

Do you have Irritable Partner Syndrome?

Category: Structure

While partnerships can deliver great value in running an organization, the behavioral styles of the partners are often very different. This can lead to irritation and confrontation that not only puts a significant strain on their relationship but also damages the culture and effectiveness of the company.

I call this "Irritable Partner Syndrome" and it is often difficult to cure because the behavioral styles and values of the partners are diametrically opposed to each other. Like its medical cousin it won't go away without treatment, but the treatment necessary can often be difficult for the partners to administer themselves,

There is a simple technique that you can use if you have this problem. While you may need a moderator to accomplish this without coming to blows, the process that I recommend is as follows:

- Each partner sits down separately and writes down a list of everything about the other person that irritates them.
- This list needs considerable thought, because once written down the rule is that neither party can add to it.
- When each partner has written their list, they exchange lists and have a 48 hour "cooling off" period to review and digest the observations being made about each other
- During this 48 hour period it is often a good idea to go over the list with a significant other who may be able to help the digestion process.
- When the "cooling off" period is over the partners should meet and ask questions about what is meant by the items on the other persons list.
- The rules for this process are as follows:
 - o neither party can defend their position, only understand where the other person is coming from.
 - o the person presenting a list can't make suggestions for how a behavior should be changed
 - o the person receiving the "input" can ask what they could do in order to make the behavior less irritating to them.
- When the process is complete the lists will be finalized and numbered. This gives the partners the opportunity, when any flashpoint occurs, to refer to the behavior that is irritating them by number rather than a more accusatory approach.

This process can be undertaken between ideally two partners, but obviously it is dangerous as it can lead to aggression and defensiveness. It is much safer if you use an independent

Do you have Irritable Partner Syndrome?

Category: Structure

moderator (lawyer, accountant or consultant) to run the discussion as it can save hurt feelings and damaged egos by keeping the whole discussion on a factual basis that avoids direct criticism and focuses simply on behaviors.