**THE KNOW IT ALLS AND THE NO CAN DOS:**

Recognizing & Working Effectively With Our Most Challenging Clients

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| **THE GENIUS** |
| The smartest person in the room. Walks in knowing the outcome. Either unaware or doesn’t care that he comes across as trying to dominate.  **THE BEST TEAMS:**   * Allow The Genius to say his piece. * Remind The Genius that his ideas may be great, but he won’t get an agreement unless spouse independently reaches her own conclusion. * Remind The Genius that not everyone is a “cut to the chase” type. |
| **THE HYPERCOMPETENT** |
| Doesn’t need team or one specific team member: “We can figure this out without all these expensive people.”  **THE BEST TEAMS:**   * Manage expectations upfront regarding using the team process and all team members. * Set limits on extent to which the team will modify the process. * Allow an individual team member to concede in a straight-forward way. |
| **THE MORALIST** |
| Has right on his side, based on, for example, religious or parenting philosophy. To The Moralist, any other conclusion is wrong.  **THE BEST TEAMS:**   * Validate perspective AND explain that process is not necessarily based on right v. wrong. * Explore how a hardline approach (calling other spouse wrong) may send process and spouse in opposite direction * Depersonalize matter by exploring what would happen under the law. |
| **THE RINGMASTER** |
| Controls: timing, information, options, fees, scope of work. Issues demands and ultimatums.  **THE BEST TEAMS:**   * Understand that under the control is fear: Fear of losing something, fear of being or looking wrong, fear of being found out, fear of being taken over, fear of being discounted or devalued. * Assess expectations, try to meet those that are appropriate, and aren’t afraid to impasse. * Encourage The Ringmaster’s attorney to ask The Ringmaster what he wants to achieve and the potential consequences of the current tactics. * Emphasize only as fast as slowest client and why. * Realize pressure on team increases likelihood of oversights. * If team accommodates The Ringmaster’s deadlines, consider CYA letter: “Cannot properly represent you in this timeframe. Prefer to go ahead anyway despite significant risks.” |
| **THE DENIER** |
| Can’t accept this is happening. Losing family, home, job, friends, identity.  **THE BEST TEAMS:**   * Allow pauses in process so time can heal. * Hire an outside MHP/PC/ GAL/Vocational Consultant to empower, guide the client. * Consider providing extra reassurance: ie. for example, coordinate weekly calls from each team member. * Prepare for The Denier’s allegations of being pushed or pressured. |
| **THE OVERWHELMED** |
| Doesn’t understand. May commit, then change mind.  **THE BEST TEAMS:**   * Early on, identify level of true understanding. Try to identify dissembling. Would presenting information in other way(s) help her? * Recruit outside financial expert and/or mental health therapist to increase understanding and ability to envision future. * Remain patient. Meet offline. Repeat pros and cons of options or explanations as much as necessary. * Only ask The Overwhelmed to focus on one task at a time. |
| **THE VICTIM** |
| Dwells on the perceived wrongs perpetrated against them, sometimes to the exclusion of all else.  **THE BEST TEAMS:**   * Validate The Victim’s anger and resentment while making clear the process cannot right the wrongs. * Prepare for The Victim to feel that the more outgoing spouse is controlling or charming the team. * Consider preparing both spouses for The Victim to share her feelings: ie., The Victim may read a letter to which the spouse is prepared to respond appropriately. |
| **THE OBSESSIVE** |
| Chases every possibility to the point of analysis paralysis. Overreacts to errors and omissions.  **THE BEST TEAMS:**   * Feed the crazy. Let The Obsessive control what they can control to increase sense of control. * Give The Obsessive time for analysis, even if it is more time than feels comfortable. * Present ultracompetent personas. Pay extra attention to detail with zero room for error. |
| **THE YIELDER** |
| Cannot self-advocate. May not voice opposition to terms they later regret.  **THE BEST TEAMS:**   * Offer pros and cons; make it clear team will not make the decision for The Yielder. * Support The Yielder’s attorney in speaking up for the Yielder when appropriate * Make agreement crystal clear. Name specific dispute resolution experts to empower weaker spouse to resolve future issues (ie. real estate arbitrator, children’s issues). * Engage family and friends, either as support system or to address the elephant in the room when they are not supporting The Yielder. * Ensure The Yielder fully grasps the consequences of acquiescence. |

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| **UNIVERSAL TEAM STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH CHALLENGING CHARACTERS** |
| **PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE** |
| * Take an honest approach to each team member’s style and potentially address in meeting. (ie. No Can Do made worse with passive or seemingly passive attorney). * Give neutrals the time they need to develop rapport and trust. * Pay attention to MHP’s background briefing: they came to us this way. Recognize our limitations. * Regularly review progress on Roadmap to Resolution. |
| **GET THE “S” OFF YOUR CHEST** |
| * Don’t attach to the outcome even if impasse. * Don’t let outcome reflect on you personally as failure. Sometimes neutrals especially don’t want to disappoint attorneys. |
| **GET OUT OF YOUR BOAT AND INTO THEIRS** |
| * Control kneejerk reactions. Instinctive responses may not be helpful. * Acknowledge and validate clients’ feelings. Walk alongside them. DO NOT MOVE ON. |
| **DON’T BE AFRAID TO ROCK THE BOAT** |
| * Facilitator may need a private conversation with client about shame, guilt, or addiction. * Be clear about how you practice, why, and be willing to refer to another professional. |