

Conflict Resolution At Work: Speedy Study Guides

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION AT WORK

Leadership and conflict go hand-in-hand. Leadership is a full-contact sport, and if you cannot or will not address conflict in a healthy, productive fashion, you should not be in a leadership role. From my perspective, the issues surrounding conflict resolution can be best summed-up by adhering to the following ethos, "Don't fear conflict, embrace it - it's your job."

While you can try and avoid conflict (bad idea), you cannot escape conflict. The fact of the matter is conflict in the workplace is unavoidable. It will find you whether you look for it (good idea - more later) or not. The ability to recognize conflict, understand the nature of conflict, and to be able to bring swift and just resolution to conflict will serve you well as a leader - the inability to do so may well be your downfall.

How many times over the years have you witnessed otherwise savvy professionals self-destruct because they wouldn't engage out of a fear of conflict? Putting one's head in the sand and hoping that conflict will pass you by is not the most effective methodology for problem solving. Conflict rarely resolves itself - in fact, conflict normally escalates if not dealt with proactively and properly. It is not at all uncommon to see what might have been a non-event manifest itself into a monumental problem if not resolved early on.

One of my favorite examples of what I described in the paragraph above is the weak leader who cannot deal with subordinates who use emotional distress as a weapon of destruction. Every workplace is plagued with manipulative people who use emotion to create conflict in order to cover-up for their lack of substance. These are the drama queens/kings that when confronted about wrongdoing and/or lack of performance are quick to point the finger in another direction. They are adept at using emotional tirades which often include crocodile tears, blame-shifting, little lies, half truths and other trite manipulations to get away with total lack of substance. The only thing worse than what I've just described is leadership that doesn't recognize it and/or does nothing about it. Real leaders don't play favorites, don't get involved in drama, and they certainly don't tolerate manipulative, self-serving behavior.

Developing effective conflict resolution skill sets are an essential component of a building a sustainable business model. Unresolved conflict often results in loss of productivity, the stifling of creativity, and the creation of barriers to cooperation and collaboration. Perhaps most importantly for leaders, good conflict resolution ability equals good employee retention. Leaders who don't deal with conflict will eventually watch their good talent walk out the door in search of a healthier and safer work environment.

While conflict is a normal part of any social and organizational setting, the challenge of conflict lies in how one chooses to deal with it. Concealed, avoided or otherwise ignored, conflict will likely fester only to grow into resentment, create withdrawal or cause factional infighting within an organization.

So, what creates conflict in the workplace? Opposing positions, competitive tensions, power struggles, ego, pride, jealousy, performance discrepancies, compensation issues, just someone having a bad day, etc. While the answer to the previous question would appear to lead to the conclusion that just about anything and everything creates conflict, the reality is that the root of most conflict is either born out of poor communication or the inability to control one's emotions. Let's examine these 2 major causes of conflict.

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Conflict at work is difficult and the steps towards resolving conflict can be difficult to remember in the heat of the moment. Most employees do not gain enough experience with workplace conflict to have conflict resolution steps easily memorized, yet the middle of the conflict is not the ideal time to research the best methods for addressing conflict resolution. A Conflict Resolution at Work study guide helps employees take initial and advanced steps in conflict resolution on-the-spot. It gives guidelines that employees can follow for a variety of circumstances and ensures that employees feel their needs are being met and addressed.