When you meet with stakeholders for their feedback on your draft Project Plan (or other subject matters), you may find that there is more resistance than you previously experienced.

In a few cases, you may encounter what Robert Bramson, Ph.D. calls "difficult people." Most of us are difficult some of the time, probably 10-20 percent of the time. People who are difficult 80 percent of the time deserve the title "difficult person." In Dr. Bramson’s work, he estimated that about 10 percent of people are “difficult.” During your campaign (and not just at your stakeholder meetings), you will come in contact with many people. Most will be helpful and supportive of your work, some will be indifferent to your work and there will be that 10 percent of others who will be difficult.

By the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Identify different types of people based on Bramson.
- Reflect upon a situation you have had with a difficult person and consider your role in the situation.
Activity, Which Difficult Person Is He/She?

Instructor Procedure

**Step 1**
Prepare the Activity

1. **Become familiar with this activity. If you have not done it before, test it out with some colleagues**
2. **Determine how you will split up the groups. One possible way is as follows**
   - Group A: Sherman Tank, Complainer, Know-it-all
   - Group B: Sniper, Think-they-know-it-all, Negativist
   - Group C: Exploder, Super-agreeable, Indecisive, Unresponsive
3. **Prepare your debrief questions. Your rational aim should be to discuss how different types of difficult people might appear in the Pride campaigns. Your experiential aim should be about letting people find some humor in what are normally very difficult situations. You might also want to ask some questions that have participants explore their feelings about “typing” people or about using negative terms.**

**Step 2**
Conduct the Activity

1. **Review the purpose and the directions. Try and remind people that they can have some fun with this, and they will be asked to take is more seriously in the writing activity. For now, though, let’s explore the types.**
2. **Emphasize that the group should pick an everyday topic to have a skit about, nothing too controversial**

**Step 3**
Debrief the Activity

- **Conduct an ORID debrief using the questions you prepared**
Participant Procedure

Step 1

Purpose
To have some fun acting out different types of difficult people behavior

50 minutes

Step 2

Participate in the Activity

1. Your instructor will divide you into teams. Each team will be assigned three to four difficult people based on the descriptions below. Your team must create a skit in which each of the characters behave difficultly by staying in character. So, an Exploder will behave in a way that shows they are feeling threatened by throwing tantrums or storming out of the room, attacking others verbally without explanation, or crying or looking silently enraged.

2. Select a very simple topic for your conversation, but something people can have fun disagreeing about. For example, "What we will have for lunch?" or "What really happened on that TV show last night?" For the purposes of this activity, do not select a truly controversial topic -- we want to have a little fun with this.

3. Spend about 15 minutes practicing your skit, be sure each character demonstrates enough behaviors that those watching your skit can guess who is playing which part. As you prepare, give each other feedback and helpful suggestions on how to make their character behave according to the descriptions below. Your skit will probably last between three and five minutes.

4. After you have performed your skit, ask the audience (the other groups) which person was playing which type of difficult person.

5. Each team will have a chance to perform.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior Name</th>
<th>Typical Actions</th>
<th>Positive Intent</th>
<th>Basic Coping Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sherman Tank</td>
<td>Pushy, abrupt and even hostile. Attacks until others move out of the way or accept their view of the world. Aggravated by too much discussion or friendly chat.</td>
<td>Get it done</td>
<td>1. Hold your ground, but do not fight back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Interrupt the attack by repeating the person's name.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Restate the problem.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. State your own opinions forcefully.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Be ready to be friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sniper</td>
<td>Hides in crowds. Uses jokes and sarcasm to sidetrack, humiliate and embarrass people. May roll eyes to distract you. Can become Sherman Tank if exposed. Friendly snipers use humor to get attention from the group.</td>
<td>Get it done</td>
<td>1. Surface the attack immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Get appreciated</td>
<td>2. Ask about intent and relevancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Seek group consensus of criticism.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Solve the problem, if any exists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Resolve ongoing problems in private.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploder</td>
<td>Feels thwarted and threatened so &quot;acts out&quot; through tantrums. May storm out of the room or attack others verbally without explanation. May cry or look silently enraged.</td>
<td>Get appreciated</td>
<td>1. Give them time to run down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Get their attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Show that you take them seriously.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Reduce intensity. Take a break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Identify and solve underlying problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know-it-all Expert</td>
<td>Extremely confident in their abilities. Very accurate and thorough. Tends to ignore other opinions. Quick to criticize and pick at others.</td>
<td>Get it done</td>
<td>1. Be prepared and know your stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Listen and acknowledge respectfully.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Compiled from Rick Brinkman and Rick Kirschner, Dealing With People You Can’t Stand: How to Bring Out the Best in People at Their Worst (McGraw-Hill Professional, 2002).
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| Does not like to be contradicted. | | 3. Present your views indirectly.  
4. Turn them into mentors. | |
| **Think-they-know-it-all** | Acts like expert. Charismatic or enthusiastic talker. Likes to pontificate about subject in front of others, even though they are not really experts. Tend to be generalists in many fields. | Get appreciated | 1. Give them a little attention.  
2. Clarify for specifics.  
3. State facts or alternative opinions.  
4. Allow them to save face.  
5. Break the cycle. |
| **Super-agreeable** | Tries to please everyone by doing what is asked while sometimes feeling put upon. Over-commit so much that they perform poorly. Uses humor to reveal issues. | Get along | 1. Make it safe to be honest.  
2. Talk personally and honestly.  
3. Help them learn to plan realistically.  
4. Ensure commitment.  
5. Strengthen the relationship. |
| **Indecisive** | Avoids making decisions for fear of harming a personal relationship. Hints or beats around the bush to remain honest. Tries to postpone decisions until they are not necessary. | Get along | 1. Establish a comfort zone.  
2. Surface the issues.  
3. Help them problem solve.  
4. Reassure, then ensure follow-through.  
5. Strengthen the relationship. |
| **Unresponsive** | Withdraws from others when frustrated. Stops talking although they appear angry. Washes hands of decision rather than try to influence it. Doesn’t like to rush into action without understanding the | Get it right | 1. Be prepared to wait.  
2. Ask open-ended questions expectantly.  
3. Avoid filling quiet pauses with talk.  
4. Help break the tension. |
<table>
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<td></td>
<td>background and the details of a project.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Negativist    | Feels hopeless to enact change. Destroys morale. Reacts strongly to problem solving or process changes. Sounds more bitter and hopeless than complainers. | Get it right     | 1. Avoid getting drawn in.  
                               |                                                                                       | 2. Do not argue.  
                               |                                                                                       | 3. Explore the problem before solutions.  
                               |                                                                                       | 4. Describe the worst case situation.  
                               |                                                                                       | 5. Use them as a resource.  
                               |                                                                                       | 6. Wait for them, but be prepared to act. |
| Complainer    | Whines and speaks in generalizations about problems. Focuses on problems, not solutions. Believes someone else should fix the problem. | Get it right     | 1. Listen for the main points  
                               |                                                                                       | 2. Acknowledge, interrupt and get specific.  
                               |                                                                                       | 3. Do not agree or apologize. State facts.  
                               |                                                                                       | 4. Switch to problem solving.  
                               |                                                                                       | 5. Draw the line. How should this end?  |

When you meet with stakeholders for their feedback on some part of your Pride campaign (Results Chains, Project Plan, etc.), you may find that there is more resistance than you anticipated. For the most part, the basic interpersonal communication skills that you learned are sufficient to work with most people.

In a few cases, you may encounter what Robert Bramson, Ph.D. calls “difficult people.” Most of us are difficult some of the time, probably 10-20 percent of the time. People who are difficult 80 percent of the time deserve the title “difficult person.” In Dr. Bramson’s work, he estimated that about 10 percent of people are “difficult.”

During your campaign (and not just at your stakeholder meetings), you will come in contact with many people. Most will be helpful and supportive of your work, some will be indifferent to your work and there will be that 10 percent of others who will be difficult.

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Dr. Bramson describes several types of difficult people, and has given each behavior a name (e.g., Sherman Tank, Negativist). The table above shows 10 difficult behavior styles that you may have to deal with.

You will need to develop strategies to work with these people. The chart above gives you some help in identifying the typical actions of the “difficult person,” as well as possible reason for their actions (positive intent). The basic coping strategies suggested in the table will be helpful to you in developing your own strategies when you encounter a difficult person.

Just as with many of the new skills you are learning, there will be some strategies that are easier for you to use than others. For some of us, it is very difficult to deal with hostility and aggression. It is easy to become defensive or even to respond with our own hostility or aggression. While that might be a reasonable reaction given the situation, it is not a response that will help you move forward or solve any problems. In fact, it often reinforces the bad behavior and makes it more difficult to work with the hostile/aggressive person in the future.
Activity, Difficult People and Their Impacts

Instructor Procedure

Step 1
Prepare the Activity

1. No preparation required

Step 2
Conduct the Activity

1. This can be a homework assignment

Step 3
Debrief the Activity

- Not needed

Participant Procedure

Step 1
Purpose
To explore how difficult people have impacted your work or how you might have contributed to the situation

120 minutes (Homework)

Step 2
Participate in the Activity
1. Use the worksheet below to help you write a two- to three-page paper that describes an incident working with a difficult person. Make sure the paper includes what the situation was, how you responded, and how the situation could have been managed differently, particularly using the techniques that Dr. Bramson recommends.

**Exploring a Situation With a Difficult Person Worksheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Think about a difficult person with whom you have had challenges working. Describe the situation and the person. Identify which type above best describes the person you are writing about.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What behaviors did you use in responding to the person and the situation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As you think about the situation now, what might you have done differently to better manage the challenges you faced?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the future, what will you do differently to better manage this type of difficult person?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Write the paper
3. Submit paper to instructor
4. Upload paper to RarePlanet
Summary

Dr. Bramson describes several types of difficult people, and has given each type a name (e.g., Sherman Tank, Negativist). The table in the activity, "Which Difficult Person Is He/She?" shows 10 difficult behavior styles that you may have to deal with.

You will need to develop strategies to work with these people. The basic coping strategies suggested in the activities conducted in this lesson will be helpful to you in developing your own strategies when you encounter a difficult person.

Just as with many of the new skills you are learning, there will be some strategies that are easier for you to use than others. For some of us, it is very difficult to deal with hostility and aggression. It is easy to become defensive or even to respond with our own hostility or aggression. While that might be a reasonable reaction given the situation, it is not a response that will help you move forward or solve any problems. In fact, it often reinforces the bad behavior and makes it more difficult to work with the hostile/aggressive person in the future.