

Turning Conflict into Collaboration

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Conflict Solving Styles

There are 5 basic styles and each is appropriate in different situations:

- Dictate (my way)
- Ignore (no way)
- Accommodate (your way)
- Settle (way we can both live with)
- Collaborate (our way)

Conflict Solving Styles

Using one style for all situations will create conflict (even if the style you use is collaboration.)

Collaboration

Collaboration is the art of working together for good solutions and good relationships.

Collaboration

Every action a person takes is about them trying to get their (conscious and unconscious) needs met in the best way they know how. When the way they choose threatens someone else's needs, there can be conflict. If we can figure out what the needs are, we can identify different ways to get them met that works for everyone.

Key Learnings

Some key learnings stand out from my three decades of facilitating conflict and collaboration:

Key Learnings

- 1 Good relationships equal good solutions.
 - The more time you spend building and maintaining good relationships, the easier it becomes to identify solutions that satisfy everyone. It is much easier to work through conflict or differences in opinion about solutions when there is trust that each party is invested in finding solutions that work for all.

Key Learnings

2 There is only one reason conflict arises: needs aren't being met or are perceived to be threatened.

- Identifying those need for each stakeholder is the key skill in collaboration.

Key Learnings

We are taught to find solutions, and often rewarded for finding them quickly. That can sometimes make conflict difficult to solve because if the solution we offer doesn't meet, or threatens, the needs of the others involved, there will be resistance. And if everyone stays stuck on their preferred solution (their position), we have conflict.

Key Learnings

Very often the needs that aren't being met are connected to relationship and a lack of trust.

Sometimes, if those relationship needs are addressed and trust is restored, the solutions that were rejected earlier may become acceptable.

Key Learnings

Getting clear on the needs before we look for solutions (WHY before HOW) is the key to shifting from conflict to collaboration.

Key Learnings

When we are clear what the needs of the stakeholders are, only then can we define the problem to solve, which will usually make finding solutions easier. If we don't know what the needs are, not only are we unable to clearly define the problem, the solutions we suggest are more likely to be met with resistance (and we may not understand why!)

Key Learnings

Every single problem you will ever need to solve comes down to this question:

- How can we meet the needs of those involved (including ourselves)?

Framing the problem this way sets us up for successful collaboration.

Moving from Positions to Needs

People in conflict typically focus on their positions - what they think will solve or 'fix' the problem. It is their preferred solution ("I don't want to meet on Saturday.") It can also be a strongly held belief ("He will never change.") This focus on positions limits outcomes and sets us up for win-lose results.

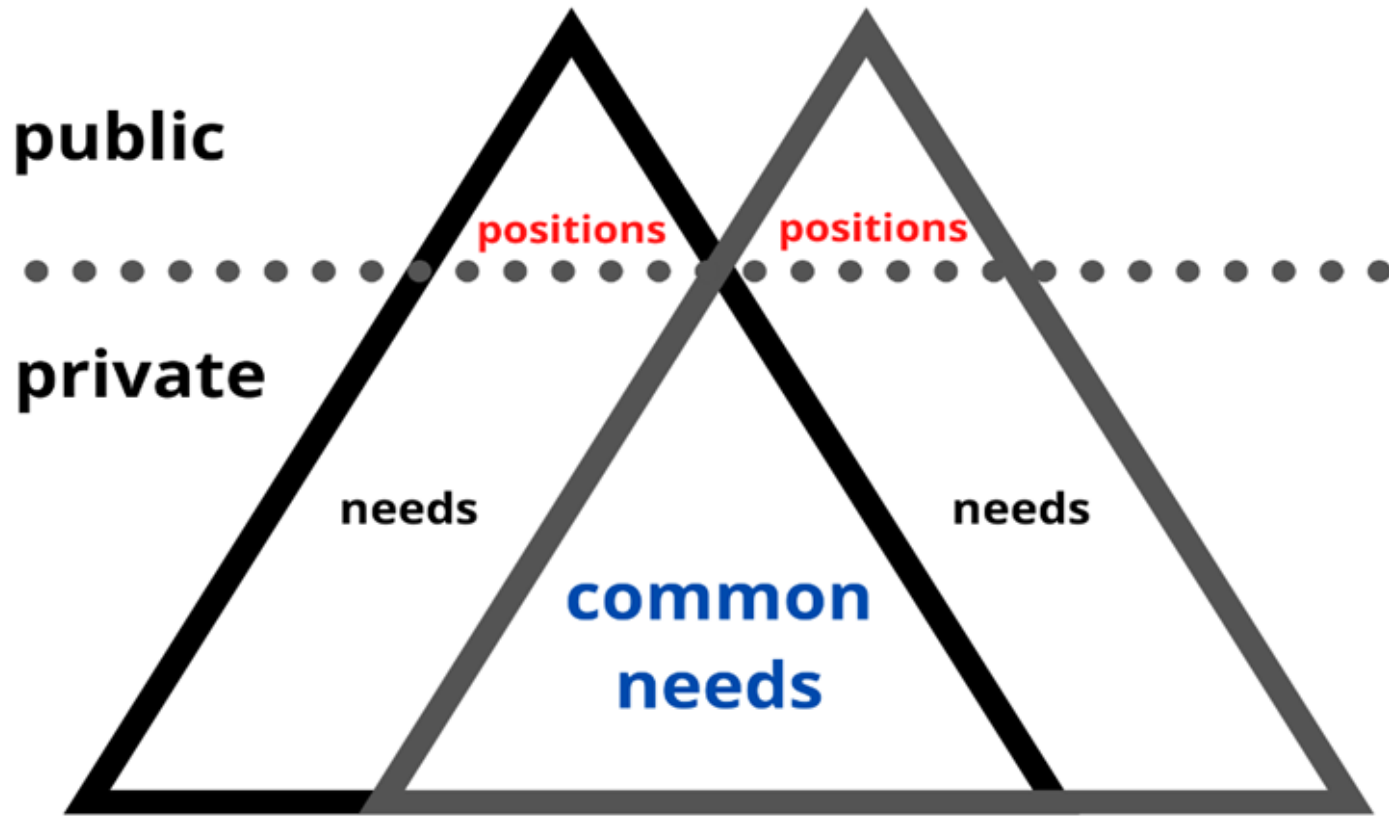
Moving from Positions to Needs

Needs are the hopes, values and interests underneath the positions – they are what motivates someone to take a particular position (remember earlier I said every action we take is about trying to get our needs met?). Needs are the most basic answers to the questions “why does that work for you?”, “what do you like about that idea?”.

Moving from Positions to Needs

Focusing on needs will open up a variety of options which can result in win/win outcomes, since the more options you can generate, the more likely it is that solutions can be found that works for everyone.

Positions/Needs Diagram



Examples

Position: I won't work with him again.

Needs: respectful work relationship, teamwork, fairness in decision making

Position: That's not my job.

Needs: using my time efficiently, manageable workload, clear expectations

Three ways to identify needs:

- Asking needs-exploring questions (WHY questions)
 - What concerns you about the situation?
 - What do you like about that solution?
 - What worries you about that idea?
 - What's important to you about doing it that way?

Three ways to identify needs:

- Naming needs in the “hoped-for-future”
 - Make it forward-looking
 - Use positive language
 - Example: instead of “you felt as though the communication was disrespectful”, you can help people shift to the hoped-for-future with “you want to ensure effective and respectful communication”

Three ways to identify needs:

- Using Collaboration in a Box cards
 - The cards were designed to be used in interpersonal workplace situations to make it simple to identify and articulate needs
 - They represent 100% of the needs I heard mediating workplace conflicts over 25 years

Fictional Case Study

- In small groups at your tables:
 - Read the case study
 - Pose WHY questions and use the Collaboration in a Box cards to identify and name the needs of each of the stakeholders

Basic Collaborative Process

WHY before HOW

- In your fictional case study, you've identified the *WHY* – the next step would be to find solutions that meet those needs (the *HOW*)

Three Steps for Collaboration

1. Prepare
2. Share Perspectives & Identify Needs
3. Find Solutions

Ideas for Next Steps

Before a difficult conversation, ask yourself “why” questions to identify your needs, including which are and are not being met. Prepare and then ask “why” questions for the other person to get at the needs underneath their positions. When you meet, ask about their needs, share yours and then brainstorm together solutions that meet the needs of you both.

Ideas for Next Steps

When you feel a negative emotion, remember there is only one reason conflict/negative emotions arises – needs aren't being met or are being threatened. Ask yourself “why” questions to determine what needs of yours aren't being met. Be open to any solutions that fully meet your needs, and if your preferred solution isn't possible, think of alternate ways to do that.

Ideas for Next Steps

Ensuring early clarity regarding expectations can help to prevent conflict – use the same process of **WHY** before **HOW** to create agreements about how you want to work, communicate and problem solve together before conflict arises. You could do this with staff, council and other partners you work with.

Typical Conflicts

- What are some typical conflicts that arise in your role as a municipal leader?

Wrap Up

- What are your Questions? Comments? Take-aways?

Round Table Discussion:

- choose a typical conflicts you identified on page 4 (or one raised by the panel)
- use the WHY before HOW process and:
 - 1) identify the key stakeholders and the positions they are taking
 - 2) ask “why” questions to identify the needs under positions each stakeholder is taking (including your own)
 - 3) brainstorm steps to meet the needs of all.