



Own your problems, find a resolution

BUSINESS IS PERSONAL
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OK. Brace yourself, as what we're about to say might seem harsh. Ready? Here goes: When you have a problem with everyone around you, chances are good you're the problem.

Ouch. We hear ya - that stings. But it's not just our opinion. It's what John Maxwell in his book *Winning with People* calls the "Bob Principle" because when "Bob" has a problem with everyone, "Bob" is usually the problem. And though it's not always true, on those days when you seem to be annoyed with everyone, it's not a bad idea to take a minute to ask yourself: "Am I being a Bob?"

Even the best communicators have moments when they're stressed, distracted, hungry, tired, uncomfortably hot, etc. Any number of things could be happening to momentarily strain your interactions with others and impede your ability to communicate effectively. During these times, a good dose of self reflection can go a long way to bring about the realisation that maybe, just maybe...you're the problem.

Granted, admitting it when you're the problem is easier said than done. Most of us have a tendency to ignore our own flaws and blame conflict on those who oppose us. So when we find ourselves in confrontational situations with others, instead of admitting we might be the problem, we tend to give ownership of the problem to the other person, regardless of if that person is an enemy, a friend, a boss, an assistant, a neighbour or a family member. In saying "it's not my problem" we are then assuming we can leave the other person to deal with the problem and walk away. Unfortunately, during those times when you're the "Bob," the problem doesn't get left behind; it sticks with you.

When presented with interpersonal conflict, uncomfortable issues, difficult conversations or pure annoyance, what is a more productive strategy than walking away? We suggest three preliminary steps. First, admit that a problem exists. Regardless of if you're willing to take ownership of the problem, the first step in resolving any issue is to accept that there is a problem. Second, take time to determine what the actual problem is. Before you react to a situation, figure out what is really bothering you. Otherwise, regardless of your intentions, you might find yourself taking the wrong steps in trying to resolve the problem. And third, commit to dealing with the problem. Facing your problems with others can seem overwhelming. If you're having a hard time facing the problem on your own, seek advice on options for dealing with it. Look for trustworthy and experienced peers, mentors or professionals who can give you the objective perspective you may need to begin to see a way forward.

So, when you find that everyone seems to be driving you crazy; take a minute to assess the situation. Start by admitting there's an issue that needs to be resolved, then figure out what is really bothering you and deal with that. When you do, you may find that other people stop being so annoying.