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**CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION**

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## EDITORIAL

Conflict - we all face it. It cannot be avoided.

In this issue, we explore effective means of dealing with conflict through alternative dispute resolution (ADR). If we can't avoid conflict, how do we make the best of it? There are plenty of good ideas in this issue.

Doyne Ahern, in her article "A Dignified Resolution", gives us an overview of alternative dispute resolution through "a look at trends in solving conflicts outside the judicial system". This opens the door for Judy Lister and Barb Patenaude to examine ADR in practical terms for the manager of volunteers and for Sylvie Giasson to walk us through a reflection of diversity as a key to conflict resolution. The issue concludes with Chris Poirier-Skelton's summary of the basic styles of conflict resolution. A review of Ben Hoffman's "Conflict Power Persuasion - Negotiating Effectively" informs us that there are many useful resources out there, waiting to be used.

All these articles have one main message: Conflict, though unavoidable, can lead to positive outcomes. As Barb Patenaude states so well in her article "Conflict Management":

"Managing conflict does not mean eliminating it, rather the aim should be to maintain an optimum balance and tension between efficiency and creativity. The manager assumes the role of trouble shooter and mediator in conflict resolution".

Read on... this is one issue you cannot afford to miss.

Ginette Johnstone is Senior Consultant of Johnstone Training and Consultation (JTC) Inc. and a member of the Editorial Team.

## A DIGNIFIED RESOLUTION: A LOOK AT TRENDS IN SOLVING CONFLICTS OUTSIDE THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

by Doyne Ahern

People are searching for more effective ways to settle disputes and resolve conflict. Indications abound from newspaper headlines, government reports, radio shows, and books, to the Internet. The Ottawa Citizen reported, "Ontario judge turns in gown to be mediator", and the monthly community newspaper, OSCAR — the Ottawa South Community Association Review, headlined, "Mediation — New Approach to Old Problems". A quick look at the Internet brought forth 4000 hits using the words, "alternative dispute resolution," many of them with Canadian origins.

So, what is ADR? Most often, it is known as alternative dispute resolution. Others offer different words for the acronym, such as, "a dignified resolution," or "a different resolution." The words, "alternative," or "different" beg the question, "different from what?" The quick and obvious answer is, "different from litigation," thereby removing it from the legal system. Why, one might well ask, should this be necessary when a complex legal system exists that has arguably dealt with every type of dispute imaginable for centuries? Ernie Tannis, Barrister, Solicitor and Notary Public, and the founding executive director of the Canadian Institute of Conflict Resolution (CICR), identified four goals of this alternative movement in his book, Alternative Dispute

### Resolution that Works

- to relieve court congestion, undue cost, and delay;
- to enhance community involvement in the dispute resolution process;
- to facilitate access to justice; and
- to provide more "effective" dispute resolution.

ADR actually refers to a wide array of techniques employed to help disputants resolve conflicts of all kinds. The techniques usually involve a neutral third party, but it is important that those involved, in fact find their own solutions. ADR provides the environment in which people can settle disputes in a quick and inexpensive manner while also maintaining or even building positive working relationships. ADR may be used to resolve the entire controversy or to resolve a portion of the controversy.

A system of justice is said to be a rights-based approach to solving disputes in which a judge, and sometimes a jury, listens to both parties in a dispute and mandates a settlement. ADR techniques aim at resolving conflicts at deeper levels. Second, interest-based mediation adds a dimension to the system of justice which using mediation are primarily for fast resolution, lower costs, and

confidentiality. If parties have to file information, it becomes available to the press. Sometimes mediation helps disputants find unexpected solutions to their conflict."

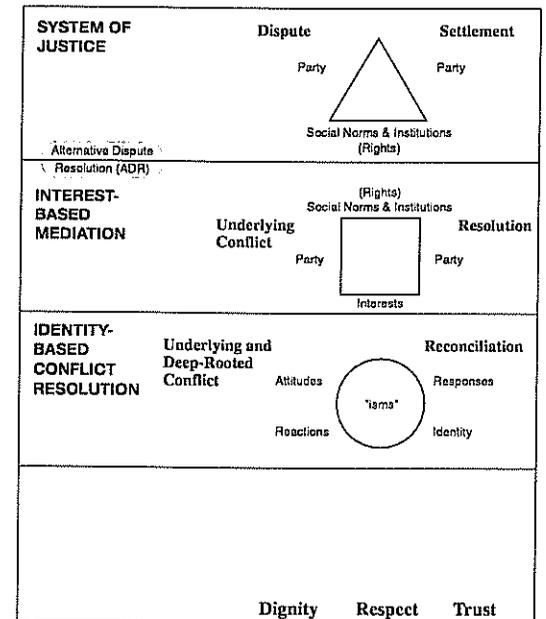
Another lawyer in Ottawa, Patrick McCann, who practices criminal law, said that ADR even has a place in the resolution of some criminal cases. Teenagers, for example, who misbehave in school are now finding themselves in the midst of criminal proceedings when in fact a serious examination of the problem with an uninvolved, dispassionate person, a "third party neutral," might be enough to turn the situation around. He also said that some harassment cases would also be amenable to mediation rather than formal proceedings in a criminal court.

On June 16, 1997, the Ottawa Citizen reported that George Adams, a judge of Ontario's senior trial court, general division, was hanging up his robes for good because "...there had to be a better way — a richer, deeper, broader way — to help people solve their disputes. Adams opened an office for "neutral dispute resolution services."

Another use of ADR, according to Steve Levesque, who is a trainer in ADR techniques, is in the workplace. "In the past," he said, "people kept their heads in the sand when a conflict existed. Now, by facing problems early on and keeping them at the lowest possible level, based on the interests of the parties in conflict, there are greater chances

for resolution before having to go to formal grievances or beyond." He said that by helping to mitigate problems, organizations become more productive.

Communities and schools are also looking to ADR for more effective, long-lasting ways to reconcile differences more deeply than simply settling an immediate dispute. Sherrill Johnson, a volunteer for the Mediation Centre at Carleton University, wrote an article which was published on the front page of the June 1997 issue of OSCAR, the community newspaper that serves the neighbourhood closest to Carleton. Johnson described a conflict between two neighbours over the condition of the property of one neighbour. Johnson reported that they spent an afternoon in mediation during which they



were both encouraged to talk about the problems they had encountered in their relationship as neighbours. Johnson wrote that they found it to be a difficult process, but they persevered and by the end of the afternoon were looking at ways they could be better neighbours to one another. This university-based mediation centre opens its doors to many beyond the immediate campus community.

Canadian youth all across the country are getting involved in solving disputes with respect and dignity for everyone involved. Dave Farthing is the young Executive Chair of YouCan, an organization that proclaims itself to be "Canadian youth taking action in conflict resolution, youth organizing to understand conflict and advocate non-violence." Farthing said that in 1987 Woodroffe High School began a program of peer mediation which was then extended to other Ottawa high schools. In 1996 he attended a conference in Edmonton at which a group of peer mediators from across Canada decided to set up a national organization to link peer mediators to give them access to information, tools, and support from one another. YouCan was just incorporated in June 1997.

After Ernie Tannis left CICR, he joined with several other colleagues to open a traditional law office, but with an added dimension. He is building an ADR Centre. His board room was designed with dispute reconciliation in mind. The large conference table was built

in segments to permit it to be configured into small units for more personal conversations. Two offices are dedicated to space for "caucus," the time that people in conflict sometimes need to withdraw from the negotiation for planning or reflection either with or without the third party neutral.

"ADR," said Tannis, "stands for dignity." He is fond of quoting Tom Porter, a Mohawk Chief, who said that when we consider that each culture is like a flower, the whole world then is a bouquet. When each part respects, even cherishes, the differentness of the others, the beauty of the whole equals far more than any individual part. "Furthermore," adds Tannis, "preventative thinking is the philosophical and practical theme in the development of most disciplines." He explains that fire prevention is better than the most efficient fire fighting equipment, diplomacy far outweighs the outcome of any war.

Tannis urges every conceivable type of organization to create opportunities for its people to take advantage of training in conflict resolution. "It's a life skill," he said, "not a technical process." Tannis said that ADR has progressed in the past ten years from a small group of pioneers who were viewed with some reservation by peers. In 1988, he wrote that ADR was "a social phenomenon, a movement, whose profound impact on our social fabric is coming to be appreciated."

"Like any frontier movement," he said recently, "ADR has gone through stages. First there were the pioneers, then came the settlers. The settlers were followed by the merchants who saw activities for business." Today we see that all of society is co-opting the principles and benefitting from the early pioneers.

Clearly then, managers of volunteers need to take advantage of the principles proffered by ADR. Built-in more effectively with the clients, their peers, and with their managers. Training opens the possibility of implementing these concepts in all situations of conflict. Such an approach to differing viewpoints would create conflict resolving atmospheres in all areas of endeavour that would ensure long-lasting harmony, rather than short-term settlements that can only incubate larger problems for the future.

ADR is based on a bedrock belief in the need to respect another viewpoint, recognizing and acknowledging the existence of deep-rooted antagonisms born of cultural, familial, or experiential biases. Despite, or indeed even because of these biases, those involved in ADR have come to recognize that even within their own very human psyches lurk unexpected pitfalls from which seemingly inexplicable stances grow. Rather, accepting that these hidden persuaders exist in all of us, they make a conscious decision to approach others with respect and acceptance. Such a philosophical base has tremendous implications for managers,

especially managers of volunteers. Respecting a person's strengths frees a manager to perform necessary administrative and organizational duties to enable the volunteer to carry out their own tasks.

Territorial, jurisdictional, or other disputes can be faced without enmity when acknowledged that those involved have the answers to their own dilemmas, that they are valuable people who behave with dignity and will return respect with respect. "Respect," said Brian McQuinn, "is a mirror which creates an environment to help people find their own answers."

It might also behoove everyone to remember the proclamation of Ottawa-Carleton's Conflict Resolution Day, September 19, 1988, which was: "Justice is ... just us."

*Doyle Ahern left a communications position with the federal public service two years ago to launch Cathcart Communications with several colleagues. In addition, she will complete the program in conflict resolution offered at CICR in August 1997. If anyone is interested in resolving a dispute with a neutral person to facilitate resolution, she can be reached at 730-2636.*



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR MANAGERS OF VOLUNTEERS

by Judy Lister

Several years ago I took some training in mediation and conflict resolution. I find that they are extremely useful in managing volunteer services.

Conflict is a normal part of the human condition. We may like to believe we have evolved, but every once in a while certain instinctual behaviours, such as protecting our territory or making sure we get our share, may surface to remind us of our ancestry. In our increasingly diverse and complex society conflict may also result from differences in values or standards. Volunteer services are particularly vulnerable to conflict arising from unclear or unrealistic expectations, condescending treatment, unsolicited advice or from what we may feel is unjust criticism.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

#### 1. Clarify expectations :

Include as part of your volunteer orientation a section on expectations. State the expectations your organization has of volunteers: for example, to show up on time, to call in if they cannot make it. Give them a chance to state their expectations: for example, meaningful work, a chance to develop new skills, to be treated as part of the team. Make sure to share these expectations with the staff or existing volunteers who will be working with the new volunteers.

#### 2. Encourage a sense of "team":

Prevent an "us versus them" attitude from developing by promoting a team approach. Include volunteers in decision-making and staff meetings if possible. Hold events that enable staff and volunteers to get better acquainted. Conflict will be less likely to develop if staff, clients, and new and existing volunteers understand and respect the needs and abilities of each other.

#### 3. Promote respect for differences:

Diversity is desirable in volunteer services because it helps organizations to deal with the increasing diversity in our society. With it can come some misunderstandings, however, unless a concerted effort is made to promote sensitivity and respect for differences in values, attitudes or abilities.

#### 4. Develop a policy for dealing with conflict:

At least one of our policies should outline how to deal with conflict. One of my handbooks includes the following policy, which has worked well:

If a volunteer experiences any conflict with a staff member, other volunteers, or clients, they are urged to try to resolve the conflict themselves first. If that is not successful, they are encouraged to report the problem to their supervising staff person, the Coordinator of

Volunteers, or the Executive Director. If required, mediation will be set up to resolve the conflict.

#### 5. Watch for early warning signs:

**Absenteeism:** Some people deal with conflict by trying to avoid it. Always check into reasons for no shows, and always do exit interviews.

**General grumbling and low morale:** This usually means that an unresolved issue is starting to fester. Take some of the key personnel aside and find out the source of the problem early, before each side has a chance to start enlisting armies of allies for their side. Deal with it early when it is much easier to resolve.

**Uncooperative attitudes:** If volunteers are suddenly unwilling to take certain work assignments, or staff are unwilling to work with a certain volunteer, it needs to be explored further.

### HOW TO RESOLVE A CONFLICT

1. Identify the "team captains". Speak separately to each one first to try to get a clear picture of the conflict.

2. Get both sides together and have each side tell their story. Often just hearing the other side's version of things helps to defuse the conflict. After they have each told their side, ask each side to respond to the other's story. Give each party a chance to express hurt feelings or other strong emotions.

3. Emphasize areas of common ground. There are always some things that both parties have in common.

4. Enlist those involved in the conflict in finding a solution. The best solution is usually the one which the conflicting parties come up with themselves. Contribute only if you can think of a possible solution they haven't considered. It is often helpful to ask each side what they need to put the issue behind them.

5. If you think the situation warrants it, help them to develop a written agreement which includes actions for both sides, and consequences if those actions are not carried through. This is particularly important if you think the conflict may flare up again.

If you feel uncomfortable about trying to resolve the problem yourself, do not be afraid to bring in a neutral party, or even a professional mediator. It may sound drastic, but full-scale conflict can devastate a volunteer department, and it can take years to repair the damage. Good luck!

*Judy Lister is the part-time Volunteer Program Manager with the Residential Tenancies Branch of the Province of Manitoba. She is also the part-time Coordinator of Volunteer Services with the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society. She is currently the Co-Chair of the Membership Committee of the Manitoba Association for Volunteer Administration.*



## DIVERSITÉ: S'OUVRIRE AUX DIFFÉRENCES POUR RÉGLER LES CONFLITS

par Sylvie Giasson

Votre organisation a des conflits à résoudre ? On discute ferme, et bien que l'équipe soit assez homogène (composée, par exemple, de femmes, blanches, de même origine ethnique), c'est l'impasse ? Peut-être que le problème réside justement dans...le manque de différences autour de la table !

Au Canada, comme aux États-Unis, de plus en plus d'entreprises privées et d'organismes publics découvrent les bienfaits de la diversité. Qu'est-ce qu'on entend par la diversité ? C'est "l'ensemble des différences qui nous définissent chacun comme des êtres uniques et individuels. Parmi ces caractéristiques, mentionnons l'origine ethnique, l'âge, les capacités physiques et mentales, l'orientation sexuelle, les convictions religieuses, et bien d'autres." Dans un sens, on pourrait dire que les différences sont la seule chose que nous ayons tous en commun !

Pourquoi faire place à la diversité quand on sait qu'il est déjà difficile de s'entendre entre personnes de même race, ayant sensiblement le même bagage socio-culturel ? De nombreuses études tendent à démontrer qu'un milieu de travail ouvert aux différences favorise la productivité, l'innovation, le climat de travail et l'esprit d'équipe. Ainsi, chaque personne peut atteindre son plein potentiel et ressentir une plus grande satisfaction personnelle et professionnelle, ce qui se

traduit souvent par une meilleure productivité. Il est aussi prouvé que les équipes les plus performantes sont celles où les personnes se connaissent assez bien non seulement sur le plan professionnel, mais aussi sur le plan personnel (par exemple, connaissance mutuelle du statut familial, des loisirs, etc.). Or, pour se connaître sur le plan personnel, il faut favoriser l'expression et le respect des différences.

Certains écueils menacent le succès des programmes de diversité. Ainsi, dans un effort de "diversification", certaines organisations se fixent des quotas pour que leur personnel soit plus représentatif de la société en général. On embauche un nombre "X" de personnes de couleur, de personnes handicapées, de femmes, etc. Une fois les quotas atteints, on se "pette les bretelles", mais on continue de travailler selon un seul modèle, généralement celui de la culture dominante, sans faire de place réelle aux différences qui pourraient enrichir le processus de travail. La prémisse qui prévaut ici est que "tout le monde est pareil" et que le pourcentage de représentation suffit à assurer la diversité. La diversité n'est pas affaire de quotas, et se fonde plutôt sur la conviction que nous ne sommes pas tous pareils !

Comment faire concrètement de la place aux différences dans une organisation ? Citons

un exemple au hasard. Votre équipe de bénévoles fonctionne un peu de travers ces jours-ci, et vous décidez de les inviter à un vin et fromage pour détendre un peu l'atmosphère. À la réunion d'équipe, il est question de la possibilité d'inviter les conjoints. Julie, plutôt repliée sur elle-même, ne se prononce pas sur la question. Vous sortez de la réunion frustrée de son manque d'implication dans l'équipe. Mais voilà: Julie a une conjointe ! Qu'est-ce qu'elle pouvait dire ? Est-ce qu'elle a senti que les partenaires de même sexe étaient les bienvenus ? Est-ce que vous avez pris le temps de le préciser ? Autre exemple, si votre équipe comprenait un certain nombre d'autochtones, vous seriez peut-être amené à adopter un mode de fonctionnement "circulaire", moins hiérarchique. Si vous pouviez compter sur une personne handicapée, vous disposeriez sur le champ du feedback nécessaire pour évaluer l'accessibilité des lieux où se tiennent vos activités, voire même la lisibilité de vos dépliants pour les personnes ayant des problèmes visuels ! Une organisation homogène est souvent privée de tous ces points de vue qui pourraient l'enrichir et l'instruire sur des façons originales de travailler et de résoudre des conflits.

Évidemment, dire que la diversité est la panacée à tous les maux ne correspond pas non plus à la réalité. Un important musée du Québec a créé une série de publications passionnantes sur les premières nations.

Chaque image, chaque ligne de texte a été validée par les nombreux conseils de bandes représentant les communautés visées. Ce processus a donc demandé plus de temps, de patience et de collaboration que si on s'était contenté d'écrire sur les premières nations. Mais il suffit de lire ces publications pour comprendre que les efforts déployés ont porté fruits, notamment en ce qui touche la qualité exceptionnelle du produit, et le partenariat véritable qui s'est développé avec ces communautés.

Comment faire place aux différences pour en tirer parti ? Il faut d'abord exprimer une volonté en ce sens. Ensuite, il est utile de se doter d'une formation appropriée, axée sur l'acceptation des différences et la démythification de certains préjugés. Enfin, il faut faire des efforts conscients et permanents pour ne pas retomber dans le mode de pensée dit "universel" qui, finalement, ne l'est pas du tout ! Les individus qui sont capables d'admettre et d'exprimer leurs limites, qui sont ouverts au changement et aux différences sont très souvent gagnants. Il en va de même des organisations.

*Sylvie Giasson est formatrice dans le domaine de la diversité. Elle est aussi une conférencière reconnue sur les questions touchant la croissance personnelle et l'orientation sexuelle.*



## DIVERSITY: BEING OPEN TO DIFFERENCES IN ORDER TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS

By Sylvie Giasson

Does your organization have conflicts to resolve? Are heated debates occurring although the group is fairly homogeneous (composed for example, of women, whites, of the same ethnic origin). Maybe the problem lies in the lack of differences around the table!

In Canada, like the United States, more and more private enterprises and public organizations are discovering the benefits of diversity. What does one mean by diversity? It is the "group of differences that define each one of us as unique individuals. Among these characteristics, let's mention ethnic origin, age, physical and mental capacities, sexual orientation, religious convictions and many others". In one sense, one could say that the differences are the only thing that we all have in common!

Why aim for diversity when one knows that it is already difficult to get along with people of the same race, having basically the same socio-cultural baggage? Numerous studies indicate that a work environment open to differences favours productivity, innovation, a positive work climate and team spirit. Each person can attain their full potential and feel a much greater personal and professional satisfaction, which often translates into an improved productivity. It is also proven that the highest performing teams are those

where the team members know each other well. Well enough not only on a professional basis, but also on a personal basis (for example, knowing each other's family status, hobbies etc.) However, in order to know one another on a personal level, it is necessary to encourage the expression and the respect of differences.

Certain pitfalls threaten the success of diversity programs. In an effort of "diversification" certain organizations establish hiring quotas in order that their employees are more representative of society in general. They hire "X" number of persons of colour, of handicapped persons, of women, etc. Once these quotas are attained, they are very proud of themselves but continue to work according to one model alone, generally that of the dominant culture, without making any real place for the differences which could enrich the work process. The premise that prevails is that "that everybody is the same and that a certain percentage of representation is sufficient to assure diversity". Diversity is not a matter of quotas, and is based rather on the conviction that we aren't all the same.

How can we concretely encourage differences in an organization? Let's cite an example - lately, your team of volunteers

hasn't been working together well, and you decide to invite them to a wine and cheese in order to relax the atmosphere a little. At the team meeting discussing the wine and cheese, the question arises of whether or not to invite partners. Julie, rather withdrawn, doesn't volunteer an opinion. You leave the meeting frustrated about her lack of involvement in the team. But there it is: Julie has a same sex partner! What could she say? Did she feel that partners of the same sex were welcome? Had you taken the time to be precise?

Here is another example - if your team is comprised of a certain number of aboriginal people, you may be able to lead the adoption of a circular mode of functioning which is less hierarchical. If you can rely on a handicapped person, you will have the immediate feed back necessary to evaluate the accessibility of places where your activities are held, to see even the readability of your pamphlets for persons with visual problems! A homogeneous organization is often deprived of all these points of view that could be enriching and instructive on the original methods of working and of resolving conflict.

Evidently, to say that diversity is the cure for all organizational problems does not correspond to reality. A well known museum in Quebec created a series of passionate publications on the First

Nations. Each image, each line of text was validated by numerous band councils representing the various communities. This process therefore demanded more time, patience and collaboration than if one was content to write about the first nations from an outside perspective. But it is sufficient to read these publications in order to comprehend that the efforts invested have brought fruit, notably the exceptional quality of the product, and the true partnership that it developed with these communities.

How does one include differences in order to profit from them? It is necessary first to express a willingness to include them. Next, it is useful to acquire an appropriate training, based on the acceptance of differences and the demystification of certain prejudices. Finally, one must make a conscious and permanent effort in order to not fall back in the mode of thinking that everyone is the same when that is not true at all! The individuals that are capable of admitting and expressing their limits, who are open to change and to differences are very often winners. The same goes for organizations.

*Sylvie Giasson is a trainer in the area of diversity. She is also a well known speaker on the issues of personal growth and sexual orientation.*



## LOOKING AHEAD

**Volonteurope** ..... **October 2-5, 1997**  
Paris, France

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**National Volunteer Week Dates** ..... **1997-2000**  
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**International Conference on  
Volunteer Administration (ICVA)** ..... **October 29 - November 1, 1997**  
Norfolk, Virginia – For more information, call: (703) 352-6222

**Canadian Association of Volunteer  
Resources and Volunteer Canada** ..... **October 16 - 19, 1997**  
Many Visions, One Future - The Canadian Conference on Volunteerism  
Lombard Hotel, Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Contact: Lenore Good (204) 787-3533 or Helen Quinn (204) 477-5180

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

by Barb Patenaude

Conflict is inevitable. It is inherent in life because of human differences. Conflict is a natural part of the developmental process and is present in varying degrees in all areas of our lives. It cannot be avoided.

People often fear conflict and view it in a negative connotation. Viewed from a different perspective, it is potentially very positive. How one looks at conflict will determine their actions in conflict situations.

Viewed negatively, conflict has great potential for discord. If a person approaches conflict as a win/lose situation where others are treated as adversaries, the results are more likely to be lose/lose. Individuals who are

more concerned with themselves and want to win at any cost contribute to the creation of negative atmospheres: distrust develops and comments are taken as personal attacks. As a result, the exchange of thought, feeling and information is restricted and this is not conducive to positive working relationships.

By contrast, when conflict is viewed in a positive light exciting outcomes can result. Approaching conflict with respect for all parties and an aim toward mutual problem solving allows win/win situations to be created. By acknowledging the validity of other people's thoughts and feelings, an atmosphere which fosters support for each other and mutual gain is created. Effective

partnerships, where the possibility of creating something more together than could be created separately, are encouraged.

The benefits of this approach to conflict are many, both personally and organizationally. When handled positively, conflict can result in stronger relationships, increased self-respect and greater personal growth and development. As individuals experience these positive results on a personal level, it is inevitable that the organization as a whole benefits. Positive conflict is a spur to innovation; efficiency and effectiveness are increased, and cooperative thinking results in more creativity and the development of new possibilities. In other words, a new and vibrant synergy should be evident.

The challenge is in managing conflict and guiding it to achieve positive outcomes. Managing conflict does not mean eliminating it, rather the aim should be to maintain an optimum balance and tension between efficiency and creativity. The manager assumes the role of trouble shooter and mediator in conflict situations. This challenging role requires superior communication and human interaction skills. By communicating openly and regularly, strong trusting relationships are formed; these relationships are the foundation for positive conflict management.

In presence of conflict there are five common response styles. These include:

1. Ignoring: Denying that conflict exists.

2. Repressing: Hiding feelings because of a desire not to hurt other people's feelings.

3. Demanding: Abuse of authority, effective when conflict cannot be resolved.

4. Negotiating: Give and take, parties work as a team.

5. Innovating: Creative cooperation to create new solutions.

When conflict is ignored or repressed, relationships and productivity usually deteriorate. The inevitable is only postponed and when the issue must be addressed, it requires crisis management, not conflict management. The situation is much more stressful and the outcome may be less positive than it would have been if the conflict had been dealt with sooner rather than later. Either of these methods could be acceptable if the issues involved are unimportant.

While a demanding, authoritative approach does not foster good relationships with others, it may be appropriate when other methods have failed to improve a conflict situation. The manager should take decisive action before a crisis develops.

Negotiating and innovation are often the best methods for resolving conflict. These methods both take a positive approach, utilizing the underlying principles of mutual respect and cooperation. Innovating will usually result in the most creative solutions with increased synergy, productivity and organizational loyalty.

Assuming that ignoring, repressing and demanding are not the preferred methods to be used, successful conflict management usually follows a common process.

If asked what the first step in conflict management is, many people would indicate identification of the problem. But before a problem can be identified, one must be aware that a problem exists. Therefore, the first step in managing conflict is sensing that a problem exists. A manager must maintain a constant awareness of conflict and pay attention to the nuances within the department. In all activities a sensitivity to others, with an aim to being aware, should become second nature. The manager must always listen and observe, paying attention to subtle clues that indicate tensions are rising and conflicts exist.

When a problem is sensed, the challenge becomes clarifying what the actual problem is. It is important to resist pressure to find a "quick fix" and take the time to become thoroughly acquainted with the concerns, perceptions and needs of all parties. Active listening is a crucial component - one must ask questions, give feedback and get feedback. Paraphrase and summarize, encouraging others to do the same so that common understandings are established. To achieve positive results, the aim is for all parties to interpret what they hear in the same way.

Once the problem has been identified and all pertinent data has been gathered and

clarified, appropriate action must be taken. Evaluating the problem in light of long-term goals and priorities will aid in this process. In light of the aforementioned information, elimination of conflict is not the ultimate purpose in all situations. It may be appropriate to do nothing more than maintain a watchful awareness of the problem and its progress. If intervention is required, it may be with varying purposes; intervention may be used to simply aid the involved parties in identifying the problem or it may be necessary to facilitate a resolution to the conflict.

If action must be taken, the manager must be well prepared and organized, maintaining respect for the individual, their interests and needs. By clarifying common goals at the outset it is easier to form partnerships working towards these goals.

One must be proactive and avoid crisis management. Rather than waiting for others to start the process, the manager should deal with conflict assertively but not aggressively. By expressing honest thoughts and feelings, others are encouraged to do the same. Aggressive behaviour and hostile attitudes can greatly impede positive outcomes to conflict.

The manager sets the tone for the department. By approaching conflict with a positive attitude which communicates respect for others, an example is set. Practice makes perfect - the more often positive conflict management techniques are utilized

intentionally, the more natural the process will become. Conflict is everywhere and how it is dealt with may determine whether it is constructive or destructive to your organization.

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## CONFLICT AND COMMITTEE DYNAMICS STYLE IS EVERYTHING

by Chris Poirier

Working on the premise that conflict does exist at all levels of our lives, this article will explore one way which may be helpful in dealing with conflict within a group setting in a healthy, positive way.

Within every organization there are committees. In general, committees come together for the purpose of helping define an issue, and resolve a complex problem. Where there are people there is conflict; it is woven into the fabric of every group.

We traditionally view conflict as a symptom of weakness, disharmony and discontent. It is not something we instinctively embrace and we go to great lengths to ignore it or deal with it in the most expedient way possible.

How then to use it to the benefit of a group. There are five basic ways in which we choose to manage conflict and in many cases the style we use will be determined in part by the composition of the group members and the issue at hand. The five basic styles are: competition, avoidance, compromise, accommodation and collaboration<sup>1</sup>.

**COMPETITION:** "I win/you lose". This style tends to focus on personal need, generally at the expense of others. It should be used with caution as it can lend itself to decisions being made in an atmosphere of anger and frustration where the notion of winning at all cost takes precedence.

**AVOIDANCE:** "We're all happy here, nothing is wrong". This style is the opposite end of the scale from the competitive style and is often used when the participants see their role as only temporary or if they fear becoming entrenched in a conflict situation. Any decisions made using this method are invariably poorly implemented because no one feels responsible for the final outcome.

**ACCOMMODATION:** "Whatever makes you happy". If one could describe the competitive style as one of high assertiveness, the accommodation style is the other end of the spectrum. People who use the accommodating style place the needs of others above their own in an effort to create or maintain harmony and good will. On the surface this may seem as the right approach to take, but it is not a style that leads to long-term satisfaction, of everyone concerned.

**COMPROMISE:** The "middle of the road". This style accepts that the outcome to the conflict will be partially satisfying to everyone, but not fully satisfying to anyone. Compromise is the blend of competition and accommodation, gradual movement toward the middle ground becomes the goal. This style has a tendency to leave people confused and feeling that the time spent was not fully satisfying.

**COLLABORATION:** "Everyone wins". Collaboration like competition, demands a high degree of assertiveness, but a high degree of cooperation as well. This is a win/win style and can work if given the time. This is the one most satisfying to all involved and the one that leads to personal and organizational development. Adopting the collaborative approach to conflict means allowing for a number of conditions to exist<sup>2</sup> ..

Controversy is seen as a valuable part of the group dynamic

The "climate" of the group is supportive, cooperative and a safe one in which to deal with conflict

Information is communicated accurately  
Feelings as well as facts are dealt with openly

Similarities in positions are recognized

Personal contributions of others

are respected and affirmed

even though they may be

different from one's own

Conflicts are defined as "ours"

Resolving conflict takes time. In choosing a collaborative approach to conflict we are ensuring that the time is being utilized to the benefit of the group and the issue at hand.

**STYLE** is everything.

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from the writing of Schmidt and Tannenbaum

<sup>2</sup>Leaders Resources, November/December 1990, Volume 1, Number 4 "Managing Conflict So Everyone Wins"

*Chris Poirier-Skelton is the Associate Director of Agency and Community Services for the United Way of Greater Victoria. Chris has been in this position for the past 6 years and spend much of her time either coordinating or participating in group situations with members of the private, public and not for profit sector.*



## BOOK REVIEW

by Eva Marks Maclsaac

### CONFLICT POWER PERSUASION - NEGOTIATING EFFECTIVELY

Author: Ben Hoffman

As managers of volunteers and as team members of an organization, we want to have the skills to settle our disputes better and to assist others in conflict. We want to be able to function without being coercive and to minimize compromise in our lives. Most of us are looking for ways to work with others and to deal with conflict. We want to reach agreements that are not based on a solution accepted simply to ensure that we do not offend or hurt the others involved.

In "Conflict Power Persuasion - Negotiating Effectively", Ben Hoffman presents an alternative to positional bargaining where a win for us is a loss for them. The principles of Hoffman's ecological model are founded in the Harvard Negotiation Project and are quite similar to those presented in "Getting to Yes, Negotiating Agreement without Giving In" by Roger Fisher and William Ury.

Hoffman provides a new perspective by presenting us with his ecological model. This model is based on his belief that a

linear framework is too cut and dry, failing to give you a feeling for the complicated and very often subtle dimensions of negotiation. The ecological view brings together issues of power, timing, information and technique set against basic considerations such as your personal values and working assumptions.

The ecological framework also gives you some sense of sequence, of what you need to do first and how you are going to do it. Most importantly, it allows for Hoffman's bias that we need to start with our own assumptions and a broader notion of what a good outcome is.

Hoffman provides some interesting work sheets designed to assist the negotiator with self assessment about our working assumptions. He poses questions about what we consider to be a good outcome and how we define success. Based on his bias that You are the centre of all negotiations you are engaged in, Hoffman asks you to explore before

negotiation, your feelings about fairness, efficiency, wisdom and stability, the four measures of a successful negotiation.

A pleasant closing feature of this book is a chart which provides guidelines for mediators trying to assist others in resolving conflict. This is a very helpful tool for managers of volunteers who may find themselves in the position of resolving conflict, assisting with negotiations between volunteers, or between volunteers and staff.

Hoffman provides an excellent listing of the key points of negotiation which summarize his model excellently and make a great reference tool for the novice negotiator.

*Eva Marks MacIsaac is the Executive Director of the Debert Military Community Resource Centre in Debert, Nova Scotia*



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ADR Systems: <http://www.adrsystems.com>  
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**JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER  
RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

Editorial Process and Guidelines for Authors

**Objective**

The Journal of Volunteer Resources Management is intended:

1. to serve as a credible source of information on the management of volunteers in Canada;
2. to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to encourage networking among managers of volunteers;
3. to provide a professional development tool for managers of volunteers;
4. to recognize and encourage Canadian talent in the field of management of volunteers;
5. to include in each issue at least two articles that will consider different views of a specific and predetermined theme.

**Target Audience**

The Journal's intended audience includes managers of volunteers, educators, media and funders of not-for-profit organizations across the country.

**Submissions**

All manuscripts will be accepted either on diskette or on typed, double spaced pages. Submissions should be written according to "The Canadian Style - A Guide to Writing and Editing" - Secretary of State, Dundurn Press.

External reviewers may be engaged to review content if deemed advisable by the committee.

The revised draft is edited for clarity and consistency by the Editorial Team.

The edited version is returned to the author for acceptance along with an approval form for signature.

The signed form is to be returned to the Editorial

Team within a week along with any suggestions for final revisions.

**Format and Style**

Authors are asked to respect the following word counts:

	<u>Words</u>	<u>Pages</u>
<b>Lead Article</b>	2000	5-6
<b>Secondary Article</b>	700-800	2-3
<b>Book Review</b>	150	1

The lead article will look at the topic in some depth and will normally require the author to conduct research into current trends and perspectives on the subject.

The secondary article will adopt a more practical approach, including personal experiences and opinions.

**Advertising**

Limited advertising will be allowed in the Journal, for materials of direct relevance to managers of volunteer service, and as long as it conforms to the guidelines set out by the Editorial Team. All ads are subject to the approval of the Editorial Team.

**Suggested Guidelines:**

1. Only 1/4 page and 1/2 page ads will be accepted.
2. Ads must be camera-ready.
3. A maximum of one page of ads will be permitted per issue.
4. Ads are to be placed near "Items of Interest" or toward the end of the issue.
5. Job ads are not recommended.
6. Cost is to be determined by the Editorial Team.



**DEADLINES  
FOR SUBMISSION AND THEMES**

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>	<u>Theme</u>
Fall '97	articles due on the 24th of August	New Visions for Volunteerism
Winter '98	articles due on the 24th of October	Boards and Committees
Spring '98	articles due on the 24th of February	Evaluation
Spring '98	articles due on the 24th of May	Volunteering in The Arts



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