

by Timothy I. Thomas

RESOLVING CONFLICT



**Overcoming Destructive
Behaviors in the Workplace**



Resolving Conflict: Overcoming Destructive Behaviors in the Workplace

Dynamic Solutions Series

By Timothy I. Thomas

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Introduction

At Makarios Consulting, we believe that leadership is about more than words or even ideas. It's about *tools* – giving you practical, rubber-meets-the-road tools to use Monday through Friday on the job ... and off the job, too.

We also believe that you can't effectively use a tool unless you practice with it. That's why you'll find these pages chock-full of questions, case studies, self-tests, and more. We encourage you to spend time on these interactive sections – this is where you will hone your skills with the tools we're going to provide you. Then, when situations arise in your daily leadership, you'll be prepared.

Even so, don't expect to use these tools perfectly the first time you try them in real life situations. It's going to take time and effort to learn to use these tools effectively. But it is worth it. What you will learn here can literally transform your leadership skills, your people, and your entire organization – top to bottom.

Is that a big claim? Yes, it is. But I firmly believe it because I have seen these tools benefit my client companies for the past ten years. And I know that as you put these tools into practice, you'll believe it, too – because you'll be able to see the results right in front of you, every day!

So get ready, roll up your sleeves, and let's get down to business!

The Conflict Continuums

Where do you stand when it comes to interpersonal conflict? Place yourself on the following two continuums: the Conflict Comfort Continuum, and the Conflict Success Continuum. Be sure to think of actual situations before you decide where to make your mark.

The Conflict Comfort Continuum:

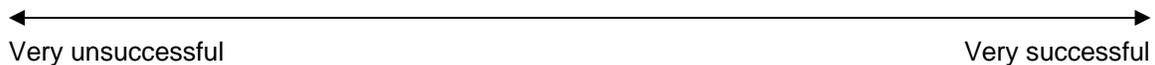
How comfortable are you in facing conflict situations?



The Conflict Success Continuum:

How successful are you in dealing with conflict situations?

("Success" is defined as "a reasonable outcome for all concerned.")



Was there a significant discrepancy between where you placed your mark on the two continuums above? If so, why?

Typically, the people who are most comfortable with conflict are also the most successful in dealing with it. Our goal in this book is to increase your level of comfort with conflict, and to give you tools to make you successful in dealing with conflict.

Defining Conflict

What is conflict? The word itself carries many varying images, with wildly different degrees of intensity:

- “I’m sorry, I can’t make our lunch appointment; I have a conflict in my schedule.”
- “Have you heard about the escalation of the conflict in Iraq?”
- “I hear Joe and Susan are struggling with some marital conflict.”

How would you define “conflict” in terms of the business or office environment?

Oftentimes, people use certain words interchangeably – even when they may be only similar, or only overlap in specific circumstances. In the area of conflict, one word people often use is “disagreement.”

Are “conflict” and “disagreement” the same thing? If not, how do they differ?

People sometimes say that a “conflict” is “an intense disagreement.” Or, they might say that a conflict is more emotional than a disagreement. For example, people might “agree to disagree” fairly calmly, but if they are having a real “conflict,” they are anything but calm.

Think of a recent incident at work that was upsetting and describe it.

Now, characterize the incident as a conflict or a disagreement, and state why you would define it in that way.

Daniel Dana is an internationally renowned conflict mediator. He is President of Dana Mediation Institute and is known as the ‘Conflict Doctor’. He defines conflict in the following way:

“A condition between two people in which at least one feels angry, resentful, hostile, etc., toward the other ... and which leads to disruption of effective work and morale in the workplace.”
– *Daniel Dana*

Note several important aspects to this definition:

- ‘at least one feels angry’ ... You don’t have to have two people seeing something as a conflict in order to have a conflict. One person’s dissatisfaction is sufficient to create a conflict situation.
- ‘angry, resentful, hostile’ ... These are all very strong emotional words. Conflict always has an emotional component.
- ‘disruption of effective work and morale in the workplace’ ... The negative result is the real danger when there’s conflict in an organization. (The same results are there in a personal conflict as well. In that case, conflict leads to disruption of the relationship.)

So how does a conflict start?

About the Author

Timothy I. Thomas established Makarios Consulting in 2003 as a natural outgrowth of his extensive experience and educational background. He graduated in 1987 Magna Cum Laude from the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. From there, he went on to attain a Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary (1990), and a Master of Science degree in Training and Organization Development from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia (2002).



Since 1998, Mr. Thomas has transformed organizations working as a leadership development trainer, executive coach, and change management expert. Mr. Thomas also has expertise in needs assessment, performance consulting, training design and delivery, 360-degree appraisal processes, and employee surveys. He brings to his clients a complete understanding of corporate culture and business processes as well as keen financial acumen, having himself been a Vice President at two international banking institutions.

Mr. Thomas' clients include Fast 500 companies such as Melillo Consulting, Inc., a computer consulting firm; internationally recognized industry leaders such as Catalent Pharma Solutions, Rohm and Haas Company, Lincoln Electric Company, and pharmaceutical giant Merck & Co., Inc.; and rapidly emerging companies such as Cadient Group.