

Strategic Controversy Management:

A Training in Managing Controversy and Transforming Conflict in Organizational and Community Change

Change, whether in communities or organizations, triggers controversy and can lead to conflict. Strategic controversy management is the art and science of forecasting and engaging with controversy before it becomes outright conflict. Many organizations and their leaders do not adequately anticipate and prepare for it. Failure to prepare for controversy and potential 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, PhDⁱ, consultant, trainer, and Founding Partner of Tenacious Change. 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 all.

Tom has been a student of controversy and conflict for many years, ever since he found himself unexpectedly in the midst of a national Culture War controversy and conflict over school-based sexual health education. From 2009 to 2013 he focused his doctoral research and dissertation on the impact of intractable "Culture War" conflict on the leaders of organizations, from both sides, who were personally engaged in the conflict. It was titled "*Leadership in an Intractable Conflict Over Public School Sexuality Education in the United States.*" When he conducted the research and finished the dissertation in 2013 the topic seemed less relevant than when he began the research some four years before because there was a relative calm in the Culture War. Today, only ten years later, the topic is more relevant than ever as schools, communities, and organizations face a plethora of Culture War issues from gun control to gender affirming care to parents' rights to social-emotional learning to vaccination to...who knows what's next!

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

Engagement Costs:

Please email info@tenaciouschange.us or call/text 240-583-1754 to schedule a brief, free consultation to discuss needs and costs.

Sponsorship Responsibilities and Planning Guide

Event Delivery Options:

Strategic Controversy Management training can be delivered on-site and in-person or it can be delivered remotely. On-site is usually preferred due to the interactive nature of the event.

On-Site Event Considerations: To facilitate small group discussion and convenient working groups, participants should be seated in “half-rounds,” four or five to a (round) table. Trainers will need: rectangular or square table for materials at the front; large screen SmartTV for PowerPoint OR projector & laptop table; projection screen; LCD projector and computer connection cords for PowerPoint; 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 very large rooms, a lavalier microphone (or cordless hand-held microphone) and speaker system. Event host is responsible for providing meeting room; equipment and materials described above; food and beverage; and managing on-site logistics.

Remote Event Considerations: Trainers will provide and use Zoom with breakout rooms, white-board, and additional add-ons as needed. Participants are expected to participate on computers with a camera (not tablets or phones) and use a wired headset for privacy and to reduce echo, feedback, and to be heard, and to hear, more clearly. Wired headsets with built-in microphones (like those that typically come with new Smartphones) are usually acceptable.

Audience:

The ideal audience for this event will be:

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

Optimal Number of Participants:

20 to 50 (If larger group desired, please discuss with us before scheduling)

Generic 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

Meet The Trainers

Tom Klaus, PhD began his nonprofit career as a teenage volunteer. Since that time Tom has served in and on behalf of nonprofit organizations and associations. He has held positions of responsibility and leadership in local, regional, statewide, national, and international nonprofit organizations and associations. These include being a frontline staff member to program director to Executive Director/CEO. He has worked in private nonprofits, membership organizations, and in organizations with affiliate systems.

As the Founding Partner of Tenacious Change™ his consulting clients have included local, statewide, regional, national, and international organizations. His practice areas of expertise include collaborative leadership, collective impact, community engagement and change, organizational leadership and change, intractable controversy management, leading and managing associations and membership organizations, nonprofit board



*Tom Klaus
Founding Partner*

development and strategy planning, and the management of government funded health and human services grants and projects that are national in scope. He is a certified Appreciative Inquiry facilitator and has been trained in delivering the *Courageous Follower* workshops by author and developer, [Ira Chaleff](#).

Tom is also the developer of the Tenacious Change Approach™, which is a means of creating movements of change for the greater good in communities, organizations, and systems. The Tenacious Change Approach™ (under the original working title, *Roots to Fruit of Sustainable Community Change*) was first described in 2016 in the journal *Community Development*. It was introduced internationally in Canada at the Tamarack Institute's *Collective Impact Summit* and *Community Change Institute* and through the *17th Annual Global Conference* of the International Leadership Association in Barcelona, Spain. In September 2016 Tom's work on the Tenacious Change Approach™ resulted in an invitation to the Obama White House to meet with Promise Zone leaders from across the United States on the issue of community and university collaborations.

Tom is the co-author, with Liz Weaver, Co-CEO of the Tamarack Institute, of "Progress, Challenges, and Next Steps in Collective Impact: Collective Impact as Disruptive Illumination" the closing chapter in *Using Collective Impact to Bring Community Change* (2019, Community Development Society). The chapter highlights the use of collective impact in community development, including the Tenacious Change Approach™.

Tom is an adjunct faculty member at Eastern University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where he currently teaches *Collaborative Leadership and Partnership* and serves on several dissertation committees in the PhD in Organizational Leadership program in the College of Business and Leadership.

Tom has earned degrees from William Penn University and Drake University in Iowa, and his Doctor of Philosophy in organizational leadership, with a concentration on nonprofits, from Eastern University in Philadelphia.

Jakob Klaus, MSW, SHRM-CP is the Principal Partner of Tenacious Change™. Jakob is an **accomplished social worker, union organizer, and change facilitator**. He worked for more than a decade as a social worker in private and public agencies. His practice focused on the disability community. During this time, he also earned licensure as an LCSW. Jakob is a strong advocate for community inclusion of people with disabilities.

Jakob worked as a social worker for the State of Maryland in Adult Services with a special focus on financial investigations. During his time there, Jakob became involved in the Maryland Social Services Employees Union as a Shop Steward and then Regional VP. He was effective as a local Union leader and left his position with the State of Maryland to become a Union Field Representative and Organizer for the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). In that role he grew Union membership and organized chapters among social services employees, correctional officers, state highway employees, and university employees throughout Central and Western Maryland. At AFSCME he gained a reputation as a highly effective negotiator, litigator, adviser, and recruiter.

Jakob is a graduate of Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. He earned his MSW in Social Change, at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, graduating with honors. Throughout his undergraduate and graduate experience Jakob worked as a research assistant where he developed his love of policy and program analysis and evaluation. His research experience also led to his contributing to several publications, including [Using Complexity Theory for Research and Program Evaluation](#), in which he co-authored a chapter on agent-based modeling.



*Jakob Klaus
Principal Partner*

Jakob started working with Tenacious Change™ in 2021 as a contractor. During that time, he worked alongside his father, Tom, on evaluation research and in all client consultations. In 2023 Jakob became a full partner in Tenacious Change™, LLC and assumed a critical leadership role as **Principal Partner** in the business. In this role his focus is on business administration, consultation in his specialty areas of social change and advocacy, and training and consulting on the Tenacious Change Approach™.

Jakob is stepping into partnership and leadership at Tenacious Change™ with over 15 years' experience in personal, family, organizational, and community change work. He is capping off his preparation for this leadership role by completing an MBA with a concentration in business analytics at Eastern University in Philadelphia. In January 2023, Jakob became a Certified Professional with the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM-CP).

Last Update: 2023-05-21

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.