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For Immediate Release

**NAVIGATE THE SWIRL
7 Crucial Conversations For
Business Transformation**

By Richard S. Hawkes

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“How many meetings have you been in that caused you to ask yourself: Why am I here? Are we accomplishing anything? Such is the character of the Swirl. High activity; low focus. Intensive motion; little direction. My experience has shown that there is a way out of the Swirl. You can chart your course by principles that are tested and proven.”
-- Richard S. Hawkes, author of **NAVIGATE THE SWIRL**

**BREAK FREE OF THE SWIRL
IMPEDING YOUR COMPANY’S GROWTH**

**New Book By Growth and Strategy Expert Richard S. Hawkes
Provides Playbook For Transformative Organizational Change**

“Too many people live with a gnawing feeling that their team and indeed, their organization as a whole, *could* and *should* run more smoothly, more purposefully, and more effectively...But they are unable to actualize it amidst the daily swirl,” contends business and strategy expert Richard S. Hawkes, CEO of Growth River. In his new book, **NAVIGATE THE SWIRL: 7 Crucial Conversations For Business Transformation** (Wiley, April 19, 2022), Hawkes shares what he has learned guiding hundreds of organizations, large and small, on their growth journeys, and lays out a playbook for leading transformative change, applicable at any stage of a company’s development.

At the heart of the author’s approach is the underlying concept that teams and organizations are not machines in which leaders can swap people like parts; they will resist. Growth cannot be achieved by replacing dysfunctional parts. “People are anything but predictable, and a mechanistic outlook on business gives rise to

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leadership approaches that are limited at best,” Hawkes explains. He carries this concept through the three interconnected sections of the book, which – taken together – provide both context and a hands-on leadership toolkit.

In Part One, Framing the Conversation, the author introduces new ways for teams to address three critical domains that must ultimately align for people to fully embrace and sustain change: leadership and culture, roles and capabilities, and strategies and customer experience. Then in Part Two, The Evolution of the Enterprise, he introduces the four stages of organizational growth he has identified as common across all companies and industries, illustrating how each stage – from Independent Contributors to Directive Leadership to Distributed Leadership to Leaders Leading Leaders – represents a greater capacity to manage complexity, enact transformation, and respond to changing conditions with agility.

Finally, in Part Three, The Seven Crucial Conversations, Hawkes lays out how organizations can successfully navigate from each stage to the next. This requires a series of ongoing, intentional conversations that have the power to align, reimagine, and consciously upgrade the “social system” in which teams work. Ultimately, the Seven Conversations are a template for creating and sustaining High Performing Teams, which Hawkes describes as the “secret agents” of transformation. The Conversations are:

Activating Purpose – Great teams are animated by purpose. This first conversation involves such critical questions as: *Does this team have a leader willing and able to activate a shared team purpose? How will decisions be made in this team? What is the shared purpose of the team?*

Driving Focus – Whereas Activating Purpose is all about the structure, format, and shared vision, Driving Focus is about getting clarity around priorities, visualizing the team’s work together, and energizing around the goals of the team. This conversation deals with questions including: *Are team members focused on a shared transformational journey? Is the destination clear? Have gaps and primary constraints been identified?*

Shifting Mindset – Teams must learn to embrace their diversity of perspectives and transform them into a tremendous asset. This means creating agreements to support one another, be accountable, and be coachable. This conversation involves questions such as: *Are team members able to bring their best efforts to the team’s success? Are they accountable and coachable, giving and receiving feedback? Do they resolve conflicts directly at the source?*

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Specifying Roles and Capabilities – Individuals and teams, alike, have roles to play in moving the organization forward. Clarifying roles to ensure that everyone knows who is accountable for what, and what perspectives they represent, is critical. Questions in this conversation include: *Does every key capability and concern in the team’s purview have an owner advocate? Are the roles and responsibilities clear? Are creative tensions leveraged?*

Streamlining Interdependencies – Teams are not freestanding. They exist in the larger organizational social system, and must optimize cross-functional business processes and pay attention to how they interact with multiple functions, teams, and sometimes even multiple businesses. It’s crucial to answer such questions as: *What other teams do we need to align with? Are the points of interdependence within and across teams explicit? Are shared processes and handoffs efficient? Do rewards, and incentives support working as a team?*

Aligning Strategies – Change initiatives often start with strategy, but Hawkes argues that prior to strategy, the issues dealt with in the first five conversations must be hammered out. It is then time to focus on questions such as: *Is there a strategy and a strategic planning process in place? What is the role of the team in this process? Is the path towards competitive advantage clear?*

Implementing Initiatives – “You don’t always know what’s around the bend in the river until you get there,” writes Hawkes. Conversation Seven is about achieving laser focus on the quality and impact of the team’s initiatives. *Do team members plan and manage programs and projects effectively? Can the team forecast demand and budget their projects? Are there sufficient dashboards for measuring and tracking performance?*

“The Swirl is an absorbing state of organizational inertia. There is always another problem to solve, pain point to acknowledge, issue to fix, turf battle to win, drama to ameliorate, or political challenge to overcome. And in the midst of it all, we lose track of the future,” asserts Hawkes. **NAVIGATE THE SWIRL** provides the tools leaders need to break free of the Swirl – whether their organization is facing good news, like a new market opportunity, or bad news, like increased competitive pressures – and lays out a roadmap for wielding influence in the complex, adaptive social systems of today’s organizations.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard S. Hawkes, author of **NAVIGATE THE SWIRL**, is the Founder of Growth River, an international consultancy that guides leaders and teams to create higher performance in businesses and organizations. Hawkes helps companies identify and resolve constraints to success. Clients include Edward Jones, GENEWIZ, Hitachi, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and Mars. He sees purpose-driven, customer-focused, team-based, multi-stakeholder businesses as the best bet for solving the world’s biggest problems. Hawkes received a B.A. in Computer Science and German Literature from Hamilton College and an M.B.A. in Marketing and Organizational Development from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For more information, visit: www.growthriver.com