Transforming Board Practice
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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
Destructive Conflict

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

Work with your group to draw a picture that represents 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
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.
Conflicts 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
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
Defensive & Supportive Communication

**Defensive**
- Evaluation
- Control
- Strategy
- Neutrality
- Superiority
- Certainty

**Supportive**
- Description
- Problem orientation
- Spontaneity
- Empathy
- Equality
- Provisionalism
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.
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.
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?
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
PDF copies of the curriculum modules are available for viewing on the NC Thrive portal:

http://communitydevelopment.ces.ces.ncsu.edu/local-government-nonprofits/
