

Teams Fear Conflict

In another column I spoke of the level of player accountability when behaviours from others in our team are unsatisfactory. I said it allowed passive members to survive.

Unfortunately, conflict is considered taboo in many situations.

I reckon confrontation is a better term: conflict infers fighting whereas confrontation infers honesty in communication.

We can distinguish between ideological conflict and conflict that is destructive fighting and interpersonal politics.

Ideological conflict you could say is directed to concepts and ideas – as such invariably it avoids personality-focused and mean-spirited attacks.

Yet, teams that avoid ideological conflict seem to do so in order to avoid hurting team members' feelings – and they end up encouraging emotional and negative tension.

Members of a team that have a fear of conflict...

- Create environments where back-channel politics and personal attacks thrive,
- Ignore controversial topics that are critical to team success,
- Fail to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of team members,
- Waste time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management,
- Clam up when something ought be said,
- Discourage a continuation of the related discussion causing the conflict.

Guess what. That team is going nowhere.

Oh, don't be surprised that members go elsewhere seeking a better environment and they will still be one of the barriers in conflict situations at their next club.

Simply because you / they take your attitude everywhere.

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