

# 723. PURPOSEFUL SPOT GAME: CREATING WINNERS IN BUSINESS

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## Goals

- To explore the relationship between the self and the whole.
  - To create a context for making choices that are congruent personally, professionally, and organizationally.
  - To experience making purposeful choices in a partnership or a group setting where multiple or competing goals exist.
  - To highlight personal responsibility for making choices.
  - To increase awareness of how one operates in a partnership or a group when a personal purpose, agenda, or goal may be contrary to that of the group purpose or goal.
  - To learn how to create win-win scenarios in any setting and under any circumstances.
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## ***Group Size***

Five to one hundred participants.

## ***Time Required***

Approximately two and one-half hours.

## ***Materials***

- A copy of the Purposeful Spot Game Affirmative Statements List for the facilitator.

- Copies of the Purposeful Spot Game Reflection Handout for all participants.
- Copies of the Purposeful Spot Game Development Plan for all participants.
- Copies of the Purposeful Spot Game Identity and the Infinite I Handout for all participants.
- Music (on tape or CD).
- Tape or CD player.
- Whiteboard or flip-chart easel with paper.
- Felt-tipped markers.
- Pencils for participants.

### ***Physical Setting***

Participants need to sit, write, and move about. The room must be large enough for participants to mill around and join hands so that everyone is connected. Some chairs, tables, pillows, and any other obstructions lower than the height of the participants must be inside the circle, and some must be outside the circle. Ensure safety and ensure that nothing of value can be damaged. Auditorium style seating works as well as any number of round or oblong tables.

### ***Preparation***

1. Use the Purposeful Spot Game Affirmative Statements List to familiarize yourself with the process of writing affirmative statements.

### ***Process***

1. Say to participants, “We will play a game first. Then you will write down your thoughts about the experience. After the game ends, reflections, learning, insights, and applications will be discussed in the large group. At the end you will have the option of playing the game again.”
2. Instruct participants to stand and mill around the room and, while milling, to select spots somewhere in the room (or visible from the room) as their own private spots, keeping the location of their chosen spots secret. (Three minutes.)

3. Ask participants to stop milling and hold hands so that all participants together form one large group, whether circle or any other shape.
4. Explain these rules of the game: “From this point on, you may not let go of the hands you are holding. You may not speak. Your task is to take everyone in the group to your private spot. You will begin when the music starts and stop when the music stops.” Repeat these instructions slowly and clearly.
5. Before you continue, say, “If anyone in the group has a physical condition that might hinder participation, or if anyone anticipates discomfort in playing this game, I invite you now to step out of the circle silently and stand or sit on the sidelines.” Let participants choose for themselves. After you begin, greet latecomers and invite them to stand or sit anywhere and silently observe. (You might write a note on the flip chart for latecomers saying: “If you arrive after the music has begun, find a place to stand or sit and observe what transpires. Your observations will be useful when the music stops.”)
6. Allow a moment for those people who choose to leave the circle to do so and for remaining players to readjust their positions and hold hands again. Ask whether there are any questions and repeat the instructions if necessary.
7. Begin the music and instruct them to begin.
8. Only interfere if, in your judgment, safety is about to be compromised. Allow the game to continue until you see evidence that the movement of the group begins to flow instead of appearing erratic, hesitant, jerky, or aggressive. This will take at least ten minutes, likely longer. If there is no evidence of this phenomenon, stop the music after a maximum of twenty-five minutes.
9. Observe what happens. Take notes for discussion.
  - Note people pulling and tugging at each other to influence the group’s movement and direction.
  - Note when people break the rules, for example, by letting go of hands, speaking, or using intense nonverbal gestures.
  - Note expressions on participants’ faces such as delight, frustration, amusement, anger, and so on.
  - Listen for any side talk, whispering, or laughter.

- Pay attention to the movement of the group as a whole as well as to individuals who stand out in some manner, for example, by refusing to move, sitting down, or pulling on others.

(Fifteen to twenty-five minutes.)

10. Ask them to stop and give each participant a copy of the Purposeful Spot Game Reflection Handout and a pencil. Tell everyone to find a place to quietly reflect on the questions and write down their thoughts. Ask them to be sure they jot down their answers to question fifteen. Tell them they have fifteen minutes to complete the handout. (Fifteen minutes.)

11. Bring everyone together again and begin group discussion by saying, “Your choice of a personal spot was analogous to setting a personal goal or having a personal purpose or agenda. In that sense, your task was to share your goal with other members of the group. Let’s examine how you behaved when attempting to achieve a personal goal in a group. As you listen to what other people say, remember these guidelines for listening.” (Read the following aloud and post them on the flip chart.)

- Any point of view is potentially an accurate one.
- All contributions have value.
- Take this opportunity to learn as much as you can about yourself.
- Be open to the unexpected.
- Listen with your heart.
- Own, even treasure, your personal needs.
- Come from a state of wonder (One-der).

(Five minutes.)

12. Begin the reflection process by asking any of the questions from the Purposeful Spot Game Reflection Handout. Encourage participants to share what they learned about themselves. Capture their insights as affirmative statements for all to see on the flip chart. Title this list “Guidelines for Living.” Use only participants’ own words, but convert them into affirmative statements, written in the present tense, positively stated, and personalized, that is, using the terms “I,” “me,” “my,” and “myself.” Use the Purposeful Spot Game Affirmative Statements List to remind yourself of the wording of affirmative statements, but do not share the list with the participants. They will generate their own insights. Your role is to translate their insights into affirmations.

13. Post people's insights, interspersing your observations and those of any other observers. (Thirty minutes.)
14. Close the discussion and then share the following story: "A college student who played this game selected a spot on her own body as her personal spot. She came to realize that, wherever she moved, the whole group was always at her spot because all hands remained connected. She experienced continual success effortlessly."
15. Now introduce the concept of encompassment (Belf, 2002). Say, "The concept of encompassment is transferable to any experience with another person or group, although in the definition I am about to read the author is referring to a coach working with a client. Encompassment is the practice of going with emergent energy instead of denying or resisting. The word *compass*, representing the whole circle, lies within *encompassment*. In coaching, encompassment means drawing a circle around you and the client so you both reside in the same circle. When you encompass a client, rapport and respect strengthen. Encompassment can happen through verbal language, physical gestures, or the sounds of silence, as we saw by playing our game." Ask for comments about the concept of encompassment. (Ten minutes.)
16. Continue by saying, "In order to be winners in any game we play, we must be purposeful, downgrade what is not purposeful to the background, let go of attachment to results, trust that what happens is for the highest good of ourselves and all others concerned; be in the present moment, available, connected to ourselves, each other, and the whole, able to choose our responses in a state of wonder and curiosity; and be of service. If we are grateful for all of this, then we all 'win.'" Ask for comments about how a sense of purpose, encompassment, and personal goals are connected and post them on the flip chart. (Fifteen minutes.)
17. Next, ask participants to reflect on the applicability of the principles that have been posted to their personal and professional lives. Ask this question: "How might you behave differently in your next group [team, community] meeting as a result of what you have learned about yourself today?" Give everyone copies of the Purposeful Spot Game Development Plan and give them ten minutes to answer the questions. (Twelve minutes.)
18. After they have had ten minutes to work on their development plans, lead a discussion of their answers and how they plan to change their lives

as a result of what they have learned about themselves and setting and sharing goals. (Fifteen minutes.)

19. Ask those who would like to play the game again or those who observed last time and would like to play now to stand up. Have them choose personal spots again and form a loose circle by joining hands. Remind them to apply what they have learned to how they play the game this time. Encourage experimentation, trying out new behavior, taking risks, and being their authentic selves.
20. Repeat the rules, begin the music, and observe. Note that this game could be over very quickly and you can expect within the first minute to see the group functioning as a whole. Allow a few rounds of this experience to reinforce the learning. (Five to eight minutes.)
21. Bring everyone together for a wrap-up discussion. Ask participants to what extent they “encompassed” the whole picture this time on a scale of 1 to 10. Have them compare the two experiences. Present your own observations about any differences between the first and second rounds. Discuss and list the reasons why there was a change on the flip chart. (Ten minutes.)
22. To move toward closure, say, “In summary, I’d like to read some excerpts, paraphrased only slightly, from the book, *Simply Live It UP*. I will give you a copy of this handout as you leave, so listen, rather than try to take notes.” Then read from the Purposeful Spot Game Identity and the Infinite I Handout and summarize its meaning through discussion. (Ten minutes.)
23. Thank the participants for coming and daring to play the game. Give everyone copies of the Purposeful Spot Game Identity and the Infinite I Handout as they leave.
24. Congratulate yourself for having facilitated an extremely powerful and meaningful exercise. Take a moment and list what you have learned too.

### **Variations**

- Use an overhead projector for larger groups.
- Play this game outdoors.

## References

- Belf, T. (2002). *Coaching with spirit: Allowing success to emerge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.
- Belf, T., & Ward, C. (1997). *Simply live it up: Brief solutions*. Bethesda, MD: Purposeful Press.

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## **PURPOSEFUL SPOT GAME AFFIRMATIVE STATEMENTS LIST**

- I use the support of others.
- I remember that things change.
- I compromise so all can win.
- I am clear about my purpose.
- I stay focused and concentrate.
- I recognize that I have and make choices.
- My power comes from within, not outside.
- I always have a backup plan.
- I wait and am patient.
- I can be playful, aggressive, and determined at the same time.
- I go with the flow.
- I realize everything that happens is okay, regardless.
- I know where I am at all times.
- I'm always in the process of accomplishing.
- I now have ways of changing and creating that are assertive and not destructive.
- I see how we are connected, instead of separate.

## PURPOSEFUL SPOT GAME REFLECTION HANDOUT

*Instructions:* Please reflect on the following questions and jot down your thoughts.

1. What did you learn from the way you played this game?
2. Were you successful? Did you achieve your goal?
3. What did you notice about your own behavior?
4. How did you feel during the game?
5. Did you feel powerful? Not powerful? Why?
6. Were you a leader or a follower?
7. Did you consider breaking the rules?
8. Did you break any rules? If yes, how do you feel about that?

9. Did you change rules? If yes, how do you feel about that?
  
10. Were you aware of others in the room?
  
11. What did you notice about other participants' behavior?
  
12. Did you have concern for your safety?
  
13. Did you have concern for the safety of others?
  
14. How energetic did you feel at the end of the game?
  
15. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the most, to what extent did you encompass the whole picture?
  
16. What would you do differently next time?



4. What might others say, notice, or feel?

5. What risks do I dare take?

6. What are possible payoffs and benefits?

7. How might I practice encompassment in my life?

## PURPOSEFUL SPOT GAME IDENTITY AND THE INFINITE I HANDOUT\*\*

What if I soared to a bird's-eye view of my life to make choices? What if I made choices and commitments in accord with my *highest* values and purpose? What if I interacted positively and flexibly with my environment? Then I would transcend to a macro-perspective and *access* flow. Expanded thinking, high perspectives, broad vistas, and encompassing viewpoints are giving up to the infinite I.

Giving up is a paradox. It may seem like losing, but giving up can mean letting go of one level of control to participate at a higher level. Acting at your highest levels can bring peace and power.

*Paradox:* To feel alone, simply close your eyes; to feel connected with the universe, simply close your eyes. We separate; we join. There is no aloneness; there is no togetherness. Both-And, Alone-Together.

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\*\*T. Belf & C. Ward. *Simply Live It UP: Brief Solutions*. Bethesda, MD; Purposeful Press, 1997. Chapter 13. Identity and the Infinite I, pp. 199–205.



# 724. OTHER PERSPECTIVES: FOSTERING THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

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## Goals

- To demonstrate that there is always more than one way of looking at anything.
  - To demonstrate that it is important to identify and assess the factors that limit our creativity.
  - To help participants eliminate their own barriers to thinking creatively and to seeing other perspectives.
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## Group Size

Any size group.

## Time Required

Two to three hours, depending on how long is spent viewing the films.

## Materials

- An Other Perspectives Possible Solutions Sheet for the facilitator.
- An Other Perspectives Barriers to Creativity Handout for each participant.
- An Other Perspectives Lecturette for the facilitator.
- A monitor and a video player.
- Two different films rented on video:
  - *Patch Adams*, directed by Tom Shadyac in 1998 and distributed by Universal Studios. 115 minutes. (*Synopsis*: Patch Adams [Robin Williams] is studying to become a doctor, but he does not look, act, or think like a traditional doctor. For Patch, humor is the best medicine. He is always willing to do unusual things to make his patients laugh. A revealing film based on a story that goes beyond a traditional comedy.)

- *Baraka*, directed by Ron Fricke in 1992 and distributed by Magidson Productions. 96 minutes. (*Synopsis*: This film shows us an impressive mosaic of images not only of human groups but also of animals, statues, buildings, and natural elements. The main theme of the film is not presented in a conventional way. The images jump from a Buddhist ritual in Nepal to the Masai dances in Kenya or the Nô Japanese theatre. To sum up, it is an incredible and breathtaking journey through six continents and twenty-four countries.)
- A flip chart.
- Felt-tipped markers.
- Blank paper and pens or pencils for participants.

### ***Physical Setting***

A room large and flexible enough to allow participants to experience different kinds of activities, from watching a movie to relaxing while lying on the floor.

### ***Process***

1. Explain that the purpose of this activity is to help them to enhance their creative processes and to see things from other perspectives.
2. Give participants blank paper and pens or pencils and tell them to write the Roman numeral nine (IX) on a sheet of paper. When everyone has finished, tell them to “add one line to make six.” Do not tell them anything else. Allow a few minutes and ask the participants to share their answers. Write their possible solutions on the flip chart. (Five minutes.)
3. Share any solutions not already mentioned from the Other Perspectives Possible Solutions Sheet, describing them and posting them on the flip chart. (Five minutes.)
4. Engage the group in a discussion of the following points about creativity:
  - What does solving this puzzle show us about seeing things differently?
  - Why don’t some people consider alternatives easily?
  - What skills or behaviors would be useful for us to develop our ability to see different points of view?

- What kinds of behaviors would you like to start doing or stop doing that inhibit your own ability to see things from another perspective?

(Fifteen minutes.)

5. After wrapping up the discussion, ask the participants to select partners. Tell them that one member of each pair should show four fingers of one hand and hide his or her thumb. The partner should decide how many fingers are shown. (Probably everybody will say four, although they may be motivated because of the last activity to look for different solutions.) Tell everyone to get comfortable for watching a film.
6. Set up for showing *Patch Adams*. You will only show two different scenes from the film.

*Show scene number 1* (Min. 9'23 to 11'50). This scene takes place in the psychiatric hospital, where Patch Adams has admitted himself voluntarily after a failed suicide attempt. In the hospital he meets Arthur, a patient obsessed with showing people four fingers of his hand and asking them: "How many fingers can you see?" Everybody says four. The scene shows Patch visiting Arthur to find out the solution. Arthur's answer is: "If you only focus on the problem, you will never see the solution. Look further. You have to see what other people do not see." (Five minutes.)

7. Engage the group in a discussion of the following questions and issues:
  - What is the relationship between the creativity exercise we did earlier and the film clip you just saw?
  - What factors restrict our ability to look beyond what we see?
  - What does seeing what others do not see mean? How can we achieve that goal?

(Ten minutes.)

8. *Show scene number 2* (Min. 20' to 21'40). In this scene, Patch has left the psychiatric hospital and is now studying medicine. The scene begins when Patch and his new friend Truman, another student, are having breakfast. Truman is reflecting on the human mind and on the changing of behavioral patterns (the adoption of programmed answers) when a person grows older. Patch proposes to carry out the Hello Experiment. The objective of the experiment is "to change the programmed answer by changing the usual parameters." (Five minutes.)
9. Engage the group in a discussion of the following questions:
  - What is your understanding of a programmed answer?

- What is the link between our programmed answers and our ability to exhibit creativity?
- How can we “de-program” ourselves?

(Ten minutes.)

10. To summarize the learnings of the session at this point, introduce the audience to some barriers to creativity. Distribute the Other Perspectives Barriers to Creativity Handout to each participant and use it as a basis for further discussion. (Ten minutes.)
11. Introduce the next section by stating that people have difficulty seeing problems and situations in more than one way. That is because we have lost our creative spirit. Once we are aware of this fact, it is much easier for us to use some special techniques that help us to unleash our creativity.
12. Show the film, *Baraka*.

*Trainer’s Note:* The purpose of this film is to show diversity using a film which is itself creative (it does not explain anything, it does not contain a word, and music plays a fundamental role) to show tensions and oppositions (nature versus culture, individual versus group, human versus animal life, urban versus rural life, modernity versus primitivism), to show how different we are and, at the same time, how alike we are. Due to the strength of the images shown and to the suitable sound track, the film can be used to accompany a relaxation exercise that allows new feelings to appear and helps participants acquire a positive attitude that nourishes their creative spirit.

It is highly recommended that participants watch the whole movie, which lasts about ninety-six minutes. If this is not possible, any segment can be selected for viewing, as there is no context or plot.

(Up to ninety-six minutes.)

13. Engage the group in a discussion using the following questions, posting responses on the flip chart:
  - What did you feel while watching this film? Why did you feel that way?
  - What do you think *baraka* means? Why do you think the movie has this name?
  - What do the set of images shown have in common? Explain.
  - What have you learned about your own barriers to creative thinking?

(Ten minutes.)

14. Summarize the main learning induced by this session with the Other Perspectives Lecturette. (Five minutes.)

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## OTHER PERSPECTIVES POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS SHEET

Here are some possible solutions:

1. If we bisect the IX with a straight transverse line, we can get six in two different ways: (a) by counting six straight lines (three over the line and three underneath it) or (b) by turning the sheet of paper upside down so that the number six appears in Roman numerals above the line.



2. If you draw a curved line (circle) around the first character, you will create a clock whose hands point to 6:00.



3. If you add a curved line (taking the shape of the letter S) in front of the IX, you will get the number six in English.



## OTHER PERSPECTIVES BARRIERS TO CREATIVITY HANDOUT

### ***Learning Barriers***

We learn correct responses, routines, and patterns of behavior. We learn “the way things have always been done” and “the way things are supposed to be done.” Over the years it becomes difficult for us to see and create new possibilities. The most obvious learning barriers to creativity are *prior learning* and *force of habit*.

### ***Perceptual Barriers***

From a lifetime of learning we are used to perceiving things in a particular way, often making it difficult for us to see new meanings, relationships, and ideas. Psychologists refer to our predisposition to perceive things in certain ways as a perceptual set, a mental set, or as functional fixedness. Perceptual barriers create the reverse of flexible, innovative thinking. Perceptual sets are tied to our tendency to make quick decisions and to jump to conclusions, rather than flexibly seeing alternatives. Perceptual blocks also prevent us from obtaining a complete and accurate picture of the real problem.

Being *flexible* is an important part of the effective cognitive process. Flexibility represents a capacity for change—whether a change in the meaning, interpretation, or use of information; a change in understanding of the task; a change of strategy for doing the task; or a change in direction of thinking. Flexibility allows an individual to see all the aspects of a problem and not just one of the facets. Being flexible allows us to see the parameters and boundaries of problems. Flexible people are capable of redefining problems and coming up with innovative solutions. One recommendation for being more creative, “Make the familiar strange,” encourages people to see common objects and situations in new ways, to overcome too-familiar perceptions, and to look for new and different ideas. Creativity involves a transformational mental process, the perception of new meanings, combinations, and relationships.

### ***Cultural Barriers***

Cultural barriers to creativity are related to social influence, expectations, and pressures for conformity, which are based on social and institutional norms. Cultural blocks include habits and previous learning, “rules,” cultural and family traditions, and more. Cultural barriers make us want to conform to the way we think others expect us to behave and to fear being different.

## OTHER PERSPECTIVES LECTURETTE

### ***What Creativity Is***

Paul Torrance, who can be considered one of the fathers of creativity, once said that creativity is to want to know, to look twice, to listen to the smells, to build sand castles, to sing while taking a shower, to have a ball, to dig deep, to make holes to see through them.

For us, creativity is, then, to look for that which does not exist, to see what we usually see in a different way, to imagine, to solve problems, to fail, to experience, and, above all, to grow personally and professionally to become a unique person.

To have an open mind is a necessary condition to becoming a more creative person. Having an open mind requires an insatiable curiosity (related to the need to learn continuously), a commitment to verify knowledge through experience and to learn from mistakes, the willingness to accept ambiguity and fuzziness, the ability to develop a balance between art and science and logic and imagination, and the realization that everything is interrelated so diversity can help our understanding of the world rather than erode it.

Watching *Baraka* allowed us think about all of these issues.

# 725. CHOICES: LEARNING EFFECTIVE CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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## Goals

- To acquaint participants with effective strategies for conflict management.
  - To provide participants with a format for analyzing contingencies in conflict situations.
  - To offer participants an opportunity to practice conflict management skills and receive performance feedback.
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## Group Size

Six to thirty participants in teams of three.

## Time Required

One and one-half to two hours.

## Materials

- One Choices Strategies for Managing Conflict handout for each participant.
- One Choices Strategies and Contingencies handout for each participant.
- One Choices Situations Worksheet for each participant.
- One Choices Popular Selections handout for each participant.
- Flip chart and felt-tipped markers.
- Pens or pencils for participants.
- Masking tape.

## **Physical Setting**

A room large enough for the subgroups to work privately or breakout rooms.

## **Process**

1. Introduce the topic of conflict management, describe the goals of the activity, and invite participants to contribute their preferred strategies for handling conflict situations. Write these on the flip chart. (Ten minutes.)
2. Distribute the Choices Strategies for Managing Conflict and the Choices Strategies and Contingencies handouts to participants. Provide a quick summary of the content, incorporating the contributions offered initially by the participants. (Ten minutes.)
3. Group participants into units of three and distribute the Choices Situations Worksheet and pens or pencils. Instruct subgroups to complete the worksheet as a team. Give them twenty minutes to finish in their groups. (Twenty minutes.)
4. Bring the large group together again and ask participants to reflect on their own behavior when they were faced with a conflict within their subgroup about a particular choice. Which conflict-management strategies were used? (Five minutes.)
5. Lead a discussion of their answers to the worksheet, posting their answers on the flip chart. Use the following questions:
  - Were different people's suggested answers within the subgroups similar or different?
  - What was the rationale for your response if it was different?
  - What did you learn about your personal strategies for managing conflict?
  - What might you do differently the next time you are in a conflict situation as a result of what you have learned during this activity?
  - How can you be certain to use what you have learned?(Twenty minutes.)
6. Provide a copy of the Choices Popular Selections handout for each participant and explain that these are not necessarily the "correct" answers, but the ones chosen most often by those who have filled out the worksheet previously. Discuss briefly why this would be and what the up side of each

answer is. Conclude by listing ways that participants can deal with conflict in new ways back on the job. (Twenty to thirty minutes.)

### **Variations**

- With groups larger than thirty, additional facilitators can be used to provide summary dialogue and feedback at the conclusion of the activity.
- Individuals can complete the worksheet prior to working with others.
- All ten of the worksheet situations need not be used if time is short. Specific situations can be selected to match the needs of the training group.
- Teams can be larger than three; however, an odd number is desirable to eliminate stalemates.
- The first two handouts and additional readings on conflict may be assigned prior to the activity.

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## CHOICES STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflict is a naturally occurring phenomenon in group growth and development (Tuckman, 1965). Resistance and hostility eventually follow the initial stage (*forming*) of orientation (task focus) and dependency (relationship focus). This *storming* stage usually requires conflict management interventions by leadership in order to move the group forward toward the stages of *norming* (communication and cohesion) and *performing* (problem solving and interdependence).

When viewed from this perspective, conflict becomes an essential predecessor to continued growth and development. A leadership goal, then, may be managing the conflict in a productive way. An optimum level of conflict is seen as healthy and as providing alternatives, new insights, and different perspectives. Extremes are dangerous, however, as too much conflict creates chaos, and the absence of conflict is typically apathy.

### ***Conflict and Leadership***

Conflict and leadership are inseparable (Burns, 1978). As conflict increases, the need for effective leadership increases. Effective leadership requires knowledge of contingencies for conflict situations and skill in conflict management. There are five generic techniques for managing conflict. The leader could (1) withdraw from the conflict, (2) suppress or diffuse the conflict, (3) integrate the conflicting positions to form a consensus, (4) seek a compromise, or (5) use some type of authority and power (legitimate position, expertise, democratic voting, or other means) to resolve the conflict.

### ***Conflict-Management Techniques***

Knowledge of conflict management begins with understanding the situation in which the conflict is occurring. Each of the five techniques noted above has advantages and disadvantages; therefore, the initial intervention technique selected, as well as a back-up plan, is situational (Kormanski, 1982; Kormanski, 1999).

The advantages and disadvantages of each technique are presented in the Choices Strategies and Contingencies handout, arranged in a hierarchical order. Thus, for example, if integration is ineffective, either of the remaining two techniques (compromise or authority) can serve as a secondary intervention. The preceding two techniques (withdrawal or suppression) cannot be

used, however, as once you have intervened it suggests that the conflict is important and needs active involvement by leadership. Per the hierarchy, authority is always the choice of last resort. Once it is used, there are no legitimate back-up interventions.

## **Conclusion**

Being knowledgeable regarding conflict and effective conflict management techniques is only the first step of the process. One must develop the appropriate intervention skills to select and apply the techniques. The rapid, complex nature of change in our current world mandates that leaders possess skills to manage conflict. Lest we fear the process, Roger Lewin (1993) has suggested that the point at which a leader has the most potential for growth as a person is when the organization is right at the edge of chaos.

## **References**

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## CHOICES STRATEGIES AND CONTINGENCIES

### ***Withdrawal as a Strategy***

#### **Use When (Advantages)**

- Choosing sides is to be avoided
- Critical information is missing
- The issue is outside the group
- Others are competent and delegation is appropriate
- You are powerless

#### **Be Aware (Disadvantages)**

- Legitimate action ceases
- Direct information stops
- Failure can be perceived
- Cannot be used in a crisis

### ***Suppression (and Diffusion) as a Strategy***

#### **Use When (Advantages)**

- A cooling down period is needed
- The issue is unimportant
- A relationship is important

#### **Be Aware (Disadvantages)**

- The issue may intensify
- You may appear weak and ineffective

### ***Integration as a Strategy***

#### **Use When (Advantages)**

- Group problem solving is needed
- New alternatives are helpful

- Group commitment is required
- Promoting openness and trust

#### **Be Aware (Disadvantages)**

- Group goals must be put first
- More time is required for dialogue
- It doesn't work with rigid, dull people

#### ***Compromise as a Strategy***

##### **Use When (Advantages)**

- Power is equal
- Resources are limited
- A win-win settlement is desired

##### **Be Aware (Disadvantages)**

- Action (a third choice) can be weakened
- Inflation is encouraged
- A third party may be needed for negotiation

#### ***Authority as a Strategy***

##### **Use When (Advantages)**

- A deadlock persists
- Others are incompetent
- Time is limited (crisis)
- An unpopular decision must be made
- Survival of the organization is critical

##### **Be Aware (Disadvantages)**

- Emotions intensify quickly
- Dependency is promoted
- Winners and losers are created

## CHOICES SITUATIONS WORKSHEET

*Instructions:* Assume you are a group of top managers who are responsible for an organization of seven departments. Working as a team, choose an appropriate strategy to intervene in the situations below when the conflict must be managed in some way. Your choices are *withdrawal*, *suppression*, *integration*, *compromise*, and *authority*. Refer to the Choices Strategies for Managing Conflict sheet for some characteristics of each. Write your team's choice following each situation number.

### **Situation #1**

Two employees of the support staff have requested the same two-week vacation period. They are the only two trained to carry out an essential task using a complex computer software program that cannot be mastered quickly. You have encouraged others to learn this process so there is more backup for the position, but heavy workloads have prevented this from occurring.

### **Situation #2**

A sales manager has requested a raise because there are now two salespeople on commission earning higher salaries. The work performance of this individual currently does not merit a raise of the amount requested, mostly due to the person turning in critical reports late and missing a number of days of work. The person's sales group is one of the highest rated in the organization, but this may be the result of having superior individuals assigned to the team, rather than to the effectiveness of the manager.

### **Situation #3**

It has become obvious that the copy machine located in a customer service area is being used for a variety of personal reasons, including reproducing obscene jokes. A few copies have sometimes been found lying on or near the machine at the close of the business day. You have mentioned the matter briefly in the organization's employee newsletter, but recently you have noticed an increase in the activity. Most of the office staff seems to be involved.

#### ***Situation #4***

Three complaints have filtered upward to you from long-term employees concerning a newly hired individual. This person has a pierced nose and a visible tattoo. The work performance of the individual is adequate and the person does not have to see customers; however, the employees who have complained allege that the professional appearance of the office area has been compromised.

#### ***Situation #5***

The organization has a flex-time schedule format that requires all employees to work the core hours of 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. Two department managers have complained that another department does not always maintain that policy. The manager of the department in question has responded by citing recent layoffs and additional work responsibilities as reasons for making exceptions to policy.

#### ***Situation #6***

As a result of a recent downsizing, an office in a coveted location is now available. Three individuals have made a request to the department manager for the office. The manager has recommended that the office be given to one of the three. This individual has the highest performance rating, but was aided in obtaining employment with the company by the department manager, who is a good friend of the person's family. Colleagues prefer not to work with this individual, as there is seldom any evidence of teamwork.

#### ***Situation #7***

Two department managers have requested a budget increase in the areas of travel and computer equipment. Each asks that your group support this request. The CEO, not your group, will make the final decision. You are aware that increasing funds for one department will result in a decrease for others, as the total budget figures for all of these categories are set.

#### ***Situation #8***

Few of the management staff attended the Fourth of July picnic held at a department manager's country home last year. This particular manager, who

has been a loyal team player for the past twenty-one years, has indicated that he/she plans to host the event again this year. Many of you have personally found the event to be boring, with little to do but talk and eat. Already, a few of the other managers have suggested that the event be held at a different location with a new format or else be cancelled.

### ***Situation #9***

It has come to your attention that a manager and a subordinate in the same department are having a romantic affair openly in the building. Both are married to other people. They have been taking extended lunch periods, yet both remain beyond quitting time to complete their work. Colleagues have begun to complain that neither is readily available mid-day and that they do not return messages in a timely manner.

### ***Situation #10***

Two loyal department managers are concerned that a newly hired manager who is wheelchair-bound has been given too much in the way of accommodations beyond what is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. They have requested similar changes to make their own work lives easier. Specifically, they cite office size and location on the building's main floor as points of contention.

## CHOICES POPULAR SELECTIONS

*NOTE:* The situations described on the Choices Situations Worksheet were designed to provide you with practice in analyzing and discussing conflict situations and contingencies. In a real-world setting, you would have had more data than was presented in the vignettes; thus, the selections below are simply presented as popular (not “correct”) choices for intervention strategies in each situation. A second choice is also given in parentheses for each situation; these can be used as back-up strategies.

### **Situation #1: Compromise (Integration)**

The limited resources of time and expertise, plus the desire for a win-win outcome, encourage *compromise* and make it an efficient strategy. *Integration* could be used to generate additional alternatives if more time were available to implement them, and this could be useful to avoid the dilemma again next year.

### **Situation #2: Integration (Authority)**

A dialogue (*integration*) is needed to assess commitment, as well as to promote openness and trust. This would also provide an opportunity to discuss performance standards and expectations with the individual. *Authority* would be the backup choice and could involve clarifying and resetting performance goals.

### **Situation #3: Authority (Integration)**

The combined issues of sexual harassment and customer service require an immediate intervention by *authority*. This may be seen by the employees as an unpopular move or as blown out of proportion (it’s just a little bit of office fun), however critical to the implementation of the values of the organization. *Integration* could be used to clarify the importance of the issues, but *authority* would be needed to ensure immediate compliance.

### **Situation #4: Suppression (Integration)**

Because only a few complaints were received and the employee is new, *suppressing* the situation and allowing time for people to get to know the individual as a person seems appropriate. An *integration* intervention can be used if the issue intensifies over time.

### **Situation #5: Integration (Compromise)**

Sitting down with the key managers involved to discuss the issue and examine implications for the company as a whole would be advisable (*integration*). Input from all involved is critical, and each person must understand the others' points of view. If a consensus solution cannot be reached, then a *compromise* would be the next best step.

### **Situation #6: Authority (Integration)**

It is the department manager's responsibility to assign office space, and this manager has provided a logical rationale for his or her choice; thus, *authority* is appropriate. An *integrative* follow-up would also be advisable to tackle a secondary concern of poor departmental teamwork, which appears to be surfacing.

### **Situation #7: Withdrawal (Suppression)**

Because you are not involved in making the decision and you want to maintain good working relationships with both departments, it is to your advantage to *withdraw* from supporting either group. *Suppressing* the conflict until the budget process is completed could work if both managers have strong egos or are loyal colleagues.

### **Situation #8: Suppression (Compromise)**

Even though few attend and are bored with the lack of activities, organizational loyalty is to be rewarded. You can *suppress* the conflict and model supportive behavior by attending the event yourselves. Respect for this manager and his advocacy of teamwork is important. As a *compromise*, you might form a task force to create a new, expanded event (at a different time and place) in the future that would be more family oriented, and you could designate the manager in question as the honorary host.

### **Situation #9: Authority (Compromise)**

The complaints concerning accessibility of the employees and unauthorized extension of the lunch period are legitimate reasons for an *authoritative* intervention. Organizational values and how the company appears to its customers may also be at stake. Parameters should be established with the employees in

question, using current company policy that is being violated. In addition, some “old-fashioned” advice about the dangers of such relationships could be given. As a *compromise*, intervene only with regard to company issues, such as not being available, and allow the two parties to decide their personal behavior when not in the workplace.

***Situation #10: Integration (Authority)***

The need for group solidarity and for managers to model the company’s values with regard to such issues is important. A consensus approach is most likely to be helpful. An *integrative* dialogue to put issues on the table and engage in innovative problem solving is a preferred choice. *Authority* is an alternative if a problem-solving approach doesn’t assure compliance with federal laws.

