

Strategic Controversy Management:

Managing Controversy and Transforming Conflict in Organizational and Community Change

Strategic controversy management is the art and science of anticipating and engaging controversy before it becomes outright conflict. Change triggers controversy and can lead to conflict. This is true whether it is organizational change, community change, or even broader social change. Many organizations and their leaders do not adequately anticipate and prepare for it. Failure to prepare for controversy and conflict put any gains already made at risk and undermines future efforts. *Strategic Controversy Management* is based on the research and work of Tom Klaus, PhD¹, consultant, trainer, and president of Tenacious Change. Tom's peer-reviewed, published research draws upon years of experience and research with leaders engaged in high-stakes, high-pressure change efforts at the organizational and community level. The training is designed to teach leaders, board members, supervisors, program managers, and "front line" staff how to forecast controversy, work proactively to prevent it from becoming outright conflict, and transform conflict when it does occur. Change is never easy and is rarely welcome. *Strategic Controversy Management* can make the way forward less stressful and more productive for leaders, their organizations, and communities.

Objectives:

As a result of this training, participants will be able to:

- ✓ Describe the difference between controversy and conflict;
- ✓ Describe how controversy becomes conflict;
- ✓ Utilize a five-step process for more effectively managing controversy and transforming conflict into dialogue; and
- ✓ Experience dialogue as an alternative to conflict.

In Their Own Words

Participants have identified *several ways this training has helped them contribute more effectively to managing controversy and conflict both inside and outside their organization*, including:

- ✓ Planning strategic messages and preparing how to present them; trying to understand the opposition; developing contingency plans
- ✓ Maintain a neutral position rather than to give into "us vs. them" thinking
- ✓ Suspending my reactions so that I may be an effective listener and an approachable staff member
- ✓ Creating a strategy where I can forecast hot spots and create more appropriate dialogue in response
- ✓ Actively brainstorming with my supervisor on talking points that can keep our messaging strong, consistent, and positive
- ✓ Practicing mindful dialogue with others
- ✓ Thinking of every conversation as a means to promote positive messages about my organization and the issues I care about

- ✓ Take my time in response, pause, in answering difficult or emotionally charged questions - I particularly liked the information on humble inquiry
- ✓ Utilize the steps to self-evaluate/evaluate the situation; I will utilize the message analysis and framing techniques to better respond to controversy

Participants also enjoy the event and the trainer:

- ✓ Nice time management; Great engagement of audience without pressure; Nice handouts.
- ✓ A wonderful, effective training I will use in the future. Entertaining and highly valuable!
- ✓ (When) Tom Klaus conducts training (here again), I will be here!

Evaluation Results:

Participants reported increases in their:

- ✓ Ability to distinguish between “controversy” and “conflict”
- ✓ Awareness of the signs of conflict escalation
- ✓ Understanding of the importance of forecasting controversy
- ✓ Confidence to accurately forecast controversy
- ✓ Understanding of how to analyze messages in a conflict
- ✓ Confidence in their ability to use a message box to create core messages
- ✓ Confidence in their ability to strategically manage conflict

About Tom Klaus

Tom Klaus, PhD is a Maryland-based nonprofit consultant, speaker, trainer, and writer whose personal mission is to bring hope and caring to the world through the nonprofit sector. Tenacious Change, his consulting practice, animates and equips people, organizations, and communities to lead change for the greater good. In addition to his consulting practice, he is a Thought Leader with Tamarack Institute, a Canadian social change organization, and an adjunct professor at Eastern University (Philadelphia).



Tom specializes in leadership, program, and organizational development as well as research and evaluation. His clients include local, statewide, regional, national, and international organizations. He has extensive experience with community engagement and mobilization, organizational and program resilience and sustainability, intractable controversy management, collective impact, nonprofit board development and strategy planning, and the management of government funded health and human services grants and projects that are national in scope.

In 2016, working with Dr. Ed Saunders, a colleague at the University of Iowa, he piloted, finalized and introduced the ***Tenacious Change Approach*** (formerly the *Roots to Fruit of Sustainable Community Change* model), published in the peer-reviewed journal, *Community Development*. The Tenacious Change Approach features a measurable approach to creating enduring community change on social issues through the integration of the collective impact framework with community development theory,

principles, and practice. In September 2016 Tom's work on the approach resulted in an invitation to the White House to meet with Promise Zone leaders from across the United States.

Tom has earned degrees from William Penn University and Drake University in Iowa, and his Doctor of Philosophy in (nonprofit) organizational leadership, from Eastern University in Philadelphia.

Engagement Options

The *Strategic Controversy Management* training event is considered a short-term engagement.

- **Short-term Engagements:** An in-person consult or training event typically requiring a 30-90-hour commitment within a one to three-month period. Tasks can include, but are not limited to, phone and video conference consults and meetings; research and writing; document review; planning; training design; etc. It also includes one on-site, two-day visit to client. On-site visits can be used for meetings, strategy planning, consultations, training, or facilitation. (Project flat rate applies; may require a deposit to initiate agreement for service with balance paid in equal monthly installments.)

Additional engagement options include:

- **Quick Consults:** Same day conversations for ideas, suggestions, recommendations, or just a friendly ear via phone or video conferencing. (Hourly rate applies; billed at the end of the month or end of the consult)
- **Long-term Engagement:** A substantial body of work requiring dedicated time each month for at least four months, typically up to a year. Long-term engagement clients have direct access as often as needed and tasks can include, but are not limited to, phone and video conference consults and meetings for personal leadership development; group or organizational development consultation; organizational change design and development; research and writing; document review; planning; training design; etc. Long-term engagements usually include at least one site visit (of at least two days) to work with a client. Site visits can be used for meetings, consultations, or facilitation regarding a wide variety of program and organizational issues. Training in the *Tenacious Change Approach*, components of the *Growing More Resilient Series* or other topics may be incorporated as needed. (Project flat rate applies, paid monthly; first monthly payment due at initiation of agreement for service; remainder of contract amount billed in equal monthly payments thereafter for the duration of the engagement agreement.)

Engagement Costs:

Please email info@tenaciouschange.us or call/text 571-241-7583 for a brief, free consultation to discuss needs and receive an estimate.

Sponsorship Responsibilities and Planning Guide

Audience:

The ideal audience for this event will be:

- ✓ If organizational change focus: executive leaders, managers, supervisors, board members, staff, and stakeholders engaged in organizational, social, or community change.
- ✓ If community change focus: movement leaders and other stakeholders in the change initiative.

Optimal Number of Participants:

20 to 100

Room Set Up and A/V:

To facilitate small group discussion and convenient working groups, participants should be seated in “half-rounds,” four or five to a (round) table. Trainer will need: rectangular or square table for materials at the front; projector & laptop table; projection screen; LCD projector and computer connection cords (for PowerPoint and other media); power strip and extension cord; flipchart stand with full pad of sticky back flipchart paper; flipchart markers (please, no whiteboard markers due to the strong chemical odor); and for groups larger than 50 or in oversized rooms, a lavalier microphone (or cordless hand-held microphone) and speaker system.

Training Schedule and Length:

The training is designed for six (6) content/contact hours. An optimal training schedule is as follows:

Morning		Afternoon	
8:30 AM	Arrival and Registration	Noon	Lunch
9:00 AM	Training Begins – Section 1	1:00 PM	Training Resumes – Section 3
10:00 AM	Mid-morning Break	2:30 PM	Mid-afternoon Break
10:30 AM	Training Resumes – Section 2	3:00 PM	Training Resumes – Section 4
		4:30 PM	Evaluation & Closing

Sponsor Responsibilities:

- ✓ Handle all logistics for the program (site, room arrangement, A/V, meals, etc., etc.)
- ✓ Reproduce all program handouts in accordance with instructions from the trainer
- ✓ Diligently promote the event
- ✓ Effectively manage registration
- ✓ Assume all costs for logistics, promotion, and management of the event
- ✓ Work collaboratively with the Tenacious Change, LLC to deliver a high-quality event

Current as of: 2019-03-23

ⁱ Klaus, T. W. (2013). *Leadership in an intractable conflict over public school sexuality education in the united states: A constructivist grounded theory study* (Order No. 3665017). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection.