



# CONNECTIONS

*Communicating in Culturally Diverse Settings*



Volume 3, Issue 1

October 2005

## Inside this issue:

3 Steps to Conflict Resolution 1

Upcoming Publications 2

## 3 Steps to Conflict Resolution

Conflict is inevitable. No matter where you work, no matter what you do, sooner or later you will have to deal with a conflict. The good news is, conflicts are resolvable. Whether you are having a conflict with someone else, or are attempting to mediate a conflict between two parties, there are three basic steps you should take to successfully resolve a conflict:

1. **Understand the CAUSE of the Conflict.** The first, and most important, step in the conflict reso-

lution process is to clearly understand the cause of the conflict. Generally speaking, the cause of any conflict will fall under one or more of the following categories: *information* - people see the same data or facts from different points of view; *process* - people disagree about how something should be done; *objectives* - people have different goals and agendas; *values* - people differ in their basic beliefs and views; and *styles* - people differ in their personality, communication or work styles. It is imperative that you are clear about the

real cause. **Remember, the biggest reason for unsuccessful conflict resolution is a failure to accurately identify the true cause of the conflict.**

2. **Understand the INTENSITY of the Conflict.** Once you have a good idea of the conflict's main cause, you need to understand its level of intensity. Specifically, you must answer two questions. First, how interested is each party in resolving the conflict? The resolution process will only work if both participants are sincerely willing to address the

## Author:

Dr. Tyrone A. Holmes

President

T.A.H. Performance  
Consultants, Inc.

[www.doctorholmes.net](http://www.doctorholmes.net)



## 3 Steps to Conflict Resolution (continued)

conflict. Second, how firm or flexible will each party be during the conflict resolution process? The more flexible each person is, the greater the likelihood of achieving a "win-win" outcome where a mutually satisfying resolution can be

found.

3. **Select a STRATEGY for Resolving the Conflict.** There are four basic conflict resolution strategies, each leading to a specific outcome. **Collaboration** is designed to help the conflict-

ing parties work together to find mutually advantageous solutions to problems so that each person is satisfied with the outcome. **Domination** is a strategy in which one of the conflicting parties tries to "win" the conflict by forcing his or her solution on

*T.A.H. Performance Consultants, Inc.*

  
**Dr. Tyrone A. Holmes, L.P.C.**  
**President**

30307 Sterling Drive  
Novi, MI 48377

Phone: 248-669-5294  
Fax: 248-669-5295

Email: tyrone@doctorholmes.net

---

VISIT US AT  
[WWW.DOCTORHOLMES.NET](http://WWW.DOCTORHOLMES.NET)

---

### 3 Steps to Conflict Resolution (continued)

the other. In this case, one party gets what they want (and wins) while the other party does not (and loses). **Accommodation** is just the opposite. Here, one of the conflicting parties is willing to sacrifice their desired outcome and give in to the other disputant. It is more important to them to maintain harmony and keep relationships intact. **Avoidance**, the final conflict resolution strategy, focuses on avoiding the conflict altogether. The parties do not do anything to resolve the conflict and therefore neither person is likely to get the outcome they desire (so both lose). Collaboration is by far the most desirable strategy because it not only requires the conflicting parties to work together to find a mutually satisfying solution, but it tends to facilitate outcomes which benefit the organization as well. However, there are some instances when the other three styles can be successful. For example, Domination can work if quick action is needed, when your viewpoint is more important to you than the viewpoint of the other person is to them, or when the relationship between parties is not important. Conversely, when the other person's viewpoint is more important to them than your viewpoint is to you,

### 3 Steps to Conflict Resolution (continued)

or when the relationship is more important than the conflict at hand, Accommodation may be effective. Finally, Avoidance may be effective when the conflict does not need immediate resolution, when the conflict is relatively insignificant (be careful, insignificant conflicts can mushroom over time), when the parties decide it is necessary to include another party (e.g., a mediator), when the potential damage of confrontation outweighs the benefits of resolution, when the conflict is entirely relationship focused instead of content focused (e.g., the cause of the conflict is that the parties just don't like each other), and when there is no chance of getting what you are seeking.

### Upcoming Publications

**Connecting Training to Performance** - An article that will be published in the 2006 Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer HRD Annual.

**How to Get the Most Out of Your Meetings** - An article that will be published in the 2006 Training and Development Sourcebook by the American Society for Training and Development.

**Five Steps to Create a Climate for Diversity** - An article that will be published in the 2006 Training and Development Sourcebook by the American Society for Training and Development.

