

Mutual Gains Problem-Solving Conversation – Suggested Structure and Flow

Plan for a 1- 2-hour meeting, depending on a variety of factors, such as number of participants, their relationship to each other, level of contention, sense of urgency to achieve resolution within a certain amount of time, stakes, etc.

Make sure that all video is on, assuming the use of a virtual meeting tool that includes the use of video

- **Welcome and context-setting** (e.g. goals, what needs to be agreed to, introductions, parameters, process, timing, etc.)
- **Short drill to identify preferred conflict resolution style**, such as *What Would You Do If?* (Example: *You are on a mountain path when you see someone you are having a conflict approaching, what would you do?*)
- **Introduce and Gain Buy-in to using “Win-Win” Principles**
 - Focus on Issues, Not Personalities
 - Focus on Interests, Not Positions
 - Create Options to Satisfy Both Mutual and Separate Interests
 - Evaluate Options with Standards, Not Power

Give an example of what often happens when we don’t use these principles: Two sisters fought over an orange. Rather than discuss why each wanted the orange, they decided to cut the orange in half, without discussion. Turns out, one sister wanted it for the rind, and one wanted it for the pulp and juice. Even though the solution appeared to be fair, it was in fact a win for neither. Had they discussed their interests, they could have both gotten what they wanted.

- **Quick listening activity** – *So You Think You’re a Pretty Good Listener?* - 95 % of people flunk this “telephone tag” drill. Key concept: Listening is key skill to understand interests
- **Perspectives & Perceptions Exercises**- Seeing Things from the Other’s Viewpoint
 - *I Say Car Salesperson, You Say...* What the public calls car salespeople; What they call their customers
 - *Did your kids get Donald Duck’s autograph at Disney World?* Our perceptions of Donald
- **State conflict to be resolved** – gain agreement as to the issue and which parties are involved

- **As a large group, identify shared or mutual interests**, asking for verbal shout-outs, the use of Chat, or a combination, making sure that all voices are heard. You may need to paraphrase your question once or twice to encourage more responses. You'll want to record the list of responses in a place all can see so you can refer to this list periodically throughout your meeting.
- **Split the larger group into smaller groups according to interests participants represent.** (For example, you may have one group of people are opposed to mandating that employees show proof of vaccines, and another group in favor.) **Assign each group the task of listing what they believe to be the interests of the other group**, preferably using a shared document that all can see, such as Google document, slide or Jamboard.
- **Bring the large group together and give a moment or two for each group to review the list of interests created by the other group and make suggested edits, additions, clarifications, etc.**
- **Ask participants to reflect on common interests** from this activity as well as the previous activity where the large group identified shared or mutual interests.
- **Guide the group in creating options to satisfy both shared interests as well as separate interests.** Depending on the size of the group, you may want to do this as a large group or in smaller groups, followed a group debrief.
- **Taking all of the options together, as a group, evaluate the options using agreed-upon criteria, or standards.** In the case of vaccinations, such standards might come from CDC guidelines, state government guidelines, state health agency guidelines, or elsewhere.
- At this point, participants may be empowered to **make a final decision**, or the short list of options may need to be turned over to senior leadership or other decision-makers for select what they consider to be the most viable option

For more details and tips, please contact one of us to set up time for a conversation.

Steve Gardiner, President,
Gardiner Associates, LLC
stevegardiner07@gmail.com
<http://www.gardinerassoc.com/>

Nancy Settle-Murphy, President
Guided Insights
nancy@guidedinsights.com
www.guidedinsights.com