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ILA Members publish on the topic of leadership from a variety of perspectives. We are pleased to feature a selection of these publications in this newsletter and our website.

In the Member Connector, authors take you behind the scenes, sharing their perspectives on the work, how the work informs contemporary issues, and highlighting points of interest to ILA members.

Thanks to ILA member Mark Gerzon for contributing to this issue. **Visit the member area of the ILA Web site to find additional information on *Leading Through Conflict: How Successful Leaders Transform Differences into Opportunities* and download chapter 3, "The Mediator"-- available only to ILA members.**

If you have a recent publication and are interested in being featured in this column, please contact ILA membership services, at ila@ila-net.org or 301.405.5218 for consideration.

Featured Publication

by Mark Gerzon
(Harvard Business School Press, 2006)

Leading Through Conflict: How Successful Leaders Transform Differences into Opportunities



Mark Gerzon is known both domestically and internationally as an "expert in civil discourse" (according to the New York Times), and an

experienced facilitator and mediator. He has worked on the frontiers between Democrats and Republicans, Israelis and Palestinians, corporations and anti-corporate activists, and many other organizations and communities in conflict throughout the world. Internationally, as the founder and director of the Global Leadership Network, he now works closely with key allies around the world to develop new approaches to global problem-solving. Among many other international roles, he is a consultant to the United Nations Development Program in fostering "Democratic Dialogue" in conflicted countries; a designer of dialogues on difficult global issues; and a conflict resolution consultant to foundations and other organizations.

***Ramsey Jabaji, ILA Staff:* How did you develop the idea of the Mediator and the notion of Leading Through Conflict?**

Mark Gerzon: The idea emerged from watching conflicts over many years and noticing how "leaders" usually made the situation worse. (For a current example, please note the behavior of the leaders of Hezbollah and Israel.) So I asked myself, "What kind of leader might actually make conflict situations better for the people who are affected by them?" The result was the concept of the leader as Mediator.

You discuss the three very different faces of leadership (Demagogue, Manager, and Mediator) and advocate for the Mediator as the prevailing model of leadership. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each model?

The *Demagogue's* only "strength" is that he defends his own group — but

the way he does so usually hurts them in the end. His weakness is his racism, ethnocentrism, or other forms of projection on the Other.

The *Manager's* strength is that she handles her own job- and turf-defined responsibilities well. Her primary weakness is that she can't deal creatively with other Manager's who are also caught within their job-defined roles.

The *Mediator's* strength is his capacity to turn differences into opportunities. His weakness is that he may be perceived by his own group of constituency as not sufficiently defending their interests against external threats.

Ultimately, as I explain in the book, the Mediator is preferable to the other two because the Mediator has a more complete leadership "toolbox." Like a carpenter who knows how to use

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a full toolbox, the Mediator can therefore handle a wider range of situations skillfully.

Taking from your own work and the work of colleagues, you have developed eight tools for the Mediator. What are they and why these eight?

For a more detailed answer to your question, I refer you to chapter three of my book. But here is a short summary answer to your question:

Tool #1: Integral Vision

Integral vision is the commitment to hold all sides of the conflict, in all their complexity, in our minds and hearts. The dictionary defines “integral” as “necessary to the completeness of the whole.” As we will use it here, integral vision is necessary to the transformation of the whole. I see it as central to all the other seven tools because it is a critical skill for dealing with tough conflicts.

Tool #2: Systems Thinking

Once our intention is clearly focused on understanding the whole conflict, we naturally want to think systemically: to identify

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all (or as many as possible) of the significant elements related to the conflict situation and to understand the relationships between these elements. It complements integral vision the same way the right brain complements the left. To deal with any serious conflict requires learning to think about all the pieces of the puzzle. The success of these Mediators, and their counterparts in scores of other professions, results in large part from their capacity

to think systemically.

Tool #3: Presence

The transformation of conflict requires more than just our minds; it requires our whole being. We can only be present to the whole conflict to the degree that we are actually present. No matter how much we may want to see the whole and think about it systemically, we cannot do so if we are not right here, right now. Presence is an expression of our capacity to apply all our mental, emotional, and spiritual resources to witnessing and transforming the conflict.

I call presence the master tool because it is what gives us access to all the other tools for transforming conflict and guides us as we decide which tool to use when, where, and how. The more deeply we develop this quality of presence, the more effectively we will use all the other tools.

Tool #4: Inquiry

Inquiry is a way of asking questions that elicits essential information about the conflict that is vital to understanding how to transform it. In addition to learning what is inside the boundaries of their profession, or worldview, Mediators must also learn what is beyond those boundaries. To paraphrase Albert Einstein’s well-known statement: a conflict cannot truly be transformed effectively with the same mindset that produced it in the first place. Inquiry permits us to examine the situation afresh.

Tool #5: Conscious Conversation

Conscious conversation is the practical application of the awareness that we are free to choose how we speak and listen. By making participants in conflicts aware of this wide range of choices, Mediators have an immediate impact on the way conflicting parties talk and listen to each other. Language starts to be used in new and more conscious ways. Reactive, mindless attacks

and counterattacks give way to more creative, catalytic conversations. Before they know it, those in conflict are learning more about the situation and about themselves.

Tool #6: Dialogue

Of all the forms of discourse Mediators use, we often focus on dialogue as a doorway to transformation. This is because dialogue is an inquiry-based, trust-building way of communicating that maximizes the human capacity to bridge and to innovate. The purpose of dialogue in conflict situations is not just to improve the quality of discourse, but also to lay the foundation for transformative action. Because of the creative application of the preceding Mediators’ tools, including dialogue, the stakeholders are far less likely to act in habitual, one-sided ways that reinforce the cycle of conflict and far more likely to act in collaborative ways that lead to new options and genuine innovation.

Tool #7: Bridging

Bridging is the process of building partnerships and alliances that cross the divisions in an organization or community.

We have many words for the construction materials from which these invisible bridges are built — trust, social capital, respect, healing, empathy, understanding, courage, collaboration, caring or even love. But however we name it, it comes down in the end to this fundamental and mysterious truth: the energy between the adversaries must change in order for conflict to be transformed into synergy. When this shift occurs, what was impossible before now becomes possible — not certain, but possible. The stage is now set for a breakthrough.

Tool #8: Innovation

Innovation is the creative, social,

or entrepreneurial breakthrough that creates new options for moving through conflicts. Such breakthroughs, if they occur, cannot be guaranteed in advance. (If they can, then they are not truly a breakthrough but rather someone's preconceived plan.) The breakthrough is an innovation, something that perhaps could be imagined but not achieved until now. This innovation — “something newly invented or a new way of doing things” — brings hope. It points the way toward resolving, or transforming, the conflict. For the first time, there is now “light at the end of the tunnel.”

I think it's fair to say that embracing and resolving conflict is at the center of your Mediator model of leadership. How do you see this playing out on today's global stage, for example in terms of the emphasis now being placed on terrorism and the current conflicts in the Middle East?

The example you have picked — the “Middle East” — is an example of a conflict where both parties, the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs, have been historically traumatized. When two traumatized communities are pitted against each other, the ensuing conflict is perhaps the most intractable of all. Ordinary conflict tools, including the eight I outline in *Leading Through Conflict*, can still be useful — but only if the trauma is dealt with first.

What happens when the leader herself is at the root of the conflict. Can one lead through conflict if they are “the cause.”?

A leader who herself is “at the root of the conflict” is what I call a Demagogue. Demagogues require conflict, and exacerbate it, in order to achieve and maintain power. So the answer

to your question is no — a Demagogue cannot lead through conflict. For that, we need a leader who is a Mediator.

Some might argue that there are conflicts that are too complex or have the weight of too much history to ever be overcome. How would you argue against that? Where would you start in the face of such a conflict?

As I mention above, conflicts involved in historically traumatized communities are hard to resolve or transform. History alone is not the problem; trauma is. Look for example at the history of Germany and France, two historic enemies. Now they are the best of friends. That is because trauma was not central to their history. So I would distinguish between longstanding conflicts that do not involve severe, chronic trauma, and those that do.

If you were asked to give one historical example that articulates the success of leading through conflict, what would it be and why?

The most commonly known example is South Africa, which (by most accounts) was heading for civil war before de Klerk and Mandela acted like true Mediators. Together, they put an end to apartheid and established free elections.

A second example, also well-known, is how Gandhi freed the Indian subcontinent from British rule. He used strategic nonviolence, combined with the eight tools of the Mediator, to achieve a remarkably bloodless revolution.

Can an ordinary person use this model without any further training to resolve day-to-day arguments and conflicts in their per-

sonal life or, for example, at their office? If so, how?

“Without any further training” seems to be central to your question. All methods for dealing with conflict require practice and experience. Whether “training” per se is necessary depends on the severity of the conflict. From my experience, reading the book combined with a minimal amount of coaching enables most people to deal with day-to-day and office conflicts much more creatively than before. Whether a person can do so without any instruction or support whatsoever obviously depends on that person's innate skill.

What would you suggest as next steps for those interested in further developing their conflict resolution skills after reading this book?

Take an experiential course or workshop with a practitioner you respect, in order that you can have the experience (even if only through role-playing) of actually working through a real conflict in your life. Simply reading books or talking “about” conflict is not enough. We have to actually experience new ways of handling conflict and then making those new ways part of our ongoing lives.

As you know, the ILA is made up of many different constituent groups including—among others—business people, consultants, scholars, and educators—particularly educators who work to develop student leaders. How would you like to see each of these different constituencies use your model and book?

Business People-- Their incentive, as I explain in the book, is increasing the effectiveness of their organization and the level of enjoyment of those

who work there. Exposing their key leaders to the concepts and tools in the book usually makes a difference in both of these areas.

Consultants-- If consultants deal with conflict (and they usually do), I recommend that they add my eight tools to their "toolbox" and use them when dealing with organizational disputes and tensions. Consultants are usually called in because organizations are experiencing "cold" conflict, and a skillful outsider can help them thaw it out.

Scholars-- I encourage scholars to consider whether the eight tools I describe is, in fact, comprehensive, and if not, what is missing. Since my book is an effort to simplify a complex and growing field so that it is user-friendly, I invite them to consider building a more academically rigorous "toolbox" that makes the field accessible to a wide audience, and to use my book as a catalyst for inspiring serious stu-

dents of the field to go beyond what I have written.

Educators-- Educators can use the book to "bridge" the discrepancy between the volumes of writing in the field of conflict resolution and the limitations of course time and student attention. It is not only a useful introductory textbook for courses, but it is also very useful for peer conflict resolution programs. In both cases, the need is strong for something simple, short and readable, which is exactly how I constructed *Leading Through Conflict*.

Is there anything else that you'd like to add that we haven't covered?

The book has clear relevance to today's headlines. Whether it is the USA's continuing "war on terror" or the continuing war in the Middle East, we are all witnessing conflicts that bring out the Demagogue in the leaders on both sides. When Mediators emerge, they are attacked by one or both sides.

So the challenge we face is clear: we need to foster new kinds of leadership, not only in violent conflicts but in policy conflicts as well.

One of the reasons why I am so active in facilitating (with my colleague William Ury) "transpartisan" dialogues, in which we bring Left, Right and Center together, is that I see a very similar process of demagogic demonization in our own domestic politics. The way Democrats treat Republicans, and Republicans treat Democrats, is not only insulting to each other. It is insulting to the voter's intelligence. Even a ten-year-old can figure out that neither party is all good or all bad. Yet that is the way they portray themselves and each other.

We have to find a better way to grow our democracy. If we don't, the weeds will overtake it. We need to find a way to begin bringing the basic tools of leading through conflict into politics.

ILA Welcomes Back Ramsey Jabaji, Our New Coordinator for Membership Services

Ramsey is a second-year Master's student in the College Student Personnel Program at the University of Maryland, where he also serves as a Residential Fellow in the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life. Ramsey interned with the ILA last summer, and he has now returned to assist ILA Membership Director Debra DeRuyver as the Coordinator for Membership Services. Ramsey has a particular interest in the area of leadership development and he currently serves as a member of the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership research team which is being led by ILA members Susan Komives and John Dugan.

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Ramsey graduated with a BA in sociology and environmental studies from Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. Prior to coming to the University of Maryland, Ramsey was the Hall Director and Special Programs Coordinator at Franklin & Marshall College. While there, Ramsey created and co-directed a faculty-led residential based program which received a grant from the Association of American Colleges & Universities' (AAC&U) Bringing Theory to Practice project. He also worked closely in the area of student civic development and served as the liaison between community-based learning and residence life.

In Ramsey's free time he loves to travel to different cities, attend Broadway shows, and spend time reading at the beach. Ramsey recently became an uncle and he longs to spend more time with his beautiful niece Gracie. Ramsey grew up for most of his life in the Baltimore area, and he hopes to settle down in Baltimore/Washington area once he completes his master's work. He looks forward to working closely with Debra to provide ILA members with the best possible service, and he looks forward to helping the ILA grow its membership base.

