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With the holidays in full swing, this month is all about strategizing. We have to come up with a strategy to get the presents wrapped and under the tree, make our end-of-the-year deadlines at work, all while celebrating another year in the books with our team members. In this month's articles, you can strategize how to collaborate with your team effectively, how to be heard at your next board meeting, and finally how to turn a crisis into an opportunity during a panel discussion.

Happy Holidays!
Kristin

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AIM FOR TEAM COLLABORATION VS. COMPROMISE

I am a huge fan of the song "[Why Don't You Just Meet Me in the Middle?](#)" by Zedd and Maren Morris. Whenever it comes up on the radio, I turn it up and sing along. It's got a catchy tune and I love the tick-tock refrain.

But then I started thinking....meeting in the middle is a compromise solution. The song is actually about a spurned lover pleading to her significant other, "Why don't you just meet me in the middle?" I got news for you, honey. If all you're going to do is compromise, then neither of you will be happy. I am NOT a relationship expert, but I AM a team expert – and many of the principles apply to both.

So here's what happens when you "meet in the middle" – you have to give up something. Change something. Subtract from. Give in. So that you can meet in the middle. Likewise, your partner has to give up something. Change something. Subtract from. Give in. So neither person ends up truly satisfied. Fulfilled. Happy with each other. If you do this all the time, resentment builds up and it's a recipe for a failed relationship. So what's an unsatisfied person to do?

Aim for a win-win. Go back to the beginning. What do you truly want out of the relationship? What would be a win for you and a win for your partner? It's typically NOT about what you're fighting about either. That's just the tactics about how to get what you both want. Focus on the "common ground" and then brainstorm what that could look like. List the possibilities (there are ALWAYS options if you look hard enough!) and then settle on one or two that will make *both* of you happy.

In team language, that's called "collaboration" rather than a compromise. Much better to at least AIM for it, vs. settle for something in the middle.

HOW TEAM MEMBERS CAN INTERVENE GRACEFULLY

I was trying to explain my position during a recent meeting, and one of my fellow board members started to interrupt me. At first, I glanced at him awry and cocked my head. I then raised my hand and said, "Please, let me finish." When he continued to interrupt, I was a bit more forceful and said, "Let me finish." When he continued to persist, I leaned forward and said, "To be a good board member, we agreed that we should listen to each other. I listened to you. It is now my turn." To which he finally stopped and let me finish my thought.

It occurred to me that the rules of escalating interventions not only apply to team leaders and facilitators, but is also a handy guide to helping team members intervene gracefully as well.

How Team Members Can Intervene Gracefully:

Do Nothing. When he first interrupted me, I paused and asked myself, "Is this worth pursuing or should I just let it ride?" Since I had observed that this was a trend (I wasn't the only one he interrupted), I decided to escalate to the next level:

Eye Contact. I turned my head to look directly at him.

Movement. I cocked my head, probably raised my eyebrows and raised my hand ever so slightly.

Redirect the Conversation. I simply asked him to let me finish my sentence. When that didn't work, I escalated to the next level:

Remind Him or Her. I referred to a board member ground rule or best practice.

Fortunately, I did not have to confront this person – so these escalating levels of intervention worked for a team member as well!

HOW TO ACE A STRATEGIC MOMENT AS A PANEL MODERATOR

Have you ever been on a panel (or watched a panel discussion) when the topic started out in one direction, and because of the synergy of the panelists as well as the interest and energy of the audience, the conversation morphed in a different direction?

Yes it happens. Sometimes, that's a good shift – because the panel discussion should benefit the audience. And if the conversation ain't getting there, then you gotta shift. But then again, the conversation might have been hijacked by one or two panelists or a few vocal and visual audience members!

I call this a "Strategic Moment" when the moderator has a choice. The moderator can continue on the prescribed path OR proceed in a new direction.

Strategic moments are both a crisis and an opportunity. The crisis is one of faith. If the moderator calls a new direction, will the audience agree (or slam them on the session evaluation)? If the moderator chooses a new path, will that conversation be lively and informative? It will certainly be spontaneous, but will it still meet the needs of the audience? When facing a strategic moment, the panel moderator needs to:

- **Make a Conscious Choice.** The panel moderator is in a quandary. What to do? Whatever you decide, make an intentional choice. If left undecided, the panelists and the audience will be confused and the conversation will become scattered.
- **Call It.** Recognize that the panel is facing a strategic moment where the discussion will diverge from the advertised objective of the panel. Make sure everyone (panelists and the audience) understands the significance of the moment.

- **Declare a New Path.** Since the conversation is going to go in a new direction, describe the process – how you are going to proceed. Most of the time, the process will not change, just the focus and content of the conversation.

When faced with a strategic moment, make a conscious choice to change direction, announce it to the panelists and audience, and declare the process you'll use to continue the conversation.

GIVE THE GIFT OF A GREAT BOOK THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

As the year comes to a close, I'd like to share my thanks to you, my clients, loyal readers, and visitors to my website. I so appreciate YOU! If you have time among your holiday festivities to reflect, learn, or just chill out with a book, my little present to you is my recommended reading list. Feel free to [check it out](#) or gift a great book to your loved ones!

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