The need for effective "social architectures" within organization is critical if we are to ensure that we develop future leaders, to drive innovation and to create an organization that has a great legacy. If we examine our leadership, I'm sure we'll find that meetings are where we do much, if not most, of our leading.

Peter Block in his book "The Answer to How is Yes" discusses the importance of the leaders' role as *social architect* which he describes as follows:

"Where the architect designs physical space, the social architect designs social space….. the role of the social architect is to create service-orientated organizations, businesses, governments, and schools that meet their institutional objectives in a way that gives those involved space to act on what matters to them…. **The social architect's task is to <u>create the space </u>for people to act on what matters to them."**

Social architecture is about leading in a way that creates space for what matters! To focus on creating the necessary conditions for acting on what matters is one of the most urgent needs of organizations today. Peter Block goes on to say that "*Acting on what matters is an act of leadership, it is not dependent on the leadership of others.*" This means we all need to take responsibility for our choices and our actions. Leadership is a choice, it's a decision we make to act on what matters. Issues such as integrity, responsibility, and authenticity are all issues that matter.

Five Capabilities of the Social Architect

Peter Block describe the following five capabilities as being necessary for the social architect to be effective. Paradoxically much on these 'capabilities' seem to get lost in the organization we work in today…

1. **Convening:** "*Social architecture is fundamentally, a convening function, giving particular attention to all aspects of how people gather. The future is created as a collective act…… The fundamental tenet of social architecture is that the way people gather is critical to the way the system functions.*" In many organizations meetings are seen as a 'necessary evil', something to be tolerated, in between more important events. The consideration of how people gather and meet is of secondary importance.
2. **Naming the question:** "*The social architect has an obligation to define the context, or the playing field, and then define the right questions, at least to start with*". Too many people dive into the how, selling solutions and describing best practices. Not enough people lead by taking the time to understand the quest that matters.
3. **Initiating new conversations for learning:** "*To sustain the habitability of a social system we must initiate new conversations and manage the airspace so that all voices stay engaged with each other.*" Too many conversations in organizations are initiated to 'align' people to lead them towards a predetermined answer, with not enough learning happening.
4. **Sticking with strategies of engagement and consent:** "…dialogue itself is part of the solution…. Commitment and accountability cannot be sold. They have to be evoked, and evocation comes through conversation." Organizations change through effective conversation.
5. **Designing strategies that support local choice:** "*If our intent is to create a social system that people want to inhabit then the social architect's job is to demand that the inhabitants join in designing the system.*"