

# Meeting conflicts and interventions

Experience, Human Nature



Meeting Conflict and Intervention We spend a lot of our working lives in meetings; some are fruitful and some, less so. Meetings are often called to discuss a project or an idea so it is almost inevitable that conflict will arise; there is certainly a strong potential as it is unlikely that everyone will be in agreement. Let us first define what is conflict: Conflict refers to some form of friction, disagreement, or discord arising within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group.

Conflicts in meetings. Many of us have experienced tension and conflict in meetings. This can be exciting, energizing and helpful, but it can also hurt the team's progress, morale and be very disruptive. Remember, conflicts are disagreements. If the person who is disagreeing with you is raising valid questions, it may benefit the group to address the issues they are presenting. In fact, by listening to them, you may gain valuable insight into what is and what is not working within your organization.

However, if the person continues past the point of disagreement to the point of disruptiveness, specific steps should be taken. If you're in charge of a meeting and conflict occurs, what is your role? How do you restore peace? How can you assure that these conflicts don't harm your work? While you can't always prevent conflict in meetings, there are things you can do to deal with disagreements from damaging your team's wider goals. Dealing with Conflict. Conflict resolution is a way to diplomatically settle disputes by finding the root of an issue and creating a solution that all parties can agree upon.

This can be a complicated process, especially if the conflict is personal (three main areas where conflicts occur: in interpersonal one-on-one relationships; in meetings; and in negotiations), however it is important to recognize and address issues that arise. Identifying and Mitigating Conflict. When conflict arises the first step is to identify the cause and ensure that it does not adversely disrupt other scheduled activities. Below are guidelines to help your meetings stay on track when conflict occurs. . Allow the opposing party to state their issue - Find some "grain of truth" in the other person's position that you can build upon. 2. Identify the problem to the best of your ability - Identify areas of agreement in the two positions. 3. Check with everyone in attendance for opinions/suggestions - See if someone else in the meeting has a response or recommendation. 4. Present any ideas or comments you may have, but do not make demands - Present your view, but do not force agreement.

At this point it is possible that the conflict has been quickly resolved and the meeting can't progress if progress is not being made it may be time to table (defer the subject to later in the meeting to handle) the discussion or schedule a special meeting to discuss the conflict. When tabling an issue until the next meeting remember to; a. Ensure the meeting minutes include all arguments b. Make resolving the conflict the first topic for the next meeting c. Avoid tabling an issue if you feel it will be tabled at the next meeting When scheduling a special meeting: i.

Hold the meeting at a neutral location/ground, such as a conference/war room. ii. Plan multiple meetings for more complicated issues iii. Keep regular

business and conflict resolution separate And to conclude, always remember that the goal is to reach a compromise that all parties can live with. Online References: [www. cs. ucla. edu/" klinger/articles/conflicts. html](http://www.cs.ucla.edu/~klinger/articles/conflicts.html) some portion are adapted from The University of Michigan Managing Conflict online handout