

# Passive Resistance/Passive Aggression

How to deal with it before it  
affects your project.



Rachel L. Paulson, PMP

Director, Project Management Services and Training  
Columbia Technical Consulting, Inc.



# Story Time

## An RFP gone bad...

### Results:

- Delayed RFP and restart
- Unplanned Architectural Change
- Scope not met
  - Legacy Application could not longer be sunset
  - Certain business features could no longer be accommodated
- Project delivered 5 months later than planned
- Work needed to be outsourced
- Budget Doubled
- Business lost confidence in the process

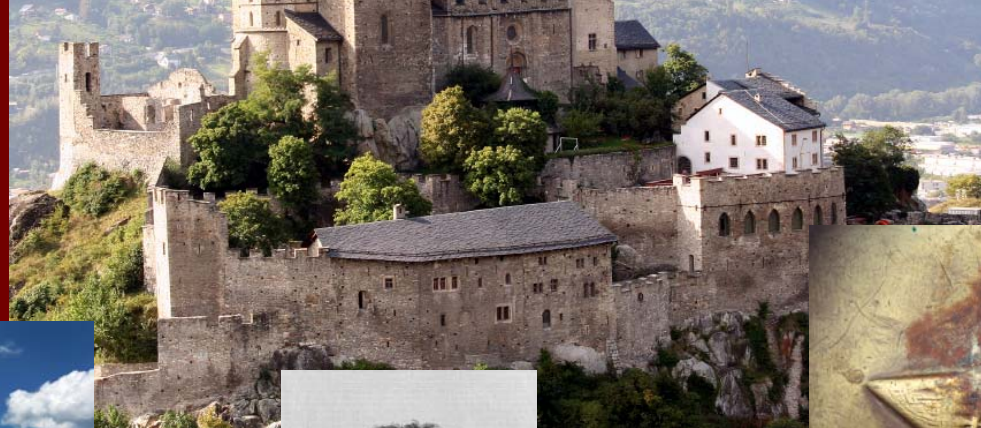


# Session Agenda

- Topic and its History
- Passive Resistance / Passive Aggression Definition
- Examples
- Tactics of Behavior
- Triggers for Behavior
- Results of Behavior
- How to Identify Behavior
- How to Deal with Behavior
- Retrospective
- Group Exercise
- Q&A



# Topic History



# What is Passive Aggression?



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# Passive Resistance/Aggression

Passive resistance / aggression is a deliberate and masked way of expressing hidden anger.

It is a defense mechanism and is usually only partly conscious.



# Examples



# Tactics of Passive Behavior

- “Forgetting” or avoiding deadlines
- Procrastination on assigned work
- Displays temporary compliance
- Lost documents / information
- Absences on important days
- Arriving late to work / meetings
- Failing to respond to emails
- Returns phone calls via voice mail
- Intentional inefficiency in delivered work
- Insists “No one told me”
- Socializes opposing ideas with peers they feel comfortable with
- Blames others for their own actions
- Personalizes confrontations from authority – takes on the “victim” role
- Engage in office gossip
- Complain about their boss or person they report to on projects
- Go around the chain of command with complaints
- Allow problems to escalate
- Withhold information
- Embarrass other co-workers in meetings
- Avoids face-to-face, 1:1 communication when there are problems
- Leaves notes on doors or desks when no one is around
- Manipulates others for control



# Triggers for Passive behaviors

- Feeling underappreciated
  - Overlooked in meetings for input
  - Overlooked for for promotions
  - Focus on the weakness not strengths
  - Not listened to
  - Not taken seriously
- Direct / Assertive communication
- Need for control



# Results of Passive Behavior

- Decreased Productivity
- Delayed / Missed Deadlines
- Decreased Morale – personal / team
- Changed direction in initiatives
- Poor customer service
- Increased stress
- Fewer Positive and Creative Moments



# Passive Behavior Identification

## Why is it hard to keep it from happening?

- Passive people are typically the nicest people on the team.
- They are masters at making you believe they are being victimized.
- Assumptions made that if they don't speak up they agree.



## How do you identify it before it becomes destructive?

- Review the list of "tactics" for this type of behavior
- Observe those that are quiet in meetings and seem to be well connected
- Personality profile assessments of team members

# Passive Behavior Identification

What personality traits lend themselves more to passive behaviors?

- People pleasers
- Avoid confrontation
- Consensus builders
- Easily angered
- Anxiety
- Sensitive
- Ambiguous
- Lacking in Trust
- Shy
- Withdrawn
- Cautious
- Conservative
- Victim Mentality
- Stubbornness
- Resentment
- Sullenness



# Profile Assessments

## LIFO

Controlling – Taking	Adapting - Dealing
Supporting - Giving	Conserving - Holding

**D**ominance

**I**nfluence

**S**teadiness

**C**onscientiousness

DISC

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ

Meyers-Briggs



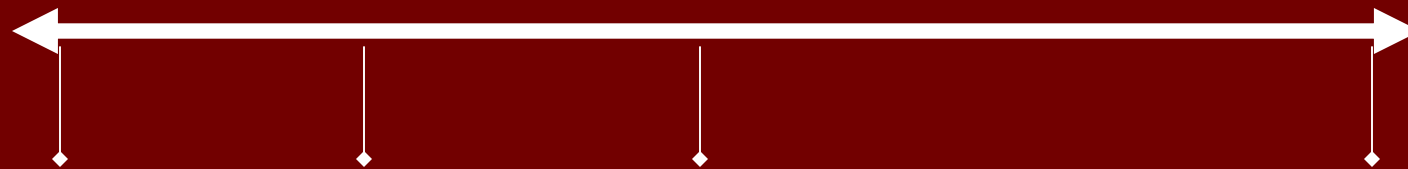
# Cultural Tendencies

Silent Disagreement

Open Disagreement

Indirect

Assertive / Direct



Japan  
China

Latin  
America

United  
States

Germany  
Israel



\*Slide borrowed from Tom Sheives, PhD

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# 10 Tips for Dealing with Passive Behavior

- Ask for clarity - how they feel – have them write a letter if they cannot articulate their feelings – read it and follow up
- Recognize your part in their behavior
- Focus on the positive



Communicate your trust through actions  
their words match

demands can be discussed

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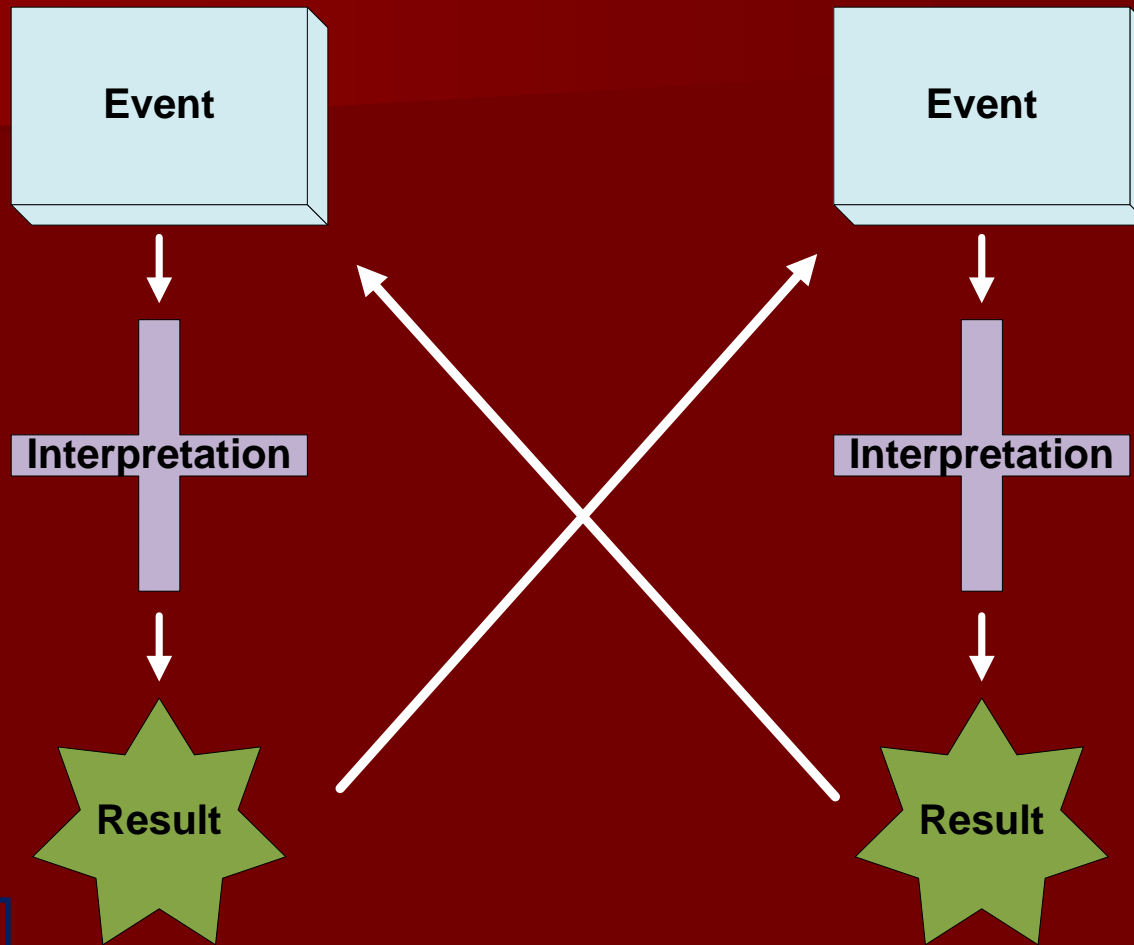
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# Handling Conflicts

- Do not take it personally – keep dialogue respectful
- Actively listen – body language speaks volumes
- Seek to understand with questions
- Repeat back your understanding
- Clarify assumptions
- Recognize cultural differences in conversation
- Recognize if you're part of the problem
- Invest time to resolve
- Agree in follow up plan
- Follow up



# What if you're part of the problem?



**We each have the responsibility to both ask and tell!**

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# Tips for Dealing with a Passive Aggressive Boss

- Remember they believe they are right
- Provide honest feedback about his/her behavior in an "I" format
- Provide at least one specific situation
- Ask for his/her perspective
- Actively listen
- Work together to form a plan moving forward
- Take note of the positive points your boss is showing and provide feedback



# Story Time - Retrospective

Hindsight: The teacher of many things.

- What should I have observed?
- What could I have done differently?
- How might the result have been different?



# Scenario

Your project team was assigned to research an alternative solution to an aging and existing system and provide a recommendation back to the steering team.

The team completed the research and you present the recommendation that your team believed to be the best solution to the steering team. The steering team responds with "we heard that this solution had high risks and not all of your team is in agreement with this solution."

## **ASSIGNMENT:**

**Work with two-three people next to you and answer:**

- Why did this situation happen?
- How do you respond?
- What could you have done to prevent it?



# Questions



THANK  
YOU

Thank you for investing your time to attend this session. Passive Aggressive behavior can be destructive if not recognized and handled carefully and immediately.



# Contact Information

Rachel Paulson, PMP

[rachel@columbiatci.com](mailto:rachel@columbiatci.com)

[www.columbiatci.com](http://www.columbiatci.com)

Cell: 503-504-5883

