

Workplace Conflict Tools & Techniques for Managers

Participant Packet

Solutions to Everyday Problems

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Workplace Conflict Tools & Techniques for Managers

OVERVIEW

In today's work environment of stress, diversity and change, disagreements and conflict are inevitable in the workplace. These disagreements or "conflicts" lead to power struggles, office politics, undermining and feeling badly about oneself and the work environment. Often individuals begin to feel that their job is not worth the knot in their stomach and look for transfers or new companies. However, having tools to deal with these differing issues and personalities can enrich your work environment and reduce the risk of greater problems.

Participants in this workshop will learn about the source of conflict. The presenter will share some concrete methods and specific skills for minimizing its' presence as well as methods to resolve it when it arises.

Agenda Topics:

- Welcome & Introduction to CONCERN
- Differences Leading to Conflict
- The Problem
- 'Should-s' and 'Blaming'
- The Arena of Conflict
- What to Do
 - An Environment with Harmony
 - Ground Rules
 - Communicate
 - Disagreement
- Assertive Use of "I" Statements
- GINISE A Conflict Resolution Process
 - Preliminary Meetings
 - Ground Rules
 - Issues
 - Needs
 - Ideas
 - Select & Contract
 - Evaluation
- Wrap up

Seminar Length: Approximately 2 hours

How many ways can two individuals be different?



- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Culture
- Age
- Education
- Beliefs
- Career Goals
- Parenting
- Ability
- Temperament
- Experience
- Income
- Marital status
- Health

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NOTES:

The Problem



- **Our personal history becomes our Survival Rule Book**
- **Everyone's history is different**
- **We act as though the rule books SHOULD be the same**
- **We BLAME others when they are not the same**

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Shoulds

Entitlement: The belief that because you want something; you should have it. This is often seen in teenagers who feel like they should have what their peers have.

Fairness: The belief that life measures our good in equal quantities and the resulting belief that if we don't get what we consider our fair share an injustice has occurred. There is no life guaranteed standard of fairness. Courts decree standards of fairness; life does not.

Change: This is the belief that I should be able to change another person if I want it enough. Husbands and wives spend entire life times trying. Change does not occur without the decision and consent of the individual changing.

Conditional Assumptions: The belief that if I do something I will get a result certain. It is implicit rather than explicit. Failure results in anger. Individual needs are unexpressed. It can be heard in the expression, "I should not have to tell him/her that. They should know." Often it is referred to as 'Mind-reading'.

As an aside, studies consistently show when we assume a fact or mind-read; we are wrong 87 % of the time. This is true for individuals who know each other a lifetime such as husbands and wives. The rule is ASK; DON'T ASSUME

Blame

Good/Bad or Right/wrong: The belief that a person's action is good, bad, right or wrong based on our internal standard. Our differences are the source of our internal standards.

Intent: The belief that another intends to do us wrong. Most people are just doing the best they can to get needs met. Their needs are different than ours. It is not their goal to inflict pain. Think about someone you hurt by your action. (PAUSE) Was it your intent or did you simply have different needs.

Exaggerating: This is the technique of making a mountain out of a mole hill. Sadly, doing so makes tasks we don't like into burdens that we hate. We become the product of the stories we tell

Labeling: This is the practice of identifying a task that does not meet acceptable standards and labeling an individual as sub standard. It fosters poor moral and does not improve the process.

How Conflict Occurs

1. We are all very different. In fact with just 14 variables the chances that two individuals would be the same exceeds the population of the world. There are far more than 14 variables in our make-up.
2. Our past becomes the basis for the rules we live by.
3. Everyone has different rules
4. We make believe that other people SHOULD have the same rules we have.
5. We BLAME them when they don't.

Arena of Conflict



- First, some event occurs that causes stress/anger/conflict. This alone is insufficient to result in conflict. Conflict has an additional ingredient.
- The second ingredient is our thoughts. We call them trigger thoughts which create feelings.
- This often alters our behavior.
- The changed behavior results in additional events and additional trigger thoughts.

What to Do

- Create a Harmonious Environment
- Set the Ground Rules
- Communicate
- Disagreement is alright if it is accompanied by suggested solutions
- Using “I” Statements
- A Method of Conflict Resolution

Create an Environment with Harmony

1. Articulate what is expected. Perhaps one of the most important tasks for any individual is to thoroughly understand what is required. Establish a method to measure your goals so you and your manager can know at any given time if you are on the right track.
2. Have the tools. First provide the tools. If there are problems getting the tools; make that clear when you are setting expectations with the manager.
3. Are you doing the job you do best? Do you utilize your talents at least some if not all of the time?
4. Recognize good work once per week. Recognize and appreciate the tasks you complete and the successes you have.
5. Care about your peers as persons. Every job requires that the individual work like a pack animal from time to time. Some jobs require it for long periods of time. This is much easier to do in an environment of mutual respect and care.
6. Seek paths to personal development. Your performance is better in a present that has visibility to a future.
7. Value individual opinions. If you wish your managers to hear and respond to your needs, it will happen when you have shown that you hear and respect what they have to say.
8. Be clear about each job’s importance. Studies consistently report that individuals who understand the part their tasks play in the overall mission of the company; (1) do better work and, (2) demonstrate more creativity in the performance of the task. Know the role you play.
9. Commit to quality. Pride continues to motivate.
10. Discuss your individual progress. If you are not ambiguous about your progress it will free you to concentrate on the tasks at hand.
11. Provide for learning and growth. Again, performance is better in a present that has visibility to a future.

Ground Rules



- **Communicate the mission and the tasks required of each individual**
- **Listen**
 - Listen
 - Listen
- **Be clear about what is expected**
- **When there are issues; present them with possible solutions**

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Communicate



- **The most difficult task a manager has is to communicate what is expected**
- **Don't assume**
- **Train your employees not to assume**
- **Ask questions**
- **“Yes” or “No” make a complete sentence**
- **In a word be CLEAR**

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Disagreement



- **Disagreement is normal**
- **Conflict is not, it is a choice**
- **The attitude that best limits conflict is one that has an intent to “resolve problems”**

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“I” Statements



“I” statements avoid blame

“I” statements express the needs of the speaker rather than “should”

“I” statements usually avoid escalation

“I” statements suggest a solution

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What is an “I” Statement?



- **Relate a ‘specific’ current event in neutral terms**
- **Indicates how it affects the speaker**
 - How it makes the speaker feel
- **Can indicate why it has that effect**
- **Suggests a reasonable solution**

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WHEN: (State what happened): _____

I Feel: _____

I Thought: _____

What I would like is: _____

NOTES: _____

GINISE – The Process



- **G**round Rules
- **I**ssues
- **N**eeds
- **I**deas
- **S**olutions
- **E**valuation

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Preliminary Meeting

In preparation for the conflict resolution process, hold brief, half-hour to one hour, preliminary meetings with each employee. The purpose of these meetings is to:

- Help employees sort out issues; to begin articulating the upset and feelings; to warm-up prior to the three-way meeting.
- To introduce the conflict resolution process as a safe and structured way to allow for a difficult discussion.
- To inform the employee that this process encourages their own resolution and that you are only the facilitator.
- To ensure that their agreements are mutually satisfactory.
- Ensure confidentiality, i.e. any information shared in this process will not be repeated outside of this discussion.

Mutually set a time and place that is quiet and confidential. Schedule a two-hour window of time.

Discuss, "What do you have to lose?"

Ground Rules

Immediately following the preliminary meetings, have both employees meet with you in a neutral setting such as a conference room. Invite the employees to sit next to each other on the same side of the table with you sitting across from them. Invite them to look at you and not at each other.

Confirm the scheduled time.

Start: "We are here to reach some agreement that is mutually satisfactory. In order to do that, there are several ground rules....."

- Review confidentiality procedures
- All discussions within this process are confidential
- Participation will not be recorded in personnel records as this is an EAP intervention
- Speak one at a time
- Speak respectfully
- Ask for commitment to ground rules

"Speak directly to me in the first stage. You will have an opportunity to speak to each other later." Pass out notepaper and pens.

Issues

Invite the disputants to talk directly with the facilitator during this stage. The facilitator chooses who will start. This is usually whomever initiated the process.

Request that disputants begin to list and discuss their issues and concerns. The general framework should include a review of facts, background history, feelings, and what the central issue in the conflict is.

Speak one at a time with no interruptions from the other party.

The facilitator's job is to listen, to help them say things more clearly, to help identify needs and to keep the discussion focused.

This is the participants' opportunity to process anger, fear and irritation. The facilitator needs to tolerate this range of emotions and understand that it is part of the healing process.

If personal feelings begin to overwhelm the process, reframe the feelings to needs. Example, "I feel like you have little respect for how overwhelmed I am with so much to do!" Reframe by facilitator, "It sounds like what you are saying is that you need to be acknowledged for the level of work that you are doing."

If participants begin to interrupt or defend themselves, request that they put their thoughts down on paper and bring them up when it is their turn to speak.

Consider if a time out is needed to write down thoughts.

Needs

The facilitator needs to review the more pressing issues and identify the needs behind these issues. This is accomplished by the facilitator asking, "What will that solution do for you?"

When you identify the "need," it opens up more options than just one particular action. For example, "I think I should have my salary increased by \$2000. I work hard here and that's a fair request."

After discussion of the issue, it was determined that the employee was not feeling recognized or valued for her contribution. The salary increase represented that need. The supervisor had no money in the budget but, understanding her employee's need for recognition, was able to provide other opportunities that would enhance the employee's visibility and recognition in the organization.

The goal is to find mutually satisfactory solutions. Understanding needs expands the options to reach that goal.

Next ask participants to check for mutual understanding. Ask them to turn their chairs to one another and address each other directly.

The participants are invited to tell one another their understanding of the other person's needs. Two things happen:

1. When someone feels completely understood and acknowledged, he or she can relax their defensive position;
2. Participants begin to see and feel the other's point of view and needs. It becomes a mutual communication rather than one sided.

Ideas

Invite the disputants to turn their chairs back to the facilitator. This signifies that they are working together on the same side and that issues are on the table.

At this point in the process, you, as the facilitator, should begin to feel a meltdown in oppositional feelings. The issues are exhausted, there is greater understanding and empathy. There is, also, a natural progression toward wanting to find ways to solve this problem.

Invite disputants to begin brainstorming to create solutions for the identified needs.

The facilitator's role is to stay neutral. Encourage and welcome suggestions. Remind participants of issues and needs.

Solutions

Keep chairs facing the facilitator but encourage discussion between all three parties.

The Conflict Manager selects suggestions on the brainstorm list and asks disputants how that might work in terms of mutual needs.

If the solution does not work for both, ask dissatisfied party how he or she would adjust the solution.

Develop a plan or contract. Ask each to list their agreements on a sheet paper. Exchange papers and have each record their part of the agreement on the other's paper.

Both participants sign and, in so doing, verify each other's commitment.

Ask each to think of cues or indicators that might signify "dropping the ball" and not following through on the agreement.

Set a follow-up date to check progress on agreements. Plan enough time to see how it will work but not enough time to sink.

Compliment disputants on work well done.

Evaluation

Follow-up sessions provide accountability. Inform participants that these sessions continue until both parties feel comfortable with their work relationship.

Check in with each participant to see how both are doing with their agreements. Use the contract as a basis for the session.

If fine, you can begin to end the conflict resolution process. Check for any needed adjustments in the contract.

If the contract has not been satisfactory, ask for specific successes and specific problems. Review the problems, brainstorm solutions and adjust the contract. Determine arrangement for evaluation.

Success using conflict resolution may, at times, mean a neutral relationship at best, i.e. a workable contract with clear boundaries that serves as a framework in which the participants can coexist.

In many situations, however, the outcome is positive. Participants have cleared the air and re-established a positive and friendly working relationship.

References

Crawley, John. *Constructive Conflict Resolution*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London, 1995.

Fisher, Roger and Ury, William. *Getting to YES, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. Penguin Books, 1983.

ROLEPLAY #1 "You're driving me nuts!"

Participant A is a middle aged European immigrant with a strong work ethic and has a need to discuss projects at length with his team members before making any decisions.

Participant B is a young Caucasian woman who is quiet, likes to work independently and get things done immediately.

They are put on a project together with a short deadline and are driving each other nuts. Participant A decided he needs to address his frustrations with her lack of cooperation and her impatience. Using the GINISE process, how might Participant A facilitate resolution of these differences?

ROLEPLAY #2 "Culture and Gender Differences"

PERSON A: PARTICIPANT

You are a female team member. You believe that you have been treated in a condescending way by a co-worker. He is from a different male dominated culture with specific attitudes about women.

PERSON B: PARTICIPANT

You are a male team member. You feel uncomfortable with Participant A whom you believe has strong views about women's roles in society. You experience constant friction when trying to work in a team manner.

PERSON C: FACILITATOR

You play the facilitator and move the participants through the entire process beginning Ground Rules and ending with Select and Contract.

As a role player, stay in the role of your position but not too strongly. You can learn much by allowing yourself to "feel" the impact of different statements from the facilitator and the other participants.

Seminar Evaluation Form

CONCERN: Employee Assistance Program

Please fill out and return to presenter or HR Representative. Your feedback is very important to us. Thank you!

Seminar Title Workplace Conflict Tools & Techniques for Mgrs Date: _____

Company: _____ Presenter: _____

Regarding the Seminar	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. How well were the seminar objectives met?					
2. Usefulness of seminar information?					
3. Length of seminar?					
4. Effectiveness of exercises?					
5. How would you rate this seminar overall?					

Regarding the Presenter	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Presentation skills?					
2. Ability to answer questions?					
3. Knowledge of subject?					
4. Use of time?					
5. Overall assessment of presenter?					

Additional Comments

1. What would you recommend to make this seminar more effective? _____

2. What part of the seminar did you find most helpful? _____

3. Additional comments/suggestions for speaker's improvement? _____

Thank you for your feedback.