

Resolving **Conflict**

eREPORT



By **Dr. Tony Alessandra**

© 2006 Dr. Tony Alessandra, All Rights Reserved in All Media

Resolving Conflict

What concerns me is not the way things are, but rather the way people think things are.

-- Epictetus

Most of us long to have conflict-free relationships in our working environment and in our personal lives. But, unless we are transported to some Orwellian future world where all of our minds and emotions work in perfect unison, freedom from conflict will never happen. And, it would be a mistake to attempt to completely erase disagreement from our lives.

People naturally disagree about what to do and how and when to do it. That interaction of ideas and opinions sparks new ideas and leads to better solutions and action plans. However, when differences of opinion are accompanied by too much emotional commitment to one point versus another, the resulting conflict can be damaging. When we become emotionally locked into one idea and believe that it is the only one that can meet our needs and objectives, we enter into conflict with only two options: fight or flight.

This eReport will help you identify the sources of conflict and understand how to encourage healthy disagreement without spiraling down into a negative conflict. It will also give you tools that will help you break out of a conflict routine once it has begun.

The Nature of Conflict

Conflict arises from the clash of perceptions, goals, or values in an arena where people care about the outcome. You see it your way, he sees it his way, and tension ignites. Conflict

can cause a complete breakdown of a relationship if one person thinks that his only options are to continue the conflict or give up a valued objective.

Conflict can also lead to productive growth if it is properly managed and resolved. The process of recognizing and working through a conflict can only happen in an environment of open communication. The old saying: *What doesn't kill us, makes us stronger* is appropriate for conflict. Conflict left under the surface festers and can be lethal. When it is recognized and brought out into the open, its resolution can bring people closer together as they grow in their understanding of each other. Communication is the key element affecting conflict: both its cause and remedy. Open communication is the means by which disagreement can be prevented, managed or resolved. The lack of open communication can drive conflict underground and create a downward spiral of misunderstanding and hostility.

For more on this, please see [Street Smarts - 75-page PDF eBook](#).

Organizations depend on a group of people working together to achieve a common purpose. This results in a built-in breeding ground for conflict as people disagree on what the common purpose is, how to achieve it, as well as how to achieve their individual goals within the organization. Competition for limited resources, both internally and externally, feeds the conflict. The ability to manage the conflicting goals and methods within a limited-resource environment is critical. Unresolved or unmanaged conflict can quickly escalate and halt organizational progress as people worry more about the conflict than the organization's goals.

By definition, conflict occurs when two or more people have a strong disagreement that is driven by a clash of goals, per-

ceptions, and/or values. The three basic components of conflict are:

1. Two or more persons are involved.
2. There is a **perceived** incompatibility between ideas, actions, beliefs or goals.
3. The opposing sides see their way as the only way to achieve their goals or objectives.

This eReport will give you a simple model that will help you resolve conflict but also help you to understand the causes of conflict. A great deal of conflict can be avoided by wise handling of change in these areas. Here are some of the common sources of conflict within organizations:

- **Responsibility levels:** if levels of responsibilities are fuzzy, there will be numerous occasions for conflict to arise over decisions made or actions taken in the disputed territory. For instance if the sales department designs and produces a product-description brochure, the marketing department may take offence because brochures are their responsibility. Clear job descriptions and organization charts can help prevent these disputes but in a rapidly changing organization, responsibility issues will be a frequent source of conflict.

For help with writing, see Writing Skills - 24-page PDF eReport.

- **Limited resources:** almost all organizations lack the resources to achieve all the objectives of each person within the organization. Manufacturing wants to replace some obsolete equipment while finance wants a new computer for the accounting system and marketing wants to increase advertising. The typical organizational division along functional lines makes it easy to lose sight of the overall organization goals as each department tries to maximize its own results.
- **Conflict of interest:** since all individual goals cannot be achieved, goals and objectives have to be ranked and some may have to be eliminated. Individuals may fight for their personal goals and lose sight of the organizational goals. The salesperson whose compensation is based on sales may bend credit requirements while

the collections department would forego sales in order to reduce bad debt. Each individual in an organization needs to know how his own goals and efforts fit within the organization's goals and efforts.

- **Communication barriers:** communication barriers exist at the interpersonal and organizational level and include: differing perceptions, language, ineffective listening, "style" differences, and power and status barriers. Overcoming communication barriers requires extensive opportunity for interaction and an organizational commitment to training. The computer systems operator who never has a chance to talk to one of the salespeople will probably never understand their goals, needs and frustrations. Only by training people at every level of the organization in effective communication techniques can the organization hope to break down communication barriers.

For more on breaking communication barriers, check out Alessandra on Nonverbal Communication - MP3.

- **Interdependency:** Increasingly, our ability to accomplish our goals and objectives depends on the cooperation and assistance of others. This interdependency increases the opportunity for conflict. Accounting needs information from the sales department in order to complete financial reports; sales needs product information from manufacturing in order to make sales; manufacturing needs the right parts from purchasing; marketing needs information from customer service for a new advertising campaign. Organizations are an inter-related web of departments, teams and individuals. No one in an organization can do his job without the input of someone else. When that someone else is late, has a different view of priorities, misunderstands directions, or is playing politics, conflicts are created.

- **Increased interaction:** The more people interact, the more potential there is for conflict. The trend toward increasing levels of participation and teamwork indicates a higher level of conflict and a greater need for conflict resolution skills. While interaction helps eliminate conflict as we begin to have a better understanding of the other person's needs and priorities, it also increases conflict as

we discover new areas of differences. In the old style organization, the assembly person was isolated and had little conflict with other departments. Now he is on a special project team and he starts to understand certain points of view but he also finds new areas of conflicts that he never knew existed. Increased interaction creates a need for special training in communication and conflict resolution.

For more on this, please see [Listening Attentively - 14-page PDF e-Report](#).

- **Competition:** when there is competition for rewards such as promotions, recognition, contest prizes, etc., conflict is a natural outcome. If only one person can become the new supervisor of the department and more than one person wants the position, the stage is set for conflict. If the organization rewards the person who breaks all barriers to achieve a particular reward, interpersonal conflict increases. It is almost impossible to emphasize individual goals and rewards without diminishing the organization's goals. Achieving the organization's goals requires people to work together. Setting up competitions to stimulate individual achievement can be self-defeating for the organization. For example, if an organization sets challenging assembly quotas and rewards the fastest worker with a special bonus, there is no incentive for anyone to stop and look at quality or for a better way to do the process. If salespeople are rewarded only on sales volume, how interested will they be in the profitability of those sales?

There is no way to avoid conflict in today's rapidly changing environment, but conflict can be managed. People can be taught communication and conflict resolution techniques that help them avoid conflict or work through it once it is recognized.

The Four Phases of Conflict

Organizational conflict can occur at several levels: between individuals, between groups and between organizations. While we will focus on interpersonal conflict, the principles and ideas discussed here are also valid for inter-group and inter-organizational conflicts.

Conflict typically proceeds through four stages even if each step is not recognized as such. The phases identified by theorist Louis Pondy are as follows:

- **Phase 1: Latent** - When two or more parties must cooperate with one another in order to achieve a desired objective, there is potential for conflict. Latent conflict is often created whenever change occurs. Examples are a budget cutback, a change in organizational direction, a change in a personal goal or value, a new crisis project added to an already overloaded work force, or an expected occurrence (such as a salary increase) not happening.
- **Phase 2: Perceived** - This is the point when members are becoming more aware of a problem, even if they are not sure where it comes from. Incompatibility is perceived and tension begins.
- **Phase 3: Felt** - The parties begin to focus in on differences of opinion and interests, sharpening perceived conflict. Internal tensions and frustrations begin to crystallize around specific, defined issues and people begin to build emotional commitment to their particular position.
- **Phase 4: Manifest** - The outward display of conflict occurs when the opposing parties plan and follow through with acts to frustrate one another. Conflict is very obvious at this point.

As conflict proceeds through the stages, resolution becomes more difficult. People become more locked into their positions and more convinced that the conflict must be a win or lose situation. The ideal is to recognize conflict early and work for a resolution that is a win for each of the parties.

Knowing how to ask questions well is important to solving conflict — for more on this, check out [The Art of Asking Questions eReport](#).

Strategies for Managing Conflict

Each strategy for managing conflict has its advantages and disadvantages. One strategy might work better for a particular situation than another. Each option varies in regard to concern for self (the degree to which a person tries to protect his own interests) versus concern for others (the degree to which a person wants to satisfy the view of others).

In any case, familiarize yourself with these conflict management options so that you feel comfortable using them or guiding others in their use.

- **Avoidance:** Avoidance is an instinctive, simple response to conflict. By not confronting the problem, neither party is labeled winner or loser. However, avoidance rarely works, because it does nothing to make the conflict go away. The ostrich-approach doesn't resolve the problem and it may actually allow the conflict to escalate to the next stage. Avoidance often takes the form of physical flight, falling asleep or mentally withdrawing. You can recognize avoidance when someone changes the subject, tries to redefine the conflict so that it no longer seems to exist, abruptly leaves the scene of the conflict, or tunes out. If the problem is inconsequential, avoidance can be an appropriate option as with a manager who avoids getting involved with a minor employee dispute.

For more on this topic, check out PeopleSmart - 269-page PDF eBook.

- **Accommodation:** Accommodation happens when someone "gives in" without actually working through the conflict. A supervisor wants an employee to do something a new way. The employee says, "Oh, all right - but I really think it's better my way." The employee has accommodated the supervisor but there is no real resolution.

Although accommodation includes cooperative effort, it still requires sacrifice, turning conflict into a win-lose situation. Because assertiveness is not involved, there is a tendency for the "losing" party to repress its point of

view. At least one of the parties involved plays down its differences while emphasizing common features. This exploitation of cooperative elements is beneficial when the accommodating party feels little personal involvement with the issue, or has little to lose by giving in to the other. Accommodation may also ensure positive future relations. In the case with the supervisor and employee, the supervisor may really appreciate the employee's willingness to try a new way and, if it works, the employee may feel good about the supervisor's abilities and be more willing to accept guidance in the future.

Accommodation provides a quick solution which is, however, often temporary because the base issues are left unresolved. Frequently, the relative power of the parties influences the outcome more than the legitimacy of complaints or the wisdom of each option. Accommodation responds to emotions but does not manage them. In our example, the supervisor didn't convince the employee of the superiority of the new method and he didn't listen to the employee's reasons for wanting to stay with the old method. The conflict might stay at the latent stage but additional pressures could cause it to escalate.

- **Domination:** This win-lose strategy involves a struggle for power and domination over another party. The most powerful party, in some cases the manager, imposes a solution. Domination has its benefits: it resolves conflicts quickly and it is effective when the parties recognize and accept the power relationship.

Unfortunately, this strategy can create resentment among involved parties if overused, because goals may be reached at others' expense. Consistent "losers" might feel that their needs will never be met and begin to withdraw from the conflict altogether. Domination fails to treat the root of the conflict, making it only a temporary solution.

- **Negotiation:** this is a compromising strategy that involves moderate levels of cooperation and assertiveness. Both sides state their positions and try to reach an acceptable compromise. In salary negotiations, every dollar the employee "wins," the company "loses." Most negotiations attempt to minimize losses while maximiz-

ing gains or creating a situation where everyone partially wins and partially loses. This can lead to a situation where no one is completely satisfied. In sensitive negotiations, it is easy for the parties to tip the scale into a more assertive mode and wind up in a stand off.

- **Collaboration:** collaboration requires a high level of cooperation and assertiveness. Rather than just negotiating salary, the employee and the supervisor might discuss at length the employee's goals and objectives and how they fit in with the organization's goals and needs. The process might reveal that the employee needs flex-time more than additional salary or that the employee's long-term goal includes an advanced degree that would require a reduction in work hours. Collaboration takes time and effort, but it addresses the underlying issues of the situation or conflict. This makes collaboration a generally long-lasting and productive conflict resolution strategy. Through face-to-face assertiveness and confrontation, involved parties work through the conflict cooperatively.

Rather than depending on negotiation or compromise, collaboration relies on creative problem solving to identify solutions that will meet the needs of all the parties. Through open communication and identification of the goals and objectives of each of the parties, new avenues of exploration can be identified and often totally unexpected solutions appear.

For more on this, please see 10 Qualities of Charismatic People- CD Version.

Four Basic Components of Collaboration

Obviously, if it is important to you to resolve a conflict positively in a way that enhances the relationships involved, collaboration is far more effective than avoidance or the other strategies of conflict resolution. There are four basic components of collaboration: understanding and respecting the goals and objectives of each of the parties, assertiveness,

creative problem solving and confrontation.

- **Understanding and respecting:** collaboration assumes equality in the standings of the parties. Even if there are differences in the power or status of one or more of the parties, for the purpose of this conflict resolution exercise, the goals and objectives of each person are presented equally. After presenting the goals and objectives, there may be a need to rank and evaluate them logically but it is done with the participation of all of the parties. Each member of the group tries to stay focused on the organization's goals rather than on individual objectives.

- **Assertiveness:** for a collaboration to succeed, each person must feel safe in expressing his ideas and opinions. Each position needs to be presented as powerfully as possible. People often confuse assertiveness with aggression. Aggression is assertiveness without regard for the needs of the other person. Assertiveness says: *Here's my position -- what's yours?* Aggression is: *Here's my position ... take it or leave it.*

- **Creative problem solving:** good creative problem solving skills can help define a solution that results in a win for each person. It is important to focus on the problem rather than on specific solutions. Spend time identifying as many potential solutions as possible before proceeding with evaluation. Avoid dwelling on the history of the problem, which often involves placing blame.

- **Confrontation:** this is a specific communication strategy, a way to change behavior through constructive feedback. During an emotionally charged conflict resolution session, it is often necessary to use confrontation to break through a communication barrier. For example, two co-workers have competing priorities that have created conflict between them. Co-worker #2 consistently is late delivering necessary information to Co-worker #1. Co-worker #1 may decide to confront #2 by telling him the impact his behavior is having on the organization. Confrontation is a useful strategy but it has to be done skillfully or it can escalate the conflict. The next section gives you a model for handling different levels of conflict through confrontation.

For more on this topic, see Alessandra on Platinum Rule MP3.

The Confrontation Continuum

The confrontation process allows you to get at the root causes of the conflict in a productive manner. You are indirectly trying to say, "Let's exchange ideas -- pleasantly and comfortably. I will try to hear you and will take your opinion into account before I state mine. Then I want you to hear my opinions and take them into account. Once we have heard our opinions, we will decide on the best option. This is not a contest for superiority."

There are levels of confrontation -- at the beginning of the continuum; there may be a simple misunderstanding or a sense by one party that the other is not hearing him. At the other end of the continuum, the conflict may be so severe that it is jeopardizing the organization's goals. At the beginning of the continuum, we are trying to achieve understanding and at the other end, we are demanding a change in behavior. As you move along the continuum, there are different confrontation strategies that can be used to resolve the conflict.

For more on this, see *The Platinum Rule - 163-page PDF eBook*.

The following are confrontation strategies that can be used to resolve conflict. They are progressive, so as the conflict moves from being merely a matter of achieving understanding to more need for behavior change, the confrontation can incorporate each of the preceding strategies.

- **Reflection:** in this stage you are demonstrating your sincere desire to understand the person's feelings and needs. You are gathering data and building rapport with the person. By reflecting the feelings you hear the person expressing, you are giving him a chance to correct your impression and to elaborate on your comment. The form of this statement is generally:
"I understand that you feel/think _____ because _____."

Example: *I understand that you feel unappreciated because you are not invited to the weekly staff meetings.*

- **I-statement:** with I-statements you are revealing your feelings, asserting your own needs and objectives in a non-judgmental fashion. You want the other person to understand your feelings and reasons. These statements follow this general form:

"I feel _____ when you _____ because _____."
Example: *I feel angry when you ignore the safety rules because you and others might get hurt.*

- **Diplomatic Disagreement:** in the diplomatic disagreement stage you are trying to achieve understanding in a tactful gentle manner. You want the other person to understand your reasoning and you are trying to understand his. You want the person to know that you value the relationship. The format for this stage includes reflection and an I-statement.

"You feel/think _____."
"I appreciate your position and understand that _____."
"I feel _____ because _____."
Example: *I understand that you think we need a new computer. I appreciate your position and realize that you think it will improve our productivity. I believe we should wait because a new model is about to be released.*

- **Gentle Confrontation:** in gentle confrontation you are actually trying to cause a change in behavior and build the relationship at the same time. You want to suggest the change in a tactful, somewhat tentative fashion. The format includes reflection, an indication that the other person is valued, an I-statement and an indication of consequences.

"You feel/think _____."
"I appreciate your position and understand that _____."
"I feel _____ because _____."
"If this continues it will cause _____."
Example: *You think the accounting department should pay our vendors immediately. I appreciate your position and understand that it helps you negotiate better prices. I feel frustrated, however, because I am trying to*

manage our cash flow as well as our profits. If you continue to pressure the accounting department, it will make it much more difficult for me to manage the cash flow and investments. That could result in vendors going unpaid and a reduction in profits that could impact our profit sharing.

- **Firm Confrontation:** in the firm confrontation you are trying to clear up disagreements and cause a definite change in behavior. The change in behavior is your primary objective. The added statement is in the format: “I would appreciate it in the future if you would ____.”

Example: Same as Gentle Confrontation above, plus --

In the future I would appreciate it if you would come to me for any special early payment requests.

For more on this, please see Flexibility - 25-page PDF e-Report.

Throughout the entire confrontation process, there are some basic guidelines that will help make the process more productive:

- **Timing:** Is the person ready to listen? If you’re trying to tell someone why showing up late for work every day isn’t in his best interests, doing it right after he checks in, probably isn’t a good time. He knows he’s late and he knows you know he’s late. He’s probably feeling defensive. Wait until you have something positive to say about his performance. Then you can tell him how his tardiness is affecting the overall perception of his commitment and performance.
- **Focus on current specifics:** Talk about behavior that is happening today, not something that happened last week or last month.
- **State your feelings:** When you tell someone how you feel, you are keeping the conversation open rather than focusing it only on the other person. “When you come to work late, I feel really angry because the rest of us have to wait for you before we can start on the project.”

Confrontation is a powerful conflict resolution strategy that requires a great deal of skill and practice. Most of us are rel-

atively unfamiliar with the process and it may take training and role-play practice before everyone in the organization acquires the skills necessary to use the individual strategies included on the confrontation continuum. However, once everyone in the organization learns to be more sensitive to timing, to focus on current specific behaviors and to state their own feelings about the behaviors, a large percentage of conflicts can be resolved more productively.

It’s also important to remember that people only change when it is in their best interest to do so. You cannot make another person change, no matter how persuasive your argument, but you can increase his motivation to do so by appealing to his self-interest.

If you are irritated by a co-worker’s behavior, for instance, focus less on how he affects you and more on how your reaction affects him. Tell John that you are less motivated to work with him on his project because of the way his put-downs make you feel. Let John look at himself in the mirror, so to speak, so he can consider what his behavior is costing himself.

In essence, you are saying: “John when you put me down, it makes me angry and I don’t feel like working with you on your project.” You are telling him how his behavior makes you feel and what that behavior costs him.

For more on relating with others, check out Personality Chemistry: Preventing Conflict at Work – eReport.

Often people are afraid to be confrontational and assertive because they are unsure of the reaction they will get. Most of us try to avoid confrontations that might create anger, defensiveness, or rejection. You can avoid this reaction and still be assertive, through the sensitivity with which you express your concerns. The confrontation continuum gives you a series of strategies to help you assert yourself in a way that reduces conflict rather than accelerating it.

For instance, only someone completely ignorant of the conflict resolution strategies we’ve discussed would accuse another person based on personality (i.e. “You are lazy, ignorant and mean!”) This is labeling and it is hazardous

not only because it can be wrong but also because it puts the other person on the defensive. Most of us do not have the expertise to know or understand another's intentions. When we attack a perceived attribute of a personality, we are hitting the core of that person. A very normal response is to reacting defensively or to deny the accusation. The conflict resolution guidelines and the confrontation continuum strategies help us achieve understanding or a change in behavior without destroying the other person's morale.

For more on this topic, please see How to Gain Power and Influence with People - MP3s.

Strategies to Avoid

Sometimes it's not enough to know what we should do. We need to be able to recognize what we shouldn't do. In a conflict situation, emotions may be extremely sensitive and we may offend without intending to. Here are some strategies that generally escalate a conflict rather than resolving it:

- **Minimization:** sometimes we do not recognize the seriousness of an action or perception and we make light of it through humor or sarcasm. When this happens the other person feels unvalued or belittled. Often the person takes your minimization as a personal attack. When someone brings a problem to our attention, the first thing we need to do is acknowledge it. Which of the following responses is more effective?

Situation: Engineer: I'm afraid the o-ring might fail at low temperatures.

Manager 1: That's not your problem. Worry about how we're going to meet our next deadline.

Manager 2: I appreciate your concern, what makes you think that?

- **Blame:** while blame can often be attached to the last person who touched a situation, most problems are too complex to be totally caused by one person or one factor. The focus should be on preventing future problems rather than placing blame.

Situation: Salesperson: We didn't get the Smith account.

Manager 1: What did you do wrong?

Manager 2: What could we have done better?

- **Unloading:** when people have worked together for a long time, there are often numerous small grievances that have gone unmentioned. When a larger problem sparks a conflict, the temptation to unload that past baggage is often overwhelming. While it might make the person unloading feel better, this is not a productive conflict resolution strategy. The other person might legitimately complain that you should have brought those problems up when they occurred.

Situation: Employee arrives at work late.

Manager 1: Not only are you late but last week there was an addition error in the report you submitted and you never have turned in the Murphy proposal that was due over a month ago.

Manager 2: Is everything ok? I know you were only a few minutes late but you normally seem so committed and recently you've seemed to be distracted. Is there anything I can do?

- **Low Blows:** as we work with people, we begin to understand their sensitivities. Hitting one of those emotionally touchy areas can escalate a conflict out of control and make it very difficult to regain the lost ground.

Situation: Employee misses a meeting.

Co-worker 1: No wonder you were fired from your last job. Obviously you're incapable of managing your time.

Co-worker 2: I really needed your support in this morning's meeting. You know I took a time management course that really seemed to help me get organized. Maybe you should take it next time it's offered.

- **Manipulation:** using personal charm or approval to get someone to do something you want done without regard to the other person's needs or objectives. This also includes withholding approval or rewards in order to get the desired action.

Situation: Manager wants an employee to work overtime.

Manager 1: If you'll work overtime tonight, I'll remember it when review time comes up.

Manager 2: I'm sorry to ask at the last minute, but we have a crisis with the ABC project. If we don't get it finished tonight, the company may lose the whole project. Could you possibly work tonight?

- **Force:** this is the "I don't care what you want, do it my way, now!" approach. If all you want is to get an immediate action, it works. And, if it's only used on extremely rare occasions, it's an effective way to get something done immediately. But, it's demoralizing to the other person because it does not acknowledge their worth or their ideas.

Situation: Manager wants to change the work schedule.

Manager 1: From now on our hours are 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Manager 2: Studies show that the prime hours for our customers are 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. We need to develop a system that will allow us to give the best possible service to our customers during those hours. Do you have any suggestions?

For more on this, please see Becoming More Persuasive - 13-page PDF e-Report.

Conflict Resolution Behaviors

There are five basic behaviors that will help you resolve conflict in almost any situation you encounter. They will allow you to benefit from positive disagreement without having those disagreements escalate into out-of-control personality conflicts that damage the morale and productivity of the organization. These basics are:

- **Openness:** state your feelings and thoughts openly, directly, and honestly without trying to hide or disguise the real object of your disagreement. Don't attribute negative statements about the other person to unknown others. Use I-statements and talk about how you feel and what you want. Focus on current specifics and on identifying the problem.

- **Empathy:** listen with empathy. Try to understand and feel what the other person is feeling and to see the situation from her point of view. Demonstrate your understanding and validate the other person's feelings. Comments such as *I appreciate how you feel ... I understand your feelings ... I'm sorry I made you feel that way ...* let the other person know that you are sincere in understanding her views.

- **Supportiveness:** describe the behaviors you have difficulty with rather than evaluating them. Express your concern for and support of the other person. Let him know you want to find a solution that benefits both of you. State your position tentatively with a willingness to change your opinion if appropriate reasons are given. Be willing to support the other person's position if it makes sense to do so.

- **Positiveness:** try to identify areas of agreements and emphasize those. Look at the conflict as a way to better understand the entire situation and to possibly find a new and better solution. Be positive about the other person and your relationship. Express your commitment to finding a resolution that works for everyone.

- **Equality:** treat the other person and his ideas and opinions as equal. Give the person the time and space to completely express his ideas. Evaluate all ideas and positions logically and without regard to ownership.

Conflicts offer many benefits if we can resolve them productively. Healthy disagreement can have a positive, generating effect. As people are forced to work through a problem to its solution, they get a chance to better understand the point of view of others. Successful resolution of small conflicts can diffuse the possibility of more serious conflicts and result in better working relationships.

The process of exploring problems collaboratively can lead us to acquire more information, new perceptions, and new ideas. Issues can be clarified. Sometimes it's only through the conflict resolution process that organizations identify and highlight key issues that were rumbling under the sur-

face and needed a healthy debate to become apparent. How well we manage conflict resolution can be a critical skill in effective communications.

*To explore this topic further, order New Relationship Strategies
-- CD version.*



Tony Alessandra, PhD, CSP, CPAE

Building Customers, Relationships, and the Bottom Line

Dr. Tony Alessandra helps companies build customers, relationships, and the bottom line. Companies learn how to achieve market dominance through specific strategies designed to out market, outsell, and out service the competition.

Dr. Alessandra has a street-wise, college-smart perspective on business, having fought his way out of NYC to eventually realize success as a graduate professor of marketing, an entrepreneur, a business author, and a keynote speaker. He earned his MBA from the University of Connecticut and his PhD in marketing from Georgia State University.

Dr. Alessandra is president of **Online Assessments** (www.OnlineAC.com), a company that offers online assessments and tests; co-founder of **MentorU.com**, an online e-Learning company; and Chairman of the Board of **BrainX**, a company that offers online digital accelerated learning programs.

Dr. Alessandra is a widely published author with 14 books translated into 17 foreign languages, including **Charisma** (Warner Books, 1998); **The Platinum Rule** (Warner Books, 1996); **Collaborative Selling** (John Wiley & Sons, 1993); and **Communicating at Work** (Fireside/Simon & Schuster, 1993). He is featured in over 50 audio/video programs and films, including **Relationship Strategies** (American Media); **The Dynamics of Effective Listening** (Nightingale-Conant); and **Non-Manipulative Selling** (Walt Disney). He is also the originator of the internationally-recognized behavioral style assessment tool **The Platinum Rule™** (www.PlatinumRule.com).

Recognized by *Meetings & Conventions Magazine* as “one of America’s most electrifying speakers,” Dr. Alessandra was inducted into the Speakers Hall of Fame in 1985. He is also a member of the Speakers Roundtable, a group of 20 of the world’s top professional speakers. Tony’s polished style, powerful message, and proven ability as a consummate business strategist consistently earns rave reviews.

To learn more about Dr. Alessandra and his services, visit www.Alessandra.com.