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# Embracing the “Storming Phase”

## Conflict Management for Inspired Team Performance

with **Dr. Marilyn Laiken**

**Date, cost and location TBA**

- *Learn to expect conflict in a team and value it as a rich resource for creativity.*
- *Learn more about your own conflict management style and how it might be having an impact on a team.*
- *Learn and practice several skills (including giving and receiving constructive feedback) for successful conflict management.*

**In the morning session of this one-day workshop, we will examine the issue of conflict avoidance as a cultural norm in North America, and learn specific skills for managing it effectively.**

*Recent Canadian research indicates that team members won't easily confront differences among themselves, employees won't deal directly with managers or colleagues who may be causing them difficulty, and managers and team leaders won't surface and confront the conflict that inevitably arises in group situations.*

*However, with the current workplace expectation of collaboration at all levels, and with team structures creating a demand for on-going interdependence, such conflict avoidance is increasingly dysfunctional and energy-depleting for teams.*

*This session begins with the assumptions that conflict is an inevitable, healthy and normal aspect of team life; and that the methods required to manage conflict effectively can be learned. We will explore conflict as a normal phase in a team's development, and begin learning the skills to manage difficult situations, towards “win-win” solutions.*



### **The Workshop Leader**

Marilyn Laiken, PhD, is one of Canada's leading experts on high performing work teams. Her reputation as a masterful workshop facilitator has been filling programs on team development and leadership across Canada for thirty-five years. She is Academic Co-Director of CODI.

Marilyn is Chair of the Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology, and a professor of Adult Education in Workplace Learning and Change, at OISE, University of Toronto. She is the author of *The Anatomy of High Performing Teams: A Leader's Handbook*.

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***In the afternoon, we will focus on Polarity Management as an approach to managing difference in a team. We will***

- *use a “Polarity Map” as one team intervention approach, and have an experiential opportunity to practice the skills*
- *explore a particular polarity of interest to your group within a dialogue format, and apply the learning to your on-the-job examples.*

There is nothing more demanding of a team’s creativity and competence than being able to create a container for the many diversities possible among its membership. Apart from the more obvious differences, such as race, class, gender, culture, language, background experience, education, etc., there are also more subtle differences in personality style, learning style, and conflict management style, among others.

These differences, though they should provide a rich resource from which the team can draw, are also often the cause of tensions and conflict among team members. They can lead to a lack of trust, resulting in an increasingly dysfunctional team environment.

However, a team that learns to manage such difference effectively is able to produce results that often surpass even the most competent individual members’ efforts. The synergy created by recognizing differences in a team as precious gifts rather than potential defects is one of the most important factors in leading a team to exceptional performance.

The secret is to be able to conceptualize these differences as “polarities to manage”, rather than as “problems to solve”. Doing so effectively can enhance team members’ collective ability to move beyond simply coping with the tensions, to engaging in truly creative action.

This session will introduce the concepts of “Polarity Management” ® (as per Barry Johnson, 1996) and the art of “dialogue” as represented in the learning organization research of Peter Senge and his colleagues.

**Date, cost and location TBA**

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As President of Laiken Associates, she has served clients in the public, private and non-profit sectors since 1975.

*“Contrary to the notion that teams waste time and energy arguing, those that avoid conflict usually doom themselves to revisiting issues again and again without resolution”.*  
(Patrick Lencioni, 2002)

*“The sign of a great mind is being able to hold two mutually contradictory ideas simultaneously, and believe both of them.”*  
(George Orwell)

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