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D1 - Managing Difficult Conversations Successfully
Michelle Bacca, Convergence Coaching, LLC

It's not you. It's me. At least that's how Michelle Bacca helped us to understand the world of conflict. It makes sense, in any given disagreement, there is only one person we have control over...ourselves. Michelle's presentation focused on recognizing in ourselves how we behave in times of conflict and to leverage that against how it may make others react around us.

Whether you function primarily as: "The Avoider," "The Giver," "The Confronter," or the "Peacemaker," there are a few common threads - no one relishes being in uncomfortable conversations and each one of us has a little of each of the abovementioned characteristics, depending what the circumstances are. We all contain a piece of each outlook.

"The Collaborator" is the outlook we all need to strive to be. You know, the one who helps everyone to play nice. The individual who can help people "just get along" and have everyone walking away feeling like a winner.

Honesty and open-mindedness can get us far in the trek to becoming "The Collaborator." Michelle noted a four-step method to help: Expectation, Observation, Inquiry Question and Stop. These steps help us to be more methodical and use our noodles to diffuse a situation. All too often emotions and feelings get caught up in the mix and can be a serious detriment to conflict resolution.

Along with the four steps, Michelle armed us with a strategy for managing conflict:

1. Define the conflict
2. Commit to discuss the strategy
3. Prepare outline of your view
4. Share your new without blame
5. Stop and listen
6. Share your view of the impacts of the situation
7. Ask for their help in developing solutions
8. Consider putting your understanding in writing

One last thing to ponder is that conflict in and of itself is not a bad thing. Does it make most of us uncomfortable? Yes. Does anyone really enjoy arguing? No. Are there important things at stake? Always. Sometimes its money. Other times it can be things even more important like time with our families, pride and the way we feel, good or bad. Sometimes it's through the difficult conversations that true change occurs. Tough problems are brought to light and sometimes we

even feel better after we broach these uncomfortable conversations with co-workers, family and friends.