

Conversations for Action

There are many types of conversation. Specific to effective coordination and high performing teams is Conversations for Action (CfA). CfA specifies the possible paths (speech acts) and outcomes of when a request is made. As Fernando Flores and Terry Winograd point out in chapter 5 of their book, *Understanding Computers and Cognition*, the form for CfA (see Figure) represents the atom of trust and the atom of work. Teams that are exceptional at this are rare. Those that coordinate well have a much higher possibility of achieving their goals.

Certain moods are supportive of a CfA, where others are not. The mood of willingness is supportive of receiving trustworthy promises, while it may not be prudent to accept a promise made in a mood of resentment.

Conversations for Action are not the only conversation that we engage in. We have many different types of conversation in business and personally. Just a few:

- Conversations for Design
- Conversations for Speculation
- Conversations for Action
- Conversations for Clarification
- Conversations for Specification
- Conversations for Orientation
- Conversations for Disclosure
- Conversations for Education

In CfA, a well-specified request consists of three things:

- Mutually understood “*Conditions of Satisfaction*” (criteria to assess success of the resulting situation and therefore the satisfaction of the requestor),
- Specification of *customer and fulfiller* (requestor and promisor),
- *Date and time* that the result is to be produced.

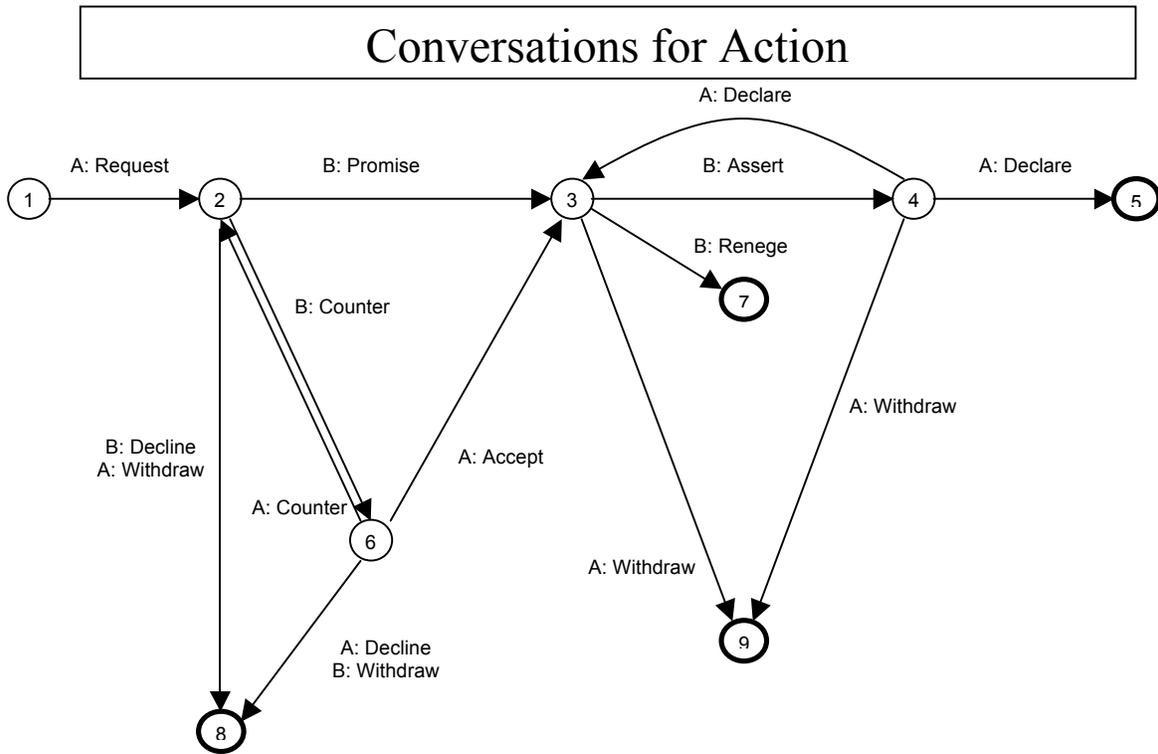
Additionally, two components to ensuring further a satisfactory outcome are two components:

- A check in time between the requestor and promisor to ensure a timely and quality outcome.
- An open offer of support from the requestor.

Arriving at a mutually understood and acceptable request **may require a few counters** as depicted in the diagram.

A person that recurrently fulfills on his or her promises **builds trust**.

Figure – Conversations for Action as produced by Winograd and Flores



Terry Winograd and Fernando Flores. *Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundation for Design*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Corporation, 1986. Print. *Conversations for Action* is a form in presented in Chapter 5.