Care to Confront

When and How to Confront Difficult Situations

Outcomes Desired

- Understanding why confrontation is important
- Examine our resistance and responses to confrontation
- Identify the most difficult situations to confront and why
- Develop specific strategies for approaching both professional and personal confrontations
- Develop our own personal strategies for confronting with care

Confrontation

The 13 Letter Four Letter Word

- Confront – “to come face to face with”
- What is it about us that causes us to avoid confrontation?
- Why do some individuals seem to be more suited to confrontation?
- Is the ability to handle confrontation situations innate or learned?
- Confrontation is more than just Fight or Flight.

Generational Differences in Confrontation

- Baby Boomers were socialized differently on the aspects of conflict… “________________”

Confrontation

The Socialization of Confrontation

- Younger generations were taught the skills of negotiation very early on – life is a series of negotiations to them

- Baby Boomers were socialized differently on the aspects of conflict… “________________”

- Younger generations were taught the skills of negotiation very early on – life is a series of negotiations to them
What If We Cared Enough to Confront?

Historical Context and Significance
- The advance of Adolph Hitler in the late 1930's
- The atrocities of Idi Amin in Uganda
- The sinking of the Titanic
- The Economic Meltdown of 2008
  - Brooksley Born – attempted to regulate and quantify the consequences of derivatives and credit default swaps in the late 1990's
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZrNZ_2gLBE&feature=related
  - Rating agencies failure to address the poor quality of bundled mortgage backed securities (someone inside had to know the ratings were wrong)

Higher Education
- Penn State abuse scandal

What circumstances and consequences could we have avoided by caring enough to confront?

Closer to Home

Personal context
- Drug and alcohol abuse of loved ones
- Undisciplined behavior of children

Work Context
- Needless terminations and appeals
- Avoidable bad hires
- Bad working relationships – leading to inefficiencies

Social Context
- Is domestic and child abuse really occurring in a vacuum so secret that NO ONE sees it before it is too late?

What circumstances are important enough for you and I to care enough to confront?

Types of Confrontations

- **Interpersonal** - when personal considerations, in the form of a clash between team members, take precedence
- **Ideological** - When people insist that the world works in a given way, they sometimes refuse to acknowledge anything to the contrary
- **Organizational** - The way you structure the interaction of people, responsibilities, and hierarchy understandably corresponds with the way you get things done
- **Operational** - Tasks that take too much time and effort to achieve are a sign of operational conflict. Your method of actually getting things done clashes with what you are trying to do.
- **Relational** - Your team might find that aspects of the larger organization make it difficult to achieve anything. There might be societal pressures or environmental conditions working to your detriment.

Confrontation Styles

Poll: How Would You Describe Your Confrontation Style?

- **Intimidator**: I bully a person until they back down.
- **Communicator**: I talk with the person directly.
- **Negotiator**: I look for commonalities between the people in conflict.
- **Procrastinator**: I wait and maybe discuss the conflict later, at a better time.
- **Avoider**: I stay out of conflict at all times.
Poll on Confrontation Styles

How Would You Describe Your Conflict Resolution Style?

- **Intimidator:** I bully a person until they back down. (1680) 34%
- **Communicator:** I talk with the person directly. (1279) 26%
- **Negotiator:** I look for commonalities between the people in conflict. (776) 15%
- **Procrastinator:** I wait and maybe discuss the conflict later, at a better time. (415) 8%
- **Avoider:** I stay out of conflict at all times. (587) 12%
- **Other:** please describe your approach to conflict in "comments" below. (150) 3%

Total Votes: 4887

What Triggers Confrontation?

**Conflict Triggers**
- Value Differences
- Experiences from the past
- Bad or inappropriate behavior
- Injustice
- Inequity or disparity
- Conflicting or misaligned goals
- Lack of commitment
- Inadequate or poor performance
- Lack of respect (for authority or for the individual)
- Failure to listen or be heard

Risk Levels of Confrontation

- In the process of confronting, we must consider the relationship of risk and confrontation
- In every confrontation there are possible positive and negative outcomes
- The fear of damage to a relationship or to perception is the single greatest obstacle to a meaningful confrontation
- There is a scale and variance between the level of relationships and the risks of confrontation
- This scale and variance will determine the methods of confrontation
Degree of Difficulty of Confrontation

- High Relationship
  - Low Risk
  - High Risk

- Low Relationship
  - Low Risk
  - High Risk

***Degree of Difficulty Increases According to Perceived Risk***

Risk and Relationship

- High Relationship
  - Low Risk
  - High Risk

- Low Relationship
  - Low Risk
  - High Risk

- Best Friends for Life
- Relatives in the Gene Pool
- Minister

- Low Relationship
  - Low Risk
  - High Risk

- Low Relationship
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  - High Risk
Risk and Relationship

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Danger Area
Decisions on Risk and Relationship
The Key to Successful Confrontations is Listening First – Advice from S. Covey

- It’s vital to listen, to understand first. Otherwise we may be acting on assumptions that are totally incorrect.
- The principles behind this behavior include understanding, respect and mutual benefit.
- The opposite is to speak first and listen last – or not to listen at all. It’s going ahead with our agenda without considering whether others may have perspectives that could influence what we have to say.

The counterfeit is pretend to be listening, while thinking about our reply and just waiting for our turn to speak.

Listening is not just hearing what is said. Research shows that face-to-face communication regarding attitudes and feelings is 7 percent what people say, 38 percent how they say it, and 55 percent body language.

Listening First also means to listen to ourselves, to our gut feelings, our own inner voice, before we decide and act.

Confrontation Methods

1. **Forcing**—force outcome regardless of the desire of one party
2. **Collaboration** - a solution to the problem that most satisfies the concerns of both parties
3. **Compromise** - a solution to the problem that partially satisfies the concerns of both parties
4. **Smoothing** - giving in to preserve relationship with other party
5. **Withdrawal** - little or no significance to either party

Conflict Orientation

**Outcome Dominant**

- Forcing—force outcome regardless of the desire of one party
- Collaboration – mutual benefit process
- Compromise - concerned more about outcome than relationship

**Relationship Dominant**

- Collaboration – mutual benefit process
- Compromise - concerned more about relationship than outcome
- Smoothing – putting the other person’s needs above all else
- Withdrawal – avoidance to maintain relationship
Forcing

- Also known as competing
- An individual firmly pursues his or her own concerns despite the resistance of the other person.
- This usually involves pushing one viewpoint at the expense of another or maintaining firm resistance to another person’s actions.

Examples of when Forcing may be appropriate

- In certain situations when all other, less forceful methods, don’t work or are ineffective
- When you need to stand up for your own rights, resist aggression and pressure
- When a quick resolution is required and using force is justified (e.g. in a life-threatening situation, to stop an aggression)
- As a last resort to resolve a long-lasting conflict

Possible advantages of Forcing:

- Provides a quick resolution to a conflict
- Increases self-esteem and draws respect when firm resistance or actions were a response to an aggression or hostility

Some caveats of Forcing:

- May negatively affect your relationship with the other person in the long run
- May cause the opponent to react in the same way, even if the opponent did not intend to be forceful originally
- Cannot take advantage of the strong sides of the other side’s position
- Taking this approach may require a lot of energy and be exhausting to some individuals
Collaboration

- Also known as problem confronting or problem solving.
- Collaboration involves an attempt to work with the other person to find a win-win solution to the problem in hand - the one that most satisfies the concerns of both parties.
- The win-win approach sees conflict resolution as an opportunity to come to a mutually beneficial result.
- It includes identifying the underlying concerns of the opponents and finding an alternative which meets each party’s concerns.

Examples of when Collaboration may be appropriate:

- When consensus and commitment of other parties is important
- In a collaborative environment
- When it is required to address the interests of multiple stakeholders
- When a high level of trust is present
- When a long-term relationship is important
- When you need to work through hard feelings, animosity, etc
- When you don’t want to have full responsibility

Some Caveats of Collaboration:

- Requires a commitment from all parties to look for a mutually acceptable solution
- Requires more effort and more time than some other methods. A win-win solution may not be evident and a quick solution is not likely
- Once one or more parties lose their trust in an opponent, the relationship falls back to other methods of conflict resolution. Therefore, all involved parties must continue collaborative efforts to maintain a collaborative relationship

Possible advantages of Collaboration:

- Leads to solving the actual problem
- Leads to a win-win outcome
- Reinforces mutual trust and respect
- Builds a foundation for effective collaboration in the future
- Shared responsibility of the outcome
- You earn the reputation of a good negotiator
- For parties involved, the outcome of the conflict resolution is less stressful (however, the process of finding and establishing a win-win solution may be very involved)
Compromise

Compromise looks for a solution to the problem that partially satisfies the concerns of both parties
- Different from Collaboration in that it begins with the premise that a total win-win is not possible
- Compromise focuses on the process of recognizing that neither party can totally achieve their desired results
- Focus becomes – "What I am willing to give up to get the most important aspects of my desired outcomes"

Examples of when Compromise may be appropriate:

- When the goals are moderately important and not worth the use of more assertive or more involving approaches, such as forcing or collaborating
- To reach temporary settlement on complex issues
- To reach expedient solutions on important issues
- As a first step when the involved parties do not know each other well or haven’t yet developed a high level of mutual trust
- When collaboration or forcing do not work

Possible advantages of Compromise:

- Faster issue resolution. Compromising may be more practical when time is a factor
- Can provide a temporary solution while still looking for a win-win solution
- Lowers the levels of tension and stress resulting from the conflict

Some caveats of using Compromise:

- May result in a situation when both parties are not satisfied with the outcome (a lose-lose situation)
- Does not contribute to building trust in the long run
- May require close monitoring and control to ensure the agreements are met
Withdrawal

• Also known as avoidance.
• This occurs when a person does not pursue her/his own concerns or those of the opponent.
• He/she does not address the conflict, sidesteps, postpones or simply withdraws.

Examples of when Withdrawal may be appropriate:

• When the issue is trivial and not worth the effort
• When more important issues are pressing
• In situations where postponing the response is beneficial:
  • When it is not the right time or place to confront the issue
  • When you need time to think and collect information before you act (e.g. if you are unprepared or taken by surprise)
  • When you see no chance of getting your concerns met or you would have to put forth unreasonable efforts
  • When you would have to deal with hostility
  • When you are unable to handle the conflict (e.g. if you are too emotionally involved)

Possible advantages of Withdrawal:

• When the opponent is forcing / attempts aggression, you may choose to withdraw and postpone your response until you are in a more favorable circumstance for you to push back
• Withdrawing is a low stress approach when the conflict is short
• Gives the ability/time to focus on more important or more urgent issues instead
• Gives you time to better prepare and collect information before you act

Some caveats of Withdrawal:

• May lead to weakening or losing your position; not acting may be interpreted as an agreement. Using withdrawing strategies without negatively affecting your own position requires certain skill and experience
• When multiple parties are involved, withdrawing may negatively affect your relationship with a party that expects your action
Smoothing

- Also known as accommodation.
- Smoothing is accommodating the concerns of other people first of all, rather than one's own concerns.

Examples of when *Smoothing* may be appropriate:

- When it is important to provide a temporary relief from the conflict or buy time until you are in a better position to respond/push back
- When the issue is not as important to you as it is to the other person
- When you accept that you are wrong
- When you have no choice or when continued competition would be detrimental

Possible advantages of *Smoothing*:

- In some cases smoothing will help to protect more important interests while giving up on some less important ones
- Gives an opportunity to reassess the situation from a different angle

Some caveats of *Smoothing*:

- There is a risk to being abused, i.e. the opponent may constantly try to take advantage of your tendency toward smoothing/accommodating. Therefore it is important to keep the right balance and this requires some skill.
- May negatively affect your confidence in your ability to respond to an aggressive opponent
- It makes it more difficult to transition to a win-win solution in the future
- Some of your supporters may not like your smoothing response and be turned off
### Risk, Relationship & Methods

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The DESC Method is Another Means of Caring Confrontation

- Respectful communication
- Describes the problem
- Explains the effect of the problem on others
- Suggests alternatives to the situation
- Outlines consequences if the situation is not addressed

### DESC Script

A structured, assertive, communication approach for managing and resolving conflict.

- **D** Describe the specific situation
- **E** Express your concerns about the action
- **S** Suggest other alternatives
- **C** Consequences should be stated

### DESC Example

- **D** When you scream at me in front of my co-workers, you’re making it personal.
- **E** This reduces my credibility with the students and undermines my authority with staff.
- **S** If you are upset about delays or other issues, please pull me aside and I will address your concerns.
- **C** If your outbursts continue we won’t have a working relationship, and students/faculty/customers will suffer.
DESC Example

• D - When you give positive evaluations on employees who don’t deserve them, it puts me in a difficult situation.

• E - This reduces both my credibility and yours with our supervisors as well as other members of the department.

• S - You must give honest feedback about employees if you expect them to improve. I am willing to work with you to help you improve upon this.

• C - If your evaluations do not improve I will have to make changes in the department that will affect you and everyone else.

LEEN — Another Model for Caring Confrontation

L - Listen
E - Empathize
E - Explain
N - Negotiate

Conflict with Direct Reports

L - Can you help me understand why you are upset.
E - That is understandable, I can see why you are upset.
E - The reason we wanted to do this was because—
N - Let’s agree on a path forward.

Conflict with Up Reports

L - Help me understand how you see the situation.
E - I understand why you see it that way.
E - Let me explain the situation from my perspective and give you some additional information.
N - Is there anything you would like for me to do differently as a result of this discussion?
Conflict with Peers

L - Tell me how you see the situation, what are the factors causing this conflict?
E - I understand why you see it that way. I hadn’t thought of it that way.
E - Let me explain how I see things.
N - How do we resolve this in a way that preserves our relationship and still accomplishes the objectives?

Helpful Hints in Applying Confrontation Care

• Focus on the common goal: quality instruction or service, the welfare of the student, safety – it’s hard to disagree with safe, high quality instruction or service
• Avoid the issue of who’s right and who’s wrong “Constituent Centered care – concentrate on doing the right thing”
• De-personalize the conversation – use “we” not “you” or “me”
• Actively avoid being perceived as judgmental
• Be hard on the problem, not the people

Tools to Choose... Best Options

• Confronting cannot be effective with a once size fits all approach
• Each of the before mentioned methodologies should be viewed as tools to be chosen for specific confrontation circumstances
• The key to becoming an effective confronter is to know which approach to use in a particular situation
• This requires a certain degree of emotional intelligence

Care Enough to Confront...
The Home Stretch

Answer the following questions...

Who in my life is the most difficult for me to confront?

Who is the person in my life that I most need to confront?
Caring Enough to Confront Yourself

• The most difficult confrontation for any of us is with ourselves.
• It is so much easier to see the faults of others and accept our own rationalizations for why we are the way we are.
• But in order to truly grow, we have to become experts at confronting ourselves before we can be proficient in confronting others.
• This process starts with facing the brutal and hard reality about our behaviors, our weaknesses and frailties and giving ourselves an honest assessment.

Confronting Reality
Stephen Covey – Modified For You

• This behavior is about taking the tough issues head-on—recognizing in yourself those things which are great as well as those you know you need to improve upon.
• Confronting your reality implies demonstrating courage, responsibility, awareness, and respect.
• The opposite of this behavior is to ignore it, to act as though it doesn’t exist. Not caring enough to confront yourself.
• The counterfeit is to act as though you are confronting reality when you are actually evading it, i.e., rationalizing and self-delusion.

In Summary

• Care enough to confront yourself. Come face to face with your own strengths and areas you need to improve. Have someone you really trust help you with this honest assessment.
• In every confrontation, LISTEN first before you speak. Treat every confrontation first as a lack of known information.
• Be aware of the risk/relationship dynamics in every confrontation.
• Use your emotional intelligence skills in determining which method of confrontation management is most appropriate for the situation.
• View every confrontation as an opportunity to grow. Remember that life is a learning process.
References & Resources

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