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★★★★★ **Basic and Sensible Advice**, May 2, 2008

By [Robert Morris](#) (Dallas, Texas) - [See all my reviews](#)

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It would be unfair to draw comparisons and contrasts between this book(let) and other, more comprehensive volumes in which their authors also examine the elements of effective conversation and communication, notably *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* co-authored by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, Robert Bolton's *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts*, and Robert B. Cialdini's *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*.

What Christine Williams offers is a solid introduction to (a primer on) basic principles of effective communication that are essential to productive collaboration., not only in the workplace but indeed in all other areas of human interaction. Each of three Parts responds to a specific question: "Why do we need to talk with one another?", "What do we need to talk about?", and "How do we go about having these conversations?" There are no head-snapping revelations among Williams' observations and insights, nor does she claim to offer any.

In my opinion, this book(let) will be most helpful to those now enrolled in schools, colleges, and universities as well as to those who have only recently embarked on a career. Correctly, Williams stresses the need for preparation prior to each encounter as well as the importance of timing, asking the right questions, and of listening carefully to what others have to say. All of this requires skills that can be developed. Although her focus is on the workplace, presumably she agrees with me that some of the most important of the "fundamental conversations that build cooperation and get results" involve customers. Now more than ever before, customers expect to obtain the information they request, to have their questions answered, and in all other ways to be treated with respect. The advice Williams offers can help to achieve those worthy objectives.