



Confrontation Skills

A Valuable Tool for Project Teams

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Agenda

- Confrontations
 - What they are
 - Why they matter
- Handling Confrontations
 - Before, during, after
 - Do's and Don'ts
- Confrontations in Project Management



Confrontations

- Definitions
- Behavior
- A skill worth mastering

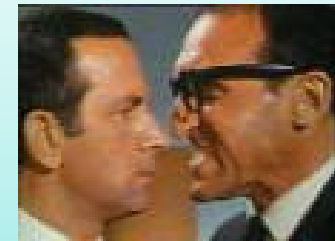




Confront:

Webster:

1. To come face-to-face with; stand in front of;
2. To face with hostility; oppose defiantly
3. To bring close together for comparison or examination



Latin: **com-**: together; **frons**: forehead



~~Should people who:~~

- Make Inappropriate Jokes or Remarks
- Break Company Rules
- Never Deliver on Time
- Never Call Back
- Never Have Time
- Never Return Things
- Always Complain
- Always Interrupt
- Display Unfair Favoritism
- Constantly Nag
- Never Clean Up
- Take Over the Place
- Continually Offer Uninvited Opinions

be confronted?

how?



Reasons for Not Confronting

- Fear of rejection
- Fear of consequences
- Fear of hurting feelings
- Fear of losing control
- Unsure of rights



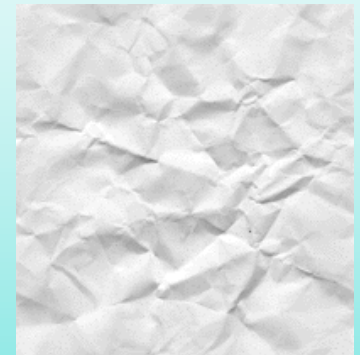
Not Confronting Leads to:

- Constant complaining
 - *To the wrong people!*
- Avoidance of situations
 - *Cross the street?*
 - *Leave town?*
- Denial
 - *No problem, it's OK.*
 - *Ulcers+*



Unskilled Confronting Leads to:

- Uncontrolled eruptions
- Emotional wounds
- False sense of success
- Agonizing failure





Confrontational Behavior

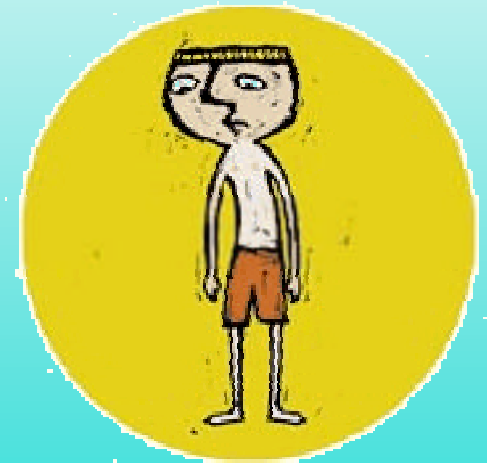
- **Aggressive**
 - *Individual’s rights take precedent over another’s*
 - *The bully, the shouter, loud body language*
 - *“I really told him off!”*





Confrontational Behavior

- **Non-assertive**
 - *Individual does not stand up for rights*
 - *The wimp, the self-effacer, apologetic*
 - *“Not really important”*





Confrontational Behavior

- **Assertive**
 - *Individual communicates needs, desires and expectations while respecting other's rights.*
 - *Fair, respectful, flexible*



Confrontation:

- A face-to-face discussion
- Between two parties
- With a desired outcome of change in the behavior of the confronted party





Successful Confrontation:

- A face-to-face accountability discussion
- Between two parties
- Resulting in:
 - A resolution to the problem and
 - An improved relationship between the parties



A Skill Worth Mastering

- **Unskilled:**
 - Bullies, Wimps and Big Mouths
 - Broken relationships
 - Ineffective
- **Skilled:**
 - Diplomats, Leaders, Winners,
 - Stronger relationships
 - Effective



Confrontation Strategy

- Before: *Introspection*
- During: *Respect*
- After: *Action*



Before Confronting: Look Inwards

- **Define the issue**
 - What is upsetting you?
 - What are your expectations?
 - Find the real problem / root cause
 - What are the consequences of the problem?
 - Think Content, Pattern, Relationship (CPR¹)
 - What do you want? Why?
 - What needs to change? Why? How?
 - Be careful about judging intentions

¹Crucial Confrontations



Before Confronting: Look Inwards

Fundamental attribution error

- Tendency to:
 - over-emphasize personality-based explanations for behaviors observed in others (***dispositional***)
 - under-emphasize the role and power of social and environmental influences (***situational***)



Before Confronting: Look Inwards

Fundamental attribution error

- What a person does is based more on what "kind" of person he is, rather than the social and environmental forces at work on that person.
- Far less likely to occur when people evaluate their own behavior.



Before Confronting: Look Inwards

- **Decide if it's worth it**
 - Risks:
 - Speaking when you shouldn't
 - Being silent when you shouldn't
 - Broken promises / Unfulfilled expectations
 - Offenses to the greater good
 - Are you acting out your frustrations instead of confronting?
 - Let your conscience speak / listen to it
 - Confront the feeling of helplessness



Before Confronting: Look Inwards

- **Prepare**
 - Gather the facts
 - Don't let emotions cloud the issue
 - Make no assumptions / draw no conclusions
 - Focus on the ***problem***, not the ***person***
 - “*Hate the sin, love the sinner*”
 - Try to know / understand the other person
 - Motivations
 - Constraints
 - Scripting



While Confronting: Respect

- **Safety First**
 - Appropriate time and place
 - One-on-one
 - Be calm and respectful
 - Do not threaten, do not attack
 - Establish mutual purpose
 - Watch your body languageCreate / maintain a safe climate





While Confronting: Respect

- **Present the problem**
 - Describe it objectively, “just the facts”
 - Be clear and firm, to the point
 - No “hints”, no games
 - Do not be judgmental
 - “*I*” instead of “*You*”; “*and*” instead of “*but*”
 - Use your communication skills
 - Listen, listen, listen
 - Eye contact
 - Body language
 - Confirm understanding



While Confronting: Respect

- **Motivate to Change**
 - Why change? What is there to gain?
 - Focus on long-term benefits
 - Link to core values
 - Explore natural consequences
 - Do not coerce
 - Do not threaten
 - If you must bribe, make it long-lasting
 - Do not manipulate
 - Discipline as last resort



While Confronting: Respect

- **Help to Change**
 - Able to change? Are there obstacles?
 - Inability can be tough to recognize / admit
 - Permission to explore root causes
 - Is something needed? (tools, training,...)
 - Invite and be open to suggestions
 - What influence do others have?
 - Maintain safe climate / no fear



While Confronting: Respect

- **Focused and Flexible**
 - Don't get sidetracked
 - One problem at a time
 - Note new problems / control priorities
 - Control / dissipate emotions
 - Focus on resolution / action plan
 - Ask for cooperation
 - Confirm understanding
 - Be prepared to postpone

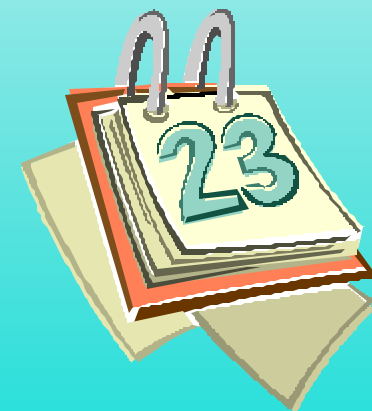




After Confronting: Action

- **Agreement**
 - Who does what
 - By when
 - Next checkpoint

- **Follow up**
 - As agreed





Confrontations in PM

- Why
 - Care enough to confront
 - Draw out excellence from team
- When
 - Regularly
- How
 - Define expectations
 - Examine and compare
 - Celebrate success

Accountability with Less Conflict



Team Operating Agreement (TOA)

- **Communication**
 - E-mail, voice mail, conference calls
 - Progress reporting
- **Decision making**
 - Consensus rules, minutes
- **Meetings**
 - Agendas, minutes, files
- **Courtesies**
 - Cell phones, sidebars





References and Further Reading

- **Crucial Confrontations**; Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler; McGraw-Hill
- **The Art of Constructive Confrontation**; John Hoover, Roger P. DiSilvestro; John Wiley & Sons
- **The Power of Positive Confrontation**; Barbara Pachter; Marlowe and Company
- **Handling Verbal Confrontation**, Robert V. Gerard, PhD.; Oughten House Foundation

