

3 Powerful Lessons From an Expert on Conflict Resolution

So many are at risk when leaders do battle. Learn how this CEO is leading people on opposing sides of geopolitical and religious conflicts to resolution.



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Conflict resolution can task a leader like no other challenge. Conflict is inevitable, and when you are in a position of power, you are automatically tasked not only with managing it, but ultimately, resolving it. Often that resolution can be difficult, particularly when the parties in question simply do not get along or are strong in their conviction.

Dick Simon, a member of the [Young Presidents' Organization](#) (YPO), co-founded and developed the [YPO Peace Action Network](#) to unite conflicted people around the world. He regularly organizes trips for international business [leaders](#) to encourage conflict resolution among major powers.

Simon, a successful CEO himself, is passionate about creating open-mindedness and learning what it's like in the other's shoes while facing down conflict. His missions have united leaders in Pakistan, India, North Korea, Iran and Cuba among others. He leads some of the most [powerful](#) leaders in the world and when I [interviewed him](#) on my podcast, [YPO 10 Minute Tips From the Top](#), he shared his approach to conflict resolution even when the battle won't upset world peace.

1. Don't use exclusionary language.

For Simon, there is no word more offensive in the English language than *them*. He points out that using that term automatically creates a [division](#) between any two opposing parties, furthering the gap. Instead, he recommends trying to avoid language that separates when engaging people in dialogue. Instead, use inclusionary language like *we* and *us*. These words help to shift your perspective from cultivating the opposition as rivals. Inclusive words help you see adversaries as people with whom you should seek out mutual respect and understanding, critical to any successful negotiation.

2. Consider opposing perspectives.

When [passions](#) run high and tempers flare, it's difficult to see the point of view of someone that you have major differences with or greatly dislike. But Simon notes that the quickest way toward finding common ground is to try and see the situation from the other side. *"Just the experience of recognizing and internalizing that the other has their own narrative and that it is a legitimate narrative to them, even if it isn't your narrative, is hugely beneficial,"* says Simon.

3. Make contact to help solve conflicts.

There is an old saying that "seeing is believing," and that is a big part of Simon's world view. Part of his work with the YPO Peace Action Network is to connect members from conflicting areas of the world in order to seek out resolution. He notes that bringing these people together face-to-face helps to diffuse stereotypes, humanize the conflict and find [common ground](#). Facing conflict in person is a far more immediate way toward resolution. Remaining at a distance and communicating from afar can create more barriers that only extend or escalate the issues at hand.

Each week on his podcast, Kevin has conversations with members of the [Young Presidents' Organization](#) (YPO), the world's premiere peer-to-peer organization for chief executives, eligible at age 45 or younger.

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