

## EXTERNAL LEADERSHIP:

### STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS “UNCOMFORTABLE WITH CHANGE”<sup>1</sup>

As women begin to work within the structures of their political parties or civil society organizations it is important for them to understand the possible obstacles they might encounter. These obstacles will create barriers for women as they proceed with their work and political advancement. As we all know the involvement of women as active participants in the political process may be something new and different for many male and female political activists. Many people are uncomfortable with “concepts or ideas” which are new and different because new and different means “change”; often many people distrust change. Consequently the major obstacle to the advancement of women within the organization will often be the individuals they must work with.

There are certain characteristics that are typical of individuals who are “uncomfortable with change”. These individuals can be found in any organized group whether it be social, religious, political, NGO or union or in the work environment. Generally these individuals can be grouped in the following categories:

1. The “*Know It All*”: the person who knows everything about all things.
2. The “*Gate Keeper*”: the person who lets nothing in or out. Very concerned about keeping the status quo.
3. The “*One Who Must Be Told*”: the person who cannot act without permission from a higher authority, never wants to make a decision themselves.
4. The “*Busy Bee*”: the person who says he/she is too busy to get involved.
5. The “*Nay Sayers*”: the person who always has a negative attitude.
6. The “*Ego*”: the person involved in the organization for his/her own self interest.
7. The “*Controller*”: the person who always must be in control, he/she generally intimidates or frightens others.
8. The “*I Did It*”: the person who always takes the credit for the work done by others.
9. The “*New Person*”: the person who is new to the organization, lacks confidence but wants to participate and become engaged in party/organizational work.

Women activists can use the following strategies when they encounter the above types of individuals:

1. The “*Know It All*”: The person who knows everything about all things.
  - a) ask them to share their knowledge, make them feel validated in their role

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from National Democratic Institute, Women Leadership Development Seminar, *Strategies for Working with Party Members “Uncomfortable with Change”*, by Sarah H. Jenkins and Karen Gainer.

2. The “*Gate Keeper*”: the person who sits in the position that controls the flow of information to a person in a leadership position.
  - a) If possible find another way to get the information to the decision maker.
  - b) Wait for an opportunity to jump through the gate.
  - c) Identify someone close to the Gate Keeper ie. friend/co-worker and ask them to intervene on your behalf.
  - d) Provide the Gate Keeper with information to make them feel a part of the process, ask for their suggestions and recommendations.
  
3. The “*One Who Must Be Told*”: the person who cannot act without permission from a higher authority, never wants to make a decision themselves.
  - a) Identify someone with higher authority to encourage the “One” to make a decision.
  - b) Attempt to create a “safe environment” for the “One” to feel comfortable and secure prior to making a decision, ie. provide information and ask for their input.
  - c) If possible provide the “One” with the support, explanation, time and effort he/she needs to make a decision.
  
4. The “*Busy Bee*”: the person who says they are too busy to assist you.
  - a) Identify someone else who is willing to work with you.
  
5. The “*Nay Sayer*”: the person who always has negative attitude.
  - a) Always be positive and always do what has to be done.
  - b) Always surround yourself with people who share your positive attitude.
  - c) Attempt to include the “Nay Sayer” in your work projects and support their efforts, maybe by your support you can change the Nay Sayer’s attitude.
  
6. The “*Ego*”: the people who are involved in the party for their own self interest and who do not want to work.
  - a) Avoid working with them.
  - b) If you must work with them, work in a team with a strong team leader.
  - c) If you are the team leader assign the “Ego” a small task that will not diminish the project if the work is not done or is done incorrectly.
  - d) Always give credit to the people who actually did the work.
  
7. The “*Controller*”: the person who always must be in control, he/she generally intimidates or frightens others.
  - a) Always be positive and always do what has to be done.
  - b) Provide the “Controller” with information to make them feel a part of the process, ask for their suggestions and recommendations.
  - c) Identify someone close to the “Controller” ie. friend/co-worker and ask them to intervene on your behalf.
  - d) Identify some one in a higher position who could encourage the “Controller” to work with you.
  - e) Identify someone else to work with.
  
8. The “*I Did It*”: the person who always takes credit for the work done by others.

- a) Always give a copy of your idea, program or work effort to one or more of your supporters within the organization/party before you give it to “I Did It”.
- b) Have the confidence to stand up and take credit for the work you did.

9. The “*New Person*”: the person who is new, lacks confidence but wants to participate and become engaged in party/organization work.

- a) Always have the “New Person” work with a strong leader, someone who will teach and guide the individual.
- b) Always train them well and always motivate and encourage them to grow and improve.

We all know that the characteristics described above do not come neatly packaged in specific individuals. In fact women can expect to find individuals who reflect the characteristics of several of the categories identified above.

It may unlikely women activists will be able to identify individuals who are “uncomfortable with change” in an initial meeting. But it is almost guaranteed that they will run across several of the individuals described above as they continue with their work and political advancement.