



Conflict - Understanding and Managing

An Online Continuing Education Course for Engineers

Course Number: BS-1040

Credit: 1 Hour / 1 PDH / 1 CPD

Conflict - Understanding and Managing

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Conflict is part of everyday work life. We may not even notice only minor irritations because we are so used to them. However, these can easily build into something that can cause great tension within a work team.

This course will help you identify typical reasons for conflict, the three escalating stages of it, and devise strategies for preventing it from getting disruptive. There is also a checklist that students can use to assess the potential for conflict in their workplace.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completion of this course, students will be able to:

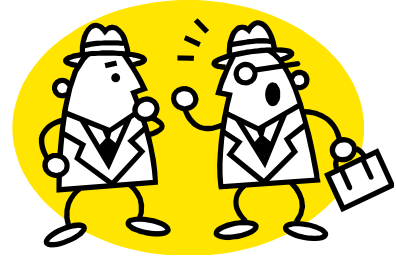
1. Deal successfully with employee conflict
2. Identify the clues that tell you how serious it is becoming
3. Identify causes of employee conflict
4. Reduce causes of employee conflict
5. Take steps to minimize conflict
6. Select an appropriate strategy to handle conflict

DEALING WITH EMPLOYEE CONFLICTS

These are some common beliefs about conflict: what do you think?

“The presence of conflict is the sign of a poor leader!”

“Conflict” used in a competitive way to generate new ideas or increase productivity to meet an earlier deadline can be a good thing and the sign of a wise leader.

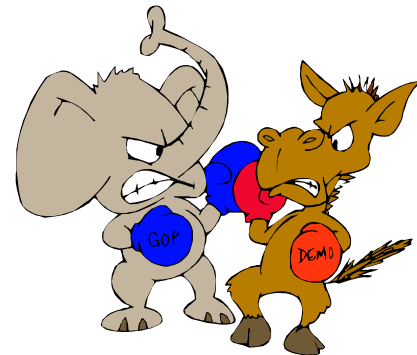


“Anger is always negative and destructive.”

Anger *can become* negative and destructive if allowed to develop and grow.

“Conflict, if left alone, will take care of itself.”

Not necessarily. We believe leaders should always *be aware* of conflict within their groups but *not always involved*. Sometimes it can take care of itself.



“Conflict must be resolved immediately.”

Once again, not necessarily. This is like the one above that *can become* a problem but is not automatically one requiring the leader’s intervention.

THREE STAGES OF CONFLICT

There are three distinct stages of conflict which are easy to identify if you know what you are looking for. Here are the three stages progressing from the simple daily irritations to the most severe which may lead to termination and even bodily harm.

STAGE ONE

These are the irritating daily events which can get your day off to a bad start. They stem from on non-personal causes that are easy to dispel with a little recognition and awareness.

CHARACTERISTICS OF STAGE ONE

You MUST LISTEN FOR these clues:

- Comments are focused on “non-human” topics (machinery, weather, traffic, the “system [computers, the organizational culture, procedures]” etc.)
- Words are in the present tense
(“This copier is out of paper”.)
- More focus on a solution than the problem
(“This copier is out of paper: where is the supply so I can refill it?”)



WAYS TO HANDLE STAGE ONE CONFLICT

Initiate a response that examines the situation.

("Looks like the copier's out of paper. Do you know where the stock of it is?")

Ask if the reaction is proportional to the situation.

(Is anyone carrying "baggage" from previous situations? How would you know? Hint: What tense are they using to describe their position? "You know, all it needs is new paper. Why not save your ranting and raving for the big deals and just put in some new paper?)

Identify points of agreement and work from these points first and then identify the points of disagreement.

("I agree with you that it seems like no one else restocks the copier but you. But at least we can rely on you.")



Think about this...

What kind of Stage One conflict have you seen within yourself recently?

How did you deal with it?

What kind of Stage One conflict have you seen in others?

What, if anything, did you do to help them resolve it?

STAGE TWO



Stage Two conflicts have become more serious as they become more personal. They are no longer about external events or conditions that we cannot control. Instead, they have become personal challenges requiring “Win-Lose” results.



CHARACTERISTICS OF STAGE TWO

You must LISTEN FOR these

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To view the remainder of the course material and to take the quiz for PDH credit, you must purchase the course.

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!”)

Coping strategies DO

problem and the conflicts do not go away.

- Self-interest is very important. “CYA” (‘Cover Your Assets’) is a survival strategy.
- People take sides, take notes, and keep score.
- Alliances and cliques may form. A “us” vs. “them” mentality develops.

