



## Is Win-Win in Confrontation Really Achievable?

*Have you noticed that almost everything is a confrontation these days? It seems that whenever you turn around someone has hard feelings or is emotionally upset with someone. If we read the latest business books, we should be 'seeking win-win' in all of our confrontations. But is that practically possible? And if so, how actually does it happen? Do we go into a confrontation really knowing that we want win-win out of it?*

With all these confrontations, you might think that a lot of problems are being solved. Actually, it's just the opposite. Individuals come together, have their say, and then separate. They have usually had an argument, but not resolved the conflict. And, rarely even if they do resolve the conflict, they don't feel positively about the conflict resolution. As important as conflicts are, we don't prepare for them, we worry about them. And to go into a conflict expecting that the relationship will improve is laughable! How often do you feel better about confrontation and the other person once you have confronted them?

We also enter into confrontations not really knowing what we want or what our intention is for the confrontation. Intentions can range from wanting to be heard, to winning, to revenge, to embarrassing the other person, to resolving the conflict, to building the relationship. And while both parties are supposed to want resolution, the true intent always comes out during the confrontation.

Intention is so powerful because in a conflict, the person with the greater intention wins. Or, said differently, the person who has the greater commitment to their intention wins. One of the most subtle and destructive intentions is 'being right'. One night my husband, a houseguest, and I were watching the bobsled competition during the last Winter Olympics. Vonetta Flowers had just won the gold medal with her partner in the 2-woman bobsled event. My husband and I began discussing if Vonetta was the first African American woman to medal in a Winter Olympics. My husband said yes, and I said no. We began arguing back and forth. On the surface this seems like a simple conflict over a miniscule issue - until, the intention of 'being right' enters into the conflict. For me, 'being right' came up. I left my husband and houseguest, marched out of the room, and logged onto the Internet to find supporting evidence for my position. I then spent 30 minutes of our precious evening time (while the kids were asleep) doing Internet searches. I finally found proof, marched back to my husband and houseguest and said, 'See, I told you so.'

What really happened here? I got bragging rights on being right and clearly met my intention. I also showed that my husband was wrong in front of our houseguest, and didn't think a thing about it. What did I lose in this exchange - respect, closeness, trust, perhaps even love? At a minimum I wasted valuable time with both my husband and houseguest. When you are on a quest to 'be right', honesty and integrity usually fall first and the relationship is always damaged.

Some people say that some confrontations can't be solved. But, again, looking at intent is crucial. The intent of the confrontation can be achieved, and in this regard 'win-win' is possible. For example, in many organizations, the in-house IT personnel are being sold to an outside company as part of outsourcing projects. These IT professionals usually don't have many choices when this occurs - they can go to work for the outside company, or they can quit their jobs. Many of these individuals want to confront their hierarchy about the decision and its impact on their lives. Perhaps their intent is simply to be heard. Perhaps their intent is to be understood. Perhaps their intent is to have their manager say 'we know this is disruptive to your life'. Most know that reversing the outsourcing decision will not happen. But, if their intent is to be heard and understood, a win can be achieved.

To do this, you will have to prepare for this confrontation. You will have to work through, with a good listener, all of the emotions you feel about the outsourcing. The anger in your voice must be gone - all that does is hook the other person into escalating the confrontation into a fight. Then, you will have to be clear and honest about your intention for the confrontation. Do you want to be heard and understood? Do you want an acknowledgement of how powerless and frustrated you feel in this situation? Once the intent is known, then you must disclose what you are both thinking and feeling about the outsourcing, your situation, etc. At this point in the confrontation, there is nearly a 100% chance that the other person will become defensive. So, you must listen and listen and listen. How many of us enter into a confrontation prepared to listen? This is the pivot point for the confrontation - where they are escalated or resolved, where you either stay with your intent, or let it fall apart. If you listen and allow the other person to express their thoughts and feelings, without interruption, what might happen? You might find out that they are feeling angry and misunderstood. They might not feel that they have any choices in the outsourcing either. You may discover that their feelings are similar to what you are feeling. You may discover that by preparing for the confrontation and completing these steps, you have achieved your intent of being heard and understood. You have also gained a bonus. You heard and understood the other person. You stayed on track, built the relationship, and achieved a true 'win-win' resolution.



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