

Resolving workplace conflict

Psychology



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Resolving Workplace Conflict Conflict can occur in any company or organization, no matter how large or small. The key is not in avoidance of conflict at all costs. It is in effective management of disputes and disagreements among various work groups or teams.

Facilitation of

open discussion, establishing of rules or guidelines, creating an environment of mutual

respect and stressing the importance of working toward a common goal are all methods

that limit and effectively handle conflict. Validation of each team's ideas is also essential

in reducing conflict.

Open discussion includes the sharing of ideas, by two or more employees in regularly scheduled meetings or work sessions. It also includes sharing of progress or

keeping other groups updated. Lack of communication by co-workers can be viewed

as secretive or uncooperative behavior, causing others to feel threatened.

Rules set

down prior to the beginning of projects that prohibit discussion of each others

shortcomings, personal lives and other attributes are vital. Creating a more level

playing field in which all employees are equal. It also encourages cohesiveness or unity.

Working toward a common goal should be stressed as a new project is

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outlined.

Goals should be described in detail, with periods for question and answer sessions

available to all staff. Employees whose skills most closely match the various tasks or

roles required should be identified. A study by Fortune Magazine in which several

CEO's failures were studied, revealed the " in seven out of ten cases, the leading cause of

the executive's downfall was the failure to put the right people in the right jobs, and the

related failure to fix people problems in time" (Experience Based Learning).

Such

failures can also lead to conflict as co-workers attempt to work around each other's

shortcomings.

Global corporations with employees in several locations worldwide can experience

conflict due to differences in work habits, cultural beliefs and language barriers. Conflict

can arise among managers, due to different management and leadership styles. Many

individuals can experience conflict for many reasons. Differences in ideas, work

habits, skill levels and many other factors can lead to conflict. Symptoms of conflict

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include withdraw or avoidance of work duties or tasks that require interaction with particular employees. Employees taking on roles as peace keepers should indicate hostility or opposition somewhere in the ranks.

The most respected leaders of highly successful organizations are faced with conflict.

Conflict is viewed by some managers as necessary, though it may feel awkward to many

Employees. When Bill Marvin was hired to manage foodservice for the U. S. Olympic

Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, he had no idea that conflict had become

so serious that cooks were waving knives at each other. Marvin was able to recognize

the incident as a symptom, rather than a problem. Marvin scheduled a meeting of the

kitchen crew and learned that many were not getting enough hours to make ends meet.

He revised many schedules and let some staff go. Interestingly, the two involved in the

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knife altercation became two of the most productive employees. The Olympic

foodservice began receiving compliments. Marvin's actions show that

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listening to

employees needs and resolving issues quickly can make a difference in profits and

reputation. “ Marvin took a near-violent conflict and managed it into a net gain for the facility” (Moomaw, 1996).

Organizations must be able to quickly and accurately identify areas or subjects of

conflict among all employees and departments. They must develop and implement

conflict resolution policies, following them with each situation that arises.

Ultimately,

the organization that handles conflict quickly and successfully will out-perform its

competitors in productivity, in attracting talented new employees and in reducing costs of

health benefits by reducing workplace stress. Simply stated, effective conflict resolution

has a cost benefit that any size organization can appreciate.

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References

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