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Ways to Handle Difficult KOLs

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1 Keep Your Cool

When you're attacked, it's easy to take it personally. Instead of letting someone else lead you in a negative direction with an email, keep your cool, take a deep breath, and avoid too quick a response. Give it some time before responding to the issue. It just takes one curt email or snarky text response to negatively impact a professional KOL relationship that you've had for a long period of time.



Listen with Patience

2

When we see a successful KOL, we often make assumptions that they have the perfect life. Instead, realize that they could be personally suffering from the loss of a loved one, may have a difficult boss, or may even have a fear of not getting everything that they need to get done at that moment. Understand that something deeper may be the trigger.

3 Go from Reactive to Proactive

Force yourself to come up with more than one way of thinking about a situation. If a KOL isn't responding to your emails, you can either think, "What a jerk for not responding," or you can say to yourself, "She must be in very high demand, so let me try to call her instead."



Separate the Person from the Issue

4

So often in our profession we see the same KOL with another complaint. "Oh, here they go again!" For example, a KOL called who had a history of backing out of speaking at previous HCP programs. Due to an internal bias, it was easy to assume he was cancelling this upcoming program as well. In reality, the KOL wanted to participate; he just needed assurance that he would have enough time to prepare and receive coaching.



5 Disarm with Humor

Appropriate humor can disarm unreasonable behaviors in professional situations. It can show your detachment from challenging or demanding KOL behavior and help you to not react to them. Humor works in miraculous ways as it changes the way that others feel in that moment. It can open their eyes to their own behavior in a particular situation.



Concentrate on Problem Solving

6

In general, difficult KOLs like things a certain way. This can lead to a negative tone. You can interrupt this behavior by focusing back on the big picture, which is always the patient. Ask the question, "How does this ultimately have an impact on improving the education on behalf of patients?" That change in conversation puts you back in control, creates perspective, and converts you from following to leading.



7 Confront Bullies

Sometimes it's time to accept that ending a relationship with a difficult KOL is an acceptable outcome. You owe it to yourself and your colleagues to function in a positive environment. When it gets to this point, there's obviously been quite a bit of past contentiousness, so keep the conversation focused on your needs and what is best for your business.



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