



FirstService
RESIDENTIAL

Managing Challenging Conversations and Conflict Q&A

With



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Questions And Answers:

- 1) How would you handle a board member who constantly asks for the history on an issue? (Example an issue with a contractor and the board member wants 5 years of history) but does not do anything with it. The item on the agenda then gets postponed until the next meeting. Then at the next meeting, they are not prepared to discuss it?

Regarding a board member who consistently asks for history, it's important to recognize that we can't say no to their request, as they do have a right to that information. I would point out the pattern and the delays it can cause in the process and ask all the board members to propose a different way of going about things.

- 2) Do you offer any programs for resident managers to deflect (when council needs to be involved) or resolve, when feasible, conflicts with owners?

Yes, we do have programs for this request. Please contact Cadence for details if interested: <https://cadenceleadership.ca/>

- 3) Is there a way to tell if someone is stonewalling?

Yes, there is a way to tell if someone is stonewalling. Stonewalling typically doesn't involve avoidance, so if people are showing up to meetings and booking calls they aren't stonewalling. However, if people are setting up these meetings and then refusing to engage in a present way or engage at all, that is a sign of stonewalling.

- 4) As condo board directors we don't have an employer, we don't have much support to deal with conflict issues. Both as a boss and an employee in the past there were lots of resources to help and consequences for bad behavior. How do boards deal with these things?

Many kinds of boards will contract outside facilitation, mediation resources or coaching resources to help navigate consistent conflict. A good resource could be a coaching organization who works with both sides to create better working conditions.

- 5) People usually think in four different ways (using Emergenetic concepts) - social (more outgoing, social types), analytical, conceptual, or structural. Within this, some are more assertive than others. How do you recommend having face to face conversations with this in mind to accommodate or identify different communication/thinking styles?

Always lead with asking open ended questions, this approach works across all four styles of thought process. This sets the tone for productive conversations. For most personality types, typical open-ended questions used effectively can create a good conversation. For people who are more assertive, using the question funnel can be a more effective approach. Paraphrasing is an exceptional tool to keep structure in a conversation for any personality type, although it isn't always necessary.

- 6) What to do when there is a sub-group in the organization that has banded together? They talk a lot about what they are unhappy about and seem to find pleasure in figuring out why any proposal/project won't work. Often end up we do nothing because we can't satisfy them. It has been divisive - creating us and them. We can't seem to get anything done. Of course, this creates frustration and then conflict.**

Great question! This would be a considered a group of detractors that have banded together and groups like this are typically influenced and led by one personality within the group. The key is to spend some time with the identified influencer in the group but develop stronger relationships with everyone outside of that person. Invest time in every other member of the group. Battling detractors head on if they have already banded together is ineffective, these are people with a lifetime history of conflict, who are able to maintain conflict long term. Pulling power from the influencer by forging strong relationships with the people around them is the effective strategy.

- 7) What about touching your face, scratching head, etc. I catch myself doing this a lot. Are my hands out of the zone?**

Yes, your hands are out of the zone, but it's okay as long as they don't stray there. For most people, being in front of an audience magnifies their natural behaviors and gestures. These behaviors aren't because someone is dealing with nerves, these are associated with creative thinking. These gestures are a part of your momentum when using creative thinking to problem solve. If you catch yourself doing these things, you are most likely working through a problem using the creative part of your brain. However, audiences can't distinguish between these gestures being part of your creative process and nervousness. These movements aren't a big deal, just make sure they aren't excessively frequent.

- 8) In many of our board meetings, the same people dominate the time, and it is difficult to be heard. Any suggestions for managing this?**

Yes. Bring up your concerns about the dynamic to the group. Discuss different facilitation styles that give everyone a voice. If needed, contract a trained facilitator who can teach the group how to effectively hold a meeting.

- 9) What type of gestures should never be used during conversations with customers?**

Gestures that should never be used during conversations with customers:

- Gestures underneath the table
- Rapid or repeated hand gestures
- Unnecessary contact with other people
- Overt physical closeness
- Spinning and clicking of pen
- Only put what you need for the meeting on the table, remember that everything you put on the table is a barrier between you and the client.

10) Is it appropriate to give a thumb up during the zoom meeting?

Yes!

11) Zone 1 and Zone 2 - can it be used with body language as well?

Zone 1 and 2 refer only to facial gestures. However, the rest of your physical gestures and posture should support your face in Zone 1 and 2. Harmony and consistency should exist between your body and face, tone of voice and content.

12) What is the importance of a mediator in case both parties disagree? But both parties want to solve the conflict?

A mediator is invaluable. It's not abnormal for people to get stuck while trying to come up with a solution where they both care about the outcome but are on different sides. A skilled mediator can be the difference of working through a tricky situation.

13) When dealing with a very argumentative or angry individual, when is a good time to walk away and then reschedule?

If an effective flow in conversation can't be achieved within 10-15 minutes, end the conversation. It's unlikely it's going to become productive.

14) Everyone has a unique mindset and paradigms, what approach is best to resolve a challenging conversation to a resolution?

Lead with open ended questions, summarize and paraphrase throughout the conversation. This will maintain momentum and create structure which leads to constructive outcomes. For complex problems, don't solve them all at once. Look at key issues, solve 1 or 2 then set follow up meetings.

For more information please visit:
<https://cadenceleadership.ca/>