

Horst Hanisch



# DISCUSSION

Mastering the skills of moderation

REVISED,  
FOURTH  
EDITION



Leading discussions, conducting surveys, steering roundtables and using manipulation

**Discussing –  
Mastering the Skills  
of Moderation  
Leading Discussions,  
Conducting Surveys,  
Steering Roundtables and  
Using Manipulation**

**Horst Hanisch**

© English edition 4, 3, 2, 1: 2025, 2014, 2009, 2003 by Horst Hanisch

© First German edition: 2003 by Horst Hanisch,

Any use of the texts or images in this book without the express permission of the author constitutes a violation of copyright and is punishable by law. This applies to reproduction, translation, transferring onto microfilm and processing the data with electronic systems.

The advice given in this book has been carefully considered, but no guarantee can be given for its effectiveness. Neither the author nor his agents accept liability for any damage to persons, property or assets.

**Idea and text:** Horst Hanisch, Bonn

**English editing and translation:** Thomas Schommers, Neuss

**Layout:** Guido Lokietek, Aachen; Horst Hanisch, Bonn

**Cover:** Christian Spatz, engine-productions, Cologne; Horst Hanisch, Bonn

**Pictures:** Horst Hanisch, Bonn

**Publisher:** BOD – Books on Demand GmbH, Norderstedt

**ISBN:** 978-3-7693-1596-7

---

# **Discussing – Mastering the Skills of Moderation Leading Discussions, Conducting Surveys, Steering Roundtables and Using Manipulation**

3

Auszug aus  
Discussing –  
Mastering the Skills  
of Moderation  
von Horst Hanisch

---

## Fore-word

***“I welcome you ...”***

*“Don’t be afraid of perfection.*

*You will never reach it.”*

**Salvador Dali, Spanish painter  
(1904 - 1989)**

**“... to our discussion roundtable today.”**

We talk with each other and we talk to each other. We speak, discuss, carry on, and communicate, etc. Do we listen to each other as well?

“Of course,” we may say.

“I am also listening to the other person. Otherwise I wouldn’t know how to respond to him.”

It seems like listening is an elementary part of communication. In a broader sense we tacitly expect that communication eventually is a goal.

This book considers discussion situations and different kinds of dialogue. Generally, it is assumed that people get together in order to exchange their views.

They also want to present their own opinion – and – in a positive sense, to listen what others have to say.

It is some people’s goal to impart as much of their own opinions as possible in a conversation and they are not considerate of other opinions or ideas.

The people who have the largest contribution to a conversation can’t necessarily say that their own ideas are the best ones.

It is possible that a quieter person who does want not strongly articulate his opinion actually has brilliant views and contributes greatly to a conversation.

---

In order to temper the vocal participants and support the passive ones, very often a moderator is used. This person has a few very important duties and responsibilities in a serious discussion.

In the following pages we will look into these details, primarily using one moderator.

This person is attuned to not only the spoken words but also everything else around the discussion. Albert Mehrabian's research indicated that only 7 % of information is transmitted by spoken words.

The other 93 % is transmitted based on how the words are spoken as well as the body language. Experienced moderators consider this knowledge.

They will set the room conditions to achieve the objective of the discussion and use an arrangement that shows respect for each person, relative to their social standing.

While the book by this author "Body Language – in Europe", focuses on nonverbal communication, and the book "Rhetoric – Mastering the Art of Persuasion", primarily focuses on the spoken word, and this book focuses on how to communicate in a group discussion.

The subject is primarily interpersonal in nature, and therefore, we apologize to the reader if we go in more detail in certain areas and if it gives the impression that something might seem to be subjective.

In order to be as objective as possible I have – in my freedom as the author and as a human being – access to other people's experience and knowledge.

Therefore I will use this opportunity to say "THANK YOU!" to everybody who supported me physically and psychological in this project.

There are my students who gave me inspirations through the realization of different group discussions, as well as my father Alfred Hanisch, who supported me as lector and mentor, and my friend Thomas Sturm, who let me work on this project without having too much stress by taking care of all the daily work and duties.

---

I also do not forget all the other people and friends who gave me small but important and precious suggestions and help.

I wish you, dear reader, lots of fun reading this book and hopefully it is a help for practical implementation, so you can use it for a more successful private and business life!

Horst Hanisch

Auszug aus  
Discussing –  
Mastering the Skills  
of Moderation  
von Horst Hanisch



---

Auszug aus  
Discussing –  
Mastering the Skills  
of Moderation  
von Horst Hanisch

---

Table Of Contents

FORE-WORD.....	5	CHAPTER 2 – INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION.....	29
“I WELCOME YOU ...” .....	5	THE TRUTH IS WHAT THE AUDIENCE UNDERSTANDS .....	29
“... to our discussion roundtable today.”.....	5	<i>The truth is what B understands and not what A says</i> .....	29
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	9	<i>Self-influence</i> .....	37
CHAPTER 1 – RECIPROCAL INTERDEPENDENCY AND INFLUENCE .....	13	CHAPTER 3 – GROUP DYNAMICS .....	39
WHAT A SAYS AND B UNDERSTANDS .....	13	BEHAVIOR OF PARTICIPANTS IN A CONVERSATION .....	39
<i>Constantly reciprocal influence</i> .....	13	<i>Active and passive listening</i> .....	39
<i>The audience’s needs</i> .....	16	<i>The typical person – Dynamic of a conversation in a group</i> .....	40
<i>Crowds = large audiences</i> .	19	CHAPTER 4 – RUMOR AND GUILT .....	47
<i>Mass-communication</i> .....	20	ACCUSATION OF BLAME .....	47
<i>Catch the interest of potential participants</i> .....	22	<i>It’s your fault</i> .....	47
<i>The title must fit the content</i> .....	24	<i>Occurrence of misunderstandings and</i>	
<i>Which goal is the speaker pursuing?</i> .....	26		
<i>How to arrange the content of a speech</i> .....	27		

<i>rumors – Rumor test.....</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>Tactic and counter-tactic...73</i>
<i>Helpful communication</i>		<i>Discussions .....77</i>
<i>strategies ... and prevention</i>		<i>Talk-round .....81</i>
<i>of misunderstandings .....54</i>		<i>Political talk.....83</i>
		<i>Debate .....84</i>
<b>CHAPTER 5 – FROM</b>		<b>MODERATION OF CONVERSATIONS85</b>
<b>MONOLOGUE, OVER DIALOGUE</b>		<i>To open a conversation</i>
<b>TO A GROUP CONVERSATION 57</b>		<i>round .....85</i>
HUMAN MONOLOGUE .....	57	<b>CHAPTER 6 – MODELS FOR</b>
“I came, I saw, I conquered”		<b>LEADING DISCUSSIONS .....87</b>
.....	57	MODERATION ROUND / THE FIVE-
What is a dialogue?.....	59	PHASES-MODEL .....
Hearing, listening, active		87
listening .....	60	<i>Five phases of a conference</i>
Reciprocal respect within a		.....87
dialogue.....	61	<i>Setting realistic goals .....</i>
Dialogue technique.....	64	<i>Examples for the five-phases-</i>
Different forms of a dialogue		<i>model .....91</i>
– From monologue to		<i>Five steps to a goal.....95</i>
dialogue.....	65	<i>Brainstorming – Finding new</i>
Conversation leadership –		<i>ideas quickly .....97</i>
Conversation leader.....	68	<i>Nothing is impossible .....99</i>
Moderation – discussion –		<i>Individual phases-model</i>
roundtable.....	69	<i>after having a ‘shocking</i>
Rules of a conversational		<i>experience’ .....101</i>
discussion .....	70	<i>Realistic goal setting .....103</i>

## Table Of Contents

<b>CHAPTER 7 – INTERVIEWS,</b>	<i>200 lies a day?</i> ..... 150
<b>SURVEYS, QUESTIONNAIRES 105</b>	
SURVEY ON THE STREET ..... 105	
<i>Interview and survey</i> ..... 105	
<i>Typical mistakes in asking</i>	
<i>questions</i> ..... 108	
<i>Different kind of questions</i>	
..... 110	
<i>Comparison of open vs.</i>	
<i>closed questions</i> ..... 118	
<i>Question techniques</i> ..... 120	
<i>Questionnaire</i> ..... 123	
<i>Is manipulation through a</i>	
<i>questionnaire possible and</i>	
<i>allowed?</i> ..... 128	
<i>What does manipulation</i>	
<i>mean?</i> ..... 136	
<i>Curiosity is a decoration ...</i>	
..... 139	
<i>Preparation</i> ..... 142	
<i>Conformity – The experiment</i>	
<i>of Solomon Asch</i> ..... 145	
	<b>CHAPTER 8 – MANIPULATION</b>
	<b>THROUGH STATISTICS? ..... 153</b>
	DO STATISTICS LIE? ..... 153
	<i>Counterfeit or truth?</i> ..... 153
	<i>Real manipulation through</i>
	<i>statistics?</i> ..... 157
	<b>CHAPTER 9 – ORGANISATION</b>
	..... 169
	CONFERENCE ROOM ..... 169
	<i>The appropriate room for a</i>
	<i>discussion</i> ..... 169
	<i>Note cards</i> ..... 171
	<i>Hand-outs and documents</i>
	..... 173
	<i>“Where are the restrooms?”</i>
	..... 174
	<i>Structure of the Presentation</i>
	..... 175
	<b>INDEX..... 179</b>

Auszug aus  
Discussing –  
Mastering the Skills  
of Moderation  
von Horst Hanisch

---

# Chapter 1 – Reciprocal Interdependency and Influence

## *What A says and B understands*

*“When I judge my brother,  
I can be mistaken,  
if I forgive him, then not.”*

**Karl Heinrich Waggerl, Austrian writer  
(1897 - 1973)**

## **Constantly reciprocal influence**

In a dialogue or a conversation all participants influence each other.

They also influence the moderator, and the moderator always influences the participants.

Therefore it makes sense to obtain information about the participants of a discussion group beforehand.

This is especially important if you have the responsibility to control and lead the conversation round, i.e., you are the moderator.

### ***Tone of the moderator***

The tone of the moderator towards the participants significantly influences the development of a discussion.

If the tone seems to be presumptuous, arrogant, anxious, obedient, etc, the participants will react towards this type of behavior. The correct tone is to be 'self-confident' and 'equal' towards all participants.

It does not matter if the participant is unemployed or a university professor – for the moderator everybody should have an 'equal value'.

---

## ***Who are the listeners?***

Think about, or ask your client in advance, which target group can be expected. For example:

- Pupils
- Foreigners
- Trainees
- Physically disabled
- Vocational pupils
- Self-payers (seminar fee)
- Students
- Invitees
- Homemakers
- Family
- Employees
- Friends
- Supervisors
- Tradesmen/women
- Managers
- Academics
- Self-employed
- Nobles
- Pensioners
- Socially disadvantaged persons
- Unemployed
- People with a strong social background
- Women
- and others
- Men

A speech can be fine-tuned to address each target group in a slightly different way, for example by paying close attention to choice of words or approach – while bearing in mind our statement above that every group is of equal value.

## ***Interdependency among each other***

‘As the question, so the answer!’

But what is meant by that?

Some moderators make the mistake of dealing with their participants ‘just’ as a serial number, i.e., as an exchangeable item.

Therein lies a great risk.

---

## Chapter 1 – Reciprocal Interdependency and Influence

---

The participant may be sensitive. He feels exactly how somebody is dealing with him. He will act towards the moderator the same way.

If the moderator sees the participant 'just as a trainee', then participant will see the moderator 'just as a smart aleck'.

That does not appear to be a solid foundation for a good co-operation. Therefore an appeal to all moderators and conversation-leaders:

"See your participants as interesting individuals who invest their energy to spend a short part of their life with you in order to take home some new knowledge at the end of the conversation."



---

## The audience's needs

Every person has needs – including your counterparties in conversations. According to the U.S. psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow (1908-1970), human beings have the following needs (simplified description):

Human beings have motives and needs. Through fulfillment of their needs, humans become motivated. According to Maslow, motivation has a hierarchical character.

Only when the fundamental needs are fulfilled, can one of the next higher needs come into focus.

The needs are ordered in 5 levels, one on top of the other. Each lower level need has to be fulfilled before the next, higher-level need, can be addressed.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Level:**

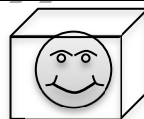
physical needs / physiological needs



This include: food, drink, sleep, motion, self-preservation, sexuality, warmth.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Level:**

security needs



This include: physical security, security of minimum sustenance, general protection, retirement arrangements, insurance, need to live in stability, love or sympathy in terms of feeling secure.

---

## Chapter 1 – Reciprocal Interdependency and Influence

---

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Level:**

---

love needs, social needs



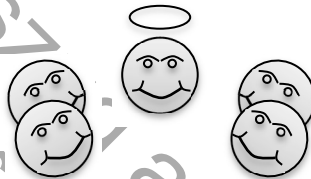
This include: affiliation to a social group or society, circle of friends, acquaintanceships, love or sympathy in terms of attention, social clubs or associations.

---

### **4<sup>th</sup> Level:**

---

appreciation needs, self-orientation needs



This include: needs for one's self, recognition though other people, status, power, respect from other people, self-respect, self-confidence, craving for recognition.

---

### **5<sup>th</sup> Level:**

---

need for self-actualization



This include: needs for one's inner self, room for self-fulfillment, room for self-actualization, privacy, realization of one's own possibilities.

---

---

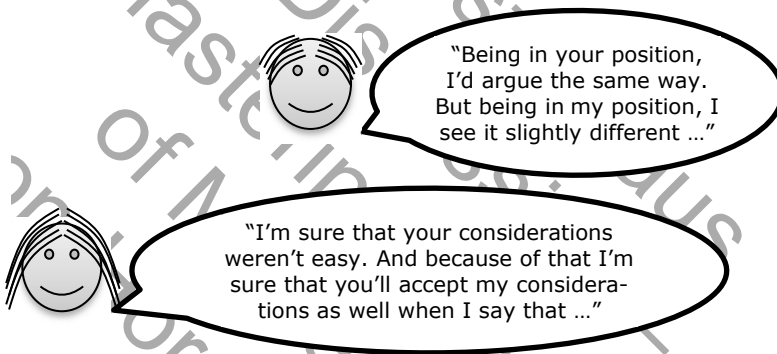
## Helpful communication strategies ... and prevention of misunderstandings

In the following we assume that all persons involved in a conversation want to reach a positive outcome. Therefore, we should consider:

### 1. Humanity

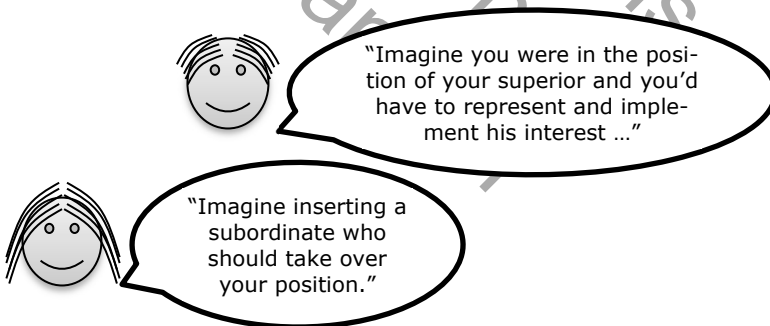
Create close contact to conversation partners.

It is essential for every conversation, even if there are hassles, to create close contact with the other side and to keep it. Inevitably, the way to achieve humanity is by demonstrating appreciation for the other position:



### 2. Creativity

Experimenting with thoughts for role reversal. Use your creative mindset; use your right hemisphere (brain hemisphere).





"Imagine you achieved something at the expense of other people. Now you have a positive feeling but did you really accomplish something for the future?"

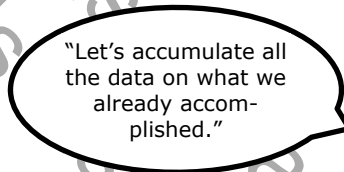
### 3. Complexity

Broaden your horizon (unlocking paradigm).

Instead of just concentrating on a difficult situation, it might be reasonable to include the complete environment:



"We agree with most of the points. What can we do in this situation in order to not jeopardize the agreements?"



"Let's accumulate all the data on what we already accomplished."



### 4. Needs

Know and use needs, motives, interests, and decision criteria of the other person (needs-clarification).

- Does your conversation partner think rationally (left hemisphere with right- hander)? Do numbers, data, and facts come to the forefront? Then you should present him his advantage with numbers and data.
  - Vice versa: If you want to avoid a certain decision you can argue with thoughts from the right hemisphere. ("Imagine, that ...")
-

---

## 5. Wavelength – the 'chemistry' must be right

- Create a good connection.
- Try to understand the world of the other person (active perception).
- Create a good conversational atmosphere so reciprocal trust is possible.

## 6. Atmosphere

Choose a suitable and fear-free room. Create a positive and stress-free atmosphere.

In an appraisal interview in the supervisor's office, the employee does not necessarily have to have a comfortable or harmonic feeling.

It would be better to have this conversation at a 'third' location, possibly in a neutral conference or seminar room.

An appropriate and strategically sensible sitting posture creates trust and advances a positive flow of the conversation.

---

## ***Rhetorical question – Why pebbles?"***



"Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen.  
Today I will talk about the subject 'pebbles on the Rhine-shore of the region in between Cologne and Bonn'.  
*Why did I choose the subject pebbles?*  
Well, pebbles, because ..."

Now, our speaker is already in the middle of the subject. How did he proceed?

1. the audience was welcomed
2. the subject was mentioned
3. a rhetorical question was used
4. the subject was begun

By asking a rhetorical question, the audience might think the following:

"Well, why is he talking about pebbles? I would like to know that."



Therefore, the speaker already reached what he had in mind as goal:

- peak the audience's curiosity,
- he them wondering what comes next and
- they are attentive.

Therefore the speaker obtains:

- curiosity
  - interest
  - attention
-

## Chapter 7 – Interviews, Surveys, Questionnaires

---

These are three important attributes a speaker can use to delve into a subject quickly.

One advantage of using a rhetorical question is that the speaker does not need to expect an answer from the audience. Instead, he gives the answer himself.

Through a rhetorical question, there is an illusive interaction with the audience created. However, the answer is given to the audience in the presentation.

Of course a rhetorical question can also been used at any other point during a presentation. Especially at the beginning of a presentation, it seems like that a rhetorical question is created just for this.

### ***Academic question***

An academic question is a theoretical question, which has no relevance for practical use.

117



"... well, the question arises, whether the word 'Wends' has Slavic origination or if the Celtic tribes gave the 'Wends' this name."

Horst Hanisch

## **DISCUSSION** Mastering the skills of moderation

### **WHAT A SAYS AND B UNDERSTANDS**

This book focuses on the subjects of moderation, discussion-rounds, surveys, round tables and different forms of dialogs. It demonstrates how to lead a conversation properly, how to avoid manipulation and how to reach a target-oriented outcome.

Among others, the content includes the following subjects:

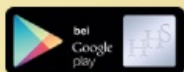
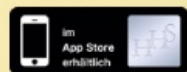
- The first decisive impression
- Interpersonal communication
- What language tells us
- From monolog, over dialog to a group conversation
- Group dynamics in group conversation
- Moderating a conversation round, surveys and interviews
- Reciprocal interdependence and influence
- Manipulation through statistics or smart display?

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Horst Hanisch has worked as author, trainer, and coach for more than 35 years. He lectures in fields including communication, personality development, soft skills, and etiquette. He has published more than 120 books.

Horst Hanisch holds in-house company training courses, and open seminars on topics such as 'Business Etiquette', 'Table Manners', 'Self-Confident Presenting' and 'Presentation and Rhetoric'.

**Download now:** the Knigge-App by Horst Hanisch



[www.knigge-seminare.de](http://www.knigge-seminare.de)

€ 24,90 [D]



9 783769 315967