

present it first in terms of the effect on and use to the group. The old self-interest theme . . . But let me say that in the evolution of a group there comes a time where self-interest becomes equated with group interest. It can still break down by section or division, though. There's always a hook that differentiates your and my self-interest.

To start a new subject and get everyone involved, you might poll the group verbally at the beginning of a discussion, going around the table to hear everyone's thoughts on that specific issue (sometimes referred to as the Delphi technique). This can focus the ensuing discussion: find out what the group really thinks so far; surface the main objections or misconceptions. It's a good ice-breaker, forcibly making *everyone* a participant, even for a little while.

Handling Egos and Conflict

Self-control is the key here. Don't blow up at anyone at a meeting. Rather, use your energies to recognize why something negative is happening. Ask yourself: "What is he really saying?" "What does she really want or need right now?" If you focus on the inner agenda, too, in order to understand the outward manifestation, you can usually handle any situation. People universally need recognition and stroking of one sort or another, especially before their peers and by their boss. Before or while you deliver any bitter pill, give an antidote.

In one-on-one confrontations between two members, use:

"You know, I don't think this discussion is helpful (constructive, relevant) in getting us to our goal, which you'll remember was to decide X. Let's focus a little more tightly here."

Personal Skills for Meeting Participants

You want to make useful, commendable contributions and to gain the respect and esteem of your fellow workers by what they see and hear you do at a meeting. But you also very much want to be noticed by the boss and key others.

You aren't normally visible in your work. This is your chance.

Be Prepared

Know who'll be at the meeting, if at all possible. Try to anticipate their point of view and what they'll probably say. Do all the research suggested in the boss's memo about the meeting, plus anything else you can glean from others. Try to understand the ramifications to your