

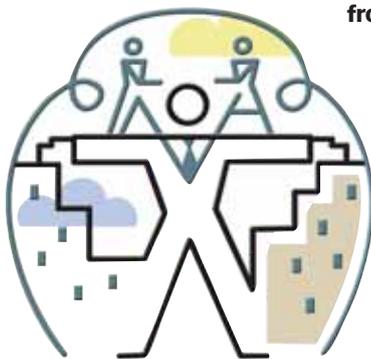
The Role of Personality In Negotiations

If you avoid conflict and friction at all costs, here's food for thought: When playing the guitar, it's friction that makes the music. It is possible to make conflict work to your advantage ... and there are other times when it's best to neutralize friction.

NEGOTIATING IS LIKE KARATE: TO BEAT A STRONGER opponent, you need to play off of and use his/her strengths and weaknesses to your advantage. You need to study your opponent in order to be able to anticipate his/her next move. * In a negotiation, you fight both your opponent — and yourself ... your natural tendencies, your self-perceptions. Since the only thing you can control in a negotiation is you and your responses, it's in your best interests to explore your own personality traits, and adjust your strategies and tactics accordingly.

Five personality types emerge in response to conflict in a negotiation:

- 1. Avoiders — who stay away from confrontation**
- 2. Competitors — who try to one-up the other side**
- 3. Collaborators — who expand the options to work on a mutually beneficial solution**
- 4. Accommodators — who give in to get to "yes"**
- 5. Compromisers — who give up something to get to "yes."**



Do you know which personality type you are? You may be more than one type — competitive at home, but an accommodator at work. You may want to figure out why and how to incorporate those traits to your advantage in different scenarios.

Does your personality change when you encounter different opponents? Do you crumble when you run into a "competitor" personality or do you raise the stakes and enter the fray like two rams locking horns?

To understand your natural personality tendency, you should know your fears and weak-

nesses. Are you self-conscious? Do you prefer to negotiate with the same gender? What are your pitfalls? If you know them going in, you will not be thrown off guard when a situation arises.

All five traits have their place at the negotiation table. If the stakes are low and you do not have a lot to lose, playing the compromiser or accommodator may work. On the other hand, you do not know how your opponent will deal with a competitive personality: Do you risk the possibility of the other side becoming more positional? If the other side is weaker, being more competitive may work. Avoidance works sometimes ... especially if you will never see your opponent again or if you are both avoiders.

But in the long run, you need to work with your opponent on a continual basis — if not for this meeting, maybe on another one at another hotel. It's a small industry. Enrolling him/her to a collaborative method for resolving most issues is probably your best bet. You will lose less if you continually expand the options and integrate both of your needs into the solution. Level the personalities to an even playing field by getting the other person to not view you as a threat, but as someone who wants to resolve the issues in a fair manner. Gain their trust, highlight their plight/issues, and use positive non-verbal gestures.

Play to your strengths. I inject humor in most tough scenarios to get me to the other side without alienating my opponent. I like to make them feel more at ease. Find out what works best for you. ■

✦ **Dana Lynn Bernstein, CMP**, has been planning domestic and international meetings for more than 13 years. In addition to a B.A., she earned a CE certificate in hospitality, and a master's degree in legal studies/dispute resolution. She teaches contract law, negotiation, and pre/post conference management, and provides meeting planning, contract review, and budget creation consulting services. She can be reached at (973) 686-3436 or danahornstein@yahoo.com.