

# POSITIONS AND INTERESTS

## Conflict Management Resources

THIS RESOURCE WAS PREPARED FOR VIASPORT BRITISH COLUMBIA BY NOW WHAT FACILITATION, A TEAM OF FACILITATORS WHO HAVE EXTENSIVE EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE, AND MEETING FACILITATION.

# POSITIONS AND INTERESTS: HOW TO CREATE AN ALL-WIN

Given the emotionally charged nature of sports, it's not surprising that the people involved can be reactive when things get heated. Unlike in sports competition, managing conflict on your team doesn't have to be a win-lose proposition. The key to a win-win outcome is agreeing on what the issue or problem is and understanding the positions and the interests of each person involved. The following will provide you with a framework to help navigate and achieve an all-win outcome.



We use an iceberg analogy here to show a conflict and how positions are really just a small part of the problem that we see. It is important to look beneath the surface of the water to the interests, which show us the bigger picture—providing a better understanding of what the conflict is about.

**Positions** are perceived fixed solutions to a problem. A position is typically a stance taken by the person who raises the conflict or takes issue with something.

**Interests** are what is important to each person involved in the conflict. Positions are based on interests. Interests show us the deeper reasons for the conflict, as well as why those issues are important to them.

**Shared Interests** are common to both parties. They provide the basis for reaching an agreement or solution. Watch for these!

**Framing the Issue** is naming the problem. It is important to have consensus on what the issue is and as such framing it in a way that is neutral and positive is crucial. Oftentimes, this is where the parties may have differences of opinion. Spending time consciously defining a problem is vital for successful change. Without the proper framing, there is no certainty about focus on the right issue.

### EXAMPLE: An all-win in practice . . .

You are the head coach of a basketball team. You and your assistant coach are driving Roop and Alex, two players on your team, to practice. Roop wants the car windows up. Alex wants them down. How do you create an all-win?

**Issue:**  
How will we be comfortable on the drive?

**Positions:**  
Roop wants the windows up.  
Alex wants the windows down.

**Interests:**

Roop:

- Staying warm
- Pressure from air hurts ears
- Being comfortable on drive\*\*\*

Alex:

- Has allergies
- Gets car sick
- Being comfortable on drive\*\*\*

**Options/Ideas:**

- Take turns having windows open and closed
- Choose certain windows to leave open
- Open windows a small amount
- Use vents to help with heat/circulation
- Change seats in the car
- Loan Roop a jacket
- Give Alex an allergy pill
- Give Alex motion sickness medication

**\*\*\* Common Interests**

## THE FIVE STEPS TO AN ALL-WIN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

### 1. Frame the issue.

Name the problem using neutral language. Here are some tips:

- Use positive language
- Ask stakeholders to frame the issue
- Challenge assumptions
- Frame questions not statements
- Avoid all subjective language

The examples below demonstrate how effective framing changes the tone of the conflict.

- "Our board is toxic."
  - How can we make our board function more effectively?
- "Decision-making is biased."
  - How do we make decision-making more transparent?

## **2. Identify positions.**

These may be demands, threats, or terms and conditions. For example:

- “If this doesn’t happen, I will . . .”
- “If we don’t have a meeting, I will boycott practice.”
- “If the coach doesn’t stop favoring this player, I will e-mail the athletic director.”

## **3. Explore interests.**

Our interests are what we really want. They are the reason our position is important to us. They are our hopes, feelings, concerns, needs, and aspirations.

## **4. List common interests.**

Which interests are important to both parties? This is the golden ticket in finding common ground to move forward.

## **5. Explore options and ideas then develop a plan.**

What options are there that will serve the interests of all parties? How can those options be actioned? Who needs to do what to make change happen?

**Numbers 1 and 2 can be done individually or as a team.**

### **1. Identify a conflict within your team.**

### **2. To address this issue, run through the Five Steps to Conflict Resolution.**

**Step 1** - Frame the issue.

**Step 2** - Identify the positions of each person involved in the conflict.

**Step 3** - Explore the interests of each person involved in the conflict.

**Step 4** - List common interests.

**Step 5** - Explore options and develop a plan.

**Options:**

**Plan:**

You may also choose to write your answers on a chart.

Positions	Interests	Options	Plan

The benefit to getting clear on what positions and interests are at play in any conflict is that once you know the interests of everyone involved, you can speak the language of each person by addressing what is most important to them. This makes it easier to build trust and strengthen bonds, as well as to find common ground and resolution.