

November 2008

To Eli Mina's clients and colleagues

This newsletter includes **three announcements** and **an article** on *The Power of Disengagement*.

**1. BOOK LAUNCH SET FOR Monday, December 15, 2008:**

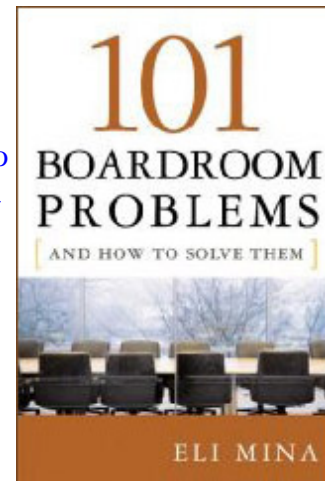
**You are invited** to join us in celebrating the publication of "*101 Boardroom Problems & How to Solve Them.*"

The launch is scheduled for **Monday, December 15, 2008, 5:00 to 7:30 PM**, at the Peter Kay Room, Library Square, 350 W. Georgia Street (lower level), Vancouver, British Columbia..

The launch will include a reception, opportunities to purchase signed copies of the book (\$25 each, all inclusive), and **special presentations at 6:00 PM**. If you wish, you may bring your own copy of the book to be signed.

Please RSVP and let us know **how many people will attend** and **how many signed books you'll need**. Contact 604-730-0377 or eli@elimina.com.

Please note that **purchases at the launch** will only be by **cheque or cash**. If you wish, you may order the book now from on-line vendors by **credit card**. You may use the following links for **Canadian dollars orders** or **US dollars orders**. Note that the book is now being distributed and you should receive it within 2 to 3 weeks.



**2. WORKSHOP UPDATE:**

The following two workshops have been scheduled in **Victoria, B.C.:**  
**"Minute Taking Standards & Related Issues"** and  
**"Meetings, Rules & Effective Decision Making"**  
**The dates for the Victoria workshops are December 11-12, 2008.**

In addition, the following workshops have been scheduled in **Vancouver, B.C.:**  
**"Minute Taking Standards & Related Issues"** and  
**"Robert's Rules of Order - Demystified"**  
**The dates for the Vancouver workshops are February 25-26, 2009.**

Finally, two workshops have been scheduled in **Halifax, Nova Scotia:**  
**"Effective Decision-Making"** and  
**"Meetings and Rules of Order."**  
**The dates for the Halifax workshops are March 26-27, 2009.**

For details, or to register on-line, visit [www.elimina.com/training/training-scheduled.html](http://www.elimina.com/training/training-scheduled.html). To schedule in-house workshops for your organization or community call 604-730-0377 or e-mail eli@elimina.com

### **3. ON-LINE TRAINING ON MEETING EFFECTIVENESS**

We are pleased to announce that an on-line training program on meeting effectiveness will soon be available for purchase. The program consists of 5 podcasts and tipsheets. The five modules are:

*"Building the Foundation for Effective Meetings"*

*"Planning and Agenda Design"*

*"Roles of the Meeting Chair"*

*"Avoiding Chaotic, Adversarial and Aimless Meetings"*

*"Rules of Order and Minutes - Key Points"*

Stay tuned.

### **The Power of Disengagement**

**Scenario 1:** At a meeting, two factions are stuck in adversarial positions and an impasse develops. Anxious to move on to other issues, the Chair resorts to the procedural option: *"Let's take a vote, and the majority will rule."* Indeed, the majority decides the outcome. However, the frustrated minority follows along reluctantly and subsequently undermines the decision.

**Scenario 2:** During a public hearing, a Municipal Council receives public input on a contentious re-zoning proposal. An organized group heckles proponents of the re-zoning and applauds and cheers those who oppose it. Confronted by this intense pressure, Council becomes pre-disposed to defeating the proposed re-zoning, regardless of its potential benefits to the community as a whole..

**Scenario 3:** During a private conversation, a person tries to squeeze a promise from you when you urgently need to get to another meeting. You like to help and accommodate people, so you say yes, albeit with a heavy heart.

Is there something you can do besides acquiescing and making decisions *"with a gun held to your head?"* One option is to disengage yourself or your group from the situation and take time to assess your options in a calm and measured manner. There is no sense making promises or reacting under pressure, as this is likely to lead to flawed decisions or actions that you may later regret.

So how might you disengage in the above scenarios?

In the case of a meeting (scenarios 1 and 2), the disengagement can be in the form of a recess: *"Is there any objection to a 15 minute recess? (Pause) There being no objections, we'll resume at 10:45 or shortly thereafter."*

What might you do during the recess?

In **Scenario 1**, you could use the recess to have private discussions with each of the opposing factions, uncover their underlying needs and "hidden agendas," and see whether a positive solution could be found, thereby possibly avoiding the majority imposing its will on the minority. Such an outcome would be easier to achieve while being disengaged from the confrontation.

In **Scenario 2**, you could use the recess to consult your colleagues and professional advisors on whether the meeting should continue, and if so, under what conditions. One option may be to postpone the contentious items to a subsequent gathering. However, if the meeting is to continue, you could prepare a script with which to resume after the recess, such as:

*"Before we resume, I need to explain something. This hearing is intended to receive public input on the proposal to re-zone area X. While we fully understand that there is some opposition to the proposal, it is our duty as a public board to maintain a safe environment at this hearing, so all sides can present their views, without any bullying or intimidation. With this in mind, we caution you that we will not tolerate heckling, clapping or cheering, and that - if these behaviours persist - we will have no option but to adjourn this hearing. Is this clear? Can we please count on your support? Thank you."*

And what if you are being bullied in a private conversation, as in **Scenario 3**? Disengaging may mean stopping the conversation by saying something like this: *"Mr. Smith, I understand your request, and I am in no position to assess it now, because I have another meeting to go to. Please write it down for me and leave all the details with my secretary. I promise I'll get back to you by tomorrow morning."* And please follow up on that promise, after an analysis of the situation and with absolute clarity about what you can and cannot promise.

In closing, never allow people or circumstances to bully you or your group to make decisions under pressure, especially when such decisions will potentially compromise the organization and the community to which you are accountable.

Thank you for your support.

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