

Health and well-being

FACT SHEET

MINIMISING CONFLICT:

Conflict can ruin employee potential, production, and well-being.

Conflict can cause enormous headaches for managers and has a negative impact on the bottom line.

Conflict can be difficult to manage and makes a lot of people uncomfortable.

How then can we deal with it ?

Five tips for minimising personality conflicts:

1. Know when to step in. You don't want to interject every time a minor issue arises, but you can't afford to turn a blind eye to problems that jeopardise the group's output. Before morale and productivity are impacted significantly, work with those involved to identify the reason for the conflict, clear the air and determine ways to address future disagreements.
2. Don't let one bad apple spoil the bunch. When friction is clearly stemming from the actions of a single individual, remind that person that the ability to collaborate and treat co-workers with respect is a requirement of the job.
3. Help employees get to know each other. Provide opportunities for your staff to interact in non-work activities, such as lunches or volunteer activities; familiarity can breed greater understanding.
4. Reward positive role models. Dole out praise, promotions and choice assignments to individuals who contribute to a supportive work environment. Recognising staff for being team players sends a clear message that how they interact with others is as important as their job performance.
5. Make good hiring choices from the start. Hiring individuals with excellent interpersonal skills who are a good fit with your organisation's culture will reduce the potential for future conflicts.

Workplace Conflict is Crippling Many Businesses

Workplace conflicts – whether expressed or unexpressed – are very damaging to businesses. A typical manager spends around 25%-35% of his or her time dealing with conflict, that adds up to a lot of wasted time and money. The hidden costs of workplace conflict are also highly significant. An unhappy workforce – where people feel undervalued, misunderstood, overlooked or taken advantage of – leads to greater stress, increased absenteeism, low morale, poor teamwork, and higher staff turnover.

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Costs have to be weighed not just in human terms, but also in terms of the costs to business productivity and efficiency. Rather than being seen as a necessary evil, unwarranted conflict should be regarded as an overhead cost, just like having computer systems and electricity.

Many people would still regard conflict as inevitable, and it's true that, on a personal level, there are individuals whose ambition, personal agenda or modus operandi will be to make harmonious relationships more difficult. A great deal of the conflict which takes place in the workplace, at home and in personal life can be avoided, and is born out of differences that could very easily be accommodated and resolved.

The best leaders use the following 5 rules to overcome workplace conflict

The best leaders do not wait for workplace conflict to get out of hand. In addition, they know workplace conflict is always present and never take it for granted. Great leaders use the following 5 rules to proactively reduce workplace conflict, knowing that it still will occur. Great leaders know:

1. Conflict is an unmet need
2. Conflict escalates when no one connects with the unmet need
3. Conflict is defused when someone connects with the unmet need
4. Conflict is resolved when the need is met
5. Conflict is prevented when people check out whether the need is being met

The best leaders know good work relationships require mutual understanding and acceptance not agreement. They know how to address and connect with needs in the early stages without waiting for the more extreme expressions of workplace conflict. In this way they avoid much of the 'grief' that can exist in working relationships.

In summary

Talk about conflict – do not let it fester. When conflict arises – deal with it. Having a dialogue early on in the disagreement is easier to do than after the conflict has persisted for some time.