

Egocentric viewpoints:



No matter how much we like to think that we can understand things from another person's point of view, we really can't. We all experience the world in different ways and have collected different views, opinions, experiences, etc during our lifetime. These all form the basis on which we judge and react to

situations and as such we will respond differently from someone else.

We also have a tendency to accept our interpretation as the correct one and often judge other people by our own standards which can make it difficult to really understand someone else's point of view.

However, by understanding this and accepting differences, we can appreciate the other person's position and work with them to identify ways of managing the conflict situation.

Active listening:



It takes self-control and practice to be a good listener. All energy and concentration should be on listening and not distracted by thinking of something to say in response. Only then will you listen fully and understand the other person's point of view. You have to have the desire to:

1. Be open to the other person rather than projecting your own views and feelings onto them
2. Listen as a receiver, not as a critic
3. Understand the other person, explore their position rather than imposing any pre-set agenda

Exploring questions



Really understanding someone's point of view requires effective questioning as well as attentive listening. Open questions elicit more information than closed questions. Listen carefully to the person's responses and use mirror or relay questions to explore further.

- **Mirror questions:** take the words that they have just said and turn it into a question e.g. A - This training period has been of no use to me Q - No use at all?
- **Relay questions:** take the information that you have given and form a question about this information to probe deeper e.g. Q - What career do you want to follow? A - The field of computers. Q - What is it about computer science that attracts you?

Overcoming resistance:



Rather than waiting for these obstacles to take you by surprise and halt your progress, accept that resistance is going to occur constantly throughout the conflict management situation. Spend time identifying possible obstructions and plan ways to overcome them. List all the objections that could be raised by each party.

Then work out your strategies to counter this resistance. Be prepared to question, and listen in an unbiased non-defensive way to understand the root cause of the resistance

Self generated resolution:



When in conflict, people have a tendency to dig their heels in and not want to budge from their position, feeling that it is the responsibility of the other person to concede. This can only result in stalemate as both parties do the same. The only way out of this is to get each party to feel that they came up with the solution but didn't need to concede their position. This requires appealing to their emotions, getting them to appreciate the other person's position (not understand, just appreciate), questioning them to create possible solutions and negotiating between the parties to an agreed way out.

Persuader's toolbox:



There are a wide range of psychological tools that can help persuade people to adopt another point of view:

- Cialdini's six weapons of influence: Reciprocation (people like to return favours); Commitment and Consistency (people are likely to honour a commitment even if the stakes change later); Social Proof (People like to do things others are doing); Authority (We trust authority figures more readily than others); Liking (we are more easily persuaded by people we like); Scarcity (There is a certain allure to having something that many others can't have)
- People prefer to have pre-existing attitudes proved correct and will be more inclined to accept messages that support their own existing attitudes and reject those that challenge their attitudes
- Self-generated arguments are stronger and more enduring
- People think more about information from multiple sources
- We naturally want to avoid losing things that we already 'have'
- We like to feel we have control over decisions and rarely like to feel that we have no choice but to do what we are told to do



St John's Innovation Centre
Cowley Road
Cambridge CB4 0WS
Telephone 01223 420252
Web: www.eloquential.co.uk

Conflict management: the essentials

Here follow the essentials for handling conflict between people or organisations.

Emotions:



No matter how professional people try to remain during conflict situations, they will always be influenced by the emotions that they are experiencing and those that they witness in the other person (or project onto the other person). The most important thing to keep in mind in these situations is that everyone is entitled to the emotions that they feel.

Challenging someone's right to hold an emotion is the root cause of many conflicts e.g. simply asking someone 'why are you angry?' can fuel the conflict situation as this question suggests that they are wrong to feel this emotion. Therefore acceptance of other people's emotional reactions is paramount for conflict management.

Showing empathy for the other person's emotion will then help to gain trust, will help remove the defensive mechanism of this emotion and will allow you to concentrate on managing the conflict itself.