

Our topic this issue comes from my very good friend and colleague, Dr. Bruce DeRuntz. “Why is it that no matter how hard I work on ensuring my presentations provide as much logic and information as possible, there is always someone who fights good ideas at every turn?”

Excellent question! First and foremost, we need to realize that most people are not trying to be difficult for the sake of making your life miserable. **Unfortunately**, adversity makes up a big part of our daily lives. It can come at us from many different directions and sources. It can manifest in our specific situation or through other people. We can experience a particular situation. We all have experienced people, situations or a combination of both that has tested us to our limits. How we responded made all the difference in how we got through it and the results we achieved at that moment. For this column, we specifically want to focus on the adversity we experience from others. I have found that there is a powerful method that can help you analyze any situation and navigate the difficult shoals of adversity with less friction and greater results.

With full acknowledgement of the brilliant work done by my good friend Rick Maurer, let me introduce you to the **Three Levels of Resistance!**

Level One: I don’t understand it!

This level is characterized by the individuals’ simple need for more information to determine if they can support you or your idea going forward. This is often very easy to recognize by the questions “Who’s going to be responsible for this?”, “Whose budget is this coming out of?”, “When are we going to begin?”, “Where is it going to be implemented first?” We get these types of questions most often during our presentations or our conversations with people to brief them on our idea or initiative. The way to overcome Level One Resistance is by supplying them with the information they need to make a decision!

Level Two: I understand it all right...I don’t like it!

This is often triggered by your idea or project upsetting the stability of their “turf” or “power”! They immediately feel threatened by you or your plan because it will result in them losing real or perceived status, influence, or some level of control of their organization or areas of responsibility. Often, the idea or project can be very beneficial for the organization or community as a whole but it will be resisted by an individual who believes he or she stands to lose something tangible as a result of the change. The questions you get from these individuals are often: “Who’s going to be responsible for this?”, “Whose budget is this coming out of?”, “When are we going to begin this?”, “Where is it going to be implemented first?” In many cases exactly the same questions you get from Level One Resistance! So...how do you tell the difference between the two? You recognize Level Two resistance by using your eyes as much as your ears. Their body language and their posture/actions will tell you there is something very different going on here. And just providing them with the answers to their questions will not help you overcome their resistance at all! They already understand it! They simply don’t like it. To overcome Level Two Resistance you have to ask second order questions and dig deeper into why they are asking to truly understand what is driving them to resist your plan. And that brings us to...

Level Three: I understand it alright...I don't like YOU!

The good news is that this is the easiest level to recognize. The questions you will hear are: "Who's going to be responsible for this?", "Whose budget is this coming out of?", "When are we going to begin this?", "Where is it going to be implemented first?" Once again, often the very same questions! But the body language, the tone of the voice, and the aggressiveness of the statements will clue you in almost immediately that this is an entirely different level of resistance. To overcome Level Three Resistance you have to politely answer their questions in the meeting or the situation. Then as quickly as possible you have to meet with them one-on-one to learn as much as you can from them. Is it you personally? Is there history between you that is "bleeding over" into this situation? Has something else occurred that you might be unaware of that this person is taking out on you? If you can get them to talk, you can find out fairly quickly and easily what is driving their emotions. The bad news is that this is the most difficult level of resistance to overcome because it has such a strong emotional component to it. Discover the root cause and do your best to address it or eliminate it. Depending upon how strong the emotional response, you may only be able to contain the damage.

Most people who make presentations or provide briefings are so focused on simply providing the information or "getting it over with", that they do not pay enough attention to how people respond to them "in the moment". You may answer a question at face value then wonder why the answer didn't seem to make any difference in how the person responded. Make it a point to listen with your eyes as much as you listen with your ears and you will see that people really are telling you exactly how they are responding to you in the marketplace of ideas! Your success depends on your ability to recognize the resistance, identify the level, and accurately respond with the right approach to overcome it appropriately. Learn to master the Three Levels of Resistance and watch your ability to be influential dramatically improve!

If you have a question or a topic you would like to see in this column, e-mail me at askcoachjr@x-slg.com