



## **Confront with Confidence** ***Rules of Engagement***

So much is being written on dealing with difficult people in the workplace. How to work around them or how to placate them. How about how to confront them? How do you handle confrontation? If you are like most, you avoid it at all costs. Besides, aren't we all taught to play nice and get along with one another in Kindergarten? Aren't only mean people the ones who confront? WRONG! Most HR Directors would love to know how to confront problem people, but lack the confidence to do it. Some supervisors would rather pass the problem along to someone else than confront it head-on. We are frightened at the reaction of the other person. Think about this, though. Maybe they are behaving in an improper way because no one has ever spelled out what was wrong to them. Maybe no one has ever stood up to them in a proper way to confront them. Well gather your courage, take a deep breath and clear your throat...We're going to go through the process of confronting another person--with confidence.

There are Rules of Engagement for confrontation with confidence. They can be found with other great insights on dealing with people in the Manual, R.E.A.L. Leadership (<http://jimmathis.com/store/agora.cgi>). Before you take the first step, though, there is an important decision YOU MUST MAKE: Are you confronting the other person for their own good and/or the good of the organization, OR are you doing it for your benefit? If you answered for yourself, check your own attitude, because this will not produce a Win-Win result. If you answered for the other person's or the organization's good, then proceed. You have a better chance of succeeding and bringing about a positive resolution. More on this in Rule #2.

**1. Clear the air immediately and personally.** Don't save everything wait a long time and "gunny-sack" the other person. Gunny-sacking is saving up all of your complaints and problems until the bag is full and then dumping it on the person. Don't get "historical." Getting historical refers to going back over a long periods of time and recalling every detail the other person has done that angers you. This will not promote a win-win situation, and I guarantee if it is a win-lose situation, you will lose!

**2. Confront with the right spirit.** See the note above #1. Leaders must be neither overeager nor too hesitant to confront. I confront not because it makes me feel good but because I, as a leader, am committed to both the organization's

goals and seeing another mature as a human being. Always have the spirit of putting the other person first in the confrontation and you will benefit.

**3. Know their personality and behavior (as well as your own).** Different personality types (DiSC®) react in different ways to criticism and confrontation. High I's will try to change the subject and tell stories. High C's will state the rules and go into details. Know how your type reacts to their behavior. Be prepared to react with the knowledge of personality management and professionalism.

**4. Start with a positive note.** Everyone likes to be complimented. Look for the positive things in the other person's actions that you can begin with. This will put them (and you) at ease to carry on the conversation. It is like using an illustration at the beginning of a speech. It gets the other person to think about pleasant thoughts about them self.

**5. Outline the problem.** Tell him/her what the meeting is going to be about. Structure what you need in three parts: (A) What - describe what the other person is doing to cause you a problem. (B) How - Tell how this makes you feel. (C) Why - Tell why this is important to you.

**6. Encourage a response.** Give them an opportunity to answer for what you are saying. John Maxwell say, "The people affected are going to feel shock, bitterness and resentment. And they may not spare your feelings by hiding behind a stiff upper lip. Whatever they say, or keep to themselves, they won't be ready to listen to the reason this is happening to them until they have expressed their emotion or had time to swallow the hurt." Keep the subject focused on your concerns, though. Don't allow them to wander off into another area to distract the conversation.

**7. Repeat the other person's position.** Re-phrase what they are saying back to them to make sure you (and they) hear what is begin expressed. allow them to correct misunderstandings or misquotes. Let them know that this is "on the record." By the way, do not record the meeting without the prior consent of the other individual; and then I wouldn't do it as it has a tendency to put them on the defensive before the meeting even gets started. It's alright, though, to write make notes, and even give the other person a copy for their files.

**8. Explain why the action was wrong.** Go over the rules or guidelines that have been broken and make sure they understand in writing what they did incorrectly. Ask them to repeat or rephrase why the action was wrong. Put it in their words so they understand and learn. We remember less of what we simply hear, and more of what we say and hear.

**9. Indicate the desired action to be taken.** This places the focus on the future, and prevents a re-telling of events that gets "historical." The person who wants to change will gravitate toward the possibility of making things better. This also keeps the conversation on a positive, cheerful note. By the way, watch out when people say they agree with you in principle. It usually means they are getting ready to argue.

**10. Reiterate the positive strengths of the person.** Go back over their positive contributions to the organization. Don't bring up anything negative at this point. Remember that you are putting them first in your concern and you want them to be better. The Number One Management Principle is: "What gets rewarded, gets

done."

**11. Put the issue in the past.** Never bring it up again unless the problem re-occurs or you use it to affirm positive change and growth. Be careful not to bring it up in a way that makes it seem like you are gloating over a victory you've won. Everyone likes to save face.

Beware of the greatest mistakes leaders make in confrontation.

- Failing to line up the facts.
- Confronting while angry.
- Being vague about the offense.
- Failing to get the other person's perspective or side of the story.
- Failing to keep good records.
- Harboring a grudge.

Now ask yourself, "Was that really so bad?" We often imagine confrontation to be worse than it actually turns out to be. Our fears are holding us back. Move forward now for the good of the other person and the organization. You will find it wasn't as bad as you imagined it would be, and you've helped someone else along the way.

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