



**The World Cafe presents... Cafe to Go!
A quick reference guide for putting conversations to work...**

Cafe Conversations are an easy-to-use *method* for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in service of the real work. Cafes in business have been named in many ways to meet specific goals, including Creative Cafes, Knowledge Cafes, Strategy Cafes, Leadership Cafes, Marketing Cafes, and Product Development Cafes. Most Cafe conversations are based on the principles and format developed by The World Cafe (see www.theworldcafe.com), a growing global movement to support *conversations that matter* in corporate, government, and community settings around the world.

Cafe Conversations are also a provocative *metaphor* enabling us to see new ways to make a difference in our lives and work. The power of conversation is so invisible and natural that we usually overlook it. For example, consider all the learning and action choices that occur as people move from one conversation to another both inside the organization and outside, with suppliers, customers and others in the larger community. What if we considered all of these conversations as one big dynamic Cafe, with each of job function as a table in a larger network of living conversations, which is the core process for sharing our collective knowledge and shaping our future? Once we become aware of the power of conversation as a key business process, we can use it more effectively for our mutual benefit.

The Cafe is built on the assumption that people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges.

Given the appropriate context and focus, it is possible to access and use this deeper knowledge about what's important.

What is essential about the Cafe method? We have outlined a series of guidelines for putting conversation to work through dialogue and engagement. If you put these guidelines to work when planning meetings and instruction, you'll be surprised at the improved quality of the outcomes you get. When hosting a Cafe Conversation using all these guidelines simultaneously, you'll find you are able to create a unique Cafe environment where surprising and useful outcomes are likely to occur.

Cafe Guidelines

Conducting an exciting Cafe Conversation is not heard—it's limited only by your imagination. The Cafe format is flexible and adapts to many different circumstances. When these guidelines are used *in combination*, they foster collaborative dialogue, active engagement, and constructive possibilities for action.

Clarify the Purpose.

Pay attention early to the reason you are bringing people together. Knowing the purpose of your meeting enables you to consider which participants need to be there and what parameters are important to achieve your purpose.

Create a Hospitable Space.

Cafe hosts around the world emphasize the power and importance of creating a hospitable space—one that feels safe and inviting. When people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking, speaking, and listening. In particular, consider how your **invitation** and **physical set-up** contribute to creating a welcoming **atmosphere**.

Explore Questions that Matter.

Finding and framing *questions that matter* to those who are participating in your Cafe is an area where thought and attention can produce profound results. Your Cafe may only explore a single question, or several questions may be developed to support a logical progression of discovery throughout several rounds of dialogue. In many cases, Cafe conversations are as much about discovering and exploring powerful questions as they are about finding effective solutions.

Encourage Everyone's Contribution.

As leaders, we are increasingly aware of the importance of participation, but most people don't only want to participate, they want to actively contribute to making a difference. It is important to encourage everyone in your meeting to contribute their ideas and perspective, while also allowing anyone who wants to participate by simply listening to do so.

Connect Diverse Perspectives.

The opportunity to move between tables, meet new people, actively contribute your thinking, and link the essence of your discoveries to ever-widening circles of thought is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Cafe. As participants carry key ideas or themes to new tables, they exchange perspectives, greatly enriching the possibility for surprising new insights.

Listen for Insights and Share Discoveries.

Through practicing shared listening and paying attention to themes, patterns, and insights, we begin to sense a connection to the larger whole. After several rounds of conversation, it is helpful to engage in a whole group conversation. This offered the entire groups an opportunity to connect the overall themes or questions that are now present.