

Ghislaine Labelle, Organizational Psychologist, Author and Speaker



How a vacationing psychologist trapped on a troubled ship in the Mediterranean turned a nightmare at sea into a lesson that launched a book. The Advantage Q&A with Ghislaine Labelle, author of *Calming the Waters at Work*.

Not many people would look at being set adrift with an unhappy crew in the Greek Cyclades as an unexpected benefit to a much-needed vacation, but most people aren't [Ghislaine Labelle](#).

The difficult personalities and the clashes of temperament that tilted the decks of a holiday cruise gave her an insightful view of the way small groups are organized and how they can either come together in harmony or find themselves sinking in deep water. The result is a souvenir useful to everyone who has been blindsided by stormy meetings and fractious encounters. Author Advantage caught up with Ghislaine on the eve of publication of *Calming the Waters at Work*, her account of a cruise gone wrong.

Advantage: What gave you the idea to write a book about a bad vacation? Most people just go home and complain.

Ghislaine Labelle: I have led a consulting business for the last 20 years, specializing in teambuilding, team effectiveness, conflict management and healthy work climates.

I'm an organizational psychologist and a firm believer that healthy work environment creates more productivity, efficiency and better retention. I also believe that conflicts are one way of telling the organization that something needs to be improved.

By writing this book, my purpose was to give a tool to all levels of management, helping them learn how to rapidly detect conflicts within their team and intervene as quickly as possible in order to minimize the negative impacts conflict have on the work climate.

AMG: What did you learn in writing your book?

GL: I've learned it's difficult to step back and analyze conflict when you have been involved in a difficult situation. Whether you have been just an observer or one of the belligerents, everyone is either concerned or involved when a conflict situation arises within a team. So often people make the mistake of thinking that if they are not involved in the fight, the situation is not their concern. This is false. All conflicts affect everyone, in one way or another, because they have an impact on the quality of the climate around you. In my book, *Calming the Waters at Work*, I tell the story of a real experience on board a sailboat, how a conflict between two people, when not managed properly or left unresolved, affected the morale and the climate of everyone. It provided a lesson in what all managers and employees need to reflect on: What are their responsibilities related to the quality of their relationships and climate at work? After all, everyone has an impact.

AMG: Can you tell us a little about the background to the trip?

GL: I had planned this voyage years ago. I wanted to treat myself well and realize one of my dreams: sailing through the Cyclades in Greece and discovering the beautiful islands and the culture. Well, it turned out it was not so gorgeous or funny on board. We ran into multiple difficulties as a team that really had an impact on the whole trip. I wondered why I had to go through such a terrible experience on my vacation. Was there a lesson I need to learn from? Then came the idea of sharing this experience with others. The best possible medium for this was a book. I want to let my readers know that conflicts can be positive. If you learn to grasp the essence, if you are receptive of things you need to improve.

AMG: How will you use the book in your professional career?

GL: I would like to expand my speaking career in the USA and internationally as much as possible. I am confident that the experience I have acquired in my professional practice can serve many organizations. This book is one of the tools that can be used to talk more about our conflicts in life and not to be ashamed if we experience them. Try to make them a growing opportunity instead of avoiding them in the hope that they will eventually disappear. As I said in the book, time is the worst enemy of conflict resolution.

AMG: In what way has this book changed your understanding of what it means to be an author?

GL: I have been published twice in French before working with Advantage so I had an understanding of the process and the impact a book can create on your credibility. With Advantage, I enjoyed every bit of my collaboration with every member of the team. Unlike my journey in Greece, this was a unique and wonderful experience. I felt like my work and my ideas

were important. And that enhanced the feeling of being the expert and being a credible author and speaker.

Ghislaine Labelle is an organizational psychologist and the Advantage author of *Calming the Waters at Work*. Her website is www.calmingthewatersatwork.com