

# FROM CONFLICT TO COLLABORATION

Conflict comes in many forms but two common delineations are warranted conflict, where we share a simple difference in opinion, versus unwarranted conflict, where psychological diversity causes a breakdown between individuals or groups. In the healthcare environment it is more complex; with factors often interrelating to create long term institutionalised conflict, often termed the clinical-managerial divide. In an increasingly hostile environment this is a significant source of risk, where energy expended in internal conflict could be better utilised improving competitiveness.

## Rational reasons for irrational behaviour

The majority of clinicians have a psychological profile very different from their managerial counterparts. This alone gives rise to the conundrum that faced with a similar challenge; doctors would most likely choose to resolve it quite differently from managers. Given the knowledge, training & clinical experience of doctors, they are likely to consider their

solution to be intellectually superior, only serving to entrench views. Furthermore, in their capacity as patient advocate, they may feel almost obligated to defend their position vigorously. Similarly, managers may well feel that the authority vested in them by the Trust to achieve specific objectives equally obligates them to pursue their agendas regardless of the resistance they meet. It does not help that the natural communication style of each is often radically different from the other, inciting intense feelings in its own right that serve to turn up the heat of an already bubbling cauldron.

## And so the divide shall remain...

This divide is unlikely to depart imminently, with managers under increasing pressure to deliver productivity, save money and address national agendas. As this heat becomes uncomfortably warm, the natural tendency of an already assertive group is to push harder against a clinical workforce that is pretty good at pushing back. This is the intellectual equivalent of

doing the same thing but expecting for one miraculous moment to get a different result. If it hasn't worked for the last 20 years then why should it start now!

## Simple solutions with resounding impact

In truth, this is a systemic failure to develop an adequate understanding of the medical mindset, how to access it and more importantly how to engage and influence clinicians in a positive, collaborative manner. The good news is just how easy this is to rectify. What's interesting is just how long individuals are prepared to continue wading through treacle before they choose the line of lesser resistance.

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