

# Leadership Tips for Handling Difficult People

## Aggressor

- ✓ Stay calm and don't take it personally. Give them time to let off steam.
- ✓ Interrupt them if you have to; many Aggressors use up a lot of oxygen in the room as a form of dominance.
- ✓ Differentiate between secure and insecure Aggressors.
  - If they are secure, stand up to the Aggressors. Call their bluff. State your counter opinion clearly and forcefully. They respect those who push back. Practice with you mentor.
  - If you suspect they are insecure, pushing back can make things worse. Avoid a head-on fight. Don't challenge their control. Use a non-verbal process to tactfully challenge them at a process level. Try to draw it on out so you can both look at it together.
  - In either case, be ready to back off your forcefulness when a truce is signaled.

## Know it All

- ✓ The basic approach with Know-It-Alls is to have them look at new options without directly challenging their expertise. They will see direct challenges as attacks.
- ✓ Do your homework. Be prepared and meter out your facts into a logical progression.
- ✓ Acknowledge an expert's legitimate knowledge.
- ✓ Summarize, and then ask extensional questions like, "As you said, the processes were designed for a different purpose. How could they be modified for this situation?"
- ✓ Inject an analytical detour: "Based on what you said, suppose we..."
- ✓ Expect that your good ideas may be owned or co-owned by the 'expert' at the next meeting.

## Negativist

- ✓ Help them distinguish between helpful potential problem analysis, and analysis based on their worst fears (sometimes called "inaction by despair").
- ✓ Avoid getting sucked in to their negativism.
- ✓ Except for the inexhaustible pessimists, set a "Horror Floor." Ask for the worst possible scenario. Don't argue, agree, or propose solutions. Listen and summarize. This will help to drain the energy from them and de-escalate their attitude.
- ✓ Don't confront negativism at the same level it is expressed. Use body language and to challenge at a process level.
- ✓ Be prepared to go it alone or to get support from others.

## Sticklers

- ✓ Do your homework. Show that your ideas are safe. Thoroughly prepare your plans and do a potential problem analysis, showing that you've covered all the bases.
- ✓ Ferret out any policies or procedures and show that your proposal does not violate these.
- ✓ Remember, the deeper issues for Sticklers are safety and looking good in the eyes of co-workers.
- ✓ Help Sticklers to plan and rehearse meetings.

## Indecisive

- ✓ Help Indecisives by surfacing concerns. Make it very safe for them to state reservations about your proposal.
- ✓ When you can, support them with their concerns.
- ✓ Help them problem-solve their concerns.
- ✓ If you suspect that one of their concerns is a lack of confidence in you, make it safe for them to be at least partially direct.
- ✓ It may be possible to take the risk away from the Indecisive by visibly taking full responsibility for any problems with your proposal or recommendation.

