



OLYMPIC CAPITAL quarterly

Sports Management Update from the City of
Lausanne and the State of Vaud



Trends to Track

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The techniques used by hostage negotiators in dealing with often life-threatening conflicts offer a powerful framework for leaders of all organisations when struggling with issues that could seriously undermine successful outcomes. That is because hostage negotiators are trained to understand quickly what is in the mind of a hostage taker. Without understanding someone else's motivation, it is impossible to be effective in establishing a strong enough bond to influence the other person.

Few people, fortunately, will ever be taken hostage physically. But what is essential to understand is that anyone can be taken hostage metaphorically – made to feel threatened, manipulated, victimized and helpless – every day by bosses, colleagues, customers, family members or virtually anyone with whom we interact. We can also

become hostage to events or circumstances happening in our lives. We can even become hostages to ourselves, our own mind-sets, our emotions and our habits.

In a sports organisation we often see conflict develop between the governing body and its members. But conflict can also be residing much closer than one might think, within the organisation itself, its own staff or even within your own mind. Resolving conflict means getting rid of negativity that "lies within" which often results from a sense of being powerless towards the things you confront on a daily basis. Phrases such as "This can't be changed anyway" or "nothing I do will ever make a difference, so why bother" are unfortunately often heard in sports organisations.

There are eight practical strategies for approaching conflict resolution. Before trying to resolve conflict, however, it is first important to understand the real meaning of conflict and why learning to face it might be a source of energy and creativity for both individuals and organisations.

Understanding conflict

The first step is to understand just what conflict is. It is defined as a difference between two or more persons or groups characterised by tension, emotion, disagreement and polarization when bonding is broken or completely lacking and result-

ing in loss and grief, either real or anticipated. At the root of all conflict is broken bonding and failure to handle loss.

There are people with major differences and disagreements who are able to keep a bond, and, as such, have no conflict. At other times some people turn small differences into huge conflicts and ongoing battles, sometimes even leading to violence. For example, there are numerous instances where disputes which start with small differences quickly escalate, leading to violence and the need for police intervention and the expertise of hostage negotiators.

Ironically, when people avoid conflict, their brains are working correctly because our brains are programmed at a very primitive level to do so to avoid danger or potential danger. It is, however, important to rewire our brain so that we learn to step towards conflict instead of stepping back and away from it because it is a natural and inevitable part of human relationships. Visualising a successful outcome in our mind's eye is one of the most powerful mechanisms in helping to over-ride the conditioned pattern of the brain that keeps people hostage to this fear of conflict.

The creative power of conflict handling

Why is this so important? Because conflict can be a huge driver of change by creating energy and stimulating creativity. Properly ▶

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OLYMPIC CAPITAL quarterly

From the Olympic Capital



Dear friends from
Lausanne and beyond,

This month's "From The Seminar Room" article focuses on improving relationships between International Federations and host cities. In Lausanne we are taking this relationship very seriously as, over the years, more and more

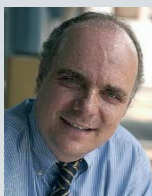
IFs have decided to come here, making this region the centre of sport administration.

But Lausanne also wants to be a place where one can practice sport. This is why our municipality has just launched a major new sport infrastructure project called "Metamorphosis".

If this project is approved by our parliament, we will build, amongst other sports facilities, a brand new football stadium and indoor Olympic size pool by the lake next to the IOC headquarters, directly facing the Alps. Our current Olympic stadium will then be replaced by a major housing development, and other purpose built athletics facilities.

Lausanne is proud and very excited to be able to very soon add a new dimension to its Olympic Capital reputation!

In the meantime, we hope that you will enjoy this new edition and will find it both interesting and informative.



With kind regards,

Patrice Iseli
Head of Sports
Department,
City of Lausanne

“Those organisations that encourage people to raise difficult issues find this leads to fresh thinking, new goals and behavioural changes.”

► managed, it can create stronger bonds, build more effective teams and improve performance dramatically. Organisations in which no one challenges the existing order often become losers. The people in them become hostages to fear. They cannot challenge other people's ideas, the organisation's vision and strategy, or existing processes. This results in a culture of stagnation.

Those organisations that encourage people to raise difficult issues find this leads to fresh thinking, new goals and behavioural changes. This philosophy has been adopted by many of the world's leading companies, as well as by law enforcement agencies, humanitarian agencies and governments, as a key factor in helping to develop high-performing organisations. It is just as applicable to sports teams, sports governing bodies, and organising committees responsible for such large events as World or Continental Championships.

The story of Hossam, a senior leader for a telecommunications company, illustrates the benefits of facing conflict. Hossam was locked into an ongoing serious conflict

with his boss. Communication was difficult and tense; the manager took everything Hossam said personally, and Hossam built a metaphorical wall to protect himself. Hossam thought the manager did not like him and did not want him on the team. Coming from a background where conflict was avoided, he believed his only choice was to resign.

Following his attendance at the High Performance Leadership Program at IMD, based in Lausanne, he decided to arrange a meeting to make one last attempt at raising his concerns. Unexpectedly, the meeting turned into a four-hour, heart-to-heart dialogue. Although painful at times, the discussion triggered a dialogue between the two men. They discovered that they had serious misconceptions about each other; they were able to clarify the issues between them and renewed their bond. Hossam decided to stay and over the next twelve months he became the top performer in his group.

Confronting conflict like this does have risks. The key is to face it openly, consistently maintaining a bond to negotiate a winning outcome for all parties. If not prop-





erly managed, the process can undermine people and teams and can damage mutual respect, engagement and trust. There is, however, every reason to believe that all conflicts can be resolved to the benefit of all sides. More than 95 percent of hostage incidents are resolved peacefully, with the hostages freed, the negotiator safe, and the hostage-taker surrendering, accepting the consequences to come.

Becoming a high performing organization

Experienced hostage negotiators know that even the most extreme conflicts can be resolved through bonding and by talking, dialogue, and negotiating. An organization in which people are not afraid to have difficult conversations, raise issues, or challenge the old way of doing things will be a place of high-performing individuals and teams, and will itself become a high-performing organization.

Eight strategies for conflict resolution

There are a number of techniques that hostage negotiators employ which are applicable to a range of organisational challenges where managers are trying for successful resolution. By both using these techniques themselves, as well as sharing them with those they work with, sports managers can improve how they and their organisations navigate through conflicts.

1. 'Put the fish on the table'

This is a vivid metaphor for finding the courage to get the issue out in the open, even if it is painful or unpleasant. Once it is in the open all parties can discuss it so that it can be 'cleaned up'. If a 'fish' – that is, a difficult issue – is left under the table it will rot and the problem is unlikely to be resolved. On the other hand, going through the bloody mess of cleaning the fish on the table leads to a great fish dinner at the end of the day.

2. Learn to bond, even with an adversary

We don't have to like a person to form a bond and work towards a common goal. This is exactly what hostage negotiators do – even in life-or-death situations. Do not focus on the person or whether you dislike them. Learn to turn an adversary into an ally.

3. Understand the role of loss and pain in generating conflict

Human beings' whole lives are built on a 'cycle of bonding'. We make attachments and form bonds, but the bonds break and we experience loss. If we do not grieve, which often happens, the broken bonds remain unresolved and play an important role in generating conflict. Losses come in many forms, large or small, with the potential to provoke strong emotional reactions.

4. Never think like a hostage

If we think like a hostage, we focus on the negatives of the situation, our fear and the feeling of being trapped and helpless. Even a real hostage has a choice in how he or she reacts. They can be negative, and feel hopeless, or they can try to generate a positive focus. We always have a choice in life, even if it is only over how we approach a situation.

5. Use the power of dialogue and negotiation

Talking and listening give us the chance to engage another party and foster a dialogue, even one who is holding us captive. Hostage negotiators ask questions to engage the hostage taker, form a bond and negotiate.

6. Make concessions to build co-operation

A situation in which someone is held hostage can be successfully resolved as long as there is a win-win outcome, a resolution that is mutually acceptable to all sides. It is necessary to understand the 'law of reciprocity', meaning that there must be an exchange, a deal or a quid pro quo.

7. Be a 'secure base'

Becoming a secure base for the other party means that we create the foundation for trust and confidence. It gives them the opportunity to decrease or even stop defensive or aggressive behavior. Secure bases allow us to look for common interests and goals. It is more natural to build a bond with someone we trust.

8. Separate the person from the problem

If we make the other person the problem, we become their hostage. With a strong enough common goal, we can resolve conflict with even the most difficult people. Hostage negotiators resolve conflict with violent and aggressive people by focusing on the outcome, not on the other party.

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