



THE RIPPLE EFFECT

The Urgency For Early Intervention

Ref CRMC301

Lessons from **CODE RED MASTER CLASS**

understanding the art of negotiation



JOHN THOMSON
the negotiator



CODE RED
the negotiators

LESSONS NOTES FROM AN EXPERT

THE RIPPLE EFFECT UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR EARLY INTERVENTION

CODE RED THE NEGOTIATORS, Lessons From An Expert, is a unique series of invaluable lesson notes and resource information for students, teachers and those considering using professional mediation services. The guides are extracts from John Thomson's (The Negotiator) books and training manuals and offers practical insights and strategies applicable to real-life situations.

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Theory, Observation and Implications

This lesson provides insight into the complexities of a frequently referred to phenomenon known as the '**ripple effect**.'

Without early intervention its dynamics illustrate how initial disruptions can escalate, leading to broader impacts on processes, resources, and relationships.

Like the simple observation of a stone dropping into water, the ripple illustrates how an initial disturbance generates waves that expand outward in increasingly larger circles. This physical example exemplifies how the interconnectedness and interdependence of actions and decisions, whether positive or negative, the ripple can spread through social, economic, psychological, and organizational systems and how their far-reaching impacts influence people and environments unconnected with the initial event.

The character and energy of the decisions or actions that create the initial ripple are carried within

the disturbance. The larger the ripple, the more encompassing it becomes, instigating further unplanned and unanticipated disturbances as it interacts with new environments and individuals.

Christakis¹ and Fowler's² research discovered that the ripple effect proportionally decays over time and across social distances but persists and influences too, '**six degrees of separation**.' Decay occurs when others see it coming and act preemptively to manage secondary consequences, thereby absorbing the energy of the initial impact.

Positive or negative social communications impacted by 'the ripple' can lead to significant policy implications and trigger critical behavioural changes in the population. Evidenced in the aftermath of natural disasters and wars and, most recently, in the post-COVID response, the fiscal impact of the COVID policies have created market volatility, high interest rates, unemployment, supply chain

¹ Nicholas Christakis: The Sterling Professor of Social and Natural Science at Yale University and author of four books.

² James Fowler (deceased): Professor of Theology and Human Development at Emory University and Director at the Centre for Research on Faith and Moral Development..

disruption, and widespread civil unrest.

Ground swell movements are linear social demands for change and ideology. For example, the '#Me Too' social movement was a public awareness campaign against sexual abuse, harassment and rape culture leading to high social vigilance and problem awareness.

Ground swell movements, like the 'domino effect' are predictable linear continuums of a single principal or ideology. Fearing an expansion of communism through Asia the domino effect shaped U.S. policy during the Vietnam War and the 'Black Lives Matter' ground swell movement arose from one Police Officers actions, all examples of the ripple.

look deep into nature and
then you will understand everything better

Albert Einstein



Ripples Make Or Break

Ripples are unpredictable because they possess energy hidden within them. They have the potential for significant escalation and disruption when they impact other ripples, which are created by unrelated events and other people.

Understanding the hidden energy within conflicts is critical for managing wider influences that create surprise, suddenly redirection, or escalate conflict.

No one has a crystal ball, nor are we foretellers, but too often, I have heard mediators, negotiators, and conciliators say, "I didn't see that coming!"

The hidden energy in conflict can be converted from destructive energy to creative opportunity for revitalization, redirection and rationalization. Those with a positive attitude towards change create opportunity to review and strengthen processes and standards, viewing conflict and disruption as an evolutionary process crucial for further developing societies and systems and enhancing their own maturity and abilities.

Most people consider conflict an adversary, the disruption to the status quo destabilizing predictable norms, while others accept disruption as a necessary

catalyst to extinguish redundant systems.

Newtons Third Laws of Motion is 'for every action in nature there is an equal and opposite reaction.' Understanding 'universal laws of movement' and how they operate across physical, spiritual, social and political contexts must be considered when assessing and instigating remediation or resolution within conflicting environments and systems.

Although these dynamics are more easily understood in music, tensions (*wire ad strings*), air column and electromagnetic waves, the **ripple effect** is an unstable and complex interconnected mix of human personality, character, and reaction and the actions and activity in external unrelated people and events.

universal laws are also consistent fundamental human behavioural characteristics (Newton)

The multi-dimensional elements of a ripple holds the potential for significant and sudden dynamic and chaotic upheaval. These large surprise events are the result of **constructive interference**³.

While the science of a wave is complex (*within the six tiers of influence*) mitigating disruptive and chaotic interventions at the appropriate tiers can harness and neutralize constructive interference through the timely intervention of **destructive interference**⁴. *Beyond the scope of this lesson, students should investigate concepts and theory of*

'social construction (momentum) theory', 'cultural resonance' and 'causes for conflict and reformation.' (refer Google search)

The consequences of conflict or chaotic events are too often measured by **post-event analysis** (*after the event*) and defined as collateral damage. Collateral loss could include fiscal or capital assets, lives lost, disruption to society, and, in marriages, relationship breakdown consequences.

Unlike the narrow field of an insurance assessor, mediators and

³: Constructive interference: When two energies moving in sequence and resonance with each other merge in a multiplied (x4) energy wave, thereby creating a larger wave.

⁴ Destructive interference: When two energies moving out of sequence and resonance merge, cancelling each other's energy.

negotiators play a crucial role in the quick resolution of conflict.

Unlike legal and academic analysis, the mediator or negotiator must have skills as

psychologists, sociologists, behavioural therapists, critical events managers, advisors, 'empathetic confidants' and generally be, 'all things to all people.'

The Invisible Dynamics Of Conflict

On an ocean, a ripple (or swell) is visual evidence of energy moving through a water column and can be measured using height, frequency, speed and length ($E \propto H^2$). If a swell is two times larger than another, the swell has four times the energy. This formula is also recognised as a 'behavioural paradox' that applies to human reactions and behaviour, causing the complexity and behavioural dynamics within conflict environments to increase exponentially.

Like a waves hidden energy, the dynamic energy of conflict is hidden within the motivations, ambitions, bias, goals and psychological disposition of those involved. How you feel and act towards an event is unlikely to be the same as those within it, they will react and make decisions inconsistent with anticipated pathways.

Maya Angelou's famous quote suggests, "*most people and most things are never what they seem to be, being, but not meant to be, yet they teach us how to be.*"⁵ This complexity challenges us to consider 'others',

The weakness of mediation is that there are few inputs a mediator can make to stop the ripple, the mediator being an umpire between two (or more) conflicting participants. Rather than reactively responding to peripheral contributors, it is crucial mediators proactively investigate and consider contributions and counterbalance these inputs. A proactive approach is often hindered by misplaced perceptions of the limitations of the roles, duties, and responsibilities of the mediator and their legal obligations to their clients.

In high-dynamic conflicts, I advise shifting from mediation to

⁵: Maya Angelou; American memoirist, poet, author and civil rights activist. 1928-2014

negotiated strategies where I can contribute with inputs and recommend pre-emptive action to arrest the impact of converging conflicts and peripheral or unrelated stimuli. While this

requires investigative assessment, risk modelling, and high levels of communication between the parties, I have acclaimed results within the corporate and banking sectors using this strategy.

When Two Ripples Collide

As two waves converge, their interference on each other can be constructive or destructive depending on their resonance and interaction point. Be mindful,

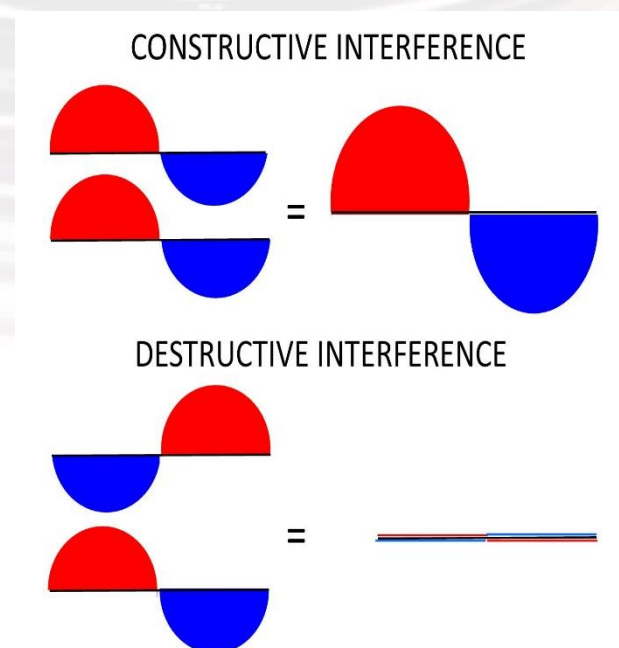
it is an oxymoron, construction relates to increasing dynamics while destructive is to diminish the wave strength and dynamics.

The Multiplier - Constructive Interference:

Multiplier waves emerge when two waves of the same frequency and amplitude travelling in opposite directions intersect and create a 'standing wave' a wave usually four times more powerful than other waves within the topography. They occur when the crest of one wave aligns with the crest of another (or *trough with trough*), leading to '**constructive interference**.'

Instead of cancelling each other, they create exceptional wave oscillation and energy shifts.

Multiplier waves add the energy of one wave to the other, **multiplied to the power of four**, and are so significant in oceanic environments are the waves mariners most fear.



This phenomenon was captured in the movie *The Perfect Storm*, where, in 1991, three separate weather systems converged off the Nova Scotia seaboard,

causing the loss of the vessel Andrea Gail and all thirteen crew.

In water, the energy is upward while electromagnetic (*radio, laser, etc*) and light waves the energy moves three-dimensionally in all directions. At these points, the amplitudes of the waves create points of maximum displacement, known as antinodes.

Another example is when an aircraft breaks through the sound barrier, the slower sound waves collide with faster compressed sound waves, creating a sonic boom (*amplified sound wave*) approximately four times louder than the noise of the aircraft in routine flight.

The Reducer - Destructive Interference:

Destructive interference has the opposite effect of construction, both wave neutralises the impact and influence of the other, their energies being absorbed and effectively cancelling each other out. This occurs when the crest of one wave aligns with the trough

of the other (*high plus low = neutral*), resulting in destructive interference and the wave's destruction. The points of neutral displacement are known as nodes. Essentially, the energy of the higher portion of the wave fills the trough (lower half) in the other wave, nullifying its effect.



Stop The Ripple

After a misunderstanding or misinterpretation, procrastination can be a major factor in escalating a conflict as time erodes confidence to find resolution and adds ambiguity and complexity as more people are drawn into the conflict.

However, when we have the courage to act quickly and proactively with honesty, courage, and discipline, we can achieve a more favourable outcome for all parties involved in the conflict resolution. When I answer a phone call for help, I quickly focus on implementing a

SWOT-style⁶ analysis of the client's position.

The 5Ws of assessment — what, where, when, and who — are often at odds with the clients' need to discuss "why."

'Why,' entwines justifications, excuses, blame, accusations, and conflicting claims and re-enforces underlying bias that become more entrenched and rigid over time. By the time they reach for help the ripple effect has typically already begun with other people's actions and events taking on a life of their own.

The risk converging conflicts create and how they intensify **constructive interference** (*conflict overstatement*) should be of significant concern to a negotiator or conciliator. If no steps are taken the consequences can be wide-ranging and potentially severe. I use a checklist to assess a client's position, focusing on the following possibilities.

Escalation: Without immediate intervention, the initial problem could escalate, capture secondary parties, risk relational and reputational damage, cause cost overruns and fiscal risk,

impact mental and physical health, and escalate broader issues within the crisis.

Disruption: As the effects spread, other unrelated social, economic, technological, or ecological environments could experience significant disruption or destruction.

Resource Demand: What must be done to mitigate a resource drain as more investments are required to deal with escalating problems?

Financial Loss: What are the financial impacts, including loss of revenue, increased costs for damage control, and legal liabilities?

Reputational Damage: Anyone else linked to the issue could suffer reputational harm, leading to a loss of trust and credibility with stakeholders and clients.

Environmental Degradation: What environmental impacts lead to increased pollution, biodiversity loss, or resource depletion, affecting wildlife, water quality or viable agricultural land?

Social Unrest: What would cause social consequences, public unrest and criminal behaviour,

⁶: **SWOT : Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat:** In mediation and negotiation this includes, Actor Character and Emotional Quotient, Fiscal,

Asset and Psychological Risk Mitigation and Opportunity

especially in vulnerable communities? This may require management of press releases and accurate reporting to prevent the spread of misinformation.

Health Impacts: Governments tend to be concerned with the wider public spread of disease or unaddressed public health risks. Mediators and negotiators should focus on their clients' psychological and mental health.

Legal and Regulatory Repercussions: What could be the legal consequences or regulatory actions as authorities seek to enforce compliance and safety measures post-crisis?

Long-term Negative Impacts: The longer the issue persists without intervention, the more profound and long-lasting its adverse effects can be, potentially requiring years of recovery.



Summary

The ripple effect illustrates the interconnectedness of universal structures across ecological, economic, social, or organizational systems, and how change in one part of a system can trigger widespread repercussions in another.

Practitioners must understand this phenomenon as crucial for effective management of all critical events as it highlights the importance of correctly assessing and managing systemic relationships between the facts within the event, human perceptions of the event, participants bias and the impact

of long-term consequences when addressing changes or challenges.

From individual stress and relational strain to organizational dysfunction and social unrest, the impact of procrastination to seek resolution and immediate steps to mitigate risk can lead to significant escalation, material loss and relationship damage.

Understanding what is required to implement effective strategies for engagement mitigates adverse effects and foster quicker and healthier conflict resolution processes.



References

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Recommended Reading In This Series

CØDE RED Master Class Lesson Notes are available in downloadable and printable format from our online platforms. With over forty titles they constitute the framework of our **CØDE RED Master Class** Training and education programs.

The following subjects are closely linked with the contents of this lesson and are recommended reading.

- CRMC207 **Calderbank Offers - Risk Or Reward**
- CRMC303 **Ash Conformity Experiment - Peer Pressure Impacts**
- CRMC409 **If And Then Bargaining**
- CRMC410 **Fault Tree Analysis – When Systems Fail**
- CRMC437 **When They Say They Did Nothing Wrong**
- CRMC510 **Emotional Regulation, Controlling Run-Away Feelings**
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John Thomson

The Negotiator

John Thomson is a veteran negotiator and mediator and Senior Partner and Consultant Advisor in Australia and New Zealand.

With a team of professionals and offices in Australia and New Zealand John specialises in environment, aviation and all property related sectors as contracts negotiator, asset allocation sale, transfer and arbitrator and mediator.

John is a prolific author, trainer and public speaker.

For further information and contact go to

www.johnthomson.com.au