

Conflict Resolution

by Debora Ott

- Create organizational structures and procedures to avoid personality conflicts
- Focus on peoples' strengths
- Concentrate on the big picture and how people and ideas fit into it
- Focus on the behavior causing conflict, not the person
- The individual causing a problem needs to be confronted by the person they most respect
- Sometimes it's necessary to introduce an outsider to resolve a conflict: "you can't be a prophet in your own land."
- In general, women have a hard time with conflict
- There is no such thing as indispensability – if someone wants to leave an organization, let him or her
- The most painful part of a merger is deciding who is going to be the board chair
- The board/staff relationship is built on trust
- The major relationship the board has is with the CEO (E.D.)
- A board chair is often involved in conflict resolution
- If there is a weak board chair running board meetings, interject a parliamentarian into the process
- Take a break in a meeting when there is conflict; in most cases, when the meeting resumes the conflict will be lessened
- Print name tents for each board member with the rules of engagement facing them:
 - Play fair
 - Value diverse opinions
 - No cell phones
 - Respect each other
 - Don't run with scissors

Tip sheet based in part on an Atlanta Women's Foundation, Women on Board workshop – November 6, 2004, Terri Theisen presenting; notes, Debora Ott