



The Executive Woman's Coach Newsletter
July 2004

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- Upcoming events: Teleseminars and Rapid Results Retreats

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Managing conflict is a tricky business, or perhaps a better term to use is clarifying conflict. Many women (and men) will avoid conflict at all costs. After a while, the cost of avoiding conflict can be career gone astray. Here are some ideas on how to understand and handle conflict with better results.

Conflict occurs for two reasons:

- Different objectives
- Differences in how to accomplish the objective

To clarify conflict, listen to what is being said to determine the specific points of contention.

If Different Objectives seem to be the culprit...

1. Restate or clarify the reason for the meeting in terms of the decision to be made or the end results for internal or external customers. Always keep the customer impact in all your decisions. For example: "My understanding of why we here today is to determine our response to customer complaints so we will keep their business and possibly increase it. Is that your understanding?" Sometimes we jump into problem solving before we understand the problem.
2. The participation of others in the decision needs to be real, not just advisory. If the meeting is to gather input, then get their input and you make the decision.
3. Narrow your decision to just one that stands alone, no ifs, ands or buts in it. For example, "We are here to decide how to reduce turnover *and* decrease our recruiting costs." Those are two different decisions that need two different discussions and two sets of decision making criteria.

If Differences in How Accomplish the Objective are at Issue...

1. Before you begin, decide how to decide. Agree on what success would look like, and then decide what criteria will be used to make the decision. Narrow your criteria to 3 or 4. Examples of decision making criteria include:
 - Is it cost effective?
 - Do we have the expertise necessary for the work?
 - Is it achievable? Are there proven strategies or interventions?
 - How many people will be affected by this issue?
 - Are we addressing a gap or is this a duplication of effort?
 - Is the problem going to get worse? Do we need to act now?
 - What if we don't take action?
 - Are the staff and/or customers interested or excited?
2. List all your options.
3. Collect the information you need based on your decision making criteria. If you use research studies you can now set the parameters of the study for exactly what you need and will use. For example is it cost effective? Are our customers enthusiastic? Does it solve the issue?
4. Rank your options. Everything is ranked above or below something else using your criteria. Set up a matrix with the criteria down the side and the options across the top. Then force-rank the options per criteria and total the numbers.

	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>	<u>Option 3</u>
<u>Criteria A</u>	1	2	3
<u>Criteria B</u>	3	1	2
<u>Criteria C</u>	3	2	1
<u>Total</u>	7	5	6

In this case Option 2 is rated as the best option.

5. Reach agreement. Review the results of the ranking and discuss if this is the option that will give you the results you want. Disagreeing here is not the same as conflict. You are evaluating making a good decision vs. a right decision. You know when you have made a good decision because you clarified what end result you want and selected the criteria to evaluate options. It might not be possible to know if it was the right decision.
6. 5 questions to ask as you evaluate your decision. Was the process open and equitable? Was the decision made? Have we made a quality decision? Will there be little or no re-work? Will people get excited about the idea?

Ask the Executive Woman's Coach

- Q. When I present my ideas to my group (or anyone else does) no one says anything for a long time. It is very uncomfortable. What do I need to do differently?

- A. It is stunned silence or thoughtful consideration? In our Western Culture people begin responding to ideas before they have been fully presented. There are times when what you have said may cause the listener to deeply consider your idea before they are ready to say or ask anything. There is also a difference in how others process information. According to the Myers-Briggs assessment, the classic extrovert thinks with his or her mouth open and the introvert needs to consider what has been said and decide what they want to say before they speak. This was a surprise to me early in my career when conference calls with my peers ended up with only my boss and I saying anything. After we finished the Myers-Briggs assessment we realized he and I were the only two extroverts on the calls. After that we would both wait 20 seconds before offering our suggestions or feedback. Usually it only took 15 seconds before they begin sharing their thoughts. There also may be a culture difference in communication styles. Asian cultures are more thoughtful in their responses, and so are the Swedes. After several conversations with one Swedish VP in a telecommunications company, I asked him why there was a long pause before he responded. He said, "I want to fully understand what you have said, then think about my answer." Mystery solved. If you are in doubt ask them or take a peek at the second hand on your watch and see if there is a magic number of seconds of silence before they respond.

Send you questions to KRN@executivewomanscoach.com. If your question is used you will participate in a teleseminar free.

Upcoming Events:

Teleseminars (all are noon-1pm ET and available 24/7 for 30 days)

- * Shameless Self Promotion - Thursday, July 29, noon ET
- * How to Develop Your "It" (Executive Presence), Thursday, September 9
- * Avoid Stupid Mistakes even Smart Women Make, Thursday, Oct. 29

They are free to my coaching clients, and \$25 for others.

Rapid Results Retreats

Join me in dazzling Cocoa Beach, Florida for a two days designed for career women who want to create clarity and increase results. The group is limited to 8.

- June 25-27, 2004 *Sold Out*
- September 16-18, 2004
- January 20-22, 2005
- April 14-16, 2005

You can find more information at www.executivewomanscoach.com, Events

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