Transforming Board Practice

NC State University
A&T State University
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Empowering People · Providing Solutions

INSTITUTE FOR
NONPROFITS

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Jessica Katz Jameson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at NC State University. She teaches courses and conducts community-engaged research on the topics of organizational communication, conflict management and nonprofit leadership. She chairs the Academic Council for the Institute for Nonprofits and serves on the Extension, Engagement and Economic Development task force for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Susan Scherffius Jakes is the Associate State Program Leader for Community Development, an Extension Assistant Professor with NC Cooperative Extension and an Adjunct Professor in Psychology at North Carolina State University. She received a Ph.D. in Community Psychology from North Carolina State University.

Mary Tschirhart is a Professor of Public Administration at The Ohio State University. She served as Director of the Institute for Nonprofits and Professor of Public Administration at NC State University from 2008-2013. She has published extensively on nonprofit topics including board governance. She recently co-authored a text titled *Managing Nonprofit Organizations*. Dr. Tschirhart has served on six nonprofit boards in a variety of roles, including president, and led a nonprofit as its executive director.

Module 5

Constructive Conflict

Goals for this Module

Participants should be able to:

- Describe the difference between Destructive versus Constructive Conflict

- Provide examples of Conflict Orientations

    (Power based, Rights based, or Interest based)

- Review principles of Constructive Communication

- Practice Non-evaluative Listening Skills & Supportive Communication

- Practice Constructive Communication
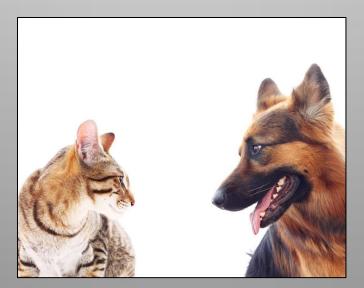
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Destructive Conflict

Work with your group to draw a picture that represents destructive conflict.

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Constructive Conflict

Work with your group to draw a picture that represents constructive conflict.

Constructive Conflict

Constructive conflict focuses on the issues through supportive dialogue that leads to understanding multiple views and collaborative problem-solving.

Conflict Orientations

- Power-based

- Rights-based

- Interests-based

Conflict Orientations

Power-based:

Assumes the party with the most power wins. Coercive tactics such as threats and unilateral decisions are common.

Conflict Orientations

Rights-based:

Assumes an objective right and wrong according to some standard. Third party makes a ruling to determine appropriate remedy or resolution.

Conflict Orientations

Interests-based:

Assumes the interests or needs of all parties are important and a solution can be reached through collaborative processes.

Constructive Communication

- Avoid attribution error

- Focus on common goals

- Use face-saving, supportive (rather than defensive) communication strategies

- Avoid strong language

- Encourage a culture of inquiry - don't be afraid to ask questions

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Face-Saving

- People want to be seen as independent
- People want to be liked, respected, feel they belong
- We can communicate in ways that support or threaten another's face
- Face threats lead to defensiveness, the primary cause of conflict escalation
- Many people avoid conflict to reduce face-threat

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Defensive & Supportive Communication

Defensive

- Evaluation
- Control
- Strategy
- Neutrality
- Superiority
- Certainty

Supportive

- Description
- Problem orientation
- Spontaneity
- Empathy
- Equality
- Provisionalism

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Non-evaluative Listening
(Activity)

Find a partner: The speaker will explain a current conflict or problem they are having.

Ask Questions: The listener should ask questions to help the person clarify concerns, interests, and goals. The questions must be non-judgmental and may not offer advice.

Switch roles:

After about 5 minutes switch roles.

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Putting it all Together

Read the case scenario provided.

Take a few minutes to consider your likely position if you were on this board of directors.

1. What questions would you want to ask?

2. What information would you need?

3. We will role play this meeting as a group.

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Evaluation

What are the key points of this module?

- What did you find most useful?
- What can we improve upon?
- Other items you want us to cover?

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Curriculum Modules

Module 1: Foundations for Transforming Board Practice
Module 2: Legal and Recruitment Issues
Module 3: Governance and Board Structure
Module 4: Enhancing Board Engagement
Module 5: Constructive Conflict
Module 6: Thinking Strategically
Module 7: Asking the Right Questions
Module 8: Board Meeting Communication

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Curriculum Modules

PDF copies of the curriculum modules are

available for viewing on the

NC Thrive portal:

http://communitydevelopment.ces.ncsu.

edu/local-government-nonprofits/

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References

Gibb, J. (1961). Defensive communication. *The Journal of Communication, 11*(3), 141-148. The article also appeared in *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, Vol. 22, No. 2, June 1965, pp. 221-230. Reprint:
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Ury, W. F., Brett, J. A., and Goldberg, S. (1988). *Getting Disputes Resolved*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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