



## **Welcome**

Bringing authentic engagement to meetings, gatherings and conversations is an essential leadership skill that improves outcomes and brings connection and positive transformation to our companies, organizations, clubs, communities, families and friendships.

Welcome to the world of Convening: *the art of gathering and "holding" people for the sake of authentic engagement.*

Much of the focus of the Art of Convening is about preparing ourselves internally for a gathering, leading to how we then interact with the others in our gatherings and how we observe and shepherd the interactions of participants with each other. Why does this matter?

Most of us really want to be effective and truly engaged with others. We go into meetings or gatherings with high expectations for good outcomes. We decide to do something – together. We want to make a plan, come to a real consensus, innovate, or pool our energies. Sometimes we may just wish to know each other better or celebrate a milestone together.

What we often hear about this feature of life that most of us experience as a necessity in our careers, families and friendships is:

"Meetings suck."

"These gatherings are boring."

"People don't mean what they say."

"Phone conferences are a waste of time."

"Do I have to go?"

"Am I really needed?"



**The ART OF CONVENING:  
Authentic Engagement in Meetings, Gatherings and Conversations**

**DRAFT**

It is unfortunate that we react this way to meetings that have come to dominate the workday, whether virtual or in-person, and that we sometimes dread gatherings where families, colleagues or friends may endure each other with smiles and chatter while impatiently watching the clock for the proper time to exit.

Why do we so often perceive meetings as a waste of time? Why are gatherings boring? Why do our conversations fall flat? To bring the kind of meaning and outcome most of us really yearn for when we gather, the key quality needed is *authentic engagement*.

Authentic engagement with another, or others, is not tiring or draining. It is not one-sided, manipulating, persuading or controlling. Authentic engagement is, simply, a genuine expression of what is true for us, and an attentive listening to what is true for another, or others. Why this simple human interaction often eludes us can be a matter of habit, distrust, faulty modeling, lack of attention, or fear.

This book offers a set of practices and principles that will lead to authentic engagement and authentic leadership in our meetings, our gatherings, and our conversations (1 on 1 or more). These practices and principles are at the nexus of leadership development and personal development and will bring an integrated, whole-systems dimension to those who use them.

We have experienced and observed, in our own work and lives, the power of authentic engagement to bring a shift of energy to a meeting or gathering. When authentically engaged, people tend to feel energized and connected, leading to better outcomes. This shift in energy often generates meaningful conversation, an emergence of something new, and an alignment that leads to true commitment from those who participate.



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The Convening Wheel model (see Introduction) helps to bring the practices and principles needed for authentic engagement together as a whole – with a natural order and sequence that can be followed, or not.

There are many books and theories about best practices in meetings or gatherings. The Art of Convening is unique in that it can be used independently, but can also be used in conjunction with other models, methods, skills and proficiencies we already have.

We welcome you to try the Art of Convening, beginning wherever it makes sense for you, and to discover the gift of *authentic engagement* in all of its simplicity and power.