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WIN LIKE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Benjamin Franklin was a true Renaissance Man, skilled in diplomacy, politics, science, philosophy, and other areas.

One of his many discoveries was how to win the respect of his opposition. When Franklin was in the Pennsylvania legislature, he was taunted by the hostility of another legislator. Franklin explains in his own words how he won the respect and friendship of his political rival:

I did not, however, aim at gaining his favor by paying any servile respect to him, but, after some time, took this other method. Having heard that he had in his library a certain very scarce and curious book, I wrote a note to him, expressing my desire of perusing that book, and requesting he would do me the favor of lending it to me for a few days. He sent it immediately, and I returned it in about a week with another note, expressing strongly my sense of the favor. When we next met in the House, he spoke to me (which he had never done before), and with great civility; and he ever after manifested a readiness to serve me on all occasions, so that we became great friends, and our friendship continued to his death. This is another instance of the truth of an old maxim I had learned, which says, "He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another, than he whom you yourself have obliged."

Studies show that people are motivated to change their attitudes in ways that are consistent with their behavior. When Franklin's nemesis saw himself doing a favor for a person he didn't care for, he may have said to himself, "Why am I going out of my way to help someone I don't like? There must be something good about Ben. Now that I think about it, he does have some good qualities."

If your efforts to open the lines of communication with a difficult person have not produced results, don't be afraid to ask that person for a favor. If he does the favor, his opinion of you may change to reflect his positive behavior, opening the door to productive discussions. Now that's a risk with a favorable return.