

Lynne Cunningham's
Book Review

I just read a great book that I think should be added to your Service Excellence Library.

Book	<i>Becoming a Conflict Competent Leader: How you and your organization can manage conflict effectively</i>
Author	Craig E. Runde and Tim A. Flanagan
Pillar of Excellence	People
Publisher's Book Description	<i>Becoming a Conflict Competent Leader</i> combines research, conceptual models, practitioner experience, and stories that highlight the core conflict competencies. The book underscores the importance for leaders to develop the critical skills they need to help them, their colleagues, and their organizations deal more effectively with conflict and move their organizations forward.
LC Review	Most of us can't avoid conflict. But we can learn to work through conflicts more quickly and productively. This book has excellent tips for resolving work place conflict with co-workers. The suggestions can easily be adapted to personal and other non-work situation. Full of practical, easy-to-use tools.
Page	<i>Lynne suggests that you pay special attention to some of these features in the book.</i>
xii	This is a leadership book that deals with conflict management. Our intention is: we want leaders to recognize the importance of becoming conflict competent as a means to becoming a better leader. We want them to champion change to help their organization improve the way in which conflict is handled so they can experience the many benefits that flow from conflict competence.
1+	Conflict in the workplace is bound to occur, so you may as well equip yourself with the skills to deal with it. Conflict is inevitable for leaders, and it exists at the root of some of their best ideas and at the core of many of their worst failures. Effective leaders hold themselves accountable for establishing work environments that provide safety and respect while helping the organization meet business and financial goals. Handling conflict effectively encompasses both of these objectives. Not all conflict is negative, painful, or unpleasant. Harnessing the power of conflict can be the catalyst for new ideas and creative solutions to challenging business issues.
4	Conflict is "any situation in which people have incompatible interests, goals, principles or feelings." Conflict can result from almost anything that puts at least two people in opposition.
7+	Four distinct areas or skill sets that are required for a leader to be considered conflict competent:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding the dynamics of conflict 2. Understanding his or her own reactions to conflict 3. Fostering constructive responses to conflict (and reducing destructive responses) 4. Creating a conflict competent organization
11+	<p>More effective leaders are better able than less effective leaders to address conflict. We believe competency in dealing with organizational conflict is a hallmark of effective leaders and crucial to organizational success. Most managers estimate that between 20 and 40 percent of their time is spent dealing with conflict. More than half of employee retention problems are related to poorly handled conflict.</p>
15	<p>Some suggest that leaders need to make sure that there is sufficient debate and conflict in their organization to ensure that varying approaches to important issues are considered and appropriately vetted. The key in these cases is to stimulate debate without letting it become destructive or focused on personalities as opposed to the task at hand.</p>
22	<p>We see conflict as “any situation in which interdependent people have apparently incompatible interests, goals, principles, or feelings.”</p>
26	<p style="text-align: center;">Types of Conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Conflict – focuses more on tasks and problem solving. • Affective Conflict – epitomizes the negative terms that our participants used to describe conflict. Here, the focus is on blaming people or proving that the other person is wrong rather than trying to solve the problem.
37	<p>Self-awareness plays a crucial role in our leadership development programs. We use a model developed by the Center for Creative Leadership known as ACS, which stands for Assessment, Challenge, and Support. Assessment helps clarify changes that may be needed to improve leadership effectiveness. Challenge provides the opportunity for experimentation and practice to make changes. Support helps confirm and clarify lessons learned.</p>
42	<p>Nine behaviors that seem to be particularly prevalent or disturbing in work place settings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unreliable – when people miss deadlines or cannot be counted on 2. Overly analytical – when people focus too much on minor issues or are perfectionists 3. Unappreciative – when people fail to give credit to others or seldom praise good performance 4. Aloof – when people isolate themselves, do not seek input, or are hard to approach 5. Micro-managing – when people constantly monitor and check up on the work of others 6. Self-centered – when people believe they are always correct or care only

	<p>about themselves</p> <p>7. Abrasive – when people are arrogant, sarcastic and demeaning</p> <p>8. Untrustworthy – when people exploit others, take undeserved credit, or cannot be trusted</p> <p>9. Hostile – when people lose their tempers, become angry, or yell at others</p>									
44	<p style="text-align: center;">Conflict Styles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing • Avoiding • Accommodating • Compromising • Collaborating 									
47	<p style="text-align: center;">Responses to Conflict</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;"></th> <th style="width: 35%; text-align: center;">Constructive</th> <th style="width: 35%; text-align: center;">Destructive</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Active</td> <td> Perspective Taking Creating Solutions Expressing Emotions Reaching Out </td> <td> Winning at all Costs Displaying Anger Demeaning Others Retaliating </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Passive</td> <td> Reflective Thinking Delay Responding Adapting </td> <td> Avoiding Yielding Hiding Emotions Self-Criticizing </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Constructive	Destructive	Active	Perspective Taking Creating Solutions Expressing Emotions Reaching Out	Winning at all Costs Displaying Anger Demeaning Others Retaliating	Passive	Reflective Thinking Delay Responding Adapting	Avoiding Yielding Hiding Emotions Self-Criticizing
	Constructive	Destructive								
Active	Perspective Taking Creating Solutions Expressing Emotions Reaching Out	Winning at all Costs Displaying Anger Demeaning Others Retaliating								
Passive	Reflective Thinking Delay Responding Adapting	Avoiding Yielding Hiding Emotions Self-Criticizing								
58	In some ways, conflict is all about emotions.									
66+	<p style="text-align: center;">Intensity Levels</p> <p>Level One: Differences</p> <p>Level Two: Misunderstandings</p> <p>Level Three: Disagreements</p> <p>Level Four: Discord</p> <p>Level Five: Polarization</p>									
116+	<p>Five ways effective leaders encourage positive response to conflict:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staying calm in the face of conflict: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Make a list b. Count to ten 									

	c. Just the facts d. Understand, then conclude 2. Encouraging civility, fairness and safety 3. Teaching and coaching effective responses 4. Providing learning opportunities 5. Embracing constructive conflict	
130+	When controversy is managed constructively, the conflict partners use collaborative and conflict management skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to be critical of ideas, not people • The ability to separate personal worth issues from criticism of one's ideas • An uncompromising focus on best outcomes, not winning • Listening to other' ideas • Efforts to understand all sides of issues 	
Overall rating	Excellent. I think we can all benefit from a fresh look at managing conflict. This book includes many tools that I know I will personally find helpful. A good book for a Leadership Development Institute focused on team building and employee retention.	
Publisher and Year Published	2007	John Wiley & Sons
Price	\$29.95	Discounted on Amazon
Recommended by	Gary Buerstatte, VP of Strategy, ProHealth, Waukesha, WI - long-time colleague and friend	

*This book report is posted at www.kristinepeterson.com. To read additional titles reviewed and recommended by Lynne Cunningham, visit *The Reading Room – Lynne Cunningham Reports* at www.kristinepeterson.com.*