

Conflict Management & Resolution for Your Partnering Success

By Ed Rigsbee, CSP, CAE

In times of conflict you can take one of two positions. First the position is that of having your heels dug in and believing you are RIGHT. The second position is where you care enough to understand what is motivating the other person's behavior. My recommendation, as you might have guessed, is the second.

Just to make a point, I'd like you to think back to the last argument you had with your spouse, parent, child, a friend or in a business situation. Do you see yourself in the argument? Now, I ask you which position did you take? "The first," you say? I thought so. If you had taken the position of trying to understand the other's position, there most likely would not have been an argument. We humans are not perfect. As such, we sometimes we fall into our *stuff*. At these times we are not the best people we could be. But, it is the person who recognizes that they are in their *stuff* and makes a new behavior decision that makes a good partner.

You might be thinking, "Thanks for the info, Ed, but why do I have to always be the person who makes the change, the person who makes it work? Why can't it be the other guy once in a while?" My answer to you is simply that you are the one who figured it out first. Get out of your *stuff* and, as Nike says, JUST DO IT®.

Listed below are some additional tactics to help you resolve conflict.

- Evaluate your and your partner's conflict management styles. Understanding each other is a great start.
- Identify and plan strategies to deal with non-productive behaviors before they crop up.
- Give positive feedback as often as possible so the relationship does not take on a negative tone through only fire fighting interactions.
- Confront problem situations at once rather than waiting for the situation to escalate.
- Invite comments from all stakeholders early in every project.
- Consider using humor and maybe even humility in certain situations.
- Encourage dissent at a time and place that serves all involved.
- Review the value of the relationship. Determine how much your interests overlap and build on the overlap.

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- When you hear something you don't like, repeat it back in an informational way. See if the message you received was the same as it was intended. Misunderstanding is the root of much conflict.
- Know your *buttons* and don't allow them to be pushed. You have control in this area.
- Completely listen to what the other person has to say before you open your mouth. Remember the adage, Listen twice before speaking once. That's why you have two ears and only one mouth.
- Keep your ego in check. Be clear on the difference between high self-esteem and high ego. One serves and one does not.
- Appoint a devil's advocate and allow them to be involved in projects from the start, all the way through completion. Their job is to be a pain in the neck. It's not that they are just picking on a certain person or position. This keeps people from taking a dissenting opinion personally.
- Keep the consequences of your decisions in mind.
- Value the opinion of others. Focus on the clarity of the water, not the spring from which it flows.

I understand that building ***Outrageously Successful Relationships*** can be difficult at times. My best advice for you: Know the value of your relationships. Know where you want the relationships to go and stay on course. Accept that quality partnering takes time and effort. Accept that there isn't any magic—just dedicated implementation.

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