



Conflict Is Good For Relationships

I remember a respected businessperson telling me years ago that their best clients were often those with whom they had experienced conflicts. They described

these conflicts as fuel that deepened trust and respect within the relationship. Reflecting on this, I've also observed the importance of separating the person from the issue or challenge—meaning, keep the discussion focused on the facts at hand, not on personal attacks. Resolve challenges with clarity and objectivity, consciously managing to keep emotions in check.

Throughout our professional lives, conflicts are inevitable. In fact, the larger the initiatives we undertake, the more likely conflicts will arise—often multiple conflicts—as part of building long-term partnerships. These moments provide a critical foundation grounded in trust, respect, and loyalty. So, when conflicts arise, don't shy away. Instead, welcome them as opportunities to examine issues together and strengthen the relationship, enabling it to move forward positively.

I recall an experience from many years ago when we closed the largest sale in our company's history. After nearly a year of negotiations, our two key decision makers finally informed us that their board had approved a one-year national leadership and coaching program with MDC. Our entire team was ecstatic—celebrating with joy and excitement, dancing in the aisles to be exact.

Yet, a quiet voice inside me urged caution: "Double-check the final spreadsheet with the financials they approved." I returned to my office and reviewed the numbers—and discovered a critical error. We had inadvertently omitted a line item, representing 15% of the total contract. Shocked, I scanned the paperwork for any sign the item was included elsewhere—but found nothing. While my team still celebrated, I was overwhelmed with concern.

I quickly weighed my options:

1. Absorb the loss and move on.
2. Call the client and be transparent about our mistake.

Choosing honesty meant asking them to return to their board to sign off on a larger amount—something I expected would not be received well.

I called them within an hour of receiving their approval. When I explained the error, they saw it on their end too—and their response was immediate anger. They hung up, and for two tense days, the silence was deafening. Morale at our company dipped sharply.

Then the call came back—with a surprising message: “We got the board to approve the new contract, and we want to expand it to a two-year relationship. Why? Because you called us as soon as you realized your mistake. That honesty has increased our trust in you. We want you to train our leaders to make decisions just like you did.”

That moment, more than 20 years ago, still brings a smile to my face.

Conflict reveals the real you to others. Like reading a book, you don’t truly understand its contents until you dive in, rather than judging it by its cover. Conflict is an essential component of any strong relationship. Welcome it. When conflict arises, here are some practical steps for leaders to navigate it effectively:

- Don’t make it personal—keep emotions in check.
- Clarify for yourself what the conflict is revealing—the core truth of the issue.
- Step into the other person’s shoes to understand their perspective.
- Have the courage to communicate your truth clearly—for both sides.
- Trust that you will uncover common ground that both parties can agree upon.
- Visualize the relationship moving forward in a positive direction.
- Embrace conflict as a catalyst for growth and deeper connection in your professional relationships.

Here is a quote from my book *Coaching Illustrated*, found on page 60, by the renowned comedian and writer Richard Lewis, “If you don’t like solving problems, you should get out of business. I have problems flown in fresh daily wherever I am.”

As usual, Summar, Alex, and I would truly like to know your thoughts on this blog. If you have a topic, you want us to address, please let us know.

Have a great summer.