



The
Lukaszewski
Group

A Division of 

America's Crisis Guru®
Crisis Management, Leadership
and Organizational Recovery

WINNING WHEN EVERYONE IS MAD AT YOU

How Waging Peace and Reducing Contention Can Bring Success - Seven Strategies -

By James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, Fellow IABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, BEPS Emeritus
First published on www.duetsblog.com

Wherever there is conflict, confrontation and crisis, there is contention. In today's Twitter, blogger and bloviator dominated world, working to resolve important issues, questions and decisions often begins very contentiously and ends only after one side is beaten and leaves the field; there is a mutual withdrawal, or mostly commonly, one side wins and the other side stays angry.

Winning, it turns out is rarely about getting 51 percent of individuals or groups to concur or comply; it's getting 51 percent of those who matter. This thinking leads to an Axiom and a Law.

Lukaszewski's 1st Axiom of Winning in Contentious Situations: Almost every decision of any consequence is made despite serious, often powerful collateral contentiousness. The media can be mad, or support someone else, some of your neighbors can be irritated, even your employees can be against you, but stay the course, be constructive in your approach and you can win.

Lukaszewski's Law of Success and Survival: Neither the media, your severest critic, angry neighbors, irritated legislators, nor regulators can truly stop what you have set out to accomplish. The most significant damage is almost always caused by the intervention, timidity, or hesitation of an overoptimistic boss or Board, well-meaning friends, "supporters," or relatives, and failure to address the issues raised by those who feel victimized by the process.

These seven principles are the components of a strategic approach for winning:

1. Wage peace every day: Reduce the production of critics, enemies and victims at every opportunity. Talk tough, act tough, or threaten and you will have war for sure. War

produces casualties, victims, and new critics, all of whom will live long enough to destroy, delay, or stop your best efforts.

2. Reduce contention: Contention is the absence of agreement. Work for agreement, incrementally, every day. Stop causing contention.
3. Seek permission rather than entitlement: Getting permission depends upon gaining public agreement and consent. Avoid and resist anything, anyone, or any decision, that delays, denies, disables, or damages the permission process. Act like you're entitled to a public decision and you'll really be stopped cold.
4. Control testosterone: Anger, irritation, frustration, and confrontation cloud judgment, damage relationships, cause misunderstandings, create critics, naysayers and rarely accomplish anything good. Stop taking contrary views and negative messages personally. The only one who is suffering from this is you. No one else cares. Remain calm and carry on.
5. Be democratic: Recognize and leverage from the patterns of democracy, avoid political games and game players, all those people have their own agendas. They will dump you in a minute.
6. Work as directly as you can: Like most everything that matters in life, agreement is generally achieved, when the principals commit to sit down face-to-face and directly work out their differences. Engagement builds stakeholder support, and reduces the production of critics.
7. Communicate intentionally: Success depends on simple, sensible, positive, declarative and constructive communication, common sense, direct, prompt action, empathy, transparency, and engagement. Explain to everyone as well as remind them of your communication and behavior intentions so they will know what to expect and how to behave in return.

Over the 30 years I've been helping clients get public permission, communities, critics, individuals and organized opposition have consistently grown more powerful in their ability to stop or significantly alter the plans of even the worthiest projects and powerful companies. With "social media" the power of individual opposers will continue to grow.

I've also learned that you can often achieve your objectives with people being upset, the media angry, your employees split, and in communities that may be more divided than unified.

Winning depends on altitude (keeping calm) and attitude:

1. Candor: Public trust depends on receiving information well ahead of their actual need for it. The most toxic strategy is to fail to answer every question, provide key information after it is truly needed, or work to disparage, demean, or discredit those

who oppose or have concerns about the project, and go to the trouble of making them public.

2. Patience: Accomplishing your goals is going to take longer than ever imagined, even to achieve interim milestones.
3. Resources: Success will defy financial management. More money will be spent for things one never imagined would happen, or be requested or required.
4. Stomach Power: Set your stomach for all the lies, misunderstandings, deceptions, bad behaviors and misrepresentations created by angry, frightened, and unqualified people with real power, combined with a willing media, and the outrageous motives they will ascribe to you, with all of your explanations, good work and intentions just bouncing off.
5. Staying Power: Community decision making is slow, sometimes silly, even stupid, sloppy, expensive, confusing, and emotionally driven. Settle back and go with the flow. Kick up, kick out, and you'll go nowhere pretty quickly.
6. Pragmatism: Winning means constantly waging peace and re-acquiring community consent daily. It means relentlessly doing the doable, knowing the knowable, getting the gettable, and achieving the achievable.

If democracy is one thing, it is a process. Those who propose, if they can stay the course, can expect to achieve less than they had hoped, sometimes far less, but usually wind up with more than they need to successfully achieve their objectives, which are likely to change as the community has its say. If you believe that you are entitled to get what you are asking for, you are entitled only to disappointment.

Your goal is to help work preemptively, constructively, and productively to shorten the timelines and lower the barriers that are inevitable byproducts of public decision making. Wage peace and win earlier, if winning is possible at all.

* * *

James E. Lukaszewski is a crisis communications and leadership recovery expert with The Lukaszewski Group Division, Risdall based in St. Paul, Minnesota.