

BOOK REVIEW

The Collaboration Effect: Overcoming Your Conflicts

By Michael A. Gregory, ASA, CVA, MBA, NSA

Review by John E. Barrett, Jr., MBA, CPA, ABV, CVA, CBA

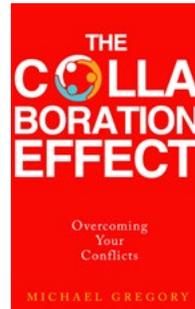
The *Collaboration Effect* is a guide to overcoming conflicts for organizational leaders as well as for people involved in negotiation, mediation, or litigation. The author, Michael Gregory, is the founder of Michael Gregory Consulting, LLC, in Roseville, Minnesota. Gregory is an expert in conflict resolution and is passionate about inspiring leaders and helping others resolve conflicts and achieve winning solutions. An experienced negotiator, facilitator, and mediator, Gregory excels at teaching others how to work with difficult people, de-escalate tension, listen effectively, and build relationships. He has more than 25 years of managerial experience, served at the executive level with the IRS, and has successfully worked in alternative dispute resolution for more than 20 years.



The book provides fresh insights into conflict resolution in an organizational context, but for the business valuation community, its discussion of conflict resolution in an adversarial setting is invaluable. Providing a quality business valuation report is only the first step in a contested matter. Equally critical is getting others to buy into the valuation outcome. This is generally not easy to accomplish and negotiations with opposing lawyers and business valuation experts can become contentious and difficult. Gregory provides a three-step collaborative process focused on positive, less contentious, less stressful outcomes. The process of building connecting relationships with others, listening actively, and educating judiciously can be of great benefit in resolving conflicts to the satisfaction of all parties.

Real-Life Relevance

Even before the first chapter, Gregory provides a powerful, real-life example illustrating how an estate tax audit business valuation matter was successfully resolved without conflict. The example is right on point for any business valuation professional. The book's collaborative process will be especially useful to my practice, particularly in managing divorce cases involving business valuation issues. It provides a valuable lesson to business appraisers: When approaching adversarial situations, such as divorce settlement conferences, your first reaction need not be to drop the gloves and go for the jugular. The book teaches a more positive, professional approach to obtaining the desired result.



Gregory creates compact “pocket guides” to accompany many of his books. I received the one for *Peaceful Resolutions* at one of his seminars and keep it on the bookcase in my conference room. It is not there for the benefit of my clients or opposing lawyers or valuation experts; rather, it is a reminder to myself to keep a proper frame of mind, in all negotiations, at all times. Gregory has also created a pocket guide to the principles covered in *The Collaboration Effect*. Email him at mg@mikegreg.com and he will be happy to send you the guide in PDF format.

Collaboration Matters

The early chapters of the book explain why collaboration matters and the benefits of collaboration both for organizational leaders and those involved in conflict resolution. Gregory focuses on establishing trust and

building relationships to achieve positive results. He explains that to establish trust we must be perceived as trustworthy. The early chapters provide several examples showing how we can establish trust with others. I would suggest that for business appraisers this really requires that we enter negotiations with credible work product devoid of intentional biases. The book contains many examples and stories from Gregory's mediation practice, illustrating the application of the collaboration effect. This helps readers shift from awareness of the collaboration process to effective implementation of the process. Chapter 3 focuses on dealing with difficult people and provides wonderful suggestions for overcoming the negative emotional reactions we have to some adversaries.

Collaboration Process

The middle chapters focus on the three-step collaboration process. Chapter 5 deals with connecting relationships. While some of the discussion really covers opposition research, the chapter goes well beyond general research and teaches us how to employ that research in a constructive manner. Chapter 6 deals with listening actively. Gregory considers this the most important chapter in the book. It explains how to actively listen to others and, when the time is right, to paraphrase or summarize what others are saying. This lets others know they have been heard and sets the stage for the next step in the process. Chapter 7, Educating Judiciously, focuses on explaining your position in a humble and respectful manner that the opposition can understand.

The final chapter outlines seven key points for negotiation that we can all practice to improve our skills. As Gregory explains, "*The Collaboration Effect* provides an effective way to build trust. Its core ideas are about establishing connecting relationships, listening actively, and educating judiciously in order to build bridges to negotiate closure." The book's message is that achieving a successful outcome is not about you, but rather about all the parties to a negotiation.

Recommendation

The Collaboration Effect provides invaluable information and practical guidance for those involved in complex negotiations. Gregory draws from his considerable experience in achieving conflict resolution to assist the reader through a well-thought-out and practical process to achieve positive outcomes, even in the most difficult cases. Adopting Gregory's mantra, "It's not about me, it's about we, but we starts with me," can help you develop the proper mindset for negotiating successful outcomes. I highly recommend this book to business appraisers dealing with potential conflicts in negotiation, mediation, or litigation. **VE**



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The Collaboration Effect: Overcoming Your Conflicts, by Michael A. Gregory, ASA, CVA, MBA, NSA, is published by Michael Gregory Consulting, LLC (2020) and distributed by Publish, Inc. It is available on Amazon in paperback (111 pages, \$17.99) and Kindle (\$9.99) versions.

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