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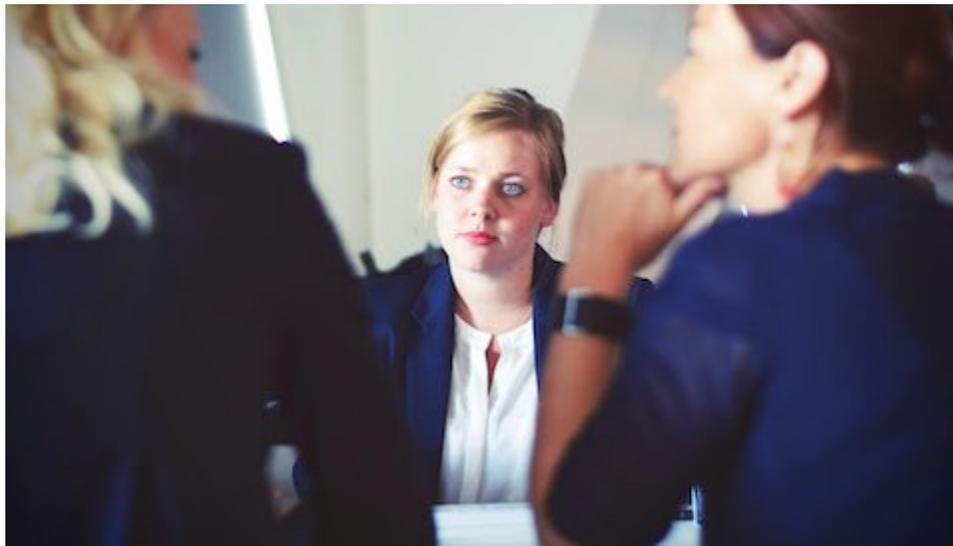


# Productive Leaders

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## 10 Tips for Resolving Conflict at Work, in Associations, and with Volunteer Organizations



We believe most people want to show up and do a great job, both in the workplace and in their community organizations. Sometimes, despite our best intentions, conflict happens. Few people enjoy conflict. As a leader of a team in any capacity, understanding how to solve problems and how to resolve conflict is an essential skill.

1. **Care enough to solve the problem.** That means getting involved, understanding the issue from all sides, and looking for common ground. It also means making sure that people tell you when there is a problem. You cannot solve problems if you don't know they exist.
2. **Lean into conflict.** Understand that personality differences and disagreements generally do not get better on their own. Yes, delving into the reasons for the conflict is uncomfortable. Yes, it is discouraging to learn that adults lie, manipulate, and use resources for personal gain. Yes, it is easier to ignore the problem, but that usually means that the issue will get worse. It most certainly will not improve on its own.
3. **Have a clear and compelling vision of where you want to go.** Your team needs to understand your vision of the future. They need to understand where you want to take the organization so they can be part of the solution. They need to be excited about the vision and their part in the success.
4. **Review expectations of roles and responsibilities early.** This is especially important for new hires or with volunteers. Many associations are 100% volunteers. Volunteers need to understand that this is a commitment, and there are tasks that have to be accomplished in their roles.

5. **Create a system of accountability and communication that works for everyone.** People work to deadlines, so give them some. Map out what needs to happen WITH DUE DATES! Put those deadlines on your calendar, and help people be successful by sending out reminders when important milestones are due.
6. **Over-communicate to the team.** Communicate more than you think is necessary. People work better with clear and frequent communication. When people realize that everyone else is pulling their share, they don't want to be the weak link, so they increase their efforts.  
Misunderstandings create tension and can lead to conflict. Many volunteer organizations use a Facebook page, GroupMe, or some other kind of easy communication method that helps everyone know what is going on and updates them on the status of events.
7. **Understand that timing and motivation are not always synchronous.** When conflict happens, many volunteers opt for quitting. Sometimes this is the best option. How do you know if it is the right course of action? Some indicators include: They cannot get along with other people, they are constantly late or have excuses about why they don't accomplish tasks, and they don't show up. Understand that sometimes it is the right person volunteering but it may simply be the wrong time for them to volunteer. It may also be the wrong team. Some people naturally work better together. Assess the team as a whole to determine the best fit.
8. **One-on-one communication.** One of the most effective techniques a president-elect or future leader can do is to call or meet with every person on the current board and ask them for advice on how to best move forward. You don't have to ask them to stay, just ask them for advice, their perspective, and their continued support in letting you know what's going on. People like to know that their opinions are considered and that they matter. Taking the time for a one-on-one meeting speaks volumes about how you value that person.
9. **Make time to appreciate the people doing the work.** People need to feel needed, wanted, and appreciated. Make sure you sincerely thank and recognize your team, both publicly and privately. For people serving on your board or committees, highlight their achievements by having them stand up and be recognized at events or meetings or point out their achievements on your blog, website, or Facebook page. Make sure to profile specific actions when thanking individuals and make sure that the right praise is going to the right person, not just to a department or that leader.
10. **Don't waste time.** Few people have time to waste. No one likes wasting time. Time is the most precious gift we can give, so be careful not to waste your people's time. Start meetings on time, have agendas for meetings, stick to schedules, and hold people accountable for deadlines.

Bonus: **Make work fun.** You can make work fun. Have board meetings at venues that facilitate work, but are also enjoyable. Find ways to make work, especially volunteer work, good bonding experiences (as long as you respect their time). Make accomplishing goals fun for your group.

Wine improves with time, but problems don't. If someone cannot do what is needed, or if their behavior is questionable, address it right away.

The people on your team are most likely on your team because of you. Not because of the job, not because of the company, association, or the cause – YOU. Your team is there because of your leadership, your personality, and your friendship. Don't let them down.

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P.S. For bulk orders, or to book the keynote, Why Leaders Fail, please contact me directly at [Mary@ProductiveLeaders.com](mailto:Mary@ProductiveLeaders.com) or at 719-357-7360.

**Mary is (happily) already being booked for conferences and events into 2017 and 2018! Let's schedule your event! Call 719-357-7360 or email [info@ProductiveLeaders.com](mailto:info@ProductiveLeaders.com)!**

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Call Mary at 719-357-7360 or email [Mary@ProductiveLeaders.com](mailto:Mary@ProductiveLeaders.com).

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*Mary C. Kelly*



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