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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL IS WORKPLACE CONFLICT AWARENESS MONTH
Employers: Bring an End to Feuds,
Email Flame Wars and Explosive Meetings

BOSTON, MA, April 4, 2012 — April is Workplace Conflict Awareness Month, a time when employers and employees everywhere can pause for an hour or so to look at what they can do to convert destructive conflict into a force for creativity.

Conflict can be creative or destructive. Anyone who works knows of or has experienced micromanagers, bullies, aggressive co-workers, screaming sessions at meetings, email flame wars, abusive bosses, and lots more. And we've also experienced disagreements that resulted in better outcomes than either side had in mind in the first place.

Rick Brenner, a management consultant in Cambridge, Massachusetts, developed Workplace Conflict Awareness Month to address the problem of destructive conflict at work.

"We need to change the way we view workplace conflict," says Brenner. "Too many believe that conflict is always bad, so we stuff it down out of sight, until it turns really destructive. Finally, when it's so powerful that nobody can control it, it surfaces, and people hurt each other. Sometimes it even gets physical."

We can't eliminate conflict, but we can eliminate destructive conflict. If we value conflict, if we know how to keep it creative, and if we know how to make it creative if it turns destructive, we can keep from hurting each other at work. The concept is simple: conflict is OK, as long as it's respectful.

And making this change has a huge return on investment. When we keep conflict creative, we're happier, we're less stressed and we're more productive. What we do produce is of higher quality.

Mr. Brenner offers employers and employees Ten Insights for Managing Conflict. Here are his top three:

- In destructive conflict, everyone plays a role. Some people are stars, but everybody owns a piece.
- Sending the stars of the conflict to "conflict training" probably won't work. Conflict is a system thing. Think System.
- Conflict and Life go together — you can't have one without the other. The trick is to keep Conflict creative.

In 1993, while researching low-cost software development methods for the Department of Defense, Mr. Brenner began to suspect that part of the solution to lowering development costs lay not in the next hot new technology, but in finding better ways for engineers to work together. That work eventually led Brenner to develop Workplace Conflict Awareness Month.

Journalists and producers are welcome to peruse an archive of dozens of short articles (500 words) about conflict. Sample titles: "The Tweaking CC," "Emailstorming," "Top Ten Signs of a Blaming Culture," "The Fine Art of Quibbling," and "Hurtful Clichés." Mr. Brenner is available for interviews on any of the topics listed there, or on other conflict-related topics. Ideas for observing Workplace Conflict Awareness Month are at http://www.ChacoCanyon.com/wcam.shtml .

About Chaco Canyon Consulting
Mr. Brenner is principal of Chaco Canyon Consulting. He works with people in problem-solving organizations that are making products so novel or complex that they need state-of-the-art teamwork and stronger relationships among their people. In his 20 years as a software developer, software development manager, entrepreneur and consultant, he has

developed valuable insights into the interactions between people in technical environments, and between people and the technological media in which they work. He focuses on improving personal and organizational effectiveness in abnormal situations, such as dramatic change, technical emergencies, and high-pressure project situations. He has written a number of essays on these subjects, available at his Web site, ChacoCanyon.com, and writes and publishes a weekly email newsletter.

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