

# Dealing With Confrontation With Your Board

## Confrontation and leadership, Part 2

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Confrontation is unavoidable. That's because you will always have conflict. We lead people, and people are imperfect. When imperfect people get together, you will have conflict.

When leaders try to avoid confrontation, they only push the problems under the rug. The conflict piles up and up without being addressed. And soon it starts to affect other areas of church, ministry and even personal life.

But when leaders manage confrontation, they gain more respect from their peers and followers. They also clear the way for vision to advance. Confrontation, done right, can lead to better communication and cooperation between people.

[Last week](#), I talked about how to handle confrontation on your staff. Today, I want to look at dealing with confrontation with your board. This is the second level of leaders that you will interact with in your church. In some ways, your relationship with your board may be more crucial. Managing confrontation with this group is vital to your continued leadership and direction.

### Why Confront?

Because you may not interact with your board that often, why should you confront? Why not avoid issues and let them resolve on their own? For one, it's the right thing to do. And for another, those issues will not die in the dark; they will grow and fester. Clearing the air when there's a problem will keep you locked in to your mission.

Realize that you will butt heads at times with your board. Your board is probably made up of leaders just like you. And although the church may be further down their list of responsibilities, that doesn't mean board members aren't highly opinionated and

passionately charged. No matter your leadership style, you are passionate about leading your church. And when passions clash, conflict ignites.

As a pastor, you have a clear and singular vision. When a board member leverages his or her position in a way that puts your vision at risk, it's natural to be upset. We need to confront without being confrontational. But we also need to have the courage to call these things out when we see them.

## **When to Confront**

Before you confront, understand that you need your board members as much as they need you. They have been chosen and commissioned by God to help you lead the body of Christ. That's a large task that no one should do alone. Confront issues the wrong way, and you may lose their support and help.

What issues will require you to confront a member of your board? You need to take it on a case-by-case basis, especially since there are so many different church board structures.

## ***When imperfect people get together, you will have conflict.***

Just like any relationship, there is a certain amount of conflict that is healthy. In your marriage, you know how often and how hard to push your spouse's buttons. You may see one couple who is more timid than you are, while another is much more confrontational. It's not that either way is bad. It's part of their relationship matrix.

So first of all, be aware of how you relate with your board members and how they relate to one another. What type of personality does each person have? How do those personalities mix with one another? This is where it may be very wise to take a group assessment so that you aren't assuming anything.

Next, determine your "hill to die on." What is important enough for you to fight for? Your hill will be different than my hill. Your hill will be different than that of the pastor down the road. In fact, your hill may be different than the hills your board members are willing to die on.

Spend some time evaluating all areas of your church structure, your ministry philosophy, your growth strategy, and anything else that relates to issues with which you will need help and support from the board. You may want to categorize them according to importance in your overall vision. Ask yourself what would happen if one of those things were gone. Would you still be able to operate successfully? You may find out that your hill is much smaller than you thought.

There are some areas that will require your confrontation. If a board member is being divisive rather than unifying, or if he or she is needlessly critical of you or another board member or fails to meet a responsibility, then go ahead and confront. The worst thing you can do is fear being direct when a board member causes conflict. You can respect that person's position and even his or her input without caving in to the pressure.

## How to Confront

There are some occasions where it is absolutely necessary to confront. Last week, I gave you some principles to remember when confronting your staff. First of all, always confront personally. When it comes to your board, never pit one member against another. Go to the person you have an issue with, and deal with it one-on-one. Confronting the problem head-on through direct communication is key to resolving conflict.

Since you may only meet with the board once a month or even once a quarter, pick a time as soon as possible to bring up the issue. Don't let it linger for another few board meetings. It's easy to leave and then forget about the issue until next time.

Confront in love, and assume the best about your board members. Don't believe the lie that they are against you. They are for you and for your church. Down deep, that conflict is probably due to their love for the church and a mutual desire to see it become as healthy as possible.

Your relationship with each board member is unique and important. It's vital to protect that relationship. Avoiding confrontation can be detrimental to relational health, though. So be courageous with your confrontation — for the sake of you and your board members.

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