

A Summary of...

## David Kantor's Four-Player Model of Communication

There are four kinds of conversational actions within a group:

- **Move**—When someone makes a *move* they are initiating an action. They carry, at least for the moment, the focus of the conversation.
- **Follow**—Another person listening to this initial proposal might agree and want to support what is being said. This person says so, and symbolically becomes close to the first person. The second person could be said to be *following* the first.
- **Oppose**—A third person, watching these two agree, may think to herself, There is something not quite right with this picture. She steps in and *opposes* them, challenging what they are saying or proposing. Symbolically, this third person might stand between the first two.
- **Bystand**—A fourth person, who has been observing the entire situation, and who has the advantage of having one foot in and one foot out of the circumstance, describes his perspective of what he has seen and heard. This person may propose a way of thinking and seeing that expands everyone's vision, and could be called a *bystander*.

A well-functioning team dialogues using these actions in balanced and fluid sequences. All four actions should be common and seen as valuable, and individuals are fluid in their ability to take on different roles. They are not bound by informal or unspoken rules imposed either by the group or by themselves. They do not get caught in repetitive patterns (move, oppose, move, oppose, etc.) but break out of stuck sequences.

	INTENT	SOMETIMES COMES ACROSS AS...
MOVER	Direction, Discipline, Commitment, Perfection, Clarity	Omnipotent, Impatient, Indecisive, Scattered, Dictatorial
FOLLOWER	Completion, Compassion, Loyalty, Service, Continuity	Placating, Indecisive, Pliant, Wishy-washy, Over-accommodating
OPPOSER	Correction, Courage, Protection, Integrity, Survival	Critical, Competitive, Blaming, Attacking, Contrary
BYSTANDER	Perspective, Patience, Preservation, Moderation, Self-Reflection	Disengaged, Judgemental, Deserting, Withdrawn, Silent

### Complications to avoid

**Mixed moves**—People commonly make a move in one voice, but have another message underneath. For instance, I may say, “Let’s go to the beach today,” but underneath I may also be saying “And let’s *not* do what you wanted to do.” (Moving with one voice and opposing with another.)

**Disabled positions**—Typically we find that some of the four positions are silenced, or “disabled,” either individually or as a group. A disabled bystander sees what is happening in a group but doesn’t do anything about it. A disabled opposer cannot offer correction to or challenge what is happening. Any system that silences bystanders and opposers is by definition in trouble.

**Strong & weak moves**—Each of us has what might be considered strong moves, ones we do well, and weak moves we do poorly. One can also be “stuck” in one of the four roles, where we repeat a move that would be better changed. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Are you able to play all four roles well, especially in high-stakes situations?

**Consider these questions:** When you speak, do you consciously choose which position to speak from? Are you in tune with the group, choosing your position based on what the group needs in this moment? Try practicing by “replaying” a recent scene in your imagination, speaking from each of the four positions, and imagining how the conversation unfolds.