

PRIORITY COACHING

Developing exceptional leaders, extraordinary teams

Considering how many horror stories I hear every week about workplace conflict, misunderstandings, and, frankly, bad behavior, I believe that every leader should be required to take a course in conflict management every year. Not because every leader is a fire starter but because we all need skills and energy when fires begin to flare. Here is my mini-lesson on **Hot Buttons** and how leaders can **manage their responses** to these annoyances.

Hot Buttons are the aggravating, irritating behaviors that provoke anger. The number one hot button is untrustworthiness. Since trust is the basis for every relationship in the workplace, its absence makes the connection in every partnership and on every team tenuous at best. If you have to watch your back every time you work with an untrustworthy button pusher, it's impossible for you or your team to be truly effective. To learn more about your **Hot Buttons** see the offer below for a **free online assessment**.



In response to **Hot Buttons**, there are sins of omission and sins of commission in managing conflict. Screaming at others, deliberately leaving co-workers out of meetings, sending “zinger” emails—these are the most obvious sins of commission. What are the just as damaging sins of omission? According to Runde and Flanagan in their book, *Becoming a Conflict Competent Leader*, these “passive-destructive” behaviors include avoiding a person or problem, yielding or giving in, and hiding emotions—all strategies that fail to work in the long run.

When leaders manage conflict is key to the successful resolution of conflict. In their article, “Good conflict, bad conflict: How to have one without the other,” Capobianco, Davis, and Kraus, designers of the Conflict Development Profile (CDP), noted “What happens at the beginning of a disagreement is disproportionately important to the eventual outcome—that is, thoughts, emotions, decisions, and behaviors occurring at the earliest stages of a disagreement can lead either to constructive and helpful forms of conflict, or to destructive and painful behavioral spirals instead.”

It is critical for leaders to learn in advance how to manage their response to conflict. It takes only two outbursts at work for a leader to be tagged as “angry”—and it takes a very long time to lose that tag. Apologies are not sufficient. So, feel free to adopt my YouTube rule: if you respond to conflict at work in a way you wouldn't want your friends, family, and boss to see constantly re-played on the Internet, you need to re-think your management style.

On the flip side, if there is no conflict on your team, you are in trouble. There can be no healthy exchange of ideas without allowing for differing views. People won't share their misgivings about plans or solutions unless they believe that it is okay to speak up. Make sure your people know that healthy disagreement is critical to the team and that you want to hear their ideas, even if they run contrary to all other team members.

Research indicates that the most effective leaders practice constructive conflict management and these skills can be learned and practiced.

To take the **free online tool** and discover strategies for managing your hot buttons, go to **Hot Buttons**. This assessment is a part of the *Conflict Development Profile*, an assessment tool that Priority Coaching uses to help leaders understand how they manage conflict. For a sample report and more information about the CDP and our training programs, please contact Sharon Dougherty at 973-743-4045 or email her at sharondougherty@prioritycoaching.com.