

Conflict Management Tips

Unproductive conflict is certainly not always avoidable but being prepared for it can improve communication and increase the odds that riffs will be mended gently and in a timely fashion. Below are tips to manage the risk of a toxic conflict erupting between leaders of an organization.

- ***Get it out and get it over*** — the sooner warring parties start talking, the sooner the war will be over, and your mission will be front and center.
- ***Seek common ground*** — identify the areas of agreement, before focusing on topics where you disagree. Seek to understand and be understood.
- ***Use nonjudgmental language*** — remember that it's okay to disagree; put all that time you spent watching election-year debates to good use by remembering to focus on the issues, not the people, their personalities or their personal attributes.
- ***Give precise examples of what you need and where you disagree*** — for example, “I need reassurance that the board trusts me to manage day-to-day operations” versus “Once again, you’re meddling in operations!”
- ***When appropriate, address issues directly*** — if you’re having an ‘issue’ with a certain board member(s) try to address the issue privately with the board member(s) versus airing your grievance with the entire board or venting with the board faction you regard as friends. Work to clarify what they are trying to achieve.
- ***Work on building and growing a positive board/CEO partnership*** — remember that great relationships don’t happen overnight, they require care and ‘feeding’ as well as trust and shared experiences.
- ***Be open to contrary points of view*** — the best board/CEO relationships are strengthened by diverse points of view; face it, you’ll never be ‘right’ 100% of the time

Conflict Management Strategies

Integrating: Primary aim of this strategy is to meet the needs of two parties; thus, satisfaction of both sides can be provided.

Obliging: Opposing topics are neglected and common points are emphasized. One party gives up its own desires to meet the needs of the other party.

Dominating: One party neglects the needs and satisfaction of the other party and gives importance to only its own goals to win position. Generally, this situation occurs when one party has more power or formal authority.

Avoiding: One party sometimes thinks that conflict is bad, unnecessary or harmful for its own interest, so this part avoids coming into conflict.

Compromising: There isn't a winning or losing party. Both sides gain some advantages but not all of them and they must give up something. Agree to disagree.

Reading-“Making It Work-The Essential of Council-Manager Relations”

<https://icma.org/documents/making-it-work-essentials-council-manager-relations>