brain works, how we form our opinions, and how those opinions influence our thinking. Stoker also provides fascinating insight into how perceptions create emotional reactions and how people can defuse their own "hot" or negative feelings.



## Chapter 6: The Preparation Principle

The subconscious portions of your brain runs a "protective-illogical" mechanism to protect your ego or sense of self. When these parts of our brain manage the conversation, problems arise. When we don't prepare, our subconscious reacts to protect us and thoughts suddenly burst out of our mouth with accompanying emotion and nonverbal behavior. Such conversations don't represent our best intentions. Failure to consciously prepare for a conversation often leads to fight or flight responses in conversation.

If we take the time to think about the conversation we want to hold and give a potentially tough topic deliberate, purposeful preparation in our "conscious" brain, then we are literally creating a different reality. By thinking through a difficult issue, you prepare your mind, heart, and the conversation to increase the likelihood of success. Stoker shows you in this chapter how to use the REAL Conversation Framework (**Initiate, Discover, Connect, and Build**) as a simple, easy-to-remember way to prepare for any difficult conversation.

## Chapter 7: The Expression Principle

One of the primary challenges in expressing ourselves in a respectful and effective manner in holding a REAL conversation is to deliver our message without creating defensiveness. You want to deliver a message with power and clarity in a way that allows the person to hear what we have to say and to increase the likelihood of their making a contribution to your perspective

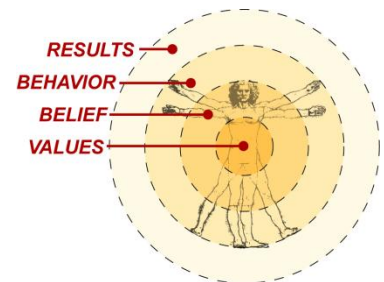


Your expression begins with what you are thinking—what you are assuming and what you really want as an outcome for the conversation. Your intention impacts the way you share your opinions, ideas, and experience. Effective expression should increase the collaboration, cooperation, and contributions of others. The goal of expression is to create more expression—shared meaning and understanding of all involved. We begin to improve our expression by shifting our perspective from “me” to “we.”

In this chapter, Stoker also teaches you how to manage the music of your message—the tone you use to deliver it. You will learn to bolster their thinking with data—verifiable facts—in order to create a message that is powerful and compelling. Finally, you will learn to balance expressing with asking by first sharing your own perspectives and then inviting others to confirm or clarify their statements.

## Chapter 8: The Discovery Principle

The “right” questions deliver the answers you are seeking. If you know what answers you are seeking, then you will ask the questions that will take you where you want to go. Notice that this approach requires that you know what you want to know—only then will you find the answer you are looking for. In a very real way, the answers we seek provide opportunities for discovery, learning, and understanding.



This chapter contains a wealth of information about what types of questions to ask and how to use them effectively to create connection, candor, and respect.

## Chapter 9: The Connection Principle

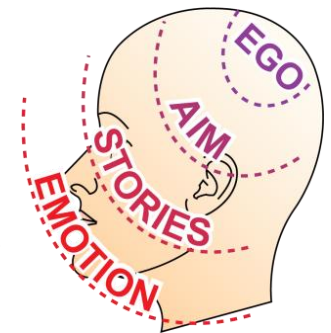
We all make observations of our daily experiences and make interpretations of what those experiences mean. Our interpretations usually take the form of judgments, which are limited by our view of reality. (That should inspire us to hold our judgments in abeyance and be more open to others' perspectives.) Unless we are aware of what we are thinking, our thoughts and our resulting behavior may escape our awareness. We tend to resist or reject realities that are outside the realm of our own experience or that contradict our personal version of the status quo.

This leads us to form negative judgments of other people and their ideas. Since we usually listen to others to validate what we think we know or what we think others should know, we listen from a perspective of judgment—we listen to see if we agree or disagree with the individual. Thus we are constantly making evaluations of what the person is saying. If we agree, then all is roses. When we disagree, that is when the fireworks begin.

Our evaluations and disagreement can cause us to offer criticism, provide advice, or mount a defense of our own thoughts or actions. You can tell when people are in judgment: they finish people's sentences, cut them off, talk over them, interrupt them constantly, or ignore them altogether. Unfortunately, many of us engage in these behaviors unconsciously.

In this chapter Stoker teaches you how to listen in a way that is focused, non-judgmental, specific, and empathetic. Then he will introduce you to the EASE Model, a tool useful for defusing negative or "hot" emotion in yourself and others.

We then introduce the **EASE Model**, which provides a framework for defusing negative or "hot" emotion. This model was developed based on current research into brain function and helps explain why people sometimes react emotionally. You will learn how to apply the EASE Model to restore rationality and resolve conflict.



## Chapter 10: Moving Forward

Failing to achieve *results*, *respect*, and *relationships* signals fake talk or counterfeit conversations. Holding REAL conversations creates what you desire most. So, don't just think and talk about conversations—jump in and swim in the current of every conversation that you hold. Doing is learning. Internalizing the principles and going where the conversation takes you will make all the difference.

To internalize the principles of REAL conversations, we offer four suggestions: be patient, be persistent, be prepared, and be in practice.

## John R. Stoker

...is the Founder and President of Light Storm Consulting, Inc. and DialogueWORKS, Inc and author of *Overcoming Fake Talk*. For over 20 years he has been immersed in organizational development and change as he has worked extensively with Fortune 100 and 500 companies helping them increase their capacity to enhance effectiveness and improve results.

John has vast experience in designing strategic change and in creating and implementing training curriculum in support of company-wide improvement initiatives. He has worked with numerous organizations as a change management consultant.



As a facilitator and coach, John works with leaders to improve their business results and focuses on developing interpersonal skills they must have in order to lead. He has experience in the fields of leadership, change management, dialogue, critical thinking, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence. Companies throughout the United States and in several foreign countries have called on John for training and coaching; his list of clients includes Cox Communications, Comcast Cable, Banner Health, Wheaton Franciscan Medical Group, Lockheed Martin, Turner Broadcasting, U.S. Tobacco, Eastman-Kodak, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, AT&T, OG&E, Alcon Labs, AutoTrader.com, Manheim Auto Sales, and Cigna Health Plan.

John's work focuses on increasing the capacity and effectiveness of individuals as professionals and leaders. Some of his recent efforts led a Fortune 100 company to a \$250 million dollar cost reduction in a major change initiative. He helps professionals talk about what really matters by teaching them how to hold those difficult conversations that people tend to avoid. John has worked with leaders as well as intact teams and cross-functional teams that are committed to improving their results.

DialogueWORKS was founded in 1998 and is headquartered in Springville, Utah, with affiliates throughout North America, Europe, and Asia.

In the past, John worked as a practicing criminal defense attorney (until he repented!), spent summers as a Grand Canyon white-water guide, and he taught for 13 years as a faculty member at a leading university. John has been happily married since 1994 and he and his wife Stephanie are the proud parents of five children.



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS for *Overcoming Fake Talk*

## What is "fake talk" or "counterfeit conversation?"

"Fake Talk" includes any conversation where the result is that you don't get what you want. Of course, some people intentionally lie. Others are unintentionally vague or unclear. But many, many people simply "go along to get along," agree, or do whatever it takes to not rock the boat. In an attempt to be politically correct, some people will dance around a topic without realizing that they are being so general, "nice," or vague that they completely miss the mark. This leaves their intention or meaning subject to other people's interpretation.

Often people are so focused on getting the results they are after that they communicate and behave in ways that create disrespect and severely hamper or even damage the relationship. When this happens, the results are obviously minimal because people are so busy protecting themselves or looking for ways to "even the score" that they are not giving their full attention to the directions or requests that would lead to achievement of the goals or objectives that are at stake.

Bottom line: If you are not getting the results you want, you should ask yourself, "What is the quality of the respect in my conversations?" and "What is the quality of my relationships?" Results are the leading indicator of whether your conversations are REAL or counterfeit.

## Why do people engage in fake talk?

People engage in fake talk because they have neither the skills nor a process for holding difficult conversations. Think for a minute about building a house: you need blueprints, materials, and tools. Without the tools, the blueprints and the materials are pretty much useless. Likewise, you can have the best materials and tools, but without blueprints for the building, who knows what your final structure will look like. To have REAL conversations, you really need skills, knowledge of how to use them, and a usable process for putting them together.

## What is REAL Talk?

**REAL** is an acronym for the four skills necessary to hold any difficult conversation.

**R** stands for Recognize and Suspend, which is about noticing your thoughts and setting them aside (suspending them). This is important because our thinking drives everything we feel, say, and do.

**E** stands for Express. This is about sharing your message in a way that creates cooperation and contribution rather than resistance and defensiveness.

**A** stands for Asking Questions. This requires that we use questions to deepen, clarify, and increase our understanding of others and their perspectives.

**L** stands for Listening and Attending. This encompasses not only what we hear, but also all the other messages that people are sending that we usually don't recognize or pick up on. Attending requires that we be fully present in the conversations that we hold.

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS for *Overcoming Fake Talk*

People who know how to hold REAL conversations understand these skills and use them to create the results that they want. And anyone who wants to improve their skills in these areas will find a great resource in *Overcoming Fake Talk*.

## **How does one create REAL conversations?**

Once you have learned the skills for holding REAL conversations, you use them in connection with the process for holding any difficult conversation, which is laid out clearly in the book: Initiate, Discover, Connect, and then Build.

When you Initiate, you focus the attention of your listener, then share the relevant data and your perspectives about that data in a way that begins the conversation in a respectful and focused manner.

Discovery requires asking a myriad of questions to either confirm your thinking or to allow you to learn and explore the other person's point of view. This is an important phase: if you are tempted to leave it out, there is a good chance that you are assuming that the way you are thinking about the other person or seeing the situation is accurate and complete—when in fact it is almost a sure bet that your perspective is flawed in some way.

To Connect, you summarize and clarify the other person's point of view by reviewing the differences of opinion you have discovered and the values you believe underlie those differences. This is also an opportunity to outline and clarify your own expectations and to share the consequences associated with performance or failure to perform.

Building is about establishing accountability and making changes for improved outcomes and success. In Building, you work to create an executable plan and gain the listener's commitment to that plan for achieving the desired results.

This Initiate-Discover-Connect-Build sequence can be adapted to meet the needs of particular types of difficult conversations. Using this process, you will always know how to begin a conversation and where to go with it, and the process allows you to keep track of where you are in the conversation. This simple four-step process is one of the hallmarks for creating conversations that work.

## **How is this book/training different from all the other conversations books/training courses?**

To answer this question, let me share a story. At an earlier point in my career, I was working in a company that had implemented a company-wide communications training program. Along with the training materials, each participant received a set of cue cards to remind them of the correct words to use and the sequencing their sentences should follow in a given situation.

I was sitting in a meeting at this company once where things started to go awry. Emotions were rising, as were voices. The leader stopped the interaction, pulled his cue card from his pocket, and proceeded to read the recipe off the card. I was stunned. Eyes rolled. Some people shut down and others became even more

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS for *Overcoming Fake Talk*

animated. Though he had the best of intentions, the training he had received did not help him one bit.

I met with him afterward and tried to help him understand that the “card” was not the conversation. Sadly, I don’t think he got it.

Here’s the point: words and sequencing do not address the nuances of holding REAL conversations. Words are just one element; there are a number of other factors that contribute to a conversation’s success: tone, non-verbals, emotional energy, tempo, context, assumptions, intent, interaction styles, just to name a few. *Overcoming Fake Talk* deals with all of these elements that contribute to holding conversations that work—within the skills and framework that we talked about before.

I would even go so far as to say that *Overcoming Fake Talk* is not only comprehensive, but is also the last conversation book you will ever need to buy.

## **What conversation is the most difficult to hold?**

In general, I believe it is safe to say that the conversations that are most difficult to hold are those conversations where there is a deep investment in the relationship. Difficult conversations with a spouse, partner, children, or other family members seem cause people the most anxiety, probably because they have the most long-term effects if they don’t go very well. Interactions with trusted friends and long-time neighbors can also be touchy. And the difficulty seems to increase when we don’t know for certain what the consequences will be. In other words, the more you care about the outcome, the more difficult the conversation can be.

The same holds true in a professional setting: the conversations that are most difficult are the ones that will really matter in the long run.

Ironically, we tend to make sensitive conversations even more difficult by worrying about a feared outcome. We project onto others what they must be feeling or thinking, and what expect they will do—often without sufficient evidence to support our fears. Our fear of the consequences can cause us to withhold our opinions or feelings, or to engage in other forms of fake talk to try to avoid the consequences we fear. The result? We end up creating the negative responses we were trying to avoid in the first place.

## **Why is holding REAL Conversations so important?**

Have you looked at a newspaper lately, or at what is being reported online? Everywhere you look in our world today, you see fake talk and the ramifications of not being able to talk about what matters most. At the highest levels of interaction, whether it be in our government or in our homes, it seems we are able to talk about important topics with everyone BUT the people with whom we really need to hold those conversations.

Based on the way we handle the issues that matter most to us, an outside observer might think those are actually the issues that matter least.

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## for *Overcoming Fake Talk*

Try this experiment: take a good hard, honest look at yourself, and evaluate where you score on each of these questions:

- ✓ What is the quality of my relationships?
- ✓ Do I treat others with respect, and do others treat me with respect?
- ✓ Am I getting the results that I want?

In all likelihood, your answers to these questions indicate the degree to which you take responsibility to create REAL conversations. You can make the choice today to create something different than what you are currently creating, or to improve the quality of your conversations. *Overcoming Fake Talk* will teach you the skills and processes necessary to talk with anyone about anything, at any time.

### **Whom do you see your book benefitting the most?**

*Overcoming Fake Talk* will benefit anyone who interacts with other people, even those who spend most of their lives in the digital world. It will be particularly helpful to the upcoming generation, whose interactions seem to be increasingly based online, via social media, texting, or tweeting.

But even those of us who have spent a long time thinking about and practicing these principles find a need to re-think and reevaluate relationships as we go along, and can put the skills and principles in *Overcoming Fake Talk* to good use. My staff and I find it very interesting to talk about our current relationships and how and where we find fake talk creeping in and effecting our interactions—in spite of all the good things we know and practice. It's true what they say: you're never too old to learn.

Holding REAL conversations require people to be conscious and deliberate if they want to be successful—it is just not something we can do on auto-pilot.

### **How would this book help the executive who is under the constant pressure to perform?**

My question is, do you know anyone who is not under constant pressure to perform? In this economy, if you are not performing, you simply will not be successful, and if you are holding counterfeit conversations, you are certainly not performing as well as you might. In other words, anyone who wants to succeed has to be able to hold REAL conversations, both in their professional associations and on a personal level.

Effective leaders think about what is important and about how to communicate that. They deliver a clear message that outlines their expectations and specifies the requirements for effective performance. Even then, people sometimes misinterpret their message, which leads to less-than-desirable results. Less-than-desirable results necessitate that the leader or manager provide clear and effective feedback about what needs to be changed and improved.

When people perform as desired, or even better than expected, it is equally

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## for *Overcoming Fake Talk*

important that the leader acknowledge and recognize the individual's achievements if they hope to create respect and improve the working relationship. REAL recognition leads to improved loyalty, trust and respect in the relationship and to increased discretionary effort from the employee. All parties work together to achieve results.

Individuals who can hold REAL conversations are invaluable to an organization and crucial to the success of any endeavor. They increase productivity, profitability, and employee retention. They are able to talk about things and get things done. Doesn't everyone want to be that person?

Interestingly, corporations sometimes refer to these communication skills as "soft skills." But the reality is this: if you cannot hold REAL conversations, you are not going to get the results you want, which ultimately effect the bottom line. "Soft" or not, these REAL conversation skills are the most important aspects of a successful career.

### **Why do you think that so many people are conflict-averse?**

Take a survey, and you'll find that people simply don't know how to deal with emotion, so when they are confronted with it, they either dumb down and shut down, or they dumb up and blow up. None of these responses resolves conflict effectively, or even creates an atmosphere where the underlying sources can be identified.

"Hot" or negative emotion is really an indication of a violated value. To deal with it, listen past the emotion for the value that is hidden or masked by the emotion. I cover this topic fairly thoroughly in *Overcoming Fake Talk*, where I teach people to ask questions in an open and respectful way to help an emotional person start to identify why a certain issue or violated value is so important to them. Once you have identified the violated value, you are in a position to address it or to work together to create a solution that will target that particular issue of concern.

Learning how to deal with "hot" or emotional reaction on the part of others is about learning how to be more emotionally intelligent. Good communicators recognize that emotion is the mask of meaning and take steps to get to that meaning.







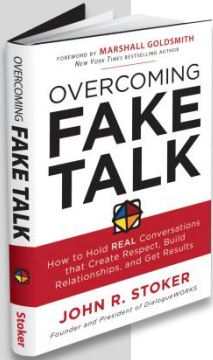








# PRAISE FOR *Overcoming Fake Talk*



## **Kenneth R. Buser**

President & CEO, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare–All Saints; [www.mywheaton.org](http://www.mywheaton.org)

Now more than ever healthcare leaders are challenged with providing exceptional and compassionate service for our patients and families. As costs continue to increase and reimbursement declines, physicians, healthcare executives and associates must work together to reduce costs and increase efficiency. We must also improve our relationship with our community to strengthen its confidence that we will consistently deliver on our brand promise to provide an excellent patient and family experience. John Stoker's book, *Overcoming Fake Talk*, teaches the skills and process for holding REAL Conversations that increase engagement and get results.

## **Dave Ulrich**

Professor, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan; Partner, The RBL Group  
[www.rbl.net](http://www.rbl.net)

John Stoker has been a white water rafter, an attorney, a speaker, and now a thoughtful writer. His book *Overcoming Fake Talk* is a thorough compendium of ideas, frameworks, examples, and actions to improve conversations. His 4 REAL conversation skills and 8 principles give the novice and master insights and guidelines for improving conversation. His book will help get people talking in ways that create respect, build relationships, and get results.

## **Dr. Steven Berglas**

Former faculty member, Harvard Medical School Department of Psychiatry; world-renowned expert and lecturer (USC, UCLA) on the Psychology of the Entrepreneurial Spirit and author of *Reclaiming the Fire: How Successful People Can Overcome Burnout* as well as numerous other books and article.

There is more in John Stoker's *Overcoming Fake Talk* than a bookshelf of self-help books about communication, relationship building, and career advancement can hope to provide. In plain language—backed by hard scientific data—John lays out everything anyone needs to know about authentic connectedness with others. In a world gone mad with pseudo-intimacy and hypocrisy, *Overcoming Fake Talk* just might save us from the phony tweets, Facebook “likes,” and all other manner of ersatz self-expression that threaten to erode the fabric of our society.

## **John H. Zenger**

CEO, Zenger Folkman  
[www.zengerfolkman.com](http://www.zengerfolkman.com)

As Peter Drucker wisely observed, nearly all leadership and management challenges come back to breakdowns in communication. This book is an insightful blend of rock-solid theory accompanied by compelling examples of the huge distinction between real and fake communication. It would be hard to read it and not gain valuable tips.

# PRAISE FOR *Overcoming Fake Talk*

## **Dennis S. Reina, Ph.D.**

Co-author of award winning, business best selling books *Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace* and *Rebuilding Trust in the Workplace*.

[www.ReinaTrustBuilding.com](http://www.ReinaTrustBuilding.com)

John Stoker's book *Overcoming Fake Talk* provides a very balanced approach to the art and science of conversation that engages your head, heart and hands—all essential elements to connect with people at a deeper, more meaningful level. This book gives you clear theory and the practical skills you need to achieve desired results, earn respect, and develop effective relationships, personally and professionally. I highly recommend it!

## **Irving H. Buchan, Ph.D.**

Capella University

It is about time that someone had the guts and the intelligence to expose our phony and empty conversations. In *Overcoming Fake Talk*, John Stoker not only provides many examples of how we distort and play one-gunmanship ego games, but also prescribes eight principles to cure once and for all our conversational lameness, lapses, and lies. Take the cure!

## **John Parker Stewart**

Leadership Coach, Executive Development Specialist and author of several books including *LEAD NOW!*; President and Founder, Stewart Systems, Inc.; [www.johnparkerstewart.com](http://www.johnparkerstewart.com)

John Stoker is right on target with his message of Fake Talk; as I've learned over 30 years of coaching leaders, the only way to Lead NOW is to engage in real conversation with team members about what matters most. John zeros in on the keys behind developing vital results-driven relationships through genuine and focused communication. All leaders need to study and apply his timely prescription!

## **Beverly Kaye**

Founder, Co-CEO: Career Systems International

Co-author: *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go: Career Conversations Employees Want*

I love the title of this book! How often do we get the sense that another person is not speaking their truth? How often do we wear our own political or social masks in the workplace? What a great book to help us stop both of these disingenuous conversations and turn around the opportunities in front of us. This conversation book is truly worth adding to your shelf...and maybe even replacing others. The author knows his material and takes a straight-forward, practical look at the subject. He reframes old notions and applies the principles to anyone, anywhere, in any position. Great questions, great suggestions...that is, if you want to change. Bravo! I will put his ideas to use in my own practice.

# PRAISE FOR *Overcoming Fake Talk*

## **Michael G. Winston**

Past EVP, Global Head—Leadership and Organization Strategy, Five Fortune 100 companies

So many leaders have failed themselves, their families, their shareholders, and their neighbors on the most important of leadership behaviors: honesty, integrity and ethical decision-making.

Given the resultant state of the economy, geopolitical instability and competitive leadership challenges, I cannot imagine a strategy more necessary than REAL conversation. *Overcoming Fake Talk* by John R. Stoker provides sound principles, effective tools and compelling stories to encourage the practice of more authentic, transparent and impactful human interactions. A great storyteller, Mr. Stoker uses interesting and relevant stories to provide the rationale for the effectiveness of each tool and method. With proper application, one can use REAL conversations to achieve extraordinary results. In sum, it is a good primer to expand self-awareness and improve performance.

## **Brent D. Peterson, Ph.D.**

Co-author, *Fake Work: Why People Are Working Harder Than Ever but Accomplishing Less, and How to Fix the Problem*

Wow! I just finished reading *Overcoming Fake Talk*. I have taught communication skills for over forty years, I wish *Fake Talk* had been available forty years ago. The book provides the most needed and helpful communication tools in a very effective manner. Stoker teaches true principles for getting Results, Respect, and great Relationships using REAL Conversation.

## **Stephen M.R. Covey**

Bestselling author of *The Speed of Trust* and *Smart Trust*

*Overcoming Fake Talk* is not only a terrific book title, it should be the mantra of anyone who's determined to get consistently great results. Many well-intended people dance around the issues that beg for open and candid discussion. Trouble is, when the topic is risky they simply don't have the skills to carry on a real conversation. So they engage in fake talk. Then, when the tough issues don't get resolved, they engage in more fake talk and the cycle starts to resemble a scene from *Groundhog Day*.

John Stoker's book is a breakthrough because it so clearly identifies a common problem that few have really talked about and offers principles, practices, and skills so necessary for honest, trust-building conversation. If you're truly interested in respect, relationships, and results, this book is for you.

# PRAISE FOR *Overcoming Fake Talk*

## **Rodger Dean Duncan**

Bestselling author of *Change-Friendly Leadership*

John Stoker scores early and often with his groundbreaking book *Overcoming Fake Talk*. He begins with the premise that much of what passes for meaningful conversation is counterfeit because the participants either tiptoe around the real issues or ignore them altogether. Then he offers a wealth of easy-to-understand principles and practices that help you engage in the real conversations that produce deeper respect, better relationships, and stronger results. I like this book so much I wish I'd written it myself.

## **Hyrum W. Smith**

Co-Founder, FranklinCovey

Not only does *Overcoming Fake Talk* uncover the key principles to REAL conversations, but it offers a true road map to mastering the skills necessary for building lasting relationships. Adhering and implementing to these principles will dramatically increase your ability to communicate and improve your relationships in your professional and personal life.

## **Ken Shelton**

Editor of *Leadership Excellence* magazine and author of *Beyond Counterfeit Leadership*

For 30 years, I've tried to help people see the difference between fake (counterfeit) and real (authentic) leadership. John Stoker not only reveals fake talk, he also delivers spot-on advice for holding real conversations that cultivate relationships, respect and results. Read it and reap. You'll be a better, more effective leader.

## **Norm Smallwood**

Co-founder, The RBL Group

Co-author with Dave Ulrich of *Leadership Sustainability*, McGraw Hill, February 2013

John has written an engaging book filled with interesting stories that guide the reader through the land mines of having difficult conversations. I can attest personally to the consequences of having bad results come from poorly managed conversations. I have had many. John gives me and others like me multiple ways to redeem myself in future conversations. John provides a step by step process to help us prepare to have REAL conversations that lead to positive results. We all know that tough conversations are not easy to have and can often spiral in a negative direction because we lack the skill and confidence to manage the process. John provides a step-by-step approach that gives the reader the skills and confidence to have these conversations. This book balances the latest theory with real-world practical advice. The result—happier, more productive relationships with others. As John promises, this is the last book on having tough conversations that you need.

# PRAISE FOR *Overcoming Fake Talk*

## **David Hanna**

Principal, The RBL Group

*Overcoming Fake Talk* is both profound and refreshing. Profound in its insights about how we converse with one another and how this impacts our personal and corporate success. Refreshing in that it is easy to read, uses many real-life examples, and offers the reader some real guidance. John Stoker becomes your coach, whose practical frameworks and case examples will prepare you for more productive discussions and then enable you to review them afterward to keep progressing.

## **Ralph Jacobson**

Principal, The Leader's Toolbox; Author, *Leading for a Change: How to Master the Five Challenges Faced by Every Leader*

At the core of every change effort, conflict, feedback session, and dialogue is a one-to-one conversation. It is an essential yet often overlooked ingredient for success. *Overcoming Fake Talk: Creating REAL Conversations for Results* provides a comprehensive and practical approach to a topic all of us can improve.

## **Patricia Wheeler, Ph.D.**

Contributor, *Coaching for Leadership*; Publisher, *Leading News*; Managing Partner, The Levin Group

Thank you, John Stoker! *Overcoming Fake Talk* is a refreshing look at how to hold **REAL** conversations that get results. As an executive coach working with senior leaders around the globe, I know that conversation is the engine of how so much work gets done, and that far too much time and energy is wasted in unproductive communication (fake talk). I heartily endorse this book as a roadmap and handbook for tough conversations, written in an engaging and entertaining style.

## **Dr. Bruce H. Jackson**

CEO, The Institute of Applied Human Excellence and Author of *Finding Your Flow*

John gets to the heart of effective communication and leadership “Fake Talk”. The serious student of leadership will have multiple copies of this book on the shelf.

## **Andrea Kates**

Author of the best-selling business strategy book, *Find Your Next*

REAL conversations help you find your competitive edge. In John Stoker's book, *Overcoming Fake Talk*, he provides us with simple and profound skills for cultivating the ideas and energy that drive organizational change and innovation through people. Truly, the types of conversations we hold create respect, build relationships, and uncover opportunities for growth by tuning in to what people say in entirely new ways.



# PRAISE FOR *Overcoming Fake Talk*

## **Ed Oxford, Ed.D**

SVP, Human Resources and Chief Talent Officer, Banner Health

John R. Stoker's book, *Overcoming Fake Talk*, is a natural extension of the training and leadership development he has provided within our company. His concepts are clear, his explanations down-to-earth, and in my experience, what he teaches really works. Our organization places great emphasis on the quality of our people, and on creating a healthcare and work environment where we treat each other with compassion, dignity, and respect—this book is a primer for developing precisely those characteristics.

## **Roice N. Krueger**

Author and Senior Consultant

*Overcoming Fake Talk* is a must-read book for anyone wants to improve the effectiveness of their verbal communication. This insightful book is full of concise suggestions on how to dramatically improve interpersonal communications. It helps a person get their head right so they can have practical conversations that will get better results. It is easy to read and full of great illustrations that help the reader to remember the skills being taught.

## **Ricardo Lillo**

President and CEO of DOOR Training International

John R. Stoker's book *Overcoming Fake Talk* offers the principles, paradigms, and processes for holding REAL Conversations to enhance results while other authors only focus on the process for holding conversations that really matter. Not only does the author deal effectively with the psychology for holding any difficult conversation, but he also offers practical tools and techniques that can be applied in the toughest business and personal situations. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to hold REAL Conversations and build better relationships in their personal and professional lives.

## **Marshall Goldsmith**

New York Times bestselling author of *MOJO* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*.

Nothing about authentic leadership is fake—and that includes all forms of talk and walk. so, if you are now a leader—or if you aspire to be a leader--you need to learn how to have REAL conversations. John Stoker's enlightening and entertaining book, *Overcoming Fake Talk*, will help you to gain and maintain influence with key stakeholders by holding real conversations that get results.

## **Aerospace Industry**

Lockheed Martin  
Honeywell  
BF Goodrich Aerostructures  
Kelly Aviation

## **Durable Goods / Manufacturing**

Ford Motor Company  
Manheim Auctions  
AutoTrader.com  
Perkin Elmer

## **Financial Services**

JP Morgan  
American Express

## **Consumer Goods and Services**

Monsanto Chemical Group  
Oriental Trading Company  
Hallmark Card  
US Smokeless Tobacco  
Kinko's  
Alcon Labs  
Regeneron Pharmaceuticals  
Unified Grocers  
Eastman Kodak  
Nebraska Furniture Mart

## **Consulting and Education**

Marriott School of Management  
Novations  
South Florida SHRM  
HR Tampa  
ASTD Nebraska  
SHRM Nebraska  
AZODN  
University of Arkansas Currents  
ASTD New Mexico  
Deloitte-Consulting

## **Natural Resources**

Chevron  
Amoco Oil  
Texaco  
Maxum Petroleum  
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## **High Tech and Telecommunications**

AT & T  
Novell  
BellSouth  
Cox Communications  
Turner Broadcasting  
Comcast Cable  
Provision Communication

## **Healthcare**

Scottsdale Healthcare  
Pinnacle Health System  
GE Medical Systems  
Cigna/Healthplan  
Southeast Georgia Health System  
Nebraska Medical Center  
Wheaton Franciscan Medical Group  
NextCare Urgent Care  
Banner Health  
HCA Healthcare  
Payflex-Aetna

## **Electric Utilities**

Oklahoma Gas & Electric  
Wisconsin Electric

## **Hospitality and Entertainment**

Pan Pacific Hotels

## **Government and Public Services**

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs  
County of San Bernardino, California  
State of Georgia  
City of Bradenton, Florida  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation  
Springville (Utah) Chamber of Commerce  
Utah Council of City Managers  
Boystown

## **Agriculture**

U.S. Sugar Corporation

## **Steel**

Geneva Steel  
Bethlehem Steel