

C OLLABORATION – BE CAUTIOUS

Conflicts can be resolved via different strategies, e.g., power techniques, referring to authority, avoidance, compromise, or collaboration. Over the past twenty years, a focus on trying to obtain a “win-win” outcome has encouraged the use of collaboration. Briefly, collaboration is a process whereby each party strives to understand the basic needs and objectives of the other party with each then trying to develop creative proposals for solutions that can meet the needs of each party to the greatest extent possible.

Collaboration is an excellent way to attempt to resolve conflict, however, there are a couple cautions that one must keep in mind. First, collaboration seldom works unless there is a strong, underlying degree of trust between the two parties involved. Second, two parties are required to collaborate. If you make the error of attempting to collaborate with another party who is focused on using either power or negotiation techniques, the probability is high that they will interpret your collaborative gestures as an indication of weakness, i.e., a likelihood that you will eventually concede to their demands if they stay firm. Trying to collaborate as a lone party is akin to having a tug-of-war on roller skates – it just won't work, at least not for you.



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