

Powwow says ciao



**Richard Ferguson is
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When I read that the water cooler company Powwow had been taken into administration and effectively closed, it triggered a thought. I was struck by the irony of a water cooler company going under as we begin to come out of a pretty tough 18 months.

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How many water coolers in offices, shops and stores around the country have been the focal point for conversations that have spawned a new idea, agreement to try something different, or just a real

moan for somebody to get something off their chest, ultimately enabling the organisation to survive and prosper in tough times.

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In today's hectic working environment, the water cooler has become the last bastion (other than the pub) for employees at every level to engage in conversation and discussion that can make a difference.

My belief is that organisations suffer from the fact that they don't create the space, opportunity or focus for the radical conversations required to drive an organisation forward – be it a strategic conversation, a cultural conversation or indeed a customer conversation. We're all so busy running as fast as we can to keep the hamster wheel that's 'business as usual' turning that we rarely take the time to stand back and reflect on whether the wheel is actually moving us in the right direction.

I remember overhearing a conversation between employees at the back gate of a busy supermarket as they were having a 'fresh air' break: insightful, sharp and revealing comments that the CEO would have been well advised to listen to. Sad that these insights are created in isolation and on employees' time rather than harnessed in the working environment to support the issues and opportunities that the organisation is facing at that point in time.

So I say invest in more water coolers and give people the time and space to stand by them and have radical conversations about the things that matter that will make an organisational impact.

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