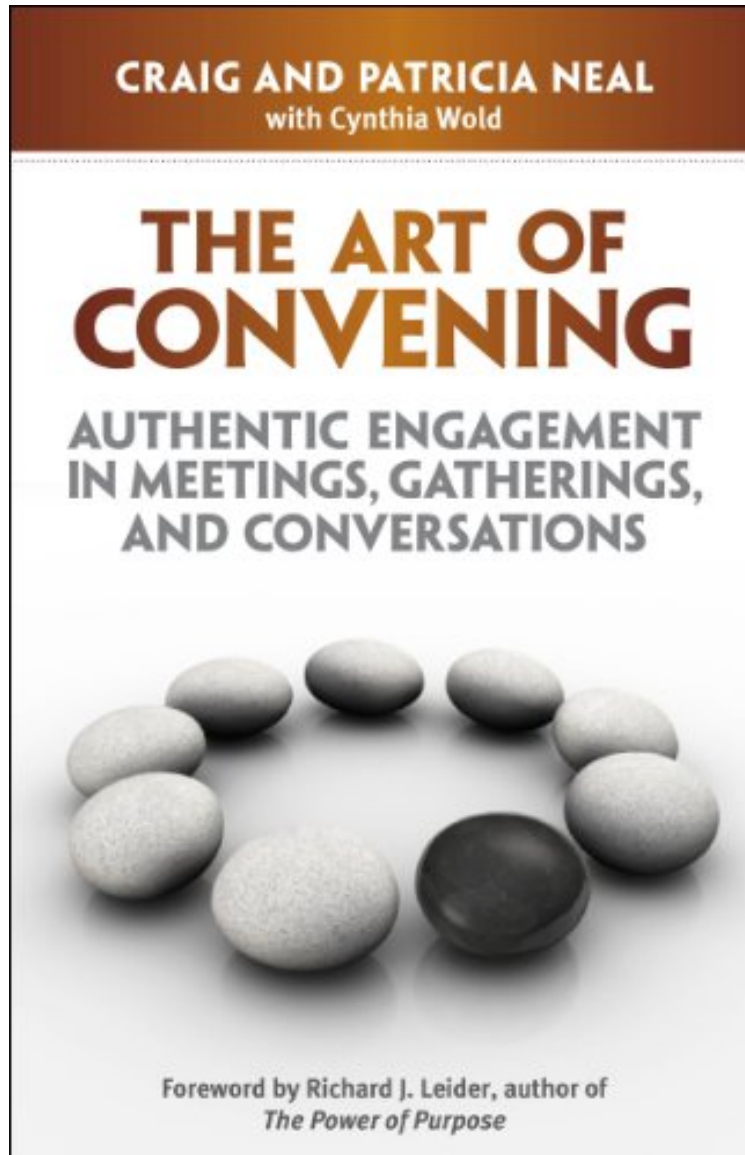


The Art of Convening: Authentic Engagement in Meetings, Gatherings, and Conversations

Craig Neal, Patricia Neal

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Craig Neal, Patricia Neal : The Art of Convening: Authentic Engagement in Meetings, Gatherings, and Conversations before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Art of Convening: Authentic Engagement in Meetings, Gatherings, and Conversations:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Authentic Engagement - The Missing Piece By Brian Kempton Few meetings, in the countless I attended, in my thirty year in business were met with a sense of accomplishment. My

colleagues left these unfulfilled gatherings with a quip like, "That was a total waste of time" and I found myself longing for the opportunity to speak my mind about what was 'on the table' and have my co-workers do the same. But, that was 'inappropriate' protocol. A few years before I ended my career, a friend told me about a new way to conduct a meeting. Authentically, getting to the heart of the matter and having all the voices heard...there was an organization...Heartland run by Craig and Patricia Neal. I called and spoke to Patricia...I started my training with Craig, in *The Art of Convening*. Through the journey of Convening I came to see what was missing in the workplace, authentic engagement with my colleagues, honesty in sorting out the issues we were managing and getting to the heart of the matter. I think Warren Bennis (from an HBR Blog post) sums it up: "People learn from dialogue -- it stretches them. I know that I don't know all that I know until I'm in conversation." Business needs a 'conversation' to stretch with and it starts with *The Art of Convening*. Traversing the ground of this conversation is not easy. It's fraught with many hazards and having experienced guides like Craig and Patricia lead through their book, will certainly ease the trip. Whether clarifying your intention, creating the invitation, setting the context, or determining the essential question, they have been down the trail and call forth deep wisdom and experience through their stories and questions. *The Art of Convening* is one of those unique books that actually delivers what it promises. Within the pages you'll find the practices and principles that lead to authentic engagement and a robust model to connect the pieces. The process in the book created by Craig, Patricia and Cynthia, conducts the reader through the ins and outs of Convening and provides real access to the power of the process. If you are looking for a meaningful transformation in your gatherings, meetings, or conferences, this is the book for you. 19 of 20 people found the following review helpful. Clear, concise, usable. By Terry L. Chapman *The Art of Convening* is not just another "How to" book full of interesting but unusable theory, offering a quick burst of inspiration but soon relegated to collecting dust on the shelf. Rather the Neals have given us a clear and concise guide for gathering and holding people in authentic conversation. This book will be a constant companion for those who believe we have to rethink the way we gather together. Oliver Wendell Holmes famously quipped, "I wouldn't give a fig for simplicity this side of complexity but I'd give my right arm for simplicity on the other side of complexity." What one encounters in *The Art of Convening* is an artful simplicity born from the labor of living with complex issues. This is the magic of this approach that makes it absolutely translatable and applicable to every context. After reading this book and practicing the Convening Wheel I have gained a deep appreciation for the years it took to distill the complexities of human encounter to an almost archetypal template to guide our engagements. Each of the nine aspects of the wheel are connected like spokes to the "heart of the matter," the "hub" at the center. So, like walking a labyrinth one cannot get lost. When the authenticity of our gatherings is compromised by any number of factors the convener can pause and return to the "hub." As the convener "travels" along the aspects of the wheel there are plenty of resources along the way to offer support. My copy of *The Art of Convening* is already dog-eared and annotated. I plan on ordering more copies to use in leadership training. While I might not give "my right arm" for the wisdom offered here, I am very grateful for this wonderful tool to keep in my tool belt as a convener of people. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Convening is indeed an art (and a necessary one)! By One Midwest Movie Mom This book, *The Art of Convening*, contains wisdom kernels one can APPLY. Every page is crisp and authentic. The authors are adept at navigating and bridging us from an operating space that is fairly mechanical to what I conceive as a vital "revival" of ancient practices. These practices are still applicable and allow for vividness and more humanity to enter into our everyday discussions and meetings, and always with an eye toward RESULTS. The authors dare us to ford this stream, in work and in life, as they supply steady, understandable tools to make it through the sometimes bumpy ride. The practice of "sit-on-your-hands-and-don't-say-what-you-mean" OR "be-a-dominator-rather-than-a-listener" has become too common. As the authors point out, neither of these is effective; neither operating stance is going to take us and our organizations to where we want to go. I read it in one plane ride. The essence and aims of the three authors ring true on EVERY page, and the resource section is comprehensive without being overwhelming. Well done, and thanks! LCC Corporate Communicator

“Meetings are a waste of time” is a sentiment many of us share, which is tragic because meetings bring us together as human beings. To achieve the kind of meaning or breakthrough results most of us really yearn for when we gather, the key quality needed is authentic engagement: a genuine expression of what is true for us, and an attentive listening to what is true for others. Why it so often eludes us can be a matter of habit, distrust, lack of attention, or fear. As cofounders of Heartland Inc., Craig and Patricia Neal have led over 170 of their acclaimed Thought Leader Gatherings with leaders from over 800 diverse organizations. Their new book shares for the first time the unique and powerful Art of Convening model—developed in these gatherings and refined over six years of intensive training—which brings authentic engagement and meaning to any group that comes together for any purpose. Convening goes beyond facilitating. Convening creates an environment in which all voices are heard, profound exchanges take place, and transformative action results. The heart of this book is the Convening Wheel—a series of nine steps, or aspects, that bring the practices and principles needed for authentic engagement together as a whole. The book provides exercises, stories, and questions to help you master both the inner and outer dimensions of this work—because in convening, the state of the convener is equally as important as the physical

preparations. Convening works in any setting and can be adapted to virtually any group process. With this book you have all the tools you need to develop this essential life and leadership skill, one that will lead to improved outcomes in your organization, community, family, and relationships.

About the Author Craig Neal is a passionate change leader, publishing executive, organizational executive, and guide. From the 70s to the 90s Craig held executive positions with Garden Way, Inc, Rodale Publishing, and as Associate Publisher, launched Harrowsmith and Eating Well magazines. He's the founder and former publisher of the Utne Reader. nbsp; Patricia Neal is co-founder and President of Heartland Inc. Patricia's focus is inspiring Heartland's growth through program development and execution. Under her guidance, Heartland's signature programs have grown to include: Thought Leader Gatherings, The Art of Convening Trainings, VisionHolder Interview Series, When Women Lead: The Inner Voice of Women's Leadership Retreat, Men's Wilderness Journey Retreat, and consulting and coaching programs. All Heartland programs are dedicated to community leaders committed to taking their visions into action. nbsp;