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## Building Productive Teams through Conflict Resolution

In the article ‘Building Effective Teams through Conflict Resolution: The Other New Year’s Resolution’, written by Shawn Callender, Senior Training Officer of the Barbados Productivity Council quotes Vince Lombardi. The quote reads, ‘The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual.’

In reference to the concept of productivity, this statement holds true. It is indeed a necessity for team members of any given organisation to think and act with a common, unified focus.

As Callender states, ‘The focus of every organization, in this performance-driven, results-oriented business environment, is to create a workplace where the slogan “Together Everyone Achieves More” becomes a reality.’

Productivity Awareness Week in Saint Lucia took place during the period- October 13 to 18, 2014. During the week a range of activities were organised, all of which gained active participation from the private and public sectors, civil society and the youth. Events during the week included forums aimed at various key sectors in the economy. The sectors included the financial services, wholesale and retail, construction, tourism, agriculture and manufacturing sectors. At each forum, successful business owners delivered presentations on measures undertaken to increase productivity in their respective companies. In doing so, the presenters cited effective team work as a key factor which has led to the success of their companies.

As part of his presentation in the construction forum, Mr. Winston Cyril of RECS General Contractors stated,

‘At RECS we’ve realized that, none of us is as smart as all of us. So, we put our ideas together, so that we are able to make better decisions. As we continue to build the company as a team and as the company develops; we would like to attract more team members to share like-minded thinking.’

Teams are made up of individuals, with each member having their unique personality and opinion. As a result of this, sometimes conflict will arise. The occurrence of conflict does not have to prove disruptive to an otherwise productive team. Team members and team leaders simply need to be able to resolve conflict amicably.

There are many reasons why conflict may occur in teams, the four most identifiable reasons being: scarce resources, communication breakdown, personality clashes and goal differences. However, there are ways to overcome any given conflict within a team.

Kenneth Thomas in his article “Conflict and Conflict Management” highlights five styles of handling conflict. These styles are competing, avoiding, compromising, accommodating and collaborating.

#### ‘Competing Style

This style reflects assertiveness to get one’s own way, and should be used when quick, decisive action is vital on important issues or unpopular actions.

### Avoiding Style

This style reflects neither assertiveness nor cooperativeness. This style of handling conflict works best in situations where the issue is trivial, when a delay is needed to gather more information or when the disruption would be costly.

### Compromising Style

The compromising style reflects a moderate amount of both assertiveness and cooperativeness. It is appropriate when the goals on both sides are of equal importance, and when people need to arrive at temporary or expedient solutions under time pressure.

### Accommodating Style

This requires a high degree of cooperativeness and works best where persons recognize that they were wrong and when maintaining harmony is especially important.

### Collaborating Style

This requires a high level of assertiveness and cooperativeness. This style produces a win-win situation for all the parties concerned. It requires at times significant bargaining and negotiating by all the parties concerned. This style is useful when the issues at hand are too important to be compromised and the commitment of the dissenting parties is needed for a consensus.'

Although conflict is inevitable, effective resolution can have tremendous benefits for all involved. Some of these benefits are increased motivation, productivity and creativity, as well as greater participation by employees and improved communication and interpersonal skills.

Conflict can be constructive as long as it is managed effectively and dealt with directly and quickly. When team members learn to see issues from the other side, it opens up new ways of thinking, which can lead to new and innovative solutions, and healthy team performance. Effective conflict resolution can help create a healthy and creative team atmosphere where persons can work collectively towards the common good of the company.