

Mental Mindsets for Success: Conflict

The Solution is in the Source

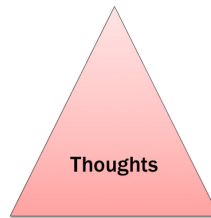
When we experience conflict, we are most likely to look at the situation to determine who was at fault. This is a natural human reaction. However, taking a moment to look at the “what” of the situation will always yield more reasonable results and lead to a calmer approach to resolving the conflict.

When conflict arises in business, it can take on a different tone than when we have disagreements with friends and family in our personal lives. We tend to be more open and emotional with people outside business. In a business setting, we may hesitate to express ourselves, question others, or ask for what we need. The fear of damaging our credibility or reputation if we address conflict is a key reason entrepreneurs avoid stepping into conflict with customers, vendors, suppliers, and other business stakeholders.

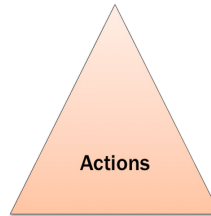
The Conflict Source Triangle is a simple tool that you can use to help untangle a difficult situation by shifting the focus from who caused the problem to what is at the source of it. No matter who has caused the conflict, the source of discord stems from one or more of these three pivotal sources: thoughts, actions, and words. It sounds quite simple, and it is. What can be difficult is to make the choice to go to this tool in times of high emotion.

Our communication style comprises many habits. We have habitual ways of greeting people. We have habitual ways of saying no. We also have habitual ways of addressing—or avoiding—conflict when it arises in our daily lives. I invite you to consider using the Conflict Source Triangle tool to help you form new habits for dealing with conflict when it arises.

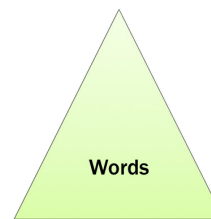
Consider a recent conflict that occurred in your business. When you recall that experience, can you spot the source of the disagreement?



Was there an error in thinking that caused or contributed to the conflict? What part did assumptions play in creating additional conflict or confusion? What needs to be clarified in order to resolve the issue?



Were you upset by something that occurred? What action, activity, or behaviour was at the source of the disagreement? What action could now help resolve the conflict?



What was said that was at the source of the conflict? What words were used that contributed to the conflict? Was there an omission of information or facts that would have minimized or eliminated the conflict? What still needs to be said to resolve the issue?

Now what?

Once you have determined the source of the conflict, it is imperative that you go back to the source to solve it. Conflict that resides in actions can be solved by acknowledging and resetting the situation with the right action. The same is true for words and thoughts. Without doing this work to reflect on the source of a conflict, we usually attempt to solve an issue of words by “making it right” with actions. Or we refrain from admitting our assumptions and attempt to speak our way out of a conflict situation. Simply, the solution is at the source.

The Conflict Source Triangle is a valuable reflection tool for understanding what is at the source of the discord. The tool begins with the concept of “thoughts” quite deliberately. In our interactions with others in daily life, any communication of words or actions begins first as a thought. Therefore, it is important to consider the thinking behind the conflict as the starting point for understanding what went wrong. However, the tool is effective no matter which angle you start with in your reflection.

If you use it over time, this tool can help you anticipate conflicts before they arise. You will be able to spot the source before things get out of hand and negatively affect your business relationships.



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