

# The Synthesis of Conflict Management and Employee Engagement

Presenters

Linda Stracke  
Federal Senior Executive/  
Executive Leadership Coach

Michael West  
Executive Leadership Coach/  
Dispute Resolution Professional

# Objectives

- ❑ Understand the concepts of conflict management and employee engagement
- ❑ Understand the neuroscience of employee engagement and conflict
- ❑ Explore how synthesizing conflict management and employee engagement can promote organizational effectiveness

# Opposition v. Conflict

## OPPOSITION



op'po•si'tion—n. 1.  
Resistance,  
contradiction,  
contrast, differences...



*Some of the most  
creative ideas come  
from the synergy  
of opposition.*

*does not  
necessarily  
equal*

## CONFLICT



con•flict'—n. 1. A sharp  
disagreement or collision  
in interests, ideas and/or  
principles... resulting in  
emotional disturbance...



*When a person's sense  
of self-worth is  
perceived to be  
threatened or at risk.*

# Conflict Management

- Conflict management
- Conflict prevention
- Conflict resolution
- Understand the concept of conflict preferences

# Conflict Management

The practice of recognizing and dealing with opposition (and/or conflict) in a rational, balanced and effective way.

Conflict management implemented within a business environment usually involves effective communications, problem resolving abilities and good negotiating skills to restore the focus to the organization's overall goals.

# Conflict Prevention

*“any structural or intercessory means to keep tension and disputes from escalating, and to progressively reduce the underlying problems that produce these issues and disputes.”*

# Conflict Prevention

- ❑ Direct prevention
  - measures that are aimed at preventing short-term, often imminent, escalation of a potential conflict
  
- ❑ Structural prevention
  - focuses on long-term measures that address the underlying causes

# Conflict Resolution

Is it more than “mediation”?

- Conciliation
- Conflict Coaching
- Facilitation
- Facilitated dialogue
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



# Conflict Preferences

## Management Preferences

- Avoid
- Accommodate
- Collaborate
- Compete
- Compromise

Thomas Kilmann

# Employee Engagement

## OPM Definition

*“The employee’s sense of purpose that is evident in their display of dedication, persistence and effort in their work or overall attachment to their organization and mission.”*

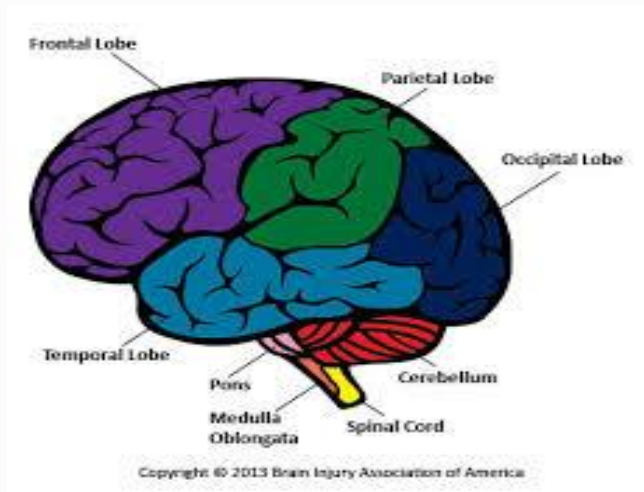
# Employee Engagement

The interplay among three factors:

- purpose
- trust, and
- discretionary effort and interest in the results

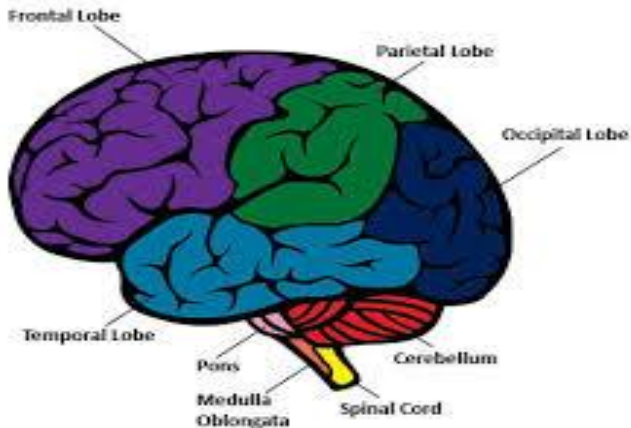
Jan Hills, Founder, Head Heart + Brain

# Neuroscience of Engagement



- ❑ The engaged brain
- ❑ The disengaged brain

# Neuroscience of Engagement



Copyright © 2013 Brain Injury Association of America

Relationship with the immediate supervisor is the strongest of all drivers of employee engagement

# Neuroscience and Conflict

- ❑ Reasoned persuasion alone is seldom sufficient to convince a party in conflict of the logic of mediating.



- ❑ There is no initial neuro-chemical inducement to negotiate
- ❑ The first response of most people to a real or perceived threat is an emotional one, triggered neuro chemically in the brain, to either fight, flee the situation, or freeze.

# “S.C.A.R.F.”

- Status
- Certainty
- Autonomy
- Relatedness
- Fairness

*“ ...in agencies where there are more employees filing complaints, there may not be the same level of engagement that is fostered in agencies where employees file fewer complaints.”*

Source: EEOC Complaint Data, Annual Report on the Federal Workforce Fiscal Year 2005



*There is “a statistically significant negative correlation between the number of employees who file an EEO complaint in an agency and the agency’s average level of employee engagement.”*

The higher employee engagement score, the fewer number of employees file EEO complaints.

Source: 2008 MSPB Report. The Power of Federal Employee Engagement

# Commonly Heard

- ❑ *“I was denied training.” (Q: 47)*
- ❑ *“I don’t feel I am listened to and so I filed an EEO complaint.” (Q: 48)*
- ❑ *“It isn’t fair the way I was treated. I don’t know why I was treated this way. It must be because.....” (Q: 49)*

# 7 Levels of Effectiveness

Synchronicity

Innovation

Engagement

Courage

**Frustration**

**Fear**

**Hopelessness**

# Question?

How often is “relationship” a part of the conflict?



# 7 Levels of Effectiveness

Synchronicity

Innovation

**Engagement**

Courage

Frustration

Fear

Hopelessness

# Leader Competencies

Functional

Technical

**Relational**

**Emotional**

**Conversational**

Language relates to conversations and relationships.

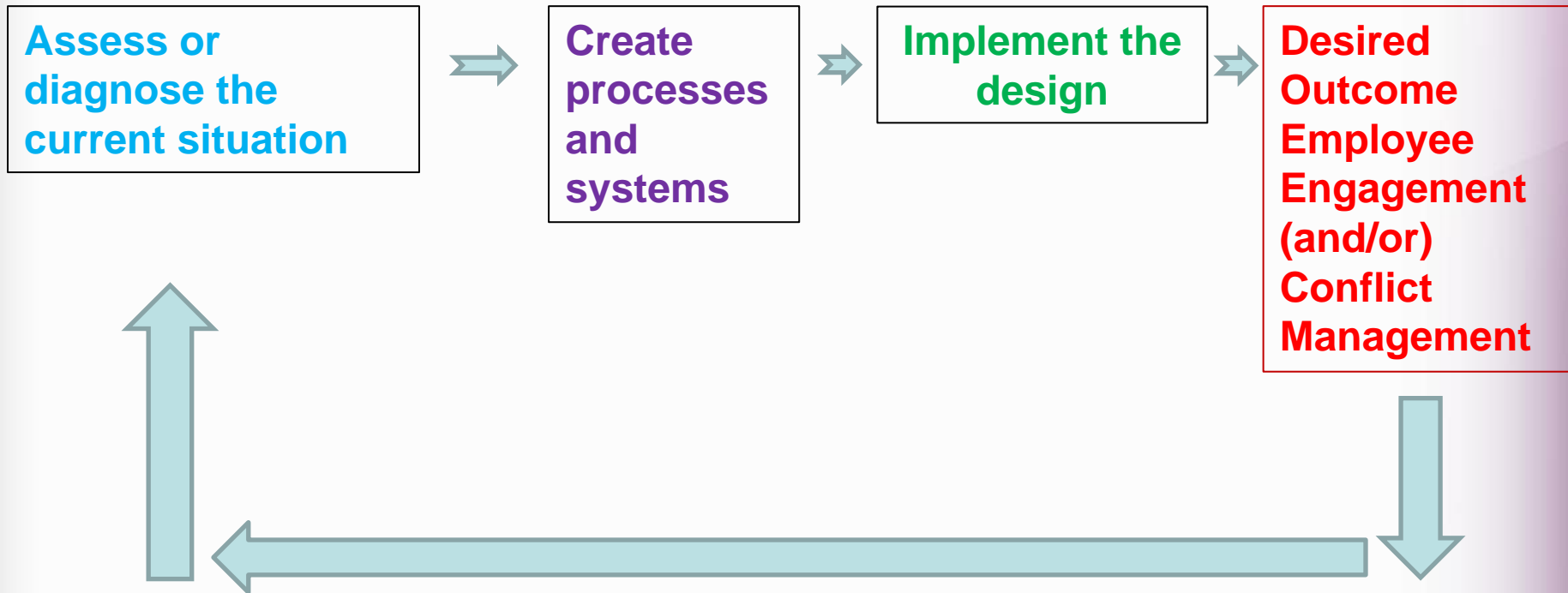
The quality of language = quality of  
conversations = depth of relationships



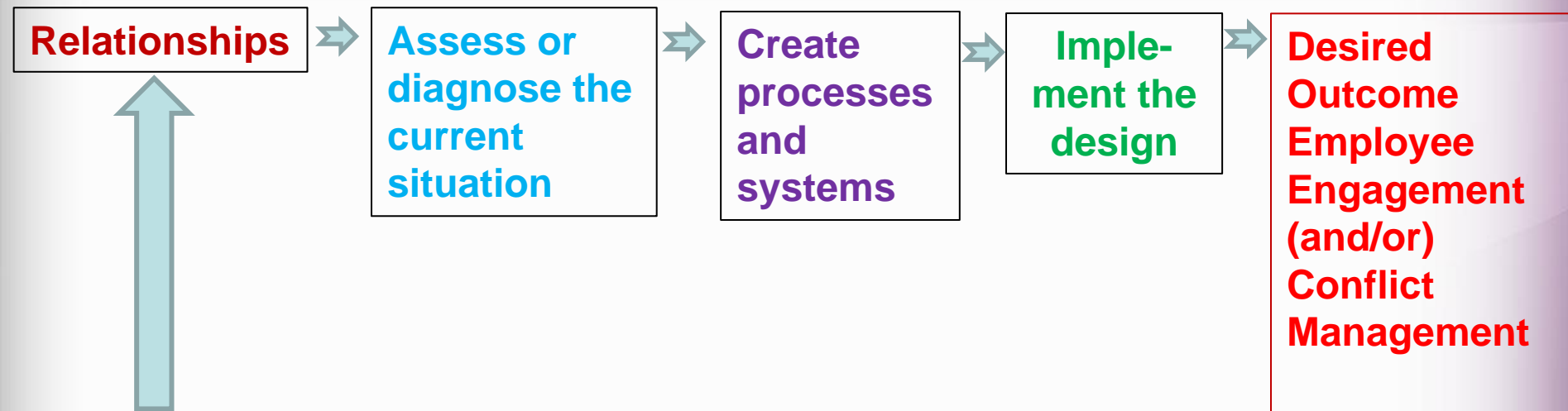
Relationships provide the foundation for what can be achieved by an organization through its people.

Extraordinary results are created by creating  
extraordinary relationships

# What We Typically Do



# What Can We Do Instead



**The missing – essential component – to engaging the employee is:**

**RELATIONSHIPS**

# What Are We Suggesting?

- Develop the soft skills with the hard skills.
- Know your yourself.
- Know your people.
- Increase the level of dialogue.
- BUILD THE RELATIONSHIPS!**

# What Are We Suggesting?

- ❑ Broaden the scope of conflict management and employee engagement to the relationship level.
- ❑ Create a holistic approach to conflict through the choice of more than one ADR option.
- ❑ Create a support system that links conflict management and employee engagement.

“In organizations, real power and energy is generated through relationships. The patterns of relationships and the capacities to form them are more important than tasks, functions, roles, and positions.”

Margaret Wheatly, *"Leadership and the New Science"*

# Questions/Thoughts?





# References

*Five Ways Neuroscience Can Improve Your Engagement Results.* Jan Hills, Founder, Head Heart + Brain

*Language and the Pursuit of Leadership Excellence.* Chalmers Brothers and Vinay Kumar

*Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World.* Third Edition. Margaret Wheatly

*Neuroscience of Engagement.* David Rock

*The Seven Levels of Personal, Group and Organizational Effectiveness.* BEabove Leadership. [www.beaboveleadership.com](http://www.beaboveleadership.com)

*2008 MSPB Report. The Power of Federal Employee Engagement*