

Howard M. Guttman—“Achieving Positive Outcomes from Leadership Conflicts”

Howard M. Guttman, principal of Guttman Development Strategies, Inc. and author of the new AMACOM book *When Goliaths Clash, Managing Executive Conflict to Build a More Dynamic Organization*, told his AMA Forum audience that a leader’s ability to understand and weather conflict is now more crucial than ever.



Howard Guttman told the Forum audience that managing conflict is the key to leadership success.

He explained, “Conflict management is the ‘make it or break it’ core competency for success. If you want to be a player, you have to push the limits of the status quo, which naturally creates conflict. It gets tricky, because you have to do it without alienating people. If people like you, (that is, if you manage conflict well) they’ll help you succeed. If you alienate them, they’ll look for ways to torpedo you.”

When conflict occurs, said Guttman, the parties involved have four choices in how to handle it:

1. Confront (address the issue openly and objectively)
2. Change (move off, “let it go”)
3. Leave (physically remove oneself from involvement)
4. Play victim (act powerless, complain)

Any of the first three choices, said Guttman, can be effective in the right situation. But he cautioned that “playing victim” breeds discontent and dysfunction, with the potential for explosive results in the workplace. Guttman encourages his clients to choose to confront issues for the sake of dynamic, effective work relations. He focuses on a four-stage process to help them move from stage one, where there is denial of conflict, through the high-performance achievement of stage four, where team and individual goals are clearly defined and the participants feel comfortable dealing with conflict. Guttman emphasized that this process usually takes about a year to complete.

AMACOM, originally the publishing division of the American Management Association (AMA), specialized in producing practical resources on business topics, including management, leadership, and professional development. In 2018, AMACOM was acquired by HarperCollins Publishers and became an imprint of HarperCollins Leadership. This transition allowed AMACOM to continue offering valuable content under the HarperCollins Leadership umbrella.