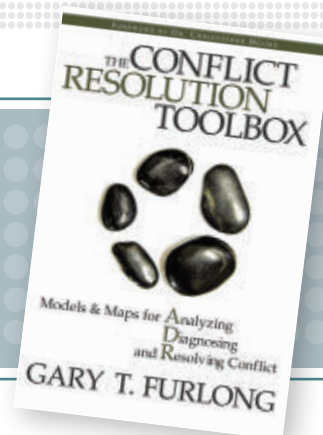


THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION TOOLBOX:

Models and Maps for Analyzing, Diagnosing, and Resolving Conflict

by Gary T. Furlong

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Reviewed by



Joshua Gordon

Joshua Gordon is an experienced mediator, facilitator, educator, and organizational capability builder. He has developed creative organizational solutions to ensure competitive success for college and professional sports teams and leagues at the Sports Conflict Institute and teaches at the University of Oregon.



Ken Pendleton, Ph.D.

Ken Pendleton earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Oregon and now works at the Sports Conflict Institute, which focuses on projects that help stakeholders understand, resolve, and prevent institutional problems that arise at all levels of sports.

The Conflict Resolution Toolbox: Models and Maps for Analyzing, Diagnosing, and Resolving Conflict, as the title suggests, was written to enable people to address and resolve a wide variety of conflicts. Written with the conflict resolution practitioner in mind, the book and its models apply well beyond professional practice.

Gary Furlong (who is a member of the Advisory Board at Sports Conflict Institute, where the authors of this review work) presents eight key models as useful analytic tools for understanding and resolving conflict: Circle of Conflict, Triangle of Satisfaction, Boundary, Interests / Rights / Power, Dynamics of Trust, Dimensions, Social Style, and Moving Beyond. Each offers a rather different, but important, lens from which to understand a particular conflict, and they can often be used in combination.

For example, the first model Furlong outlines, the Circle of Conflict, classifies disputes into six categories. The three that are relatively easy to understand and address are interests, structure, and data; the more difficult three are values, relationships, and externals or moods. Interests, structure, and data are far more tangible and make for a more meaningful place to start to understand where emphasis should be placed in terms of making changes stemming from that conflict. The other three, values, relationships, and externals, are important to understand but are less tangible and may not be something the other party can address.

This model has the advantage of compelling practitioners to look at the big picture, e.g., a given dispute might be occurring because an organization is badly structured and/or because two parties have a poor relationship. Identifying which factors are relevant should, in turn, allow the disputants to then employ other models that focus on the relevant category, e.g., a relationship issue might be addressed using the Dynamics of Trust or the Social Style model.

Furlong argues that these models offer frameworks that can help us analyze and address conflicts. Which model is most suitable in a given case depends on the core problem and possible solution(s). For example, the Social Style model would be useful if one party is emotional and speaks in generalities and another is very detail oriented. But the Dynamics of Trust model would probably prove more helpful if there is a

history of "bad blood." Furlong never argues that any particular model is preferable to the others or that, in any given case, one model reveals the entirety of the problem or points to *the* solution; rather, he argues that these models offer frameworks that can help analyze and address conflicts.

Furlong uses business-related examples throughout the book. Most of them are short, but he uses one (presumably hypothetical) longer case study centering on intra-office dynamics. This case study is used to illustrate all eight models. The problem is that readers often struggle to assimilate cases that are not based on real events. This problem is hardly unique to Furlong, or to books on conflict and dispute resolution. Real world examples may run the risk of being inaccurate or omitting relevant details, but readers often find them far more engaging.

We have been employing Furlong's models in a class called "Introduction to Sports Conflict" which examines sports-related conflicts and demonstrates how they might have been resolved, or better still, prevented.

We find that conflicts in sports are often highly publicized and therefore students can easily understand how the models apply. For example, we used the Circle of Conflict to discuss why David Beckham's transition to playing for Major League Soccer's Los Angeles Galaxy was so difficult, and ultimately successful. We used the Triangle of Satisfaction, which divides interests into substantive, emotional, and procedural categories to analyze why the Baltimore Colts' National Football League Franchise relocated to Indianapolis. We used the Dynamics of Trust, which divides how we attribute blame to others into three categories—situation, intrinsic nature, and intentional/hostile—to analyze why an extraordinarily gifted college football player, Marcus Dupree, decided to leave the University of Oklahoma.

Furlong's models allowed us to deepen the students' understandings of events with which they were

already somewhat familiar. Most importantly, the Triangle of Satisfaction allowed them to systematically organize and make sense of a complex series of events.

In our experience, sport offers an especially teachable context because there is a defined way of measuring success: winning. The pursuit of a victory or a championship is by no means the only reason athletes play—and the other reasons are often crucial to understanding a conflict—but they allow us to organize our understanding of what unfolded in terms of a clearly defined, exoteric institutional goal. Failure to win initially went a long way towards convincing the Los Angeles Galaxy and David Beckham that there were serious problems that needed solving. The success that the Colts had enjoyed on the field was at the heart of why Baltimoreans were so distraught at the owner who they thought had mismanaged the franchise. And the disillusionment that both Marcus Dupree and the University of Oklahoma experienced was ultimately measured by how Dupree's lack of success, and subsequent departure, impacted the school's won-loss record. In sum, the importance of winning or losing facilitates an unusually well-organized discussion of how to use conflict dispute resolution models.

Teaching sports-related courses may actually open up a new area of practice in the conflict and dispute resolution field. Until recently, the front offices of sports organizations have largely been run by sports people, such as former players and coaches that have limited professional backgrounds. But that has begun to change dramatically in the last decade, since the 2004 publication of Michael

Lewis's *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game*, which showed how the Oakland Athletics baseball team compensated for its relatively small budget by using non-traditional tools to evaluate players that allowed it to compete successfully with teams with much bigger budgets. Now every other franchise in major league baseball, as well as in other major sports, is looking to employ similar methods.

The Circle of Conflict classifies disputes into six categories: Interests, Structure, Data; Values, Relationships, and Externals or Moods.

So far, this change in approaches to talent evaluation has not been matched by innovations in conflict resolution in the sports industry. At present, most sports franchises still rely on coaches, captains, and other members of their teams to resolve conflicts. That is to say, they rely on intuition and experience—and rarely seek the counsel of conflict resolution experts. But the work we have done has shown that sports organizations could benefit significantly—that is, resolve disputes far more effectively—if they (or conflict resolution experts they hired) were trained to use the kinds of models Furlong outlines. The class we offered and the case studies we did benefited significantly from our extensive use of *The Conflict Resolution Toolbox*. 🌐

**BOOKS
THAT MATTER**

GREAT MEETINGS! GREAT RESULTS

by Dee Kelsey and Pam Plumb

Great Meetings!: Great Results is a rich and practical handbook that is an indispensable guide for mediators and other conflict resolution professionals asked to facilitate or manage any type of meeting. The authors, with years of experience in organizing and managing meetings, take the reader a step-by-step in designing, organizing and managing group processes.

MICHAEL LANG

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO MEDIATION

by Forrest Mosten

Woody Mosten selflessly gives mediators who want to open a practice all of the tools they need and all of the things about which they need to think. Once I made the decision to shift my practice, I was able to use the tools in this book as a guide, and tweak them so they would fit my practice. Had I not read these books, I never would have shifted from practicing law to practicing mediation.

JONATHAN ROSENTHAL

THE HANDBOOK OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION: Theory and Practice

edited by Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman, and Eric C. Marcus.

The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice brought the theories and practices underlying our field into one place for students of Conflict Theory.

SUSAN RAINES

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

by Daniel Goleman

I read *Emotional Intelligence* when I was in the Peace Corps, and it resonated with me on every level. I had a hard time articulating what it was that made some mediators great, and where the ingredients for conflict lived within the human mind, and this book gave me the language to explain and understand the challenges of dispute resolution in a new way.

COLIN RULE