

By Teri Traaen Ed. D.P.A

*April 2014*

As day to day strategy and decision efforts race forward within our business sectors, the undercurrent that most often shapes the integrity of the work being done is conflict. Conflict - or a strong difference in beliefs and/or opinions is seldom celebrated as the catalyst for progress. Instead, it is more often viewed as an obstacle that threatens individual perspectives and more critically agendas from being accomplished. Imagine if the use of conflict became the bedrock for measuring both individual and collective performance, rather than an indicator of dissension and cast individuals as being contrary to serving as a collaborative team member.

If change were seen as the pathway to ultimate creativity, how much more efficient and effective might we all be in stabilizing the reality of a post Great Recession come back? Seldom considered as urgent in terms of positive impact, conflict is not viewed within many organizations as the language of action - rather it is viewed as the formula for polarization and interruption of a singular outcome process. At the core of the mis-use of conflict is routinely a very fundamental mistake. This mistake takes the form of focusing our sites on the individuals involved rather than the issue.

The second stumbling block is seeing only the 'loss' of our own need to always win. Coupling these self-aggrandized actions together results in a radical inability to find common interests. Common interests translate to better (and often larger) solutions for the common good. Is your organization feeding the lesser need for individual gains or working toward the more sophisticated outcomes of sustained building blocks for greater service to the larger needs of a community or industry? It's always a choice. What type of path is your organization on at this time?