



Anthony Ing
Co-Founder,
Condonexus

How to Stay Cool in Heated Conversations

I was recently in a virtual condo AGM where an owner asked about adding a night shift for security. The owner, a young woman, mentioned that thefts were reported in the underground parking and parcels had been stolen and suggested that adding a night guard could mitigate these thefts. The manager merely responded by saying that adding another guard would be cost-prohibitive. Within moments, the issue escalated into a 10-minute argument about how the board did not care about the safety or the needs of the owners.

Whether the issue is resident safety, unsightly garbage, common element deficiencies, or a chargeback, managers are regularly caught in heated conversations with irate owners and residents. Although de-escalating conflict is a hallmark of a great property manager, some property managers can struggle to communicate disagreements or differences without heightening tension. After all, there isn't

a simple one-size-fits-all method to take away an owner's anger when they feel like they've been wronged.

Why Heated Conversations Take Place

One hallmark of a heated conversation is that people disagree. That being said, disagreement is not necessarily bad, nor does it always lead to a heated discussion. However, when an owner cares a lot about an issue, an argument may arise when the manager does not agree with what the owner wants them to agree with, and the manager doesn't do what the owner needs them to do. Often at the end of the day, both parties are left feeling frustrated, hurt, or misunderstood, with the argument ready to boil over again in the near future.

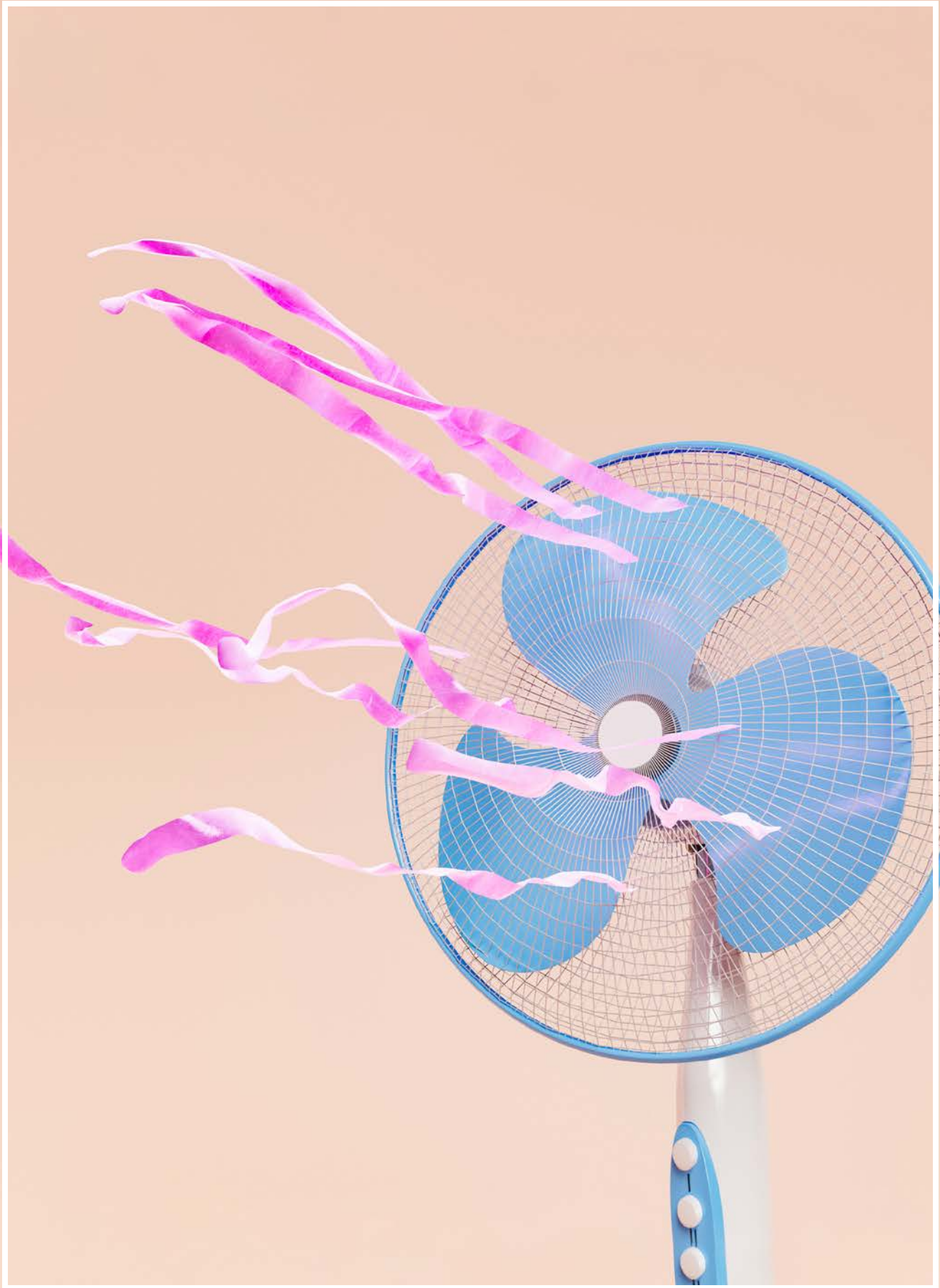
Another hallmark of a heated conversation is that managers will distill the issue to think the owners are the problem and that owners distill the issue down to believing the manager is the problem. Ultimately the

problem is "them," and both sides are left thinking, "they're selfish," "they're ignorant," or "they're controlling." If that's the issue, it's no wonder we all end up arguing!

Transitioning to a Learning Conversation

While it may be difficult during the moment, if we can turn the conversation into a learning discussion, then we can keep it focused on the issue instead of degenerating into an unproductive "us versus them" scenario. We must not assume we know everything we need to know to formulate a response. We must explore what other information the person might have that we don't have. We must work to understand and acknowledge the owner's perceptions, interpretations and values more and avoid the inclination to prove a point or get them to do what you want.

We must assume that each party will bring different information and perspec-





Turning
Possibilities Into
Reality

We've encountered almost every possible building-related issue in the past five decades.

McIntosh Perry provides a full range of consulting engineering and technical solutions that encompasses every stage of a project.

Reserve Fund Studies
Rehabilitation/Restoration
Hazardous Materials -
Environmental Health &
Safety
Performance Audits
Roofs

We continue to help our clients turn possibilities into reality.

Ask us how we can help with your next project, call
1.888.348.8991 | info@mcintoshperry.com

McINTOSH PERRY
mcintoshperry.com



OLD-FASHIONED VALUES...
TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY



CONDOMINIUM SECURITY EXPERTS

REGISTERED MASTER KEY SYSTEMS
SUITE, WOOD, KALAMEIN & HOLLOW METAL FIRE RATED DOORS
MAILBOXES & LOCKS • BREAK-IN REPAIRS • PANIC BARS
PATIO DOOR HARDWARE • LAVATORY HARDWARE • SAFES
FIRE PROOF FILING CABINETS • OFFICE FURNITURE
WINDOWS CUT IN EXISTING DOORS • FIRE RATED HARDWARE
HANDICAP OPERATORS • HINGES • CONCEALED DOOR CLOSERS
REMOTES • EXIT ALARMS • CCTV • CARD ACCESS • ELECTRIC STRIKES



BONDED & INSURED

TEL: (416) 699-4716 • FAX: (416) 699-4724
1060 KINGSTON ROAD • TORONTO ON • M1N 1N4
email: service@customlocks.ca
www.customlocks.ca

PROUD MEMBER OF  **ACMO** ASSOCIATE FOR OVER 30 YEARS



caulking & maintenance

30+ Years Experience in Building Envelope & Restoration

Featuring Repairs, Assessments and Reporting on:

Caulking • Glazing • Leaks • Fire Stop • Smoke Seal • Custom Expansion Joint Solutions

Flashing • Curtain Wall • EIFS • Multi-Component Spray Foam

Rigid & Semi-Rigid Insulation • Water Repellant Coatings • Free Estimates

Fully Trained and Certified in Bosun's Chair, Swing-stage and Scaffolding Applications

LEED Platinum Certified Products

2861 Sherwood Heights Drive, Suite 28 • Oakville, Ontario L6J 7K1
Tel: 905-847-6618 • Fax: 905-847-8226 • www.encocaulking.com



tives to the table. If we turn a potentially heated conversation into a productive learning discussion, we need to assume there is much we can learn from each other. Simply put, we must initially operate under the belief that there are likely vital things that each side doesn't know, and we must validate and acknowledge those gaps before we can come to a resolution.

A significant concern about validating and acknowledging an owner's perceptions, interpretations and values are that the manager may confuse that with agreeing with the owner. It's important to understand that you can still disagree with someone even if you validate their perspective. You are simply acknowledging the issue's importance to the owner, and it's valuable to hear their entire side of the story. You'll find that listening to them will ultimately help them listen to you later.

Disarming Using a Learning Stance

Changing how you deal with heated conversations takes work, and mastering it is likely beyond the scope of this article. However, below I present some minor changes to how we communicate

that will guide the discussion toward a learning conversation and demonstrate that you value the other person or their perspectives.

- "Thanks for raising your concern. This is an important issue, and I hope you can help me understand your perspective better."
- "Given that you may come at this with a different perspective than me, I hope we can discuss this openly to understand your problem better."
- "I appreciate you making me aware of this. Can you say a little bit more about how you see things?"

To show that you're acknowledging their perspective and attempting to learn more, paraphrase what they said to check your understanding and validate that you've listened. Again, listening to them will ultimately help them listen to you later.

- "If I understand you correctly, the problem is _____. Is this correct?"
- "Based on what you said, this is about _____."
- "I'm beginning to get a sense for how you see things. You believe _____, is that correct?"

By listening and paraphrasing, you

hopefully remove the owner's need to keep repeating their issue and put yourself in a good position to continue sharing your perspective. Once you believe you've heard their perspective (and this can take time, so be patient!), you may be ready to share your story and move towards a mutually agreeable solution.

Changing the conversation to one focused on learning means inviting the other person to help us figure things out. You will run into situations where deciphering what happened is more complex than we initially expected. No matter the level of training, heated conversations will always be challenging. However, if you bring a learning mindset to a heated conversation, you can reduce defensiveness, stay focused on the issue and work towards solving the problem. ■

Anthony Ing is the Co-Founder of Condonexus, a leading electronic proxy collection, virtual meeting host, and notice delivery service provider. Condonexus is trusted to host over a thousand virtual owners' meetings across 50+ property management companies in Ontario. condonexus.com



**RESIDENTIAL
CONCIERGE**

A Luxury
**LEVEL OF SECURITY
& CUSTOMER CARE**



Elite is one of the Top Concierge companies in the GTA, with over 14 years experience in the industry.

CONTACT US

Book a meeting with Elite to discuss the security and concierge services that will fit your needs.

T: 647.499.5727

E: INFO@ELITECONDOCONCIERGE.COM

ELITECONDOCONCIERGE.COM