



Getting to Yes

How to be a Functioning, Effective and Respectful Council

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We are Human Resources Consultants who can help you with projects like compensation reviews, policy creation, workplace investigations, and all the other HR stuff that bogs down your Municipality's productivity.

I have been a Human Resources Consultant for five years but, being a middle child growing up in a family business, I have been negotiating, debating, and learning leadership lessons for my entire life.

So, the topic today is, essentially, how to be nice. Sounds easy, but they allocated an hour so I am going to take it.

I know that all of you are looking around the room and hoping that someone else you know is present so that they can hear this and they can change and then your life in the Council chamber will be better for them realizing the error of their ways.

I am sorry to say that you cannot change other people. The only thing you can change is your own thoughts.

I am going to try to stay on the business side of self-help wisdom today although I am a former bookseller so if you would like some recommendations "for a friend" I can certainly supply them for you after this talk.



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Where does disrespect come from?

What subtle techniques do people use to attack someone?

- Eye rolling.
- Side whispering.
- Looking at cellphone.
- Calling people nicknames.
- Various actions that make people feel discounted.



Okay we are going to start with the bad and move to the good.

Sometimes disrespect is loud and in your face, but disrespect can chip away at someone through small acts over time. This is a tiny list but the examples are endless – AND not productive.

If you are doing these things, stop.

Being nice has an ulterior motive. If you are nice then people like you and want to do things with you and for you. When you approach the world with an open mind and a respectful manner it is AMAZING how people will respond! You will be happier, too, so it is a win-win.

Why come out of a meeting thinking: “wow, my well-placed eye roll really derailed her train of thought” when you could come out thinking about collaboration, renewal, and shared drive. That has got to be better for you and for your municipalities.

Remember, if you cannot brag to your grandmother about your actions, you probably should be pulling up your socks and changing your ways.

Rules for Meetings

Why have rules at all?

- In order to preserve the group's **freedom to act**, there must be imposed regulation.
 - Geared towards getting the business done
 - Resolving issues along the way
- Most important is to make sure this is all done fairly to **everyone taking part** in the process.
- It is the **rules of conduct** that keep control in meetings.
- Ensure that **everyone understands** the rules and agrees to abide by them!



Okay, so how do we get there?

We will never get anywhere if we are pulling against one another. The pie shrinks when we are throwing chunks of it at each other. It is a much rosier picture to work together to make a second pie so everyone can get their share.

How?

Review and make sure your rules are clear. Review frequently and perhaps every meeting if need be. Orient new councilors to your rules.

Obey the rules of order so there is a baseline of respect and use that to find common ground to negotiate.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY PERSON TO ACCESS THE GROUP'S WISDOM AT THE TABLE.

Rules for Meetings

- Maintain **order and trust**.
- Give people the floor so they can talk **without interruption**.
- **Speech limits** – allow for a certain number of times and duration for a single meeting.
- Who gets precedence.
- Stick to the subject.
- Debate issues, not personalities.
- Formalities that use titles rather than people's first names.



Credit: Henry Robert III, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised in Brief*

It may seem that meeting rules are a thin veneer on the chaos of humanity but it is a gatekeeper that has been proven to hold down decorum.

Speech limits control how long someone can talk for but also necessitate that people plan their speeches and their time. They need to get to the point and the back and forth cannot go on forever.

Rules ensure that those who have not spoken yet have an opportunity before someone speaks for a second time. It also allows the person bringing forward the motion to speak first, hopefully providing answers even as the debate is getting started.

The gavel may bang if you veer off topic. This is helpful as a decision may need to be made, preferably before dinnertime.

Be careful when responding to a motion. While an opponent's reasoning may be questioned, there cannot be any personal attacks.

Set accountability at the start by putting goals and times on your meeting agenda so everyone stays on track.

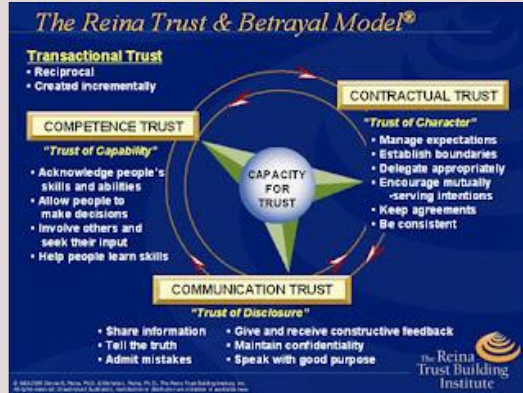
Keeping it formal by using Official titles rather than first names. This is the one that often seems a bit silly but it is a good reminder of the formality of the meeting, and does go a long way towards maintaining a bit of distance – hopefully that can keep the personal attacks out of the debate.

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When I got married, I got two pieces of advice: 1) never go to bed angry, always talk it out. 2) Sometimes you need call it a night and tackle it when you are not exhausted.

Both have turned out to be great advice. I can say for meetings, sometimes it is great to lock everyone in a room until a decision is made but, if the meeting is falling into personal attacks and betraying relationships, it might be time to hit pause.

The Trust & Betrayal Model



Credit: Dennis Reina PhD and Michelle Reina PhD: *Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace: building effective relationships in your organization*

It can be said that trust is the most important ingredient for a successful council. Trust takes a long time to earn and can be broken in an instant.

There are three types of trust that spin the wheel to increase the capacity for trust.

Reina and Reina have spent years in corporate America consulting on building trust and honouring relationships in the business world. Their lessons are universal, however, and Municipalities can use them to build effective relationships as well.

To rebuild trust, focus on these 6 things:

- Be consistent
- Encourage mutually serving intentions
- Share information
- Admit mistakes
- Acknowledge others skills and abilities
- Involve others and seek input

How to Access Group Wisdom

- **Respect** where people come from
- Try to **understand** other people's approach to debate
- Actively **listen**
- **Take notes**



Pay attention and try to understand where your colleagues are coming from and why. Understanding where people are coming from and why they react in certain ways can help cut through the emotions and get to the central issue.

Respect different backgrounds and allegiances - acknowledge that the commitments your fellow Councillors have made to their constituents may be different from your own.

Take notes - When you take notes in meetings it forces you to listen and ask for clarification on what others are saying rather than letting your mind jump forward to your reflex response.

Who knows the truth?

- We are all experts in our own version of truth.
- Everyone is working for their own version of the common good...and how to get there.
- Do not focus on flaws at the start.
- The opposite of one great truth is another great truth.
- The world is fascinating and diverse with many perspectives. Be curious.



Truth is in the mind of the beholder.....we are all experts in our own versions of truth.

When I was growing up, I loved reading upside down fairy tales which are the classic stories told from the bad guy's point of view.

Take the three little pigs, (we all know there can be multiple truths about housing developments)... anyway.

In the wolf's truth, it all happened because the wolf was baking a birthday cake for his grandma and needed to borrow a cup of sugar from a neighbour. He just made the mistake of sneezing at really inopportune moments.

The End.

I will leave you with these thoughts on TRUTH:

- 1) What if instead of saying "That is not true" you said instead "that is one way of looking at it". How would that change the conversation?
- 2) The easiest kind of critical comment is a negative one. When criticism is the first step in a dialogue it stops the conversation completely. If you can hear them out, understand their stance, you may be able to make a suggestion and grow their idea rather than stomping on it.
- 3) If your colleague perceives that something is a problem, it is true in their mind so you have to deal with it, even if they are wrong.
- 4) When you are in conflict with someone, ask yourself these two things:
Why would a reasonable person be acting like that? What role might I have played?
The truth may be somewhere in those answers.

Active Listening

Pick some **active listening** phrases that you like and use them as often as you can.

"Can you tell me more?"

"Let me make sure I have got this right."

"Why? What would you like to see happen?"

"I can appreciate why you feel that way."

"It sounds like you are saying..."

"I have noticed that you..."

"That's rough. How can I help?"



Active listening is a type of communication that requires conversational participants to fully focus on, comprehend, and answer what is being said to them.

I know you have been told these things before but, since no one uses them, I am telling you again!

The internet is full of these phrases so take some time to find some that match your style. Colleagues will be suspicious of you if you come to the next Council meeting speaking like an Active Listening robot. Make them your own so you sound genuine and, also, really actually be interested in what other people are saying.

One other caveat, all of these phrases are lovely when said with an open mind and respectful manner. They can, however, be as nasty as swearing if they are said with sarcasm or malicious intent.

Again, be nice.

“Please say a bit more about that.”



- Initially, **be an inquirer** rather than an advocate.
- Engage in **parallel thinking**.
- **Refrain** from **judgement**.
- Honour **different perspectives**.



In essence you need to be interested in other people and draw out their opinions and thoughts.

Edward de Bono invented something called Parallel Thinking and I encourage you to try it at your next Council meeting:

I quote: “A good conversation employs a kind of parallel thinking where ideas are laid down alongside each other, without any interaction between the contributions. There is no clash, no dispute, no true/false judgement. There is instead a genuine exploration of the subject from which conclusions and decisions may then be derived.”

If you take away one thing from this talk, I hope it is that you do not have to form and express opinions at all times about absolutely everything, at least not until you have heard the other people’s facts first.

Look inside yourself



- Banish your own quick negative reactions.
- You are emotionally invested in your work, how do you make that a positive force?



Find your own tricks to stop your knee-jerk negative thoughts and emotions. They are not productive and are harmful to others and to your own wellbeing.

Here are some examples – open your heart and really consider if I am talking about YOU:

All or nothing thinking - You see things as either/or. If a solution isn't perfect, you can't accept it.

Discounting the positive - You reject positive ideas because of who put the idea forward.

Emotional reasoning - You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are or how others think

Jumping to conclusions - You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion and it's hard to change your mind

Magnification - You exaggerate the importance of your issue and/or solution and minimize others

Mental filter - You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively,


Overgeneralization - use words such as 'always' or 'never'- this closes you off to new ideas

Labeling others - attach a negative label to your colleagues. This leads to anger and will colour your relationships


You joined Council because you wanted to make your Municipality a better place. What you do is hard work. You certainly cannot please everyone but you can, even as you make tough decisions, build mutual respect and caring with those in your community. Remember that being on Council requires long term relationship building. A single win where you steamroller over your colleagues will not lead to long term success.

Again, be nice.

Recipe for Harmony



- Paraphrase what you are hearing
- Listen
- Paraphrase again
- Ask for a potential solution or ask “how can I help?”
- Give an honest apology, if warranted



When someone is yelling, it is hard not to get your emotions amped up as well. However, when you are listening to understand, you are directing your attention to what they are trying to say.

Paraphrasing is to repeat back to someone what you think they are saying. This method is especially helpful because if someone is overinflating their case, when you repeat it back to them, often they walk their position back. This is especially useful when they are using words like ALWAYS and NEVER because, really, those positions often come from a place of pure emotion, not logic.

When you are paraphrasing you are de-escalating the situation, you are not even saying your own opinion on the issue. And people love it because when someone is yelling it is because they do not feel heard. By paraphrasing, you are telling them you are actively listening.

Intentions and Consequences

- Try to figure out your own motivations.
- Ask to learn what the intentions and consequences are for the others at the table.



As you think about the decision that needs to be made, think about what outcome you need to fulfill your own intentions and the consequences you may face if you do (or don't) get your way. Often these are strong hidden motivators for behaviour – fear of losing face, not wanting to deliver bad news to a Ratepayer, feelings that you are being disrespected. They all come out in our interactions.

Think carefully about the other person's intentions and consequences that are motivating them. It is best to ask them what they are rather than assume.

Remember that as Counsellors you are all representing diverse stakeholders. You cannot know where allegiances are if you do not know the intentions and consequences for each person. We have all felt bound to our word in an unpopular choice. Help each other through these inevitable tough spots. Even acknowledging when someone is in a tight squeeze can build trust, whether or not it helps reach a decision.

Again, be nice.

Leader as Facilitator

Questions to break through an impasse in a group:

- What kind of **outcome** are we after?
- What is the **emotional tone** of the group at this moment?
- What are the **values we want** to use in making this decision?
- In light of these values, what is the **decision** of the group?
- How can we link two people's **ideas** together?
- What are the **next steps**?



Credit: R. Brian Stanfield, *The Art of Focused Conversation*



Leaders in 2022 are no longer charismatic decision-makers but are now Questioners who access the Wisdom of the group.

Who is doing this at your council table? Could this help in bringing issues forward before things get heated?

The key is to get all of the hidden information out before a decision is made so it can be accounted for.

Following a set of questions as you work through the elements of an issue can bring much more to light than having a bunch of people on their own soapboxes.

Pre-Think, Don't Pre-Plan

ISSUE SHEET
Issue
Impact on Organization
Potential Solutions
Recommended Solutions
Rationale
Decision/Action

- When preparing for a decision making discussion, use an issue sheet to **brainstorm multiple solutions**.
- It helps to **structure your thoughts** and give a logical presentation of your ideas, cost and impact.
- **Come ready for questions** and be prepared to alter, adapt, merge or discard your idea in response to what is presented at the meeting.



Now that you have carefully acknowledged the opinions of others at the table, you can bring forward your own ideas. They should be researched and sound in order to present to Council but that does not make your idea the only option.

An Issue Sheet helps to structure your thoughts and give a logical presentation of your ideas. Put more than one solution down so you are not pushing an ultimatum.

Remember, when someone is questioning everything you say, embrace it. It is your chance to explain yourself, to say why you are suggesting it, and to provide them with a deeper understanding. It is good to ask questions. Welcome them.

Be ready to adapt. If you hear something great, try and see whether you can incorporate, merge or discard your own suggestion in favour of something that will be in the best interest of the Municipality.

This process can take time. However, time spent at the beginning getting all on side will pay dividends later as the cascading decisions that inevitably flow for any project will be easier if the initial buy-in was universal.

Social Astuteness

- Possessing **astute observation**
- Keen **sensitivity to diverse social situations** and understanding these interactions
- Accurate **understanding of behaviour** (your own and others)
- High level of **self awareness**
- High level of **ability to deal with others**



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Social Astuteness, you probably know this as Emotional Intelligence but I am trying to trick you into reading the side and just not think – I know that already. Because this is where it gets tough because this work is never done.

Watch, listen, think before you speak, speak, listen again.

Be open minded and have a respectful manner. Be welcoming of difference and meet people where they are. Make people feel heard and they may just listen to what you have to say.

Again, Be nice.

Interpersonal Influence

- A graceful, **easy personal style** enabling you to exert influence on others.
- Ability to be **flexible and adapt** style.
- Ability to **focus** on the overall objective.
- Ability to remain **emotionally detached**.
- **Obtain support** from individuals higher up or create coalitions of peers.



Interpersonal Influence is essentially charm.

This is where all the hard work that I have asked you to do will pay its dividends. If you can make people feel understood and included while keeping your overall objective in sight, this means that you are being nice WHILE moving the Municipality forward.

Make yourself calm, cool and collected, focus on those around you, and you will have a magnanimous personality and attract trust and respect.

It is hard work though, being adaptable while maintaining your eye on the vision is exhausting.

Improving Social Astuteness and Interpersonal Influence

- Think about the needs of others, **what do they need** in exchange for carrying out your wishes.
- Need to appeal to the **common good** for all parties.
- Think about how **your request impacts on others**, think about what they need, try to find something that would interest them to act.
- How can you **link your ideas together** with others to create an outcome that all can support?
- What can be done to **make them feel good**?



You must always take into account who you are speaking to and how they might respond:

If you are too honest, you can hurt feelings, bruise egos or release information accidentally

If you say something the wrong way to the wrong person, they might “go after” you

The wrong language in a public meeting or email can give someone ammunition to sabotage you

As always, here are your questions when you are in conflict with someone:

Why would a reasonable person be acting like this?

What have I done to create this situation?

Now we can add:

How can I link together with this person to create an outcome that we can all support?

What can be done to make them feel good?

Holding People to Account

- Reduce a broken commitment down to one sentence.
- Then use CPR:
 - **Content** – what happened that needs to be held accountable?
 - **Pattern** – is there a history of things that makes this occurrence worse?
 - **Relationship** – What is in danger long term? (loss of trust? doubt of person's competency?)



Credit: Patterson et al., *Crucial Accountability*



Now we are going to change gears here because I do not want to leave you with the impression that if someone is disrespectful, that you should just take it. So, let's talk about what to do when people betray your trust or exhibit bad behaviour. You do not have to take it, but you do have to hold them to account in a way that does not compromise your professionalism.

Here is a method of holding someone accountable without saying something equally insulting back. It is a way to assert yourself without regretting your actions.

If you can calmly show someone the Content, Pattern and Relationship elements of their behaviour, they will see the bigger picture, understand that you are unimpressed, and set expectations for future conduct. They may try to dismiss it but stick to these steps to make yourself heard.

For Example, if someone interrupts you continuously, take them aside and say: "I felt diminished when you cut me off in the meeting today. It has happened in three of the last five meetings and I am worried about my ability to appear competent in front of the group."

Listen to their response and if they do not come up with their own solution, provide your expectations for future interactions.

I will break the elements down on the next slides so you can see how the process works.

Accountability CPR

“C” is for Content



- Work to make sure that you are asking the proper questions.
- Why would a reasonable person be acting like this?



C is for Content.

Speak to your personal experience of what recently occurred and describe it from your point of view.

Pay attention to your tone of voice – be sure it doesn't sound sarcastic or accusatory

Do not make the other party a villain. They have a reason for acting as they do, even if the reason is they are completely unaware of their effect on other people. Before you approach, spend a minute attempting to work out reasonable explanations. Remember the question: Why would a reasonable person do this?

People rarely set out to be malicious. Self-serving, certainly.

You should also consider whether it is worth bringing up. If you can put it down to a bad day and are able to shake it off now that you have calmed down, consider whether you should drop it. In all human interactions we have to pick our battles. It takes emotional energy to speak up.

However, if it was awful or has been a happening with frequency, it needs to be addressed. The next slide on Pattern will help with this decision.

Accountability CPR

“P” is for Pattern



- Make sure you are clear about the history
- Only speak from personal experience
- Have specific examples



P is for Pattern.

This is where you can delve into the history of what has been happening. Laying out several instances of similar behaviour will strengthen your case. Do not lay them all out in grand detail but do give a highlight reel speaking from your own experience.

Please make sure that the pattern and examples are all from your first-hand experience and do not exaggerate but be specific.

Accountability CPR

“R” is for Relationship



- Informing the other party of what could be lost if trust and accountability is not restored



R is for Relationship.

The last piece of CPR is to inform the other party of what you feel could be lost if they continue to act in the same way. It could be they could lose future opportunities to cooperate or you can all be perceived by rate holders as dysfunctional.

Try to speak to them one on one, going through these steps, Content, Pattern, Relationship. talking about how they made you feel, giving a brief history of their behaviour towards you, and an expressed concern that the relationship will be damaged long term will hopefully awaken them to their poor behaviour and allow you to reset expectations.

When someone treats you poorly, you feel vulnerable, I know it is hard but remember, the only behaviour you can change is your own. Go back to thinking about your social astuteness and interpersonal influence. This is a way to ensure you are setting expectations for your fair treatment without resorting to slinging the mud back in their direction.

Dealing with Pushback

- **Rise above** a confrontational response and remain calm.
- **Pause and consider** the desired outcome of the conversation.
- Keep an **even, matter of fact and firm voice** when it is time to speak.
- **Seek to understand**, discover the true issue or true intentions of the pushback.
- **Consult** your policies or procedures to address this issue, or request further support from your leadership or HR team.



CPR is useful but it usually needs to wait until you can gather yourself and prepare the accountability conversation.

This slide has some tips for what you can do in the moment. It may not feel as satisfying to “pause and consider” in the heat of the moment rather than yelling back but, long term, you will be a better adult, have less regrets, and will be consistently building your social astuteness and interpersonal influence.

Always know, too, that, like the advice from my bridal shower to just go to bed rather than keep fighting, you can stop the interaction whenever it is spiraling downwards or it is not productive.

Reflect



Reflect on your own behaviour

- What are you currently doing that is contributing to disfunction?
- What you can do better at your next meeting?

Remember, Getting to Yes is the only way you will have a functioning, effective and respectful Council.



I know that it is hard to hear that the only person you can fix is yourself. But it is true. Socrates knew it, and we all have to live with it.

Reflect on your own behaviour and see if there are not ways past a barrier that everyone on Council can stomach.

You work hard for your community. Guess what? The person sitting beside you does, too. That is your common ground. Be curious, be open, and be adaptable, be respectful.

But, above all, be nice.



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