

RESOLVING PROBLEMS AMONG SCHOOL STAFF

I was attending a TOC training. I had told my principal in November that I would attend in the month of February and, although I had offered to take personal leave, he told me I could take the training on work time. About two weeks before my training, my principal told me that he wanted me to attend a conference with a group from our school's Literacy Committee on Wednesday of the TOC seminar week. I reminded him that I was going to be at the TOC training at that time but he "suggested" that I just skip that day of the TOC training. The conversation was left up in the air with no clear resolution. The week of the training I felt uncomfortable because I knew he wanted me to go but I used my usual technique of passive resistance. The Literacy Conference was on the TOC day when we would be taught how to resolve chronic conflict. I did not want to miss chronic conflict day! I told myself that my principal had never really insisted that I go to the other event and, after all, I didn't even know exactly where that event would be held--so how could I go? I ignored his 'suggestion' and went to my TOC training. When I stopped by school the next day, I could feel the chill in the air. I explained that I didn't know where the Literacy event was and he said I should have contacted him to find out. I could tell he was really angry. He also mentioned that he wanted me to attend an administration team meeting on Friday at 9:00 AM.

That was on TOC Ambitious Target Day! Now I was angry too. I worked on a cloud and came up with a solution: He could start the meeting at 8:00 and I could be out around 10:00 because they usually don't last longer than 2 hours. Since the TOC sessions usually started with feedback, I wouldn't miss much. When I took him my 'solution,' however, he became angrier. The relationship was deteriorating and he even made some cynical remarks about clouds. One of the TOC lessons was clearly reinforced:

You cannot tell other people what they must do to solve your problem!

The next morning I took the cloud itself to him. It was a page full of corrections and scribbles but nevertheless I read it to him in the proper order--his side first. His solution was that we start at 9:00 but that all items I was involved in would be addressed first and he would have me out by 10:00. He said that he was particularly pleased that we had had this little chat and that I had put the desire for a good relationship first in priority in the discussion. He even hugged me as I left his office!

This was a person who was decidedly angry with me when I walked into his office, as was I. And both of us now felt like winners. He got me out of the meeting at 9:45. What a powerful tool that cloud was in mending our relationship. My principal even sent me a follow-up note.

Using the cloud, it only took 10 minutes to resolve this problem with him which might otherwise have continued with days of resentment.

Assumption The meeting will not be successful
I don't attend.

Successful
Team meeting

Go to Admin Team
Mtg

Good
Relationship
between Mr
& I

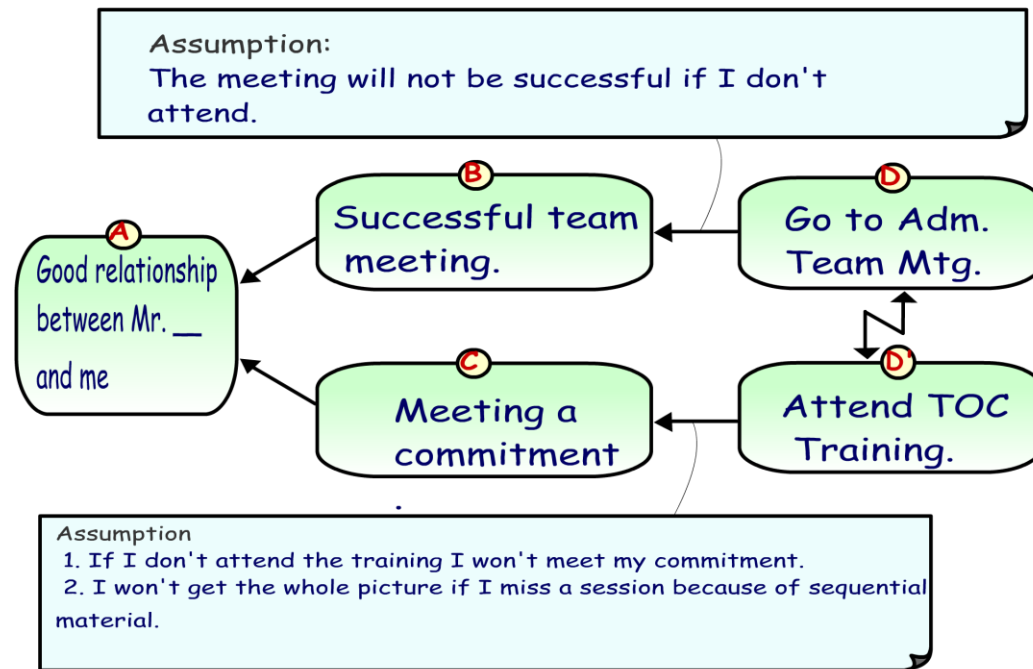
My ideas need to be
valued.
Meeting a
Commitment

Attend TOC
Training

1. If I don't attend the
training I won't meet my
commitment

2. I won't get the whole
picture if I miss a session
because of sequential notes

Injection - Since morning
are review I will miss
first part and maybe
we could start mtg at
9:00 instead of 9:15



Injection:
Since mornings are review I will miss first part and maybe we could start mtg at 8:00 instead of 9:00.

February 9, 1996

Dear Denise,

Thank you very much for sitting down with me and discussing our small problem. Yes, many times we don't consider other people's priorities or we make too many assumptions. And this is the reason communication is of paramount importance.

I hope I got you out of here on time. I did keep some items from the agenda because I knew how important and how much you wanted to attend the class.

Denise, you are going to be a fine administrator. It's a pleasure having you on my administrative team!

Mr. _____

---For a copy of the original letter go to the next page---

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