

INDIVIDUAL COACHING

Shifting Blame to Empathy

Anne was a senior level executive reporting to the CEO of a large financial institution. She had contracted with an executive coach to enhance her leadership skills.

There were no glaring deficiencies in her performance and 360-degree feedback was quite positive. She was the type of executive who believed leadership was a journey of acquiring knowledge, putting it into practice and seeking out opportunities for growth.

She took The Conflict Lens™ using the first conflict to describe a discussion with a subordinate and the second with a peer. Both conflicts were mildly constructive in outcome--a result she was not satisfied with.

When she and her coach analyzed her report, they found that she had scored much higher with the subordinate on the Control, Blame, and Stand Firm scales. With the peer her high scores were on the Empathize, Compromise and Self-Restrain scales.

In both situations she was firmly convinced that she had demonstrated appropriate behaviors in each situation.

What Anne and her coach discovered was that the behaviors she used in the “peer” conflict would have been much more effective with her subordinate.

She learned that she should have used the more conciliatory strategy, whereas with the peer it would have been better to take a more active and forthright approach.

This led to rich discussions of how and where to use assertiveness when power dynamics are present. Anne learned that she would be more effective if she were more assertive in conflicts with peers and less assertive with subordinate conflicts.

“If you do not trust the person you are in conflict with, you are very unlikely to have a positive outcome to the conflict.”



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Approaches to Problem Solving

John was a middle level manager in a manufacturing plant. He had been passed over for a promotion that he was counting on and as a result, was considering leaving.

He was seen as a good team player- conscientious, and motivated- but was not given the promotion because there was a question of whether he could adequately deal with some of the strong personalities in the plant.

When he was told that he did not get the promotion, he told his boss he was inclined to leave the company, as he felt he was more than qualified for the position. His boss convinced him that there really was a development need that would follow him and impede his career no matter where he went.

The boss agreed to assign him a coach to work on the issue and they used The Conflict Lens™ as a starting point. John chose to analyze a conflict in the plant that had been particularly difficult and involved many of the employees.

The issue was one around scheduling and last minute order changes in the assembly process. Due to the many people involved, John spent a significant amount of time talking to everyone he could about what their views and complaints were.

The outcome had been generally positive and a compromise had been found that everyone thought they could live with. When John analyzed his results on The Conflict Lens, he saw that his highest scores were on Seek Support, Affiliate, and Comply.

John and his coach discovered that in his attempt to bring the group to consensus, he was seen as one who would not take a stand and express his own position. His desire to not alienate anyone had led to conflict resolution for the group, but left his boss with the impression that he could not hold his own with the more vocal critics.

As a more effective approach for future situations, he learned to promote his own ideas, while also listening to others.



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