

## **Conflict Resolution**

### **Conflict at work**

Conflict at work can be destructive.

Not in all cases, a bit of team conflict can raise some player's game but in general it tends to be destructive.

The reasons conflict occurs at work can be complex and range from

- poor management
- inequality between employees
- harassment and bullying
- ineffective training to
- poor working environment

At some point in your business career you are going to come across some of the above.

The destructive effect of conflict can result in a wide range of symptoms such as

- increased sickness
- unreasonable behaviour
- lower morale
- poor motivation
- poor productivity

In some instances you can deal with conflict by:

- Booking a one to one to informally discuss the issue
- Referring the conflict to a line manager
- Escalating the conflict using the company grievance procedure
- Making adjustments to working conditions for a fixed period of time

### **Conflict between individuals**

But where conflict is between two individuals who have to work together resolving it can be tricky.

This simple model for resolving conflict or airing differences is a winning recipe for resolving conflict in exactly that situation.

### **Step by step instructions for D.E.S.C**

The person feeling aggrieved should ask for a one to one meeting, in a neutral space to discuss the issue.

Then, follow the instructions outlined below. The person feeling aggrieved should practice saying the actual words in front of a mirror!

When individuals feel upset or angry emotions often get in the way of being able to clearly articulate their point of view. Practicing removes some of the emotion and allows for a more productive exchange of views rather than a heated, tear filled, angry outburst.

#### ❖ **STEP 1**

##### **D – Describe the situation**

Just describe the situation, giving specific examples of the situation as you see it. You will need to practice this bit, but it is important to set your case clearly and specifically. It goes something like this:

“As I see it Suzy you take every opportunity to put me down in front of Dale. Dale is my manager and when you told him I hadn’t finish the report it made me look really inefficient in front of him and I was embarrassed. It was up to me to tell Dale that I needed the deadline to be extended as Rebecca had given me an additional piece of work which took priority”

#### ❖ **Step 2**

##### **E – Explain how it makes you feel**

State clearly how the offending action / words makes you *feel*. Be prepared to be like a “**cracked record**” here, you may need to repeat this stage a number of times.

“Suzy you make **me feel** really embarrassed and as if you are undermining me on purpose”

It will be almost impossible for Suzy to say nothing at this stage and will probably start to say something like “I’m not, I didn’t mean to do that, it’s just that.....”

But at this point it’s important you go into “**cracked record**” mode, just repeat calmly again,

“Suzy you make **me feel** embarrassed and as if you are undermining me on purpose”

This point is this. No one can tell you how you **feel**. This is where she may say again, “No but .....”

**Remain firm and say** “I understand that, but it is how you make me **feel** when you do it”

#### ❖ **Step 3**

##### **S – Solution**

Now you need to provide a solution. This may seem hard, especially when you are feeling angry but it is important to come up with the solution yourself. This shows the other individual you are not just “having a go” but are trying to resolve the situation. Your solution might not be acceptable to the other person, but suggest something that is a fair and reasonable. You may not get exact agreement to your proposed solution but suggest something yourself and be prepared to consider a compromise as an alternative. Try something along these lines:

“Suzy a solution might be if you could stick to the agenda in our team meetings. That would allow me to update Dale myself rather than skipping the administrators section and going straight to the actions points”

#### ❖ **Step 4**

#### **C - Consequence**

Finally you outline the consequence of adopting the solution upon the overall situation. Along the lines of:

“If we could agree to adopt this new approach in the team meetings, I wouldn’t feel embarrassed or feel that you were undermining me and that would be a much more productive and pleasant way of working”

Just remember that conflict is part of normal life, at home and at work it’s just a matter of knowing how to tackle it.

Like everything it will need practice and adapt it to work for you but we hope this little morsel of advice is practical straightforward and user friendly – just like Cajun!

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