

HEALTHY CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE APPLICATION: LEADERSHIP

Checklist for how to lead a conflict-positive organization

82% of international NGO staff surveyed believe their organization's capacity to respond to internal conflict is less than adequate. (Survey of 93 international NGOs working in over 100 countries.)

Here is why staff say unmanaged conflict matters:

1. **Morale, reduced communication, and troubled or terminated employment**
2. **Waste of time and / or money**
3. **Actual or perceived loss in organization reputation or credibility.**

Tending to key aspects of leadership, organization culture, conflict process, and relationships can transform conflict into opportunity and support positively adapting to a turbulent world.

Use this checklist to focus on the leadership element.

✓ #1 SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Tip 1: In our organization design, are we clear about management authorities regarding helping work through conflict? Are leaders and managers clear about who is responsible to help staff work through conflicts?

Tip 2: Who has responsibility for helping deal with the conflict? Do staff know – and turn to those responsible for helping – when in conflict?

Tip 3: Are we communicating that conflict is usual in life? Are we speaking of specific conflicts as part and parcel of organizational reality?

✓ #2 CONFLICT COMPETENT SELF

Tip 1: Am I embodying what my organization stands for?

Tip 2: Am I embodying comfort about and seeing opportunity in conflict spaces?

Tip 3: When I speak about conflict – in concept or a specific instance - am I speaking in a way that signals opportunity?

Tip 4: Am I consistently embodying the above?

Tip 5: Am I welcoming and including diverse and varied perspectives?

✓ #3: READ THE ORGANIZATION

Tip 1: How assertive, aggressive, or blame-gaming are conflict narratives?

Tip 2: Are the arguments becoming more antagonistic, or conversations to find solutions to a problem? Notice signals of deeper dissent.

Tip 3: Are normal core processes slowing down? Are decision processes heavily belabored? Reflect – might there be sub-surface disagreement(s)?

Tip 4: Is learning from past conflicts incorporated? Is the organization moving on?

Tip 5: What are partners signaling that I might not be aware of?

Success check: Is conflict energy transferring into adaptive energy?