



Building an Effective County Team

Walt McBride
South Carolina Association of Counties
Institute of Government for County Officials
August 5, 2025

“Leadership is a serious meddling in
the lives of others.”

Max DePree

What we’ll be discussing ...

- Civility
- Conflict
- Personality Types
- Group Dynamics
- Roles of Elected Officials and Staff

A Civility Lesson from Ben Franklin

We are sent here to *consult*, not to *contend*, with each other; and declarations of a fixed opinion, and of determined resolution, never to change it, neither enlighten nor convince us.

Positiveness and warmth on one side, naturally beget their like on the other ... harmony and union are extremely necessary to give weight to our Councils, and render them effectual in promoting and securing the common good.

- Public policy development is aimed at solving critical public issues
- How can we do that if we can't even talk to one another civilly?



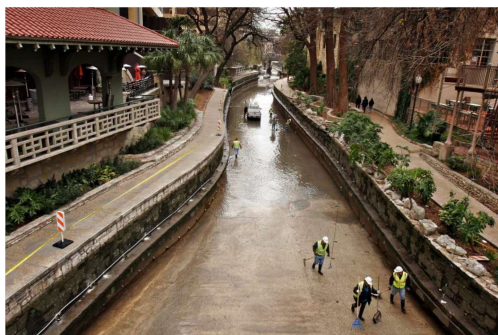
“To disagree, one doesn't have to be disagreeable.”

Senator Barry Goldwater
Noted Political Wuss

What do you see?



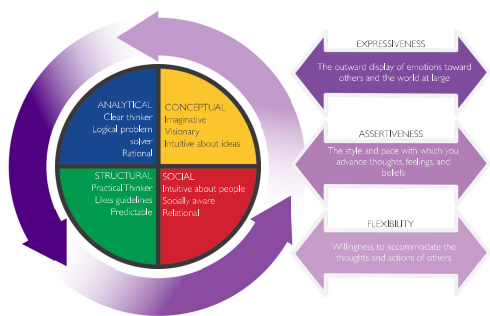
It depends on your perspective!



What Causes Conflict?

- Our perspective leads us to try to solve issues differently
- We have different views of the same issues
 - Facts
 - Goals
 - Values

Personality Types – Emergenetics®



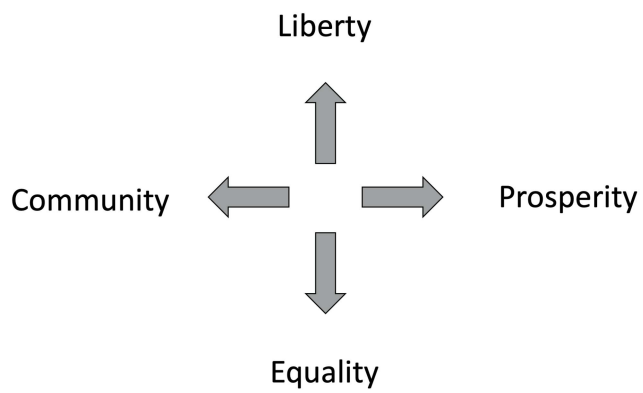
More info at emergenetix.com

Conflict & Public Policy

- What makes an issue public?
- It's not private ...
 - Some would have you frame the question as "You have to figure out how to be good with money or good to people"
 - Its really "How can you be good with money *and* good to people"
 - And the issues are complex

Simple and Complex Decisions

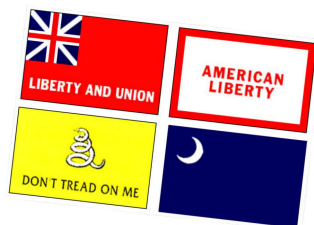
- Simple decisions choose between dualities
 - Pretty clear cut contrast between two concepts
- Complex decisions can be viewed in different ways
 - Not simply right or wrong
- For example ...
 - We're all honest people, right?
 - Then, when is it okay to lie?



Boyle, P. 2001. "Public Problems, Values, and Choices." Popular Government. (Fall 2001). 18-23.

Liberty

- Freedom
- Choice
- Opportunity
- Independence
- Due Process
- Individual Rights



Prosperity

- Economy
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Productivity
- Performance Measurement
- Quality of Life





- Equity
- Fairness
- Justice
- Representation
- Equal Opportunity
- Equal Access

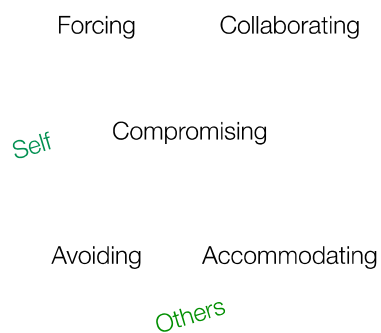
Equality

- Safety
- Security
- Social Order
- Collective Action
- Sense of Place
- Culture



Community

Five Ways of Dealing with Conflict



<http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/overview-thomas-kilmann-conflict-mode-instrument-tki>

Getting to Yes

- Don't argue over positions!
 - Produces unwise agreements
 - Small concessions are inefficient
 - Endangers ongoing relationships
 - Even worse when there are many parties
 - But ... being nice is not the answer

Getting to Yes

- The Method
 - Separate the People from the Problem
 - Focus on Interests, not Positions
 - Invent Options of Mutual Gain
 - Insist on Using Objective Criteria

Tuckman's Stages of Group Development

- Forming
 - Breaking the ice, social interchanges
- Storming
 - Conflict, disagreement, participation
- Norming
 - Establish order, build cohesion, clarify norms & values
- Performing
 - Cooperation, problem solving, task accomplishment



Tuckman, Bruce W (1965). "Developmental sequence in small groups". *Psychological Bulletin*. 63 (6): 384–399.



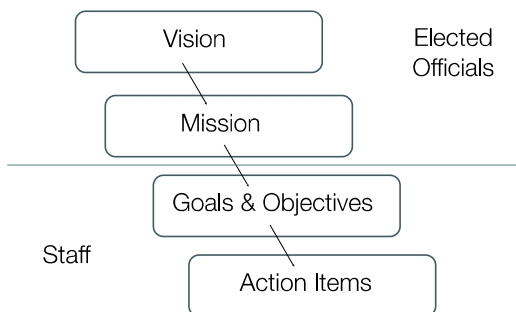
Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Lencioni, P. 2003. "The Trouble with Teamwork." Leader to Leader (Summer, 2003). 35-40.

Traditional Idea



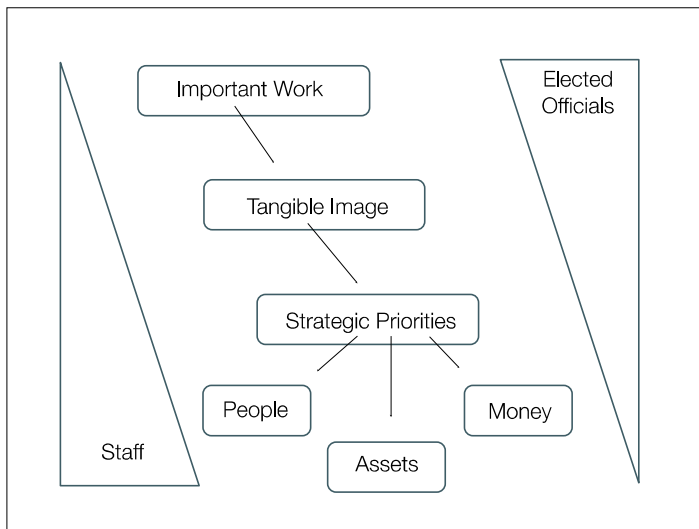
- Like unto a cruise line ...
- Council owns the ships
- Council hires professional staff to run it



More Modern Idea

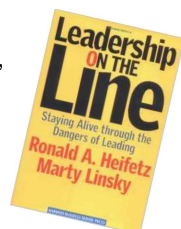


- More like being in a boat paddling together
- Staff participates more in determining direction and actually helps to steer



Leadership on the Line

- "The lone warrior myth of leadership is a sure route to heroic suicide."
- Six Aspects of Thinking Politically
 - One for dealing with those who are with you, one for those in opposition, four for those who are uncommitted



Find Partners

- Be mindful that they may push their own agenda; they have other commitments they will be unwilling to give up
- They provide protection to maneuver
- They help you create alliances with other factions
- Partners from another faction can provide “key intelligence” necessary to improve ideas - and positions - by incorporating other viewpoints

Keep the Opposition Close

- To survive and succeed, you must work closely with your opposition
- People opposed are usually those with the most to lose
- However, opposition also includes those in the middle
 - Who resist simply because it may disrupt their lives
 - Or, it makes their future uncertain

For those who are uncommitted ...

- Own your piece of the mess
- Acknowledge their loss
- Model the behavior
- Accept casualties

Contact Info

Walt McBride

McBride Consults, LLC

(770) 503-4474

walt@mcbrideconsults.com
