

The Consulting Team's

Leadership Tips



Conflict Mediation

War and Peace in the Workplace

Leadership Tips editor, Elaine Schmitz, interviewed Dr. Marilyn Manning and Team member, Steve Ellis, on their work as conflict mediators. Here are their combined insights on conflict in the workplace and how a neutral professional can help to resolve it.



NOTE FROM THE CONSULTING TEAM

In this issue, The Consulting Team explores a subject many people have difficulty managing, because they would rather avoid it. That subject is conflict, whether it exists between two people or affects an entire team. Unresolved conflict can hamstring results and cripple team progress. The impact on the business bottom line can be as much as a 30% decrease in profits and a 50% drop in goal attainment success.

Conflict mediators are professionals who have been trained to help others to defuse emotions and explore mutually advantageous solutions to even the most thorny disagreements, while preserving all parties' dignity.

Most of our readers have met Dr. Marilyn Manning, the CEO of our team. In this issue we publish an interview with her, as well as another team member, Steve Ellis. Both are well-trained and experienced professional mediators.

If you or your workgroup are experiencing problems from unresolved conflict, we hope this *Leadership Tips* will provide you with some insights and resources to resolve the situation.

Warm regards,

The Consulting Team

• (650) 965-3663

How does conflict show up in the workplace?

Not all conflict is an argument or angry outburst in a meeting. It can be silent. Notice when people avoid contact or sabotage projects. Conflict can go underground: when co-workers are apathetic, lose focus, express distrust, or even act overly competitive. Some teams cannot even agree on basics: ground rules, priorities and objectives. Unresolved conflicts stall productive results.

What are typical causes of this conflict?

We note two basic kinds of conflict. The first are personal in nature. Supervisors or co-workers may not like behaviors or comments of others. They may not appreciate others' attitudes or contributions. They might continually compete for power or resources. They may have different personalities or communications styles that cause misunderstandings or irritation. The second type of conflicts divide people into opposing groups. The conflicts can be historical, i.e., unions and management; demographic, i.e., regional, generational, or gender bias; or organizational, i.e., marketing vs. engineering. "Us against them" is a universal theme.

What are typical conflicts you resolve?

Our value as professional mediators is our neutrality, which we apply to resolving issues that may be emotionally charged. We have facilitated conflict resolutions including:

- Ineffective leadership or votes of "no confidence"
- Claims of unfair treatment, discipline, or harassment
- Work or project team internal conflict or complaints
- Disagreements between groups or within teams

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Steve Ellis

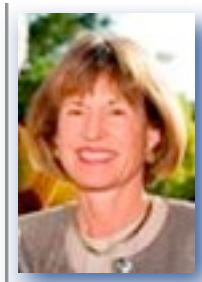
"Steve, of The Consulting Team, consulted on a big initiative with a joint union/management airport leadership team. His neutrality in facilitating meetings provided a forum for open, honest discussions to solve critical business issues."
 ~ Jeff Townsend, Principal, Engagement Planning & Initiatives, American Airlines®

How do you mediate or resolve points of conflict?

We establish a neutral, productive climate by

- Following our process (See Tools of the Trade)
- Establishing credibility, defined expectations and outcomes, and a safe, neutral environment
- Removing obstacles to communication
- Establishing common ground
- Training clients in skills to resolve and avoid conflict

"Using Dr. Manning in negotiating our team differences proved positive and fruitful. She provided examples of dealing constructively with conflict and led our team to positive solutions. We made tremendous progress working with her."
 ~ Dr. Nashita Kothari, Medical School Faculty, Stanford University



Marilyn Manning

What do our clients learn through the mediation process?

- Appreciation for diverse viewpoints and ideas
- Listening and communication skills
- Experience in acknowledging feelings and overcoming fears and anxiety

What successes come from The Consulting Team's formal conflict mediation?

- Teams and individuals reestablish trust and get back on track
- Individuals are motivated to modify unproductive behaviors
- Groups realign project and organization goals and objectives
- Issues are resolved between contentious factions or groups

The Consulting Team impressed us with their superb insight, style, feedback, and results. I recommend them for their specialized work in conflict resolution."
 ~ David Kapler, Fire Chief, City of Alameda

What can you recommend to avoid future conflict?

- Train your workforce, especially supervisors and managers, in how to use a formalized process and conflict resolution skills to resolve divergent opinions and modify unproductive behaviors
- Rely on neutral parties to help establish transparent, open communications
- Realize that conflict will always arise and may ultimately be productive

The following quote illustrates a positive outlook on conflict:

"Conflict is opportunity. Do not underestimate the chance it gives you for change. Crisis is a vehicle, not an obstacle."
 ~ Edwin Lewin

Tools of the Trade: Dealing Positively with Others

- Research background in private, "confidential" one-on-one's
- Facilitate session in neutral location
- Set ground rules
- Respect participants' space
- Take neutral role; no judging
- State desired outcome
- State impact of their conflict on others
- Ask them to write down their version
- Read versions without comment
- Time for silent reflections
- Let them resolve
- End to the meeting: quick closure, celebrate success
- Plan follow-up meeting

Want to Learn More About This Issue of Leadership Tips ?

Here is a sample of what we have to offer.....

Visit the following links for more information:

Our Free Assessment:

- ▶ [Listening](#)
- ▶ [Team Effectiveness](#)

Our [Consulting Services](#) include:

- ▶ Conflict Mediation
- ▶ DiSC Communication Style Assessment

View [Descriptions of Related Training](#):

- ▶ [Resolving Conflict with Difficult Personalities](#)
- ▶ [Facilitation and Meeting Management Skills](#)

Read [Related Articles](#):

- ▶ [Closing the Communications Gap: Managing Conflicts in High Tech Environments](#)
- ▶ [Seven Difficult Personality Types and How to Deal with Them](#)

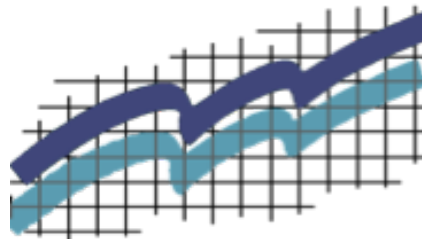
Quick Tips Brown Bag Workshops

- ▶ The Consulting Team is providing low-cost, brown bag workshops! Call Marilyn for details: (650) 965-3663.

About Leadership Tips

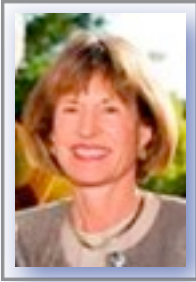
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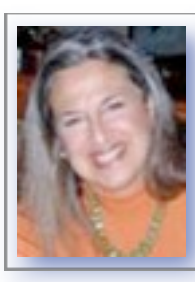


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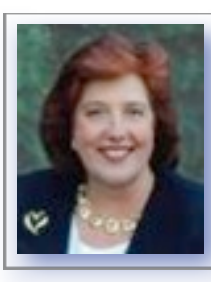
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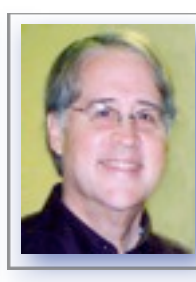
**Marilyn
Manning, CEO**



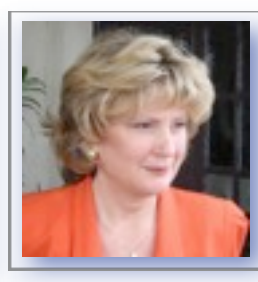
Elaine Schmitz,
Leadership Tips Editor



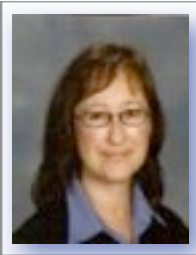
Nan Andrews-
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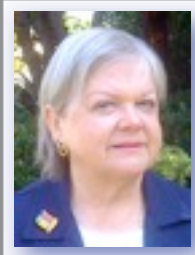
Ken
Braly



Lynn
Myhal



Victoria Smith-
Raymond



Pat
Haddock



Howard
Miller



Lee
Weimer



Steve
Ellis, Esq.

Core Team Talents

Our Core Team of consultants each bring over 15 years of experience and expertise to add breadth and depth to our services. Over the coming months, we will provide you with information about their key skills. This month we feature:

Steve Ellis, Esq. Conflict Mediation

Steve Ellis brings an additional skill set to The Consulting Team. Not only has he earned a law degree with an emphasis in negotiations, arbitration, and mediation and is member of the bar, he also holds a post graduate diploma in comparative labor relations law. Steve's background has included settling union grievances and institutional level formal and informal mediations issues, as well as developing procedures to avoid conflict.

He has been instrumental in successful major initiatives in the airline industry, including building a multi-year, national effort of American Airlines Joint Leadership Teams, which not only resolved existing conflicts but also solved problems within the teams' areas and became involved in charitable outreach. He also facilitated the Memphis City Airport union and management in rebuilding effective teamwork with tangible results for the organization.

Steve excels at building rapport with contentious factions, creating an easy-going group setting within which to discuss issues, building client skill sets of different tools and techniques, and finding common ground and shared values. Steve finds satisfaction in helping others broaden their viewpoints and by transforming negative energy toward positive outcomes. His clients carry away a more hopeful future, because their newly acquired skills and experience help to break the cycle of continuous, non-productive conflict.