Bridging Divides: What to do When People Disagree

LMC Leadership Conference

January 27, 2018
Objective: Increase participants' ability to effectively address contentious public issues.

Participants will learn to:
• Increase mutual understanding
• Identify their needs and the needs of others involved
• Reframe toxic statements into problem solving statements
• Build consensus
I. Opening

II. Interest-Based Problem Solving Mindset

III. Interest-Based Problem Solving
   i. Process
   ii. Theory
   iii. Skills
Interest-Based Problem Solving Mindset
Interest Based Problem Solving Mindset

• Name

• Share why you went into public service and your guiding value as a public servant?
Interest-Based Problem Solving
Interest-Based Problem Solving Process

1. Agree on the problem or decision to be made.

2. Engage in dialogue to exchange information and to increase understanding of diverse points of view.

3. Generate options for mutual gain based on shared interests.

4. Develop an integrative solution.

5. Reach final agreement that all parties can accept.
Positions v. Interests

*Position = what you want*

*Interest = why you want it (needs, hopes desires)*
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

1. **Physiological Needs**
   - Air, food, water, shelter, clothing, sleep

2. **Safety and Security Needs**
   - Health, employment, property, family, stability

3. **Love and Belongingness Needs**
   - Friendship, family, intimacy, connections

4. **Self-Esteem Needs**
   - Confidence, achievements, respect of others, connections, need for individuality

5. **Self-Actualisation**
   - Morality, Creativity, Spontaneity, Acceptance. Experience purpose, meaning and inner potential

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**Interest Based Problem Solving Mindset**
Interest-Based Problem Solving: Positions V. Interests

Examples

• The City does not have a drone law ordinance. Some community members want one while others do not.

• The City wants all residents in a given community to eradicate an invasive plant species from their properties. Some community members do not want to participate.

• The City council is disbanding the local police department. The police union is furious.
Reframing is translating toxic, positional, threatening or unclear statements into statements that others can respond to productively.
Principles of Reframing

- Every strong statement contains some underlying interest or concern that promoted the strong statement.
- People usually want a constructive response to their statements.
- People can switch to more constructive communication when they believe that their needs for concerns are being dealt with.
Interest-Based Problem Solving: Reframing

**Framing errors**

1. The problem is layered in toxic or value-laden language.
2. The problem is presented in a position, either/or way or a demand.
3. The problem is either stated in global terms or is too specific.
4. The problem is stated in attitudinal or feeling terms rather than behavioral or operational terms.
Steps of reframing

1. Listen hard.
2. Identify interests, needs, concerns
3. Remove problem language
Steps of reframing

4. Paraphrase the statement, using:

- Neutral language eliminating toxic language, blame, and fault.
- In terms of interests rather than positions
- To emphasize the commonality of interests
- Defining the issues jointly, rather than from one participant’s perspective
- In terms of a search for a common solution rather than a fight
Interest-Based Problem Solving: Reframing

• In light of the future, not the past
• In behavioral terms, rather than character or personality.
• From non-negotiables such as values, attitude, feeling to negotiables such as behaviors or systems.
• By testing perceptions
• As an individual component of the problem
5. Stick with it until person lets you know you got it right
Statement 1: Resident where jail may be built: “We don’t want criminals in our backyard!”

Try reframing the problem:

• as an interest(s) v. position(s)

• by testing perceptions

• as an individual component(s) of the problem

• in behavioral terms, rather than character or personality
Statement 2: School board member, “Physical education is essential for the health of our kids; we can not cut it!”

Try reframing the problem:

• as an interest(s) v. position(s)

• as an observation v. inference

• in terms of a search for a common solution rather than a fight
**Statement 3:** Tribal elder, “Fishing that lake is part of our heritage and important for our ceremonies.

**Try reframing the problem:**

- as an interest(s) v. position(s)
- by defining the issues jointly rather than from one party’s perspective
- by testing perceptions
- as an individual component(s) of the problem
Interest-Based Problem Solving: Process

**Interest-Based Problem Solving Process**

1. Agree on the problem or decision to be made.

2. Engage in dialogue to exchange information and to increase understanding of diverse points of view.

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Interest-Based Problem Solving: Brainstorming

Strategies for Success!

• Avoid judgment – monitor verbals and non-verbals
• Be creative – invent options
• There is no RIGHT answer - multiple possible solutions!
• All ideas are accepted
• Encourage funny or seemingly “wild” ideas
Interest-Based Problem Solving: Brainstorming

• Avoid either-or thinking
• Avoid stopping the brainstorming “too early” – set a timer and stick to it, even if it feels like energy has run out early.
• Let your thoughts come quickly - Build on the ideas of others.
• Seat people next to each other in a circle, around a table, or so they can see the written problem on a chart
• Record ALL ideas somewhere for all to see as the process occurs
Interest-Based Problem Solving: Brainstorming

Only
Proposals
That
Include
Others
Needs
Succeed
Interest Based Problem Solving Mindset

Integrative problem solving

Domination    Compromise    Integration
Interest-Based Problem Solving: Selecting Options

Things to consider before making the final decision
• From the brainstormed list, select the top options.
• Consider options for improvement for each of those top options.
• From the brainstormed list of shared interests, create a shared goal.
• Consider the problem from different experts' viewpoints.
Interest-Based Problem Solving: Selecting Options

• Consider what is legal and perceived as fair, honorable, etc.
• Is there a precedent from the organization that might be followed?
• Consider how the option, if selected, might be perceived by the other person/organizations worst critic.
• Other?
Closing


Thank you!

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