

# Good character: The foundation for crucial conversations

*Shirley Poertner, president of Poertner Consulting Group, gives us her thoughts on how the Six Pillars of Character can help you communicate.*

Character Counts In Iowa is certainly an awesome force for good within our schools, businesses and communities within the state. That's why I'm delighted as President of Poertner Consulting Group to partner with the Character Counts team to build on the solid foundation they have laid around the state in their many endeavors.

As the VitalSmarts Associate in Iowa, my team and I bring to Iowa's organizations the skills outlined in the NY Times bestselling book *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*. Our training teaches individuals how to achieve spirited dialogue at all levels in an organization, surfacing the best ideas, making high-quality decisions, and then acting on those decisions with unity and commitment. Our workshops introduce a skill-set that builds alignment, agreement, and relationships – within teams, companies, and families. The principles and skills of Crucial Conversations® synch with the Six Pillars of CHARACTER COUNTS!

The Six Pillars provide the bedrock for becoming a dialogue master, especially the Pillars of Respect and Caring.

We know that people will not feel safe sharing their perspectives and disclosing their concerns during a tough conversation unless there's a foundation of trust. What builds that layer of trust? It's knowing that the others in the conversation care about what I care about, and they care about

me as a fellow human being. In Crucial Conversations®, we call that having **Mutual Purpose**. When that “mutuality of soul” is in place, the skillful and authentic communicator can talk about almost anything with almost anyone. Candidly and respectfully. Results are achieved and relationships are strengthened.

Equally as vital to resolving tough issues is the principal of **Mutual Respect** in Crucial Conversations® (...i.e., the Pillar of Respect in CHARACTER COUNTS!) When there’s mutual respect, individuals see and respect the humanity in others, treating each other with dignity in spite of differences of opinion. Real listening happens. People are sincerely curious about others’ viewpoints and are patient in hearing them out.

Character Counts In Iowa is busy infusing six ethical values within the culture of our schools, businesses and communities. The citizens of Iowa are making more ethical decisions as a result. Poertner Consulting Group is busy bringing tools for talking about tough issues to our for-profit and non-profit organizations. The workforce in Iowa is achieving better results and enhancing working relationships as a result.

Sounds like a partnership for driving positive change, huh? Iowa wins!