
THE NEW SAM CO: EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF CONNECTION FOR BREAKTHROUGH LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

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A lot of businesses today are hitting the performance glass ceiling after having gone through many reorganizations and so-called “transformations” with the latest in processes and technologies ensuring everyone stays “connected” – at least digitally. Unfortunately, despite all of their efforts, it seems that no matter what strategy they use, their performance falls short of compensating for all of the efforts they have undertaken. They keep being in a business-as-usual mode and improving their performance incrementally while some other businesses seem to be able to really take off. How come?

The source of performance is “thinking”

Consider that performance is the result of the actions people take and that their actions come from their way of thinking – in other words, their minds. Simply said: When you are really connected to yourself and others, you truly understand them and their points of view. For most things we do in life, that works just fine.

However, if you want extraordinary levels of performance – a whole new future, totally distinct from what’s predictable – to happen for yourself, your client, your team or organization, then you will need to be very interested in “thinking” and particularly your “way of thinking.” You will need to be able to challenge your own thinking as well as others’. You will need to change the mind, to get connected to a whole new thinking – a whole new mindset.

For that to occur, whether on an individual, team or organizational basis, your access is *connection* – your connection to yourself, to others, to your teams, your organization, your customers, their organization, their customers, the world. When people are truly connected at all levels, there is an easiness to take on anything and to achieve anything we want.

I believe that one of the most powerful ways an organization can distinguish itself against competition boils down to the quality of its connections – or the quality of its relationships within and outside of the organization. Connection is the new performance game, and it goes back to basics: relationships, relationships, relationships.

More than ever, anyone who is a “connector” between ideas and among people within and outside of their organization will be at the heart of extraordinary levels of performance. SAMs who have the ability to truly “connect” beyond their knowledge and create authentic alignment with *all* of their key stakeholders will lead their organizations and their customers’ organizations to new levels of unprecedented performance.

There is a term for a SAM who has mastered the five basic “Co”s for **CON**nection, **CON**sciousness, **CO**herence, **COL**laboration, and **CO**mmitment. It is the new SAM ^{CO}.

The basis for extraordinary levels of performance is CONNECTION

Check it out for yourself. Have you ever been with someone, a boss or a colleague or a friend, who was so *CO*nected with you

that you felt you could just be yourself and express anything? You felt free and truly understood and appreciated? How was that experience? You wanted to go *beyond* what was asked of you, right?

How about the reverse? Have you ever been with someone who was not at all connected, who seemed to only care about themselves? How was that? You did just the minimum requested, right?

Have you ever felt things were moving very slowly and that no matter how many calls, emails or communications you made, things seemed to be stopped or not moving in the right direction or just progressing simply too slowly? Well, consider that in your ecosystem there are connections which are at best a three on a scale of one to five.

When things are moving slowly, I am inviting you to look at all of your key stakeholders and check your connection score. In order to bring velocity, you need a minimum of four on that scale. If you want to cause a whole new result, a whole new future that is distinct from the past and what was predictable, you will need to ensure that *all* of your key stakeholder connections are at five.

The opportunity here is to transform all key relationships below four on the scale to at least a four. When people and teams in an organization are truly connected to who they are and why they are there and are free to be themselves with each other, they go beyond just what is expected of them.

But how do you do it? How do you create that kind of connection, especially when the relationship has not been that great or when it has been in place so long that to do anything differently might feel inauthentic?

It all starts with your own connection with yourself.

Figure 1. Quality of the Connection Your Score

Score	Label	Description
5	Extraordinary	Excellent relationship. Feels free to express anything and looks to create alignment event when he/she disagrees. Is prepared to make a strong effort and takes risks for me.
4	Strong	Very Good relationship. Readily accessible and available to me. Is positive and often helpful and often generates the connection with me instead of waiting for me.
3	Medium	Transactional, is accessible and available to me upon request.
2	Weak	Difficult or we have had some sporadic communication.
1	Poor	Non-existent, problematic or negative relationship.

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First level of connection – with yourself

When you are truly connected to yourself, to who you really are, that you know *why* you are where you are, that you know the *impact* you are out to accomplish, that you are entirely “Coherent” with who you are and what you do, you *feel free to be yourself*. This is the first level of connection. This level of connection allows you to connect with anyone and create the kinds of conversations that can lead to extraordinary levels of performance. The question is: Who are you? Who is the “self” that you are referring to?

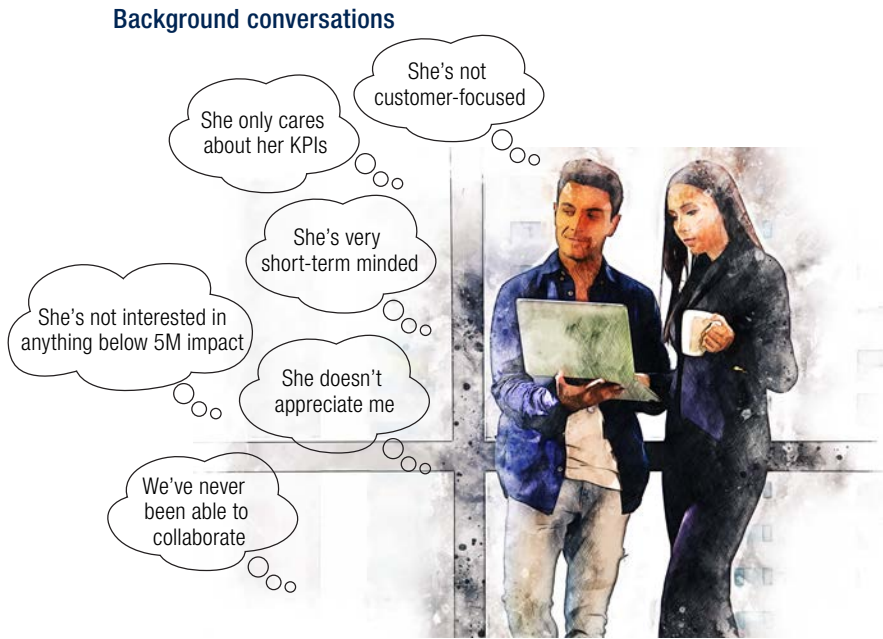
For the most part, we define ourselves by our personality and our past experiences. That is the trap. That thinking limits us totally and is only one part of who we are. I would like you to consider that you *are* not only the result of your past experiences but

that, at any moment, you actually are the result of the future that you think you will be living into. The key word here is *think*.

For example, you are a SAM and you are about to meet one of your clients who you want to sell on a \$10 million deal. But here is the thing...you already *know* how the conversation is going to go. You already *know* what he is going to say. Your *thinking* is telling you that he will respond in such and such a way. So you plan accordingly with counter-arguments and justifications. You already *know* how you are going to be in that meeting. You find yourself nervous. You are fixated. Your mind is set.

This thinking is what I call your “background conversation.” It is the conversation you are having with yourself – in this case about yourself and about your customer.

Figure 2. Background conversations lead to foreground conversations



The quality of your relationships is a function of your background conversations

So in that moment, while you are preparing, if you consider that *you are the result of the future that you think you will be living into*, you see that your thinking in that moment is past-based.

Now, there is nothing wrong with past-based thinking. We run most of

our lives in that mode, and it allows us to survive. Remember, our thinking gives us our actions, which give us our results. So, our background conversation (i.e., our thinking) leads us to our actions (i.e., foreground conversations), which lead us to our results.

Background conversations lead to foreground conversations

The only problem lies when that

“thinking” is not going to lead us to the results we want and when we really *believe* our thinking as *the only truth*.

When you can see that your thought is just a thought (and not the truth), you are free to choose that thought or *invent* another thought. I call this “COncious Background Conversation.” When you can do that, you have the ability to truly connect to yourself – the self that is *based in the future you want* rather than the predictable past that your thinking is telling you. This then allows you to connect with and to others.

Conscious Background Conversation: Future-based thoughts

If you are conscious of your “background conversation” and you understand that this conversation is just your thoughts and not necessarily the truth, and consequently that these thoughts will not lead you to the results you really want, then you can cause a different kind of conversation...a conversation comprising future-based thoughts – a “COncious Background Conversation.”

For instance, I can describe myself as

Figure 3. The quality of your relationships is a function of your background conversations



Figure 4. Conscious background conversation: Future-based thoughts

a woman, a consultant and a coach or I can say that I am a leader who frees people and organizations to dare to be, to do and to have the results they *really* want. That's who I am, and that's what I am about. Can you see that the second way of describing myself puts me into a whole new future?

For instance, my company is totally “COherent” with that mission. I have built my entire organization, concepts and offers in line with who I am (as a matter of declaration rather than a mere description of myself). So when I am meeting prospects, I share about who I am, and I look for where they need to be freed up and where they need to dare. Most importantly, I look for what they really *want*. I am clear that my clients are leaders who want to achieve extraordinary levels of performance while growing as human beings. When I meet them, they don't necessarily demonstrate that. I am also clear that who I am and what I am about is not for everyone. However, I do take on “connecting” with anyone I meet by ensuring I always see myself and them in the context of future-based thinking rather than my opinions about myself or them.

How can you really connect?

“Disruptive Meeting Technology”

One way we connect with people is through meetings. SAMs have meetings all the time within and outside of their organizations. They spend their lives connecting, creating bridges between the needs of their customers and the offers of their organizations. Meetings are often prepared for but with an automatic background conversation that does not allow for extraordinary levels of performance.

I have developed a four-step

Conscious background conversation



methodology for anyone who wants to create extraordinary levels of performance at the outset of a meeting. I call it the “Disruptive Meeting Technology.” It was created to achieve two things: alignment and commitment.

1. What's at stake?

One powerful way to be anchored in the future, creating future-based thinking and a very high level of connection fast, is to be clear about “what's at stake.” If you are clear about what's

at stake for yourself, your organization, your customer, your customer's organization and your customer's customers, then your thinking will be automatically elevated and future-based. You will notice you're thinking about your customer, about yourself and about the outcome of the meeting in a very different way.

It seems that when people really engage on what's at stake and really care about finding a way to answer to all key stakeholders, a level of

Figure 5. Disruptive meeting technology 4 steps

DMT: A meeting preparation tool to cause ALIGNMENT and produce extra-ordinary results and relationships

Four steps

- 1) What's at stake
 - ✓ For me? For them? For both of us?
- 2) What outcomes do I want to achieve at the end of the meeting?
- 3) What conscious conversation can I create?
 - ✓ About me? About them?
- 4) What will be said at the meeting (beginning and end) that would be a representation of having been successful with the meeting?

connection is created that goes beyond business as usual. That connection leads to fruitful conversations that are daring and engaging. When people are truly connected, they dare more, they consider things they have never considered before, they take actions they have never taken before. They feel free to create. I invite you to try it!

2. Disruptive outcomes

Ask yourself, “What is it that I actually want to achieve in this meeting? If I could get anything I want, without any barriers, based on what’s at stake here, what is it that I actually want? What outcomes do I want? Are they really inspiring to me? Are they bringing me energy? Do they answer to what’s at stake for all key stakeholders?” If not, then you need to look again and be clear about what you want. Once you know what you really want, then you can commit to actually having these things by the end of the meeting.

Oftentimes, we are not clear about what we want because we are so sure we won’t be able to get it. We are stuck in past-based thinking. As Henry Ford said, “Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t – you’re right.”

3. Conscious background conversations

Ask yourself, “What am I actually thinking? About me? About them?” Be conscious about this thinking. Then ask yourself these questions: “Who do I need to be in order to deliver on what’s at stake and the outcomes? Am I clear that I will be able to deliver on these?” Sometimes, we don’t feel 100 percent adequate for the job or we think that this is not the right timing. It is important that you create a powerful conversation about yourself and about your customer. It is like bringing about a different side of the Rubik’s Cube with different colors or like putting on a different set of glasses to look at yourself and others.

For instance, I remember a time when I met with a new prospect (who is now a very big client). I was talking to two people accountable to create a senior leadership program for their strategic account executives (SAEs). The email I received from them mentioned that they wanted me to give a short talk to their group of SAEs, ensuring that they would be transformed and be innovative.

I was nervous. I knew that if I agreed to do something like this, that it would be insufficient and that it was not in line with who I was. I knew that there was a lot at stake for them – the transformation of the mindset of a large international group of sales executives. There was a lot at stake for my organization as well – my legitimacy as a disruptive performance and leadership company as well as my company’s growth internationally. This prospect represented everything I wanted and needed at the time.

I had only 30 minutes over the phone to convince them to meet with me again because, I said, if they truly wanted to transform their SAEs, then a one-hour speech would not do it. What they would need (I told them) was a whole disruptive transformational leadership program, created and led by yours truly. I had no idea if they would go for it, but that is where I stood. I created a Conscious Background Conversation about them as the key to the transformation of the company and about me as their strategic partner for the transformation of the entire organization.

I know that if I had not created a Conscious Background Conversation, I would not be writing about it today. This was a crucial moment for me and my company at the time.

4. What will be said?

Once you are clear about what’s at stake, the outcomes you really want, who you are and who they are and from this created a Conscious Background Conversation, then it is useful to start

thinking and visualizing what will be said by all parties involved. How are you going to begin the meeting? What will you say? What words will you use? What will you say at the end of the meeting that will demonstrate that you have achieved your outcomes? What could you imagine others saying that will demonstrate what you wanted?

Doing this helps you be really clear about whether or not you actually achieved alignment. It’s amazing what can happen. Before meeting with this prospect, I had created the four steps of the Disruptive Meeting Technology. During our meeting, I could not believe it: They said almost word for word the Conscious Background Conversation I had created. I knew in my heart that they were going to be a very big client – and that is the case today.

Connection, connection, connection

When you are really connected to yourself and others, you truly understand them and their points of view. There is nothing to defend; everyone can express and communicate what they are truly thinking – all in service of being able to co-create together. When this happens, things move more quickly, decisions get made faster, true alignment (as opposed to “agreement,” which is only an exchange of opinions leading to the uncertainty of people truly doing what they agreed to do) happens. People take action consistent with their COmmitment. Of course, this leads you and others to want to connect and engage in other COs, feeling free to COmmunicate, COoperate, COllaborate and, for sure, COmmit authentically.

With this kind of connected commitment, extraordinary levels of performance suddenly become possible. ■

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