Crucibles of Leadership: From Conflict to Collaboration

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Relationships and Conflict
What is the most energy-consuming conflict you face as a mayor today?

What makes it so challenging for you?

What makes it challenging for the other party?
Why Do Conflicts Arise?

Each problem is unique

No perfect solutions

Solutions may take long time

Limits on resources

Issues of sensitivity to race, gender, age, class, education, ability

Differing values, interests, opinions, and beliefs

Different cultures and assumptions

Volatile, fast-changing environment

Different communication styles
Mayors can partner closely with state health officials to identify spending and program priorities.
Options for Managing Conflict

**Avoid**
- ignore the conflict and not take any action

**Force**
- use your formal authority without regard to the other party

**Accommodate**
- yield to the other party

**Compromise**
- identify a partially satisfactory solution for both sides

**Collaborate**
- cooperate with the other party to understand their concerns in order to find a mutually satisfying solution

“Leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations”

(Kouzes/Posner, The Leadership Challenge, 2014)
Leading Across Sectors and Levels of Government
What are some of the strategies you have used to resolve conflict and foster collaboration?
Build Teams

Develop Trust
- How can I encourage empathy in this crisis?
- Am I listening to other perspectives?

Align Motivations and Values
- How do I identify and work with new, unexpected allies?
- How do I leverage different stakeholder’s motivations/values/resources to create value?

Manage Power Dynamics and Conflict
- Who needs to be on the bus? In which seats?
- Who is being forgotten?

In Practice
- Capitalize on your uniqueness
- Model vulnerability—encourage the heart
- Employ ‘everyone-talks’ rule
- Give credit to the team
Who are some unexpected stakeholders that you are collaborating with?

How are you learning together?
Solve Problems

**Take a Systems Approach**
- How do I encourage each stakeholder to view the whole system?

**Foster Innovation**
- How am I actively encouraging new ideas and solutions?
- How are we continuously improving (learning from failure)?

**Define Success and Use Data**
- What does success look like for the system?

**In Practice**
- Acknowledge unfamiliar roles, responsibilities, values, ways of working
- Pursue opinions that are different than yours; challenge your own assumptions
- Establish ‘proactive hour’ for brainstorming
Achieve Impact

Engage People Directly Affected by the Problem
• How am I engaging those most directly impacted in problem solving?

Use Leverage Points
• Which levers have biggest impact?

Share Learning
• How am I communicating the story?
• How do we celebrate progress and even ‘quick wins’?

In Practice
• Identify resources—human or otherwise—that are underutilized
• Be transparent with the data
• Tell stories that connect emotionally
• Demonstrate that a system is working to protect people
Learning through the Crucible
Value Your Crucible Experiences

Crucibles of Leadership

by Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas

As leaders, we are faced with the challenge of developing ourselves and others in order to improve our effectiveness. This requires that we learn to think critically, analyze situations, and make decisions based on evidence and logic. In this context, the concept of the crucible experience becomes relevant. The crucible experience refers to a period of intense pressure and adversity that challenges an individual's assumptions and beliefs. It is through these experiences that people develop resilience and the ability to adapt to new situations.

In the crucible experience, leaders are forced to confront their limitations and discover new strengths and capabilities. This process is not always easy, but it is essential for personal and professional growth. Leaders who are able to embrace the crucible experience are more likely to succeed in challenging environments.

In summary, the crucible experience is a powerful tool for developing leadership skills. By embracing the challenges of adversity and working through them, leaders can become more effective and resilient.

Sources:

Key Take-Aways

1. **In confronting wicked problems that create conflict:**
   - Work to understand other perspectives
   - Use your convening power to build and broaden teams of unexpected allies
   - Empower teams to challenge their assumptions and explore innovative solutions
   - Use data and storytelling to celebrate wins and convey that the system is working to protect people

2. **Recognize this moment as a crucible experience in leadership and a potential source of growth**