

CareerSmart Advisor™

Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

You might not realize it, but how you manage your biases can have a strong impact on your career. I was recently reminded of that fact.

A few months ago, Pete Weddle wrote an article for his WEDDLE's newsletter about Andrew Zolli, a futurist who helps companies prepare for the challenges of the 21st century. Zolli says there are four biases that are essential to understanding human behavior, all of which play a strong role in how we manage our careers.

Zolli describes the four biases this way:

We bias the personal over the impersonal. We concentrate on that which affects us individually because it most directly affects the extent of our success.

We bias the tangible over the intangible. We focus on that which we can see and/or feel because we believe we have a greater probability of using it effectively.

We bias the present over the past and the future. We devote our attention to today's reality because it's the best way to control what is going to happen to us in the future.

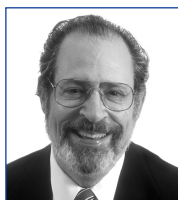
We bias desirability over responsibility. We fixate on that which we enjoy because it is the most direct connection to a meaningful and rewarding life.

Weddle stresses how we need to be aware of the trouble that these biases can cause in our careers. But he notes that we should welcome that knowledge, not fear it. "We can acquire self-knowledge and use that insight to change our direction and reform our biases so that they benefit rather than harm us," Weddle says. "That's my prescription for a healthy and rewarding career." I couldn't agree more.

Sincerely,



Dave Opton
ExecuNet Founder & CEO
www.execunet.com/davesblog



Turning Conflict into Career Success

By Marji McClure

As a leader, your success or failure is determined by what you get accomplished during your tenure. Sometimes, the wins come easily. Other times, they can be hard-fought battles.

No matter where one looks, in the workplace or not, conflict is certainly prevalent. Because people have different and diverse backgrounds — and thus, different ideas and opinions — conflict in both personal and professional lives is inevitable. It can also be quite uncomfortable. As a result, for most people, the natural response is to avoid conflict. In the workplace, many executives echo that response.

In nearly 30 years of research and working with clients, Judith Glaser has found that there are two skill sets that are least developed in human beings: handling difficult conversations (conversations that involve conflict) and asking "what if" questions (questions that transition individuals from conflict into innovative solutions.)

"What we've seen is that people avoid talking about conflict issues, especially those that put relationships in jeopardy, create embarrassment, cause arguments and fights, and end in win/lose," explains Glaser, CEO of New York City-based Benchmark Communications. "To many people, conflict means 'disagreements that are unsolvable.' That is, if they even believe they're facing a conflict.

"Ofentimes, the executive won't even view a particular situation as a conflict when, in fact, it may be," says Stephen Xavier, CEO of Westlake Village, Calif.-based Cornerstone Executive Development Group. "In their eyes, it may be as simple as a need to influence a decision or as dramatic as a flat-out 'fight to the death' with a peer or other individual for a shot at much-needed resources, a need for others to see a very different point-of-view on visions, strategy or direction."

Yet, most of the time, it is conflict that executives are faced with. In a collaborative environment where many ideas are generated and processes are created, conflict will exist. "In organizations that place a high value on innovation and creativity, conflict is bound to occur," says Tim Flanagan, co-author with Craig Runde of *Becoming a Conflict Competent Leader* and *Building Conflict Competent Teams*. "In some ways, it's not just inevitable, but necessary. Executives don't want people who think alike; they need people who think differently. When people think differently, innovations

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Insider Insight

Strategic Recruitment and Retention: Appreciating the True Cost of Voluntary Attrition

By Walter Kuchinski

It may seem out of character for a human resources consulting and executive search firm to stress the importance and critical nature of sound recruitment and retention practices, employee coaching, mentoring and the like. After all, we're in the business of finding great talent for our clients, right?

Well, of course that is true. However, when we speak with clients and hear statements such as "our business is doing well," "our employees are engaged and happy," "turnover is low and running at acceptable levels," we feel those messages resonate within us. Why? Simply because when we *are* called by our clients to fill a specific need, our message to the marketplace becomes a powerful one. It becomes a marketing statement that serves to attract the highest-quality, passive job-seeking talent available.

Someone once said that the marketplace has a long memory. As professionals in acquiring the very best talent available for our clients, we understand, first-hand, how true that quote can be, working in the favor of (or perhaps against) the overall recruiting effort. Generally, one can argue that great organizations have a higher likelihood of attracting great people, but often suffer the same challenges in retention that are faced by other organizations.

However, all organizations can become great in the area of talent recruitment and retention. It's not about "rocket science" or leading-edge contemporary recruiting practices necessarily, but rather the result of sound management practices, being sensitive to and willing to listen to your people, and being action-oriented — ready to do

what is reasonably necessary to keep good people fully engaged and committed. It's about being visible and involved; being interested in helping your people succeed; and recognizing that their success is, inevitably, your success.

Understanding the Impact of Turnover

Management practices, culture, working conditions, internal mobility, business results and succession management practices (to name just a few) are factors that have been frequently cited as having a direct bearing (good or bad) on the overall recruitment and retention experience of an organization. Of course, this is just a partial list.

As leaders, it is safe to say we've all experienced the discord that arises when a valued employee leaves our organizations. Reflecting on those instances, perhaps we noticed when someone's performance dropped off and we wondered why. Certainly it is safe to assume his colleagues and teammates may have noticed some level of disengagement prior to his departure. Perhaps the employee approached us, seeking resolution to the core issue that was fueling his discontent. How did we respond?

When the resignation comes, most often, it is truly too late. Worse perhaps, if we are totally taken off-guard, then we certainly missed some important cues along the way. Perhaps actions could have been taken to avert the employee's decision?

Barring the occasional successful effort to counteroffer an employee, the challenge for the manager now becomes how to refill the position and minimize the loss of intellectual capital associated

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with the staff member's departure.

Depending on the efficiency of the internal recruiting policy and process, and probably budgetary realities as well, the manager will likely experience a significant lag time — just in receiving approval to hire a replacement.

Once approved, there is the predictable cycle of recruiting activities: creating a search strategy; posting the position; evaluating internal candidates; research and sourcing; external candidate prescreening; multiple levels of interviews; final interviews; candidate selection; referencing; background checks; offer negotiation; agreement on a start date; and finally, onboarding. Of course, with national searches, the problem can be compounded with relocation and other related matters.

Once on board, and depending on the complexity of the position, there is the associated learning curve, technical training, procedural orientation and technology considerations. These are all components that directly affect the speed of acclimation to the new position and determine how quickly the new recruit will climb the productivity curve to achieve the expected level of performance. During this period, regular coaching, closely monitoring the degree of integration, observing the effect on the team, and a multitude of other considerations become absolutely essential to help the new hire successfully integrate into the organization.

Research has demonstrated how fragile the first year of employment can be. It is a time for the new recruit to find his way, to learn new functions, to demonstrate his competency, and to justify the decision to hire him. It is also a time to learn what is politically correct in the company, how the culture works, and how to find and connect with others in the organization with which he can readily identify. During this time, the manager should position herself as a pivotal player, helping to guide the new employee in the right direction, to be there providing proper "air cover" and encouraging others to play a mentoring

and integration role.

The search aspect of our business devotes considerable effort in assessing the degree of cultural fit of a candidate, apart from the obvious assessment of technical competencies. We find it is often the "softer elements" that, if not properly weighed, can contribute to candidates becoming seriously derailed, often before they complete their first year on the job. Today, many organizations are increasingly seeking new ways to put more thought into assessing the "degree of fit" of a candidate.

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Whether through testing, assessments or other means, many companies are exploring and investing in new ways to place a higher degree of precision on the overall process of selection.

Of course, the hypothetical departure of one individual described previously is depicted as an isolated case. But what happens when there are two resignations, or when there are even more across the organization? What happens when there is a large departure from a single department? The effect can become seriously compounded, as the associated costs present an enormous problem to manage, with the result potentially having the ability to alter current-year revenue expectations.

The Cost of Turnover

According to studies conducted by Cornell's School of Industrial Relations, it is estimated that the cost of turnover can

easily exceed 30 percent of an employee's annual compensation. The Saratoga Institute quotes a higher estimate, upwards of 150 percent of an employee's annual salary. The Department of Labor weighs in similarly. The consensus of experts working in the field agree, when all relevant factors are taken into account, turnover can easily range from a conservative 50 percent of an employee's annual base compensation to well in excess of 100 percent.

Factors that are typically considered to compute this cost-estimate include:

- Loss of productivity prior to the resignation.
- Length of time the position is left vacant.
- Management and staff time recruiting the replacement.
- Impact on others who may cover during the vacancy.
- Cost of overtime to fill the gap.
- Impact on morale within the department.
- Hard recruiting costs — postings, agency fees.
- Background and referencing fees.
- Payroll and other transaction processing costs.
- Onboarding expense.
- Training costs.
- Period of time required to reach full productivity.
- Performance management and coaching.

Other factors that can escalate this estimate are: the economic value attributed to the loss of intellectual property, the impact on customer service, and impact on growth plans and subsequent new hire costs.

Keep in mind, the above elements are attributable to one resignation. By using whatever criteria may be applicable in our own organizations, we can easily multiply these costs by the total regretted turnover experienced in any given calendar year.

With that accomplished, we begin to appreciate and gauge the magnitude of expense involved. How often do we take replacement hiring for granted and not fully consider the real impact in terms

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arise. So does conflict.”

If you're going to be able to exploit those innovations and make your entire organization successful, you need to be able to deal with the conflict that most often accompanies those great ideas. Plus, the conflict itself can spark new ideas, and executives must be able to recognize those opportunities when they emerge.

“What executives do know for sure is that conflict management is difficult,” says Jim Ramerman, co-CEO of McArdle Ramerman Inc., an executive leadership development firm based in Rochester, NY. “They know that specific conflicts need to be resolved in order to get things done and to move forward. A smaller percentage realize how rare a skill conflict management is and how it can be a career differentiator that separates them from others. Many find out too late that an unmanaged conflict can possibly spin out of control and damage an entire organization and possibly even their own career with it.” Oftentimes, executives don't recognize that strong conflict management skills are among the most important leadership capabilities they can have.

“Unfortunately, according to our research, the ability to manage conflict is one of the important leadership competencies that are in the shortest supply and the most difficult to develop,” says Patrick Costello, client partner with Minneapolis-based LeaderSource, a Korn/Ferry company. One reason that it is so difficult to develop is that conflict management encompasses a variety of leadership capabilities.

“It is a ‘metaskill’ made up of a number of different competencies along with emotional intelligence: self-awareness; empathy; listening skills; composure; ability to read others; building effective teams; and the ability to take the heat,” explains Costello.

Changing Your Outlook

The first step in developing your conflict management skills is to understand that conflict isn't necessarily a bad thing. “Conflict helps to raise and address

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previously unseen problems; it can re-energize focus on the most appropriate issues, and it helps create an environment of openness, participation, and acknowledgment of diverse insights,” says Linda Dominguez, CEO and executive strategist at Executive Coaching and Resource Network Inc. “The conflict itself isn't really the problem. But when the conflict is not managed well, it becomes a problem.”

Experts agree that the next step is to accept that conflict exists. “This requires self-awareness, as sometimes the core conflict is internal within the executive,” adds Dominguez. “Self-awareness allows the executive to clearly and objectively identify the conflict and resolve it (or empower others to resolve it) in the most appropriate way.”

Leaders need to also be able to identify conflict quickly. “Executives need the ability to get a sense of the contours of the conflict as it is unfolding,” says Holly Weeks, author of *Failure to Communicate: How Conversations Go Wrong and What You Can Do to Right Them*. “They need to know their own strengths and weaknesses in dealing with conflict in order to build on the first and offset the second. Most need to get beyond their old habits and develop a repertoire of responses to what is likely to come up in a conflict conversation.”

Runde, director of new program development at The Leadership Development Institute (LDI) in St. Petersburg, Fla., says he and Flanagan use a “Conflict Dynamics Profile” assessment instrument as one way in which to develop this self-awareness. (Flanagan is director of custom programs at LDI.)

The Training Component

Changing your behavior toward conflict isn't easy, and since it is such a challenge, experts agree that training and coaching are necessary. According to Sandi DiMola, director of the Center for the Study of Conflict at Chatham University in Pittsburgh, coaching can help with these basics: using “I” statements, active listening, and distinguishing positions from interests. “The best way to learn conflict management skills, after initial coaching, is to practice,” says DiMola. “In the training that I do, I use a guide to cooperative problem-solving with role plays and exercises that are geared toward showing individuals their approaches to conflict and how those approaches can be modified.” Role-playing and practice are key components of conflict management training. Repetition is crucial in learning these skills.

Glaser notes how her sessions help leaders understand that they shouldn't fear conflict. “There are skills we teach around context-setting, perspective-sharing, deep-listening for needs and understanding as well as asking the ‘what if’ questions,” she says.

Experts agree that this exercise of actually showing executives how to work through an entire conflict process is among the most effective forms of training. “When I mediate conflicts, I insist that part of the process is to learn as we work the conflict through so that the executives involved get a double benefit: the conflict resolved and skills that can be applied throughout one's career,” says Ramerman, author of *Why Dogs Wag Their Tails: Lessons Leaders Can Learn About Work, Joy, and Life*.

When Mediation is Necessary

Another way in which executives can handle conflict within their organization is to get some outside help in the form of an attorney or mediator. Sometimes, gaining the insight and expertise of a third party can be the most effective strategy. Delida Costin, a business attorney in Oakland, Calif., says that lawyers can be especially helpful in various situations, such as when companies “are putting

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a deal together and they don't know how to get from point A to point B," Costin explains. Attorneys listen to both sides and help put solutions in place.

Mediators can also help companies and their executives work through conflict. Costin, recognizing that need, has added mediation to her practice. She notes how as an attorney, she serves as an advocate for her clients; as a mediator, her role is to remain neutral and help both parties reach a resolution. One example of a conflict that requires a mediator, Costin explains, is when two employees are not getting along "and the company is worried about issues escalating into a lawsuit, or the company values both employees to stay and work together," says Costin. After the mediator helps resolve the conflict, he or she continues to follow-up to see if the issues remain resolved.

When It Works

Whether you resolve conflict through coaching techniques or bring in an outside party to facilitate, the end result is a more productive organization: one in which team members can come together to accomplish common goals.

"What I see occurring most consistently and most positively from the actual utilization of constructive conflict is a new way of seeing things by the individual whose thinking has been challenged and, in many cases, the thinking of the entire team can also be swayed and broadened to see and think differently," says Xavier. "It's really all about perspective, isn't it? If handled properly, I'm not trying to 'win' you over. I'm trying to get you to see differently so that you may see something through different eyes."

"By using constructive conflict behaviors, the executive can help promote robust discussion and, at the same time, keep it from becoming negative," adds Runde. "When this happens, new ideas are generated and good decisions are made because various approaches are adequately vetted." The possibilities for new and effective ideas become practically endless, as a truly collaborative environment is

Expert Resources:

- Richard Chang, Richard Chang Associates Inc. (RichardChangAssociates.com)
- Patrick Costello, LeaderSource (LeaderSource.com)
- Delida Costin, The Law Office of Delida Costin (delida@costinlegal.com)
- Linda Dominguez, Executive Coaching and Resource Network Inc. (Executive-Coaching.com)
- Sandi DiMola, Chatham University (StudyConflict.org)
- Tim Flanagan, The Leadership Development Institute (Eckerd.edu)
- Judith Glaser, Benchmark Communications Inc. (CreatingWellInstitute.com)
- Jim Ramerman, McArdle Ramerman Inc. (LeadershipRising.com)
- Marcia Reynolds, Outsmart Your Brain (OutsmartYourBrain.com)
- Craig Runde, The Leadership Development Institute (Eckerd.edu)
- Holly Weeks, Holly Weeks Communication (HollyWeeks.com)
- Stephen Xavier, Cornerstone Executive Development Group (Cornerstone-edg.com)

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Leaders have an opportunity to set a positive example when it comes to handling conflict by addressing it with a positive and welcoming attitude.

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created. It is a culture in which individuals aren't afraid to share their ideas because they know they will receive equal attention.

"When executives enable open, honest, robust debate, previously unimaginable suggestions and solutions become possible," says Flanagan. "Participants in such discussions stay focused on the substance of the ideas instead of the distractions related to criticism, blame or cynicism."

Teams are then more convinced that a resolution in which everyone is comfortable can be reached. "Leaders have an opportunity to set a positive example when it comes to handling conflict by addressing it with a positive and welcoming attitude, as well as working to resolve it with an open and 'win/win' outcome in mind, where possible," adds Chang. "With the appropriate skills, leaders can build upon the opportunities that this diversity provides for the greater good of the teams and organizations they lead."

Leading the Way

Once you, as the leader, understand how to manage conflict and can elicit effective results from the members of your team, the next step is to show what you have learned and teach those team members how to manage conflict themselves. Runde suggests modeling such behaviors for others to see. "This not only shows others how it can be done, but provides them with implicit (or even explicit) permission to use these same behaviors," he says. "They have credibility to champion organization culture change because they are 'walking the talk'."

Organizational psychologist Dr. Marcia Reynolds says that if an executive can create an organization that is self-managed, groups can create their own guidelines for working together, thus enabling them to resolve their own conflicts instead of turning to their leader to do so. "If this is the case, then good training and coaching on conflict management/emotional intelligence skills should be provided for everyone so there is a common language and way of being with each other throughout the organization," adds Reynolds.

Ramerman says that the best leaders study conflicts and develop a consistent approach to dealing with them, such as:

- Remember that change and effective conflict management begins with self.
- Acknowledge and get clear on any fears, anxiety and any "hot spots" that have been triggered by the other person/situation.
- Identify, acknowledge and accept differences: personality, communication

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Your Career Advisor

Building a Proactive Approach to Conflict Management

By Marji McClure

As a leader, you will most likely have to deal with resolving a conflict between two or more individuals at some point during your career. The disagreement could involve a couple of your direct reports who have different ideas about how a project should move forward. Perhaps you will need to mediate when two colleagues are battling for money and attention for their departments' latest initiatives.

Regardless of a conflict's participants, it's up to the leader to help them work out their issues and move on in a way that is productive for both the individuals and the company. How a leader handles that conflict will have a lasting effect on that career — either positive or negative — depending on how the issue is resolved.

Having a plan in place to work toward a resolution can be extremely helpful. Linda Dominguez, CEO and executive strategist at Executive Coaching and Resource Network Inc., suggests following this process:

- **Talk it out.** Each individual simply and professionally explains his view of the problem, along with feelings associated with it, if appropriate, one at a time. Remember to work the issues, not the person. The speaker must be uninterrupted, must not accuse or directly address others during the explanation; the others may take notes but not agree, disagree, roll their eyes or take heavy sighs. Every participant must behave professionally and actively listen.
- **Agree on the definition of the problem.** While this may seem like an obvious step, often different underlying needs, values and goals can cause people to perceive problems very differently. You'll need to agree on the problems you are trying to solve before you'll find a mutually acceptable solution.

- **Brainstorm possible solutions.** If everyone is going to feel satisfied with the resolution, it will help if everyone has had input in generating solutions. Brainstorm possible solutions and be open to all ideas, including ones you never considered before.
- **Negotiate a solution.** At this point, everyone has been "heard," and the conflict may be resolved. Once both sides better understand the position of the other, a mutually acceptable solution may be easily identifiable.

"In choosing and applying the appropriate conflict-resolution strategy, leaders need to keep in mind that the strategy they select should help build PEACE and lead to a resolution," says Richard Chang, CEO of Richard Chang Associates Inc.

Chang explains that the PEACE model for strategy selection includes:

- **P-Postpone** (Delaying the resolution until later).
- **E-Enforce** (Doing whatever it takes to resolve the conflict to your point-of-view).
- **A-Accommodate** (Going along with the other point-of-view).
- **C-Compromise** (Both parties offering to slightly alter their position).
- **E-Explore** (Investigating completely new alternatives).

The Foundation for Conflict Management Skills

In order to become a skilled leader in conflict management, it's crucial to possess certain qualities and abilities that will enable you to handle conflicts that may arise between employees within your organization. Dr. Marcia Reynolds, an organizational psychologist, says that it's important for executives to have the following foundation when working to manage conflict within their organizations:

- **Respect for all employees involved.** Without respect, the employees won't

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How a leader handles that conflict will have a lasting effect on that career — either positive or negative — depending on how the issue is resolved.

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commit to resolving their conflict. With respect, the result of the resolution can lead to even higher levels of productivity and creativity. Respect shows up by not getting emotionally hooked by the conflict. Therefore, a level of emotional intelligence is key. Executives have to be aware when they get angry or frustrated by the conflict, and then know how to release these reactions in order to stay emotionally neutral.

- **The ability to maintain focus on the intended results.** The executive must keep the conversation focused on the results that the parties need and want to create. If both parties are willing to create this result, then every time the conversation turns to blaming and past actions, the executive should redirect the conversation to what actions they are willing to take to obtain the intended result.
- **Personal awareness of non-verbal messages.** The executive needs to know what signals are present in his or her words, tone of voice and gestures. If the tone rings with impatience or the gestures show judgment, then the participants will not feel that the space is safe to fully explore the conflict and possible solutions. ■

Books Worth Your Time: Q&A with Author Ram Charan

The Game-Changer: How You Can Drive Revenue and Profit Growth with Innovation

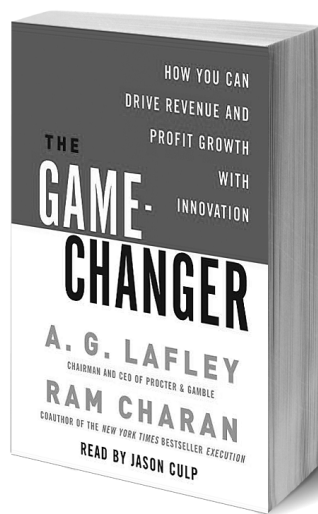
The outline for company success hasn't really changed much over the years. It's a fairly standard formula of creating relevant new products and services and attracting new customers to buy those offerings. If done right, revenues and profit will grow. What A.G. Lafley, chairman and CEO of Procter & Gamble, and Ram Charan, a noted author of several business books (including the bestseller *Execution*) propose in their new book, *The Game-Changer*, is a new way of reaching revenue goals and improving profit margins. They suggest that leaders become more innovative in their approach to running businesses.

In the book, Lafley and Charan define a game-changer, in part, as a "visionary strategist who alters the game his business plays or conceives an entirely new game; a creator who uses innovation as the basis for sustaining profitable organic growth and consistently improving margins; a leader who understands that the consumer, or customer, — not the CEO — is boss."

In this exclusive interview with ExecuNet, Charan explains how executives can create a foundation for success and become effective game-changers within their own organizations.

Q. What are some of the characteristics of a successful game-changer?

A. The first part for any executive leader is to look over the horizon and see what needs to change and decide where to play. That gives you the inspiration for changing the game. The second part is that you are not necessarily the genius who comes up with the most brilliant idea, and any idea is an invention. You must find people and methodology to generate the ideas. You don't have to be the genius. Your ingenuity is the leadership.



Q. Once you have that great idea, what's next? How do you bring it to fruition?

A. Once you find the idea, how do you nurture it to the first moment of truth? The first moment of truth is, will the consumer buy it? The second moment of truth is, will the consumer use it? Will it increase revenues or margins or differentiate? Then, you are a game-changer. Leaders create an environment to find people, to encourage groups, to come up with innovations, to come up with new ideas. Leaders then lead teams and convert those into the first moment of truth, the second moment of truth, then revenues and margins. As an executive, this is what you need to work on.

Q. How is reaching out to customers early in the process a different approach?

A. If you look at the historical perspective, in most companies, the innovation has been linked through the people in technology and R&D. It is their responsibility to come up with these things, and then other people will commercialize

[the idea] and reach the consumer. What we have written is to reverse that process a bit, and say, "That is fine, but we need to get the customer up front in the early stages." That will help increase the success ratio.

Q. How can a leader help a company become more customer-centric?

A. You can't do everything at the same time. Then, start the way we tell you in *The Game-Changer*. Identify those ideas and then get your teams, very early, to interact with the customers — listen to them, observe them, get their input in shaping and nurturing the idea. That's how you become customer-centric. Practice it. You have to act repeatedly.

Q. Who is the champion of the game-changing cause? Does it start with the CEO?

A. If it is a new thing for your company and if it is necessary for your revenue growth, the CEO is the chief innovation officer, as it is at Procter & Gamble, as it is at Apple. It has to start from the chief leaders. They have to demonstrate the behaviors. They have to practice it. They have to show this. They have to allocate the time. People have to see them doing it. It will enable them to go very fast after that.

Q. What's the first step in becoming a game-changer? And once you're known as a game-changer, how does this affect your future career opportunities as a leader?

A. Pick one project and do it. You will learn a lot. It will give you a lot of confidence and then you can just scale it up. You'll build a career. People will see you as an innovator; that you get ideas from others and you convert them to revenues. You will have a positive career. ■

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style, cultural.

- Identify one's own needs, interests and values in this situation.
- Identify the needs, interests and values of others involved in the conflict.
- Identify any institutional/system forces (policies, broader dynamics) that are factors in this conflict.
- Work to achieve win/win results for both the individuals and the organization while maintaining working professional relationships.

Creating such a conflict competent culture should be the ultimate goal for

executives. "A leader has remarkable power to model and create a culture of respect in an organization: self-respect characterized by people who can hold their own, but also own what they do, and respect for counterparts characterized by the idea that 'We're two human beings who are not now in accord — we're in this together' instead of a win-or-lose battle for control," says Weeks. "Such a culture doesn't ignore or undermine power differences but, in managing conflict where reputations, relationships and viable outcomes are at stake, power moves to the background, and respect comes to the foreground."

Xavier advises leaders to encourage colleagues to keep critical issues in the forefront for discussion. "Discourage

'side-bars' and water cooler talk on key issues," says Xavier. "Tough issues never get resolved when discussed to the exclusion of the party affected."

Runde says that he and Flanagan have spoken with many leaders who said that they would have preferred to have learned conflict management skills earlier in their careers. "They routinely say they would have been more successful and have risen higher if they had known how to deal with conflict," says Runde. "From an organizational effectiveness standpoint, we strongly believe that organizations won't deal effectively with conflict unless the leaders develop their personal conflict competence and champion organization-wide competence." ■

Insider Insight

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of total expense, consequences to the bottom line and the like?

The Positive Side of Turnover

Of course, not all turnover is bad. In fact, a moderate level of churn in an organization can be quite healthy. It can present the opportunity to bring in fresh perspectives, upgrade bench strength, energize teams, enhance revenue, along with consolidate structures and processes.

Turnover, at least regretted turnover, can be detrimental in many respects, often having a financial impact that goes far beyond the obvious. Organizations need to appreciate the impact of this part of the people equation, and, where warranted, periodically "go up to 10,000 feet" and take a hard look at what is

happening back on the ground.

We've also made the case for creating efficiency in the recruitment process. How is the process currently managed? Can it be fine-tuned? Is it candidate-friendly? Are you always in the market? Are you finding the right people? Are you assessing them correctly? Are they staying, and do they refer their friends and colleagues? Recruiting is a dynamic process that is constantly undergoing evolution and change, with the demand for "A" players becoming increasingly competitive. How you differentiate yourself from your competition becomes crucial in how you will be viewed by candidates, and it ultimately determines how successful you will be in attracting them.

And, once on board, companies have to guard this talent and protect it for

what it is — an integral, valuable, scarce resource that can easily be taken away if we don't do the right things, nurture that talent, providing an environment that is conducive to growth and career advancement. If we don't do it — someone is always ready to step up and take our place. ■

Walter Kuchinski, founder of Diversitas, a multi-faceted human capital solutions provider based in Charlotte, NC. The firm helps organizations plan for succession, retain their key talent and recruit new leadership. Diversitas also helps organizations assess and refine their overall recruitment strategy, tools and processes, providing pragmatic, value-driven solutions to optimize performance, profitability and results. Kuchinski can be reached via the company website at Diversitas.us or 704-341-8670.

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Founder & CEO: David Opton

Executive Editor: Lauryn Franzoni

Editor-in-Chief: Robyn Greenspan

Editor: Marji McClure

Copy Editor: Carol Hamilton

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ExecuNet
295 Westport Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06851
Phone: (800) 637-3126
E-mail: info@execunet.com



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