



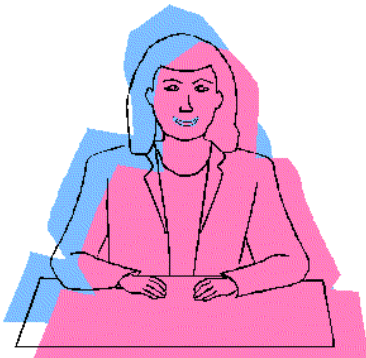
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## How to Confront Without Conflict

By Roberta Chinsky Matuson



Most people are reluctant to address problems they are having with an employee, co-worker or even their boss. Yet, pretending everything is fine certainly won't improve the situation. Here is just one example of why this isn't in the best interest of the employee or yourself.

Just today, I spoke with a client who was describing an employee who wasn't quite working out like he had hoped. He shared with me how this employee was refusing to take on projects that were well within the scope of her job description and how unpleasant she was making life for everyone. Yet, instead of confronting this employee, he is going to wait for her to find another position within the company so he can be rid of her.

I suggested a different approach. Why not simply tell this employee that she has gone as far as she is going to go in his workgroup and that it is time for her to move on? This is certainly in her best interest as well as his, and more than likely will take less time than waiting for her to bid adieu. He thought my idea was brilliant!

Whenever we think about conflict, we tend to think of it in a negative connotation. Yet conflict can be good. Here's why. Conflict fuels innovation. It helps take good ideas and make them great. Here is an example of what I mean by this. Have you ever noticed that the best ideas seem to come from other ideas? Think about what would happen if everyone went along with whatever was suggested and stopped there? Do you think such innovative products like smart phones would exist if no one in the room challenged the idea that a phone could be used for more than just making and receiving calls? You can close your eyes and imagine the sparks flying in the room as each participant defended his position.

I got to experience this first hand in the early days of mobile phones when I worked closely with an executive at NYNEX, which is now owned by Verizon. I could see this executive's counterparts didn't quite know what to make of her. She was bold and forward thinking, uncommon in companies like that back in the early nineties. She had a way of confronting the naysayers, and turning them into her advocates. I noticed that when she was in situations that appeared to be contentious, she would win the other people over by telling them what was in it for them. Worked like a charm.

The executive that I spoke with today could have learned a lot from this woman. He knows his problem employee is very interested in being promoted. He also knows this certainly isn't going to happen on his dime. He needs to be honest with her and let her know that she has gone as far as she is going to go within his workgroup. Most likely this conversation will not come as a shock to this employee. In fact, more than likely she will be relieved, as deep down inside she knows this as well.

This is a conversation that may feel uncomfortable to him, but in the end if he plays his cards right, she'll walk out the door thanking him for giving her permission to seek a workplace where she will be an asset. And he will be a much stronger manager as a result of this experience. Now that's what I call a win-win situation.

***About the author:***

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