JACOBS SCOTT

Consultants in Executive Search & Leadership Development

RELATIONSHIP INTELLIGENCE®
### Affective Conflict - The Elephant in the Boardroom

⇒ Relationship Intelligence, or RQ, is a model for effectively and accurately understanding the motivation behind behaviour. The model was developed by Dr Elias Porter, who worked with Carl Rogers and other acclaimed psychologists in developing a client-centred approach to counselling and therapy during the 1970s.

⇒ RQ is our concept of the combination of Social and Emotional intelligence and is one of the most important competencies a leader can develop, because our relationships with others are integral to everything we do and the results we achieve.
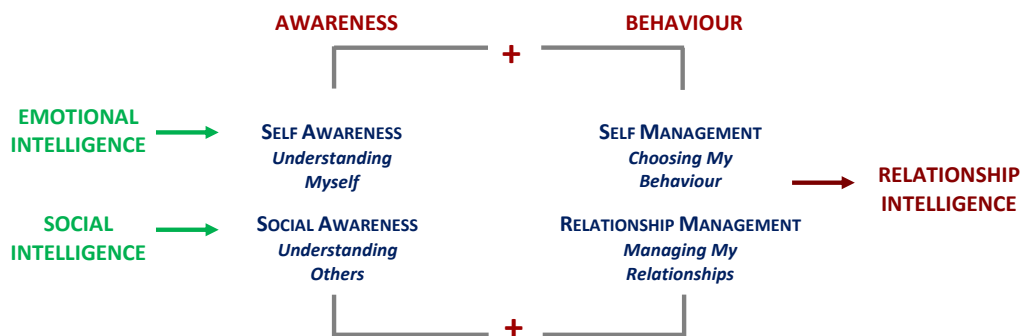
⇒ According to Solange Charas, (PhD on *New Approaches to Select, Develop and Manage Passionate High-Performing Interdisciplinary Teams*), conflict within Boards are characterized by two distinct types: *Cognitive Conflict*, dealing with task-focus and drive for optimal results; and *Affective Conflict,* which is emotionally-oriented and focussed on personal differences.

⇒ In Dr. Charas' research, Boards that recognized and addressed Affective Conflict revealed much more efficient governance, while Boards that did little to alleviate this conflict type evidenced poor governing efficiency. Moreover, Boards with a higher incidence of Cognitive Conflict evidenced significantly higher levels of innovation and growth.

⇒ RQ helps Boards promote Cognitive Conflict and minimize Affective Conflict. It is non-judgmental and emphasizes a person's strengths in relating to others. The end result is increased collaboration and trust, and the development of real strategies that define how they will continue to work together in ways that best meet organizational growth.

⇒ South African Boards are becoming increasingly diverse, and because different people bring different experiences, personalities and cultural values to the Boardroom, Affective Conflict is highly likely. Moreover, as business grows, roles and responsibilities of Board members change and when these clash with organizational strategy, conflict follows.

⇒ Although most leaders would say their Board functions as a leadership team, their behaviour usually demonstrates a reticence for open or frank communication of key issues. Team members often take their issues *off-line* to avoid personality-focused conflict. When leaders do not openly debate and disagree about important ideas, they often turn to personal attacks that prove to be more harmful than any heated argument over critical business issues.

⇒ RQ helps senior teams acknowledge that conflict is healthy and productive, and that many teams have a tendency to avoid it. It enables the kind of productive conflict that produces the best business solutions. Issues are discussed and resolved more quickly with no collateral damage to the executive team.

How Relationship Intelligence® Functions
The Strength Deployment Inventory® or SDI

⇒ Completing the SDI, an on-line assessment, is the first step to building RQ. It provides insight into an individual's motivational value system and clarifies what is important in their relationships with others when things are going well and when there is conflict.

⇒ While other assessments inform us **what** we do, the SDI helps us understand **why** we do it. It creates a common language that guides people toward greater interpersonal effectiveness by providing a practical and comprehensive guide to developing the *art of influence.*

⇒ It is far easier to influence someone when there is insight into what is important to **them,** what they pay attention to and what drives their behaviour. The SDI provides this powerful insight and provides leaders at all levels of the organization to influence and engage people who are motivated by different things, and who think, behave and communicate in very different ways.

⇒ As importantly, the SDI provides a unique window into understanding how we and others approach conflict, based on the unique changes in motivation we experience during affective conflicts. This is important, because Affective Conflict creates dysfunctional work relationships, intensifies member grievances, and impacts organizational productivity and revenues.

⇒ Conflict and motivational values have a very powerful connection: We enter into conflict over those things upon which we place the greatest personal importance. When we are prevented from or not valued for doing things that provide us with a sense of purpose or self-worth, we experience conflict. This is an important discovery that can transform conflict into healthy disagreement - *a more positive force for progress and constructive change on Boards, as well as across the organization as a whole.*
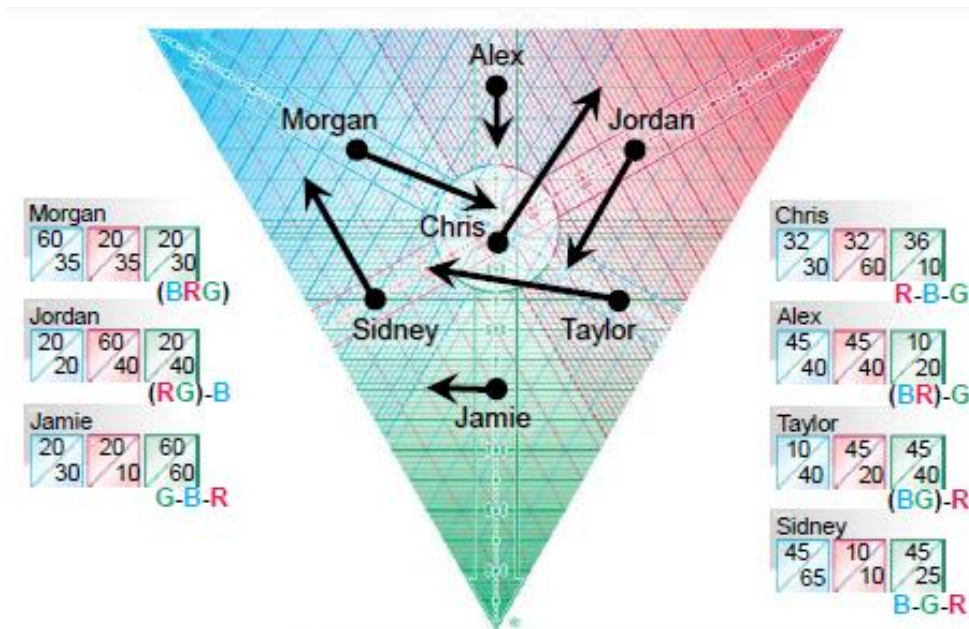
SDI Chart of Executive Team Showing Individual Motivational Value Systems &
Conflict Sequences

Relationship Intelligence® & Leadership

⇒ At the executive level, relationship issues often result in reduced leadership performance, derailment, and damaged client relationships, all issues that filter down the organization and impact working relationships at every level.

⇒ New business models and goals, different team members, changing roles, structures and accountabilities, mergers, acquisitions and divestitures are all are major changes that can generate stress-related issues and conflict in organizations and on leadership teams.

⇒ Today many organizations are recognizing the connection between leadership behaviour, employee/client satisfaction and profitability. By helping leaders better understand how to influence people who think, behave and communicate differently from themselves, we enable them to build and sustain important relationships both within and outside the organization.

⇒ From the perspective of many CEOs, leadership teams and Boards often tend to operate in *silos*, with a focus on functional management rather than on organizational leadership. In their words, the team members engage individually, but not as a leadership group. There are often varied interests, styles, cultural values and beliefs within the team or on the Board that have a definite impact on how the team functions as a whole.

⇒ Although most individual leaders would say they function as a leadership team, their behaviour usually demonstrates a reticence for open communication or frank discussion of key issues. Team members often take their issues *off-line* to avoid personality-focused, or affective conflict. When leaders do not openly debate and disagree about important ideas, they often turn to back-channel personal attacks that, in the long run, prove to be far more harmful than any heated argument over critical business issues.

⇒ The SDI, combined with a focus on real business issues, enables a leadership team to focus on how they function as business leaders, including how they communicate and work with one another and deploy individual and team strengths in light of current business goals. The end result is increased collaboration and trust, and the development of real strategies that define how they will continue to work together in ways that best meets the future needs of the business.

⇒ The SDI provides an effective means to align cultural values, especially when appointing new Board members. New appointments are hired for the skills and experience required to meet the role's mandate, but often lack awareness of what is expected of them in the role; specifically how their style of relating *impacts* the team's existing culture.

The Integration of a new Board Member & Team Values Alignment, SDI Team Culture Assessment