



Conflict in the Workplace

Conflict in the workplace has huge consequences.

Consider these statistics for a moment:

- 67% of employees avoid co-workers due to bad feelings from a conflict
- 33% of employees leave a position because of conflict

Not a pretty picture, for sure, but wherever there are people working together there is bound to be conflict. We're human beings, after all, and we not only

have conflict with others but also within ourselves.

In a recent presentation to the RBF CEO/Executive Peer Group, Business Coach Karl Diffenderfer shared some thoughts on handling conflict in the workplace.

7 Sources of Conflict

- **Goals.** Conflict can happen as a result of conflicting goals or priorities. It can also happen when there is a lack of shared goals. This could also be called "mis-alignment"
- **Personality conflicts.** Sometimes there is no chemistry, or you haven't figured out an effective way to communicate with somebody.
- **Scarce resources.** Conflict can happen when you're competing over scarce resources.
- **Styles.** Your thinking style or communication style

"Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."

- Ronald Reagan



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Conflict in the Workplace

might conflict with somebody else's thinking style or their communication style. The good news is that conflicts in styles are easy to adapt to when you know how.

- **Values.** Sometimes you will find conflict in values. The challenge here is that values are core. Adapting with styles is one thing, but dealing with conflicting values is another. That's why a particular business, group, or culture may not be a good fit for you. It's also why "birds of a feather flock together" and why "opposites attract, but similarities bind."
- **Expectations.** Expectations murder people. While this is a rather abrupt statement, think about how frequently your expectations of others turns into disappointment, which then results in a strain in your relationship.

Perspectives / World View.

Our experiences shape how we see the world. This world view can affect our relationships if someone else has a different perspective shaped by their own experiences.

Resolving conflict can go more smoothly if you prepare for it, noted Diffenderfer. Ask yourself these questions and this process of preparation can help to get to resolution.

1. Is this the first time I've felt conflict with this person?
2. What are my goals for the relationship?
3. Are my expectations so rigid that they won't allow the conflict resolution process to work?
4. Am I letting my own expectations be shaped or distorted by other people not involved in the conflict?
5. Are my expectations taking into account the other party's needs, values, and constraints?
6. Am I expecting the other party to behave or think in ways I want them to?
7. What have I done to contribute to the conflict?
8. What misperceptions might the other party have of me?
9. What misperceptions might I have of the other party?

"When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion."

- Dale Carnegie

JEFF BLEACHER



"Karl's presentation was a great reminder that we cannot eliminate conflict but we can manage it. What a shame it would be to lose good people because a conflict couldn't be resolved. By using these insights we can all create better, more aligned workplaces."

KEN FALK



"Everyone spends a lot of time at work and the work environment has such an impact on our well-being. As we face conflict it's important to understand the other person's point of view and to listen deeply to their issues, as well as acknowledging our own. Civility and mastery of conflict resolution should be a part of every training program."

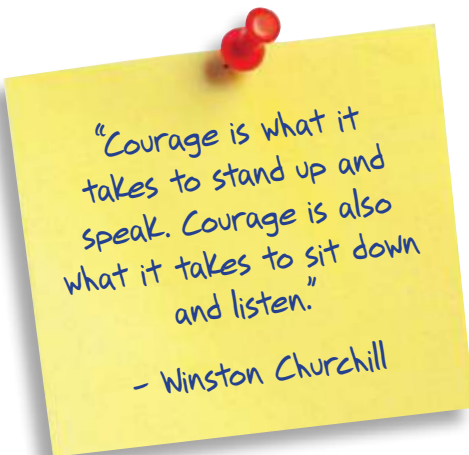


Conflict in the Workplace

- 10. What is it I need differently from the other party and what would that look like?
- 11. What am I willing to do for the other party to show my willingness to work through our issue?
- 12. What are some of the workable compromises I can come to the table with?

Here are some quick tips to increasing your communication skills in order to diffuse an escalating situation:

- start with agreement, instead of leading with disagreement



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- avoid intermingling facts, with feelings, or opinions
- get specific and reduce generalization
- learn the ABCs of communication (Agree, Build, and Compare)
- balance connection and conviction
- explore and appreciate what a person has to say, independent of agreeing or disagreeing with their content, or opinion
- start using "and" instead of "but" when you have a debate with someone

Additional resources for Conflict Resolution:

- Robust Conversations
- Crucial Conversations
- Tony Robbins
- <http://www.ihhp.com/free-eq-quiz/>
- https://www.ted.com/talks/william_ury

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JEFF GROFF



"We live in a world that seems to be escalating with conflicts that are deadly. Maybe we can't do anything in a global fashion, but we can do our best to resolve conflict in our own workplaces and family environments. It's inevitable that relationships will have conflicts – whether they are with team members, clients or outside the workplace. But, we can work through those problems and have better relationships as a result."

PATRICK GENDRUE



"It's unfortunate to see workplace conflict and tension tear people apart and sometimes even devastate companies because people can't resolve the issues. If we were all able to put our egos aside we might be able to resolve conflicts more quickly and in a way that would be much less costly – not only financially but also in our levels of stress."