

Conflict: Who's Running Your Life?

Conflict happens...it's a fact of human nature. As long as there are organizations, the potential for conflict exists. So the question I'd like to explore is, "So if I recognize that conflict will happen from time to time, then how can I face and manage it rather than have it run my life?" Well, for starters, think about what motivates you personally to overcome obstacles in life and find a reason for YOU to take action. Is it money; is it strong, trusting relationships? "I don't like losing money in my business." OK, if that's your hot button, then think about all the time and effort that is wasted when people are unhappy about something and sulk, fret or complain to others. Believe me, that's a real cost to your bottom line.

So why not take charge by managing conflict effectively. You have four distinct options when conflict occurs. Three choices, **compete**, **avoid**, or **accommodate**, provide only temporary solutions and someone loses. The fourth choice, **collaborate**, is the only response that offers the opportunity to both solve the conflict and build a stronger trusting relationship for the long-term. Collaboration requires a mindset of openness, listening, compassionate truth, sharing, problem solving, win-win, synthesis, negotiation, maximizing joint outcomes, and a high concern for self and others.

Based on extensive research, collaborative relationships require you to be assertive and cooperative over time and consist of three key elements:

- Be nice unless something detrimental occurs
- Be provokable (assertive) and speak up consciously
- Be forgiving when resolved and be nice again
- Follow this pattern openly to increase your predictability and influence

Adapted from Xicom, Inc., Thomas-Kilman Conflict Modes. Robert Axelrod, Tit for Tat Strategies for Conflict Management.

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