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## Understand Behaviors to Get Ethical Outcomes

December 14, 2011

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Summary: What drives people to behave unethically and sow conflict among their peers? Personality and behavior-assessment tools can help you understand behavior patterns and improve relationships on your board and committees.

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I've had many positive experiences in associations I've belonged to, but I still remember one that left me feeling frustrated. I served on the board of one association in which a senior officer with strong, assertive behavior characteristics constantly competed for recognition and was determined to be seen and heard above all others. She often bypassed board members and committee chairs to achieve her goals, and she routinely took others' ideas and presented them as her own. Not surprisingly, her unethical conduct created stress and hard feelings among the other board members.

Unfortunately, my experience wasn't unique. Fear, concern, and even intimidation are real feelings that develop in many boards and committees. Often, "ladder climbing" occurs when one member is overbearing and bossy, putting his or her needs and desires ahead of the group's—personality traits that may demotivate others.

Of course, your association can only thrive if it has board members who get along well, behave ethically, and understand key issues. Your group will benefit if you consider the behavior type best suited to fit in with current members.

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wanted to better understand their different behavior styles, including the strong assertiveness of the senior officer.

To understand behaviors and conflict, you need to look at what's driving them, and the first step is to understand yourself. The more you're aware of what makes you tick, the more you'll understand what makes others tick. When people are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, they're better prepared to respond to others in various situations.

Making an effort to gain this kind of self-awareness shows that you have concern for others' feelings, and it will benefit your relationships. Taking a close look at yourself is never easy, but there are many tools that can help you determine your behavioral tendencies and motivational traits when dealing with conflict. Some may be familiar to you:

- The Strength Deployment Inventory is used to assess behavior characteristics, validate the importance of individual differences, and provide skills in relationship management.

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- The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a personality assessment that reveals people's perceptions of the world and how they make decisions.
- DISC is a personality-profile assessment that describes a person's dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientiousness. It provides feedback for building on strengths and increasing personal effectiveness.

In addition to giving you a clearer picture of your own behavior, these assessments help you understand behaviors in work groups or teams. They reveal how you react under stress versus when things are going well. You gain an awareness of how you affect others through personality and behavior.

I recommend using the assessments with people working in groups, because all members benefit when their peers understand what's behind the tendency to behave ethically (or not).

Most assessments have an administrative component that helps the group understand their scores. A person trained in administering the tests will produce the most accurate results and report them to the group.

When the members of the group fully understand how their behaviors affect others, they are able to work together more effectively. In my example, when board members understood why the senior officer was so controlling, with a strong-directive behavior style, they were able to manage the conflict. The assessments gave them an awareness they didn't have previously, and they learned how to respond in a constructive manner.

Taking responsibility for your actions is an important piece of the behavior puzzle. Being more flexible isn't necessarily the answer, but respecting others' views will help. What do you do to take responsibility for your behavior, and what outcomes have you achieved?

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