PRACTICE

Influencing Under *Conflict Conditions*

B. Kim Barnes

THE INFLUENCE GURU

Four situations where the relationship is already strained. Work through each one before you need it, because the hard conversations are the ones you get no rehearsal for.

HOW TO USE THIS

Take one scenario at a time. Decide what a successful outcome would actually look like, then choose the tactics you would lead with and the behaviors you would use first. In each of these, the other person has a reason to resist, so the receptive tactics of inquiring, listening, and attuning usually have to come before anything expressive. Working through these with a colleague, out loud, is worth more than reading them.

SCENARIO ONE

You are leading a team involved in an important project. Two of the most important team members have had a difficult relationship with one another for some time. You have decided to set up a meeting for the purpose of establishing a better working relationship between them. You plan to facilitate the meeting. One of them has agreed to attend, but the other has taken a very hard stand and refuses to meet with his or her colleague. You believe that a better working relationship is possible, but only if both contribute to the resolution or management of the conflict.

Influence the reluctant team member to agree to attend an initial meeting.

SCENARIO TWO

You have always had a good working relationship with a peer in another unit, a part of the organization that you need to collaborate with on a regular basis. However, for the past several weeks, your colleague has seemed very cold and unresponsive. He or she does not reply to your emails or messages or return your calls. You are mystified by this behavior and it is getting in the way of accomplishing important tasks. You have just spotted this person sitting alone in the cafeteria and would like to take the opportunity to find out what is going on.

Influence your peer to tell you about any issues or concerns that are associated with this change in your relationship.

SCENARIO THREE

One of your internal customers has sent you a very angry message regarding the services your team has been providing. He or she is threatening to go to senior management with the complaints. You would like to resolve this without having the issue escalated.

Influence your customer to agree to meet with you and try to find a solution before involving anyone else.

SCENARIO FOUR

You are meeting with your manager. You are aware that he or she is not happy about some decisions that you have made recently and is suggesting in subtle ways that you are not a "team player." You have decided to bring the issue out into the open.

Influence your manager to work with you to come to an open agreement about the direction your team should take.

The fastest route through a conflict is almost never the most direct one.

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Founder of **The Influence Guru**, Kim Barnes is a coach, facilitator, and author with more than forty years of experience in leadership, influence, and organization development. She was a founder and, for many years, CEO of Barnes & Conti Associates, and developed or co-developed programs including *Exercising Influence*, *Inspirational Leadership*, *Intelligent Risk-Taking*, *Consulting on the Inside*, and *Managing Innovation*. She is the author of six books, including *Exercising Influence* (Wiley) and *Building Better Ideas* (Berrett-Koehler). She works with enterprise companies, government agencies, small businesses, and individuals from the San Francisco Bay Area.

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