

REPUBLICANS UNITED

Stand Together. Stay Together. Win Together.

By Rachel Woods

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We all want Republicans to succeed. Now more than ever, we are mindful that the consequence of a fractured Republican Party could mean the end of the United States as we know it. Only united will we effectively fight for our freedoms and for an America that we recognize at the end of the day. It is apparent that we must stand together in order to stay together, and that we must stay together in order to win.

But how can we, as individuals, make a difference? You may be wondering, "What can I do? How can I make a difference in an organization that is so large and with so many perspectives?" Probably the simplest and most effective strategy is to look inward. It's easy to point fingers and blame others, but we are the party of personal accountability – so, let's start with ourselves. Instead of worrying about those systemic issues that are beyond our control, we can focus on how we interact with the current and potential Republicans around us. We each have a sphere of influence in which we can make a difference.

Republicans United

To encourage effective communication and healthy conflict management among Republicans, the *Republican United* series will be distributed monthly by the Texas Federation of Republican Women (TFRW) throughout 2010 and 2011. If you are interested in learning practical conflict management techniques and communication strategies for every day interactions, this series is for you!

Conflict is Non-Partisan

First, we must understand that conflict is non-partisan. Democrats and Republicans alike have conflict, because it is a reality in every organization. Conflict can be defined as any situation in which one's concerns or desires merely differ from those of another person. Conflict runs rampant because we all have different needs, values, perspectives and goals. None of us are immune to it. Where there are two, there will be conflict.

Why It Is Important to Manage Conflict

Since we know that conflict is a reality, we should not be surprised when it occurs. We should prepare for it. The following are a few reasons why we must manage conflict: (1) We exert more control over processes and outcomes when we resolve conflicts ourselves and early; (2) Our world is increasingly interdependent and so is our Party; (3) The consequences of high organizational conflict are destructive; and (4) Conflict can be an opportunity.

Control over outcomes. Have you ever considered how much more control we have over outcomes when a conflict first arises? Conflict is like fire. As it spreads or escalates, we have less control over its effects. For example, consider a situation in which a dispute arises in a

business relationship and the parties sit down to find solutions together. In this negotiation, the parties have more control than if the dispute escalates to mediation where they may have control over the outcome, but not necessarily the process. Or maybe they go to arbitration where they jointly choose the arbitrators, but they do not control the outcome or the process. And finally, if matters escalate to the courtroom, not only is it more costly, but also the parties have little to no control over the outcome, the process or publicity. And when problems become public, a whole new set of problems may arise.

Interdependence. Our world is increasingly interdependent, and so is the Republican Party. Try to think of anything that you have accomplished lately without depending on someone else. We may not have the same exact beliefs, needs or interests, but we do have interlocking interests and goals that make us rely on each other to be successful as a Party. With increased reliance on each other comes increased frequency of communication. An increase in communication, and the diversity of ideas represented, presents more potential for conflict.

Consequences of High Levels of Organizational Conflict. The following are potential effects of high levels of conflict in an organization: Increased stress among workers (paid or volunteer); lower morale and motivation levels; hampered performance; decreased productivity; high turnover rate; escalation to aggression and/or possible public relations challenges. In politics, any or all of these possible outcomes can translate into a lack of involvement or a loss of votes.

Conflict Can Be an Opportunity. One of most important reasons we must manage conflict proactively is because of the opportunities that can stem from conflict. Conflict has the potential to open doors to needed communication, bring about positive change, restore relationships, bring about creative solutions and provide for better handling of future conflicts. This is why we will explore and strive to implement small and practical ways to manage conflict among Republicans. Can we solve all of the Party's conflicts? Of course not. Is the challenge a bit idealistic in a contact sport such as politics? Maybe. Is the GOP worth the time and effort? Absolutely.

Attorney-Mediator and President of Leadership Trek Corporation (LTrek), Rachel Woods, currently serves as the TFRW Chairman of Leadership Development. Rachel has helped executive teams to enhance individual and group negotiation and conflict management performance as a trainer, consultant and executive coach. She has served as a Lecturer of Negotiation and Conflict Resolution for the Baylor Business School MBA Program. Rachel has been a mediator since 1999 and was trained to teach negotiation in organizations at the Harvard Law School Project on Negotiation in Cambridge, MA.