Conflict Resolution

by Debora Ott

• Create organizational structures and procedures to avoid personality conflicts
• Focus on peoples’ strengths
• Concentrate on the big picture and how people and ideas fit into it
• Focus on the behavior causing conflict, not the person
• The individual causing a problem needs to be confronted by the person they most respect
• Sometimes it’s necessary to introduce an outsider to resolve a conflict: “you can’t be a prophet in your own land.”
• In general, women have a hard time with conflict
• There is no such thing as indispensability – if someone wants to leave an organization, let him or her
• The most painful part of a merger is deciding who is going to be the board chair
• The board/staff relationship is built on trust
• The major relationship the board has is with the CEO (E.D.)
• A board chair is often involved in conflict resolution
• If there is a weak board chair running board meetings, interject a parliamentarian into the process
• Take a break in a meeting when there is conflict; in most cases, when the meeting resumes the conflict will be lessened
• Print name tents for each board member with the rules of engagement facing them:
  o Play fair
  o Value diverse opinions
  o No cell phones
  o Respect each other
  o Don’t run with scissors

Tip sheet based in part on an Atlanta Women’s Foundation, Women on Board workshop – November 6, 2004, Terri Theisen presenting; notes, Debora Ott