

# Seven Steps to Conflict Resolution

Conflict is defined as, “Any behavior between two or more individuals which prevents work from getting done”. This means that every time we experience a “hiccup” in our daily routines, it is not conflict. Focus your efforts on resolving those issues which actually prevent work from being completed.

- 1) **Everyone in the organization must be taught the rules and must agree to abide by the rules of conflict resolution.** The first step to making sure the organization runs smoothly is to make sure every individual knows these rules and agrees to abide by them.
- 2) **All conflict must be resolved at the source.** Following a hierarchical structure communication pattern reduces the probability of positive resolution.
- 3) **Conflicts are resolved one at a time (on time).** There is a tendency to let issues build and mount until the last straw is reached, when a flood of conflicts come forth. In this chaos, no conflicts can be adequately resolved. Make sure you focus on only one issue at a time. If a number of issues exist, agree to work through them individually.
- 4) **Address behaviors, don't attack individuals.** When a person feels he/she is being attacked, personally, the natural reaction is to defend (become defensive). By addressing a behavior, instead of attacking them personally, the focus becomes changing a behavior, not changing a personality. For example, attacking a person would sound like, “I hate the way you made me feel”, whereas addressing a behavior would sound like, “When you (do, say, behave, act, etc.) this way, I feel (angry, upset, demeaned, etc.)”
- 5) **Everyone must practice polite rules of communication.** Remember, he who yells first, loses. In no situation does name calling, demeaning statements, threats or raising a voice contribute to peaceful resolution. Each party deserves an opportunity to share their position, UNINTERRUPTED, in a positive, respectful environment.
- 6) **If conflict cannot be resolved, it must be managed.** Conflict that goes unresolved only builds and grows until an explosion. If there is no meeting of the minds, the agreement must be reached that, as adults, we agree to disagree on this subject and also commit to working together in spite of the disagreement. If agreeing to disagree doesn't work, and it usually doesn't, then agree to avoid the issue. It becomes off limits.
- 7) **If an outside party is sought (supervisor), both parties must agree that the decision of the third party is binding.** The decision of the third party is final and must be accepted by the parties in conflict. Before a third party commits his/her time and energy to helping others resolve their conflict, it is important that the third party know, in advance, that their time won't be wasted. Courtesy dictates that both parties agree, in advance, that they will heed the advice/decision of the third party.

## BONUS #8!

**You don't get to decide what offends someone else, they do. If someone is offended, whether you think they should be or not, they are offended. It is your responsibility to apologize for offending them. It is perfectly acceptable to explain that you had no intention of hurting their feelings or causing an offence, but that you are sorry that you did.**

## Characteristics of a successful team

- 1) **Know your team members strengths and weaknesses.** Learning about your co-workers and exploring their hidden talents and strengths provides more opportunities for success as well as building respect for each other, faith in each other's abilities and lays the foundation for the "chemistry" successful teams have.
- 2) **Make it fun.** Teams are most successful when they create an atmosphere of fun. Nearly 40% of all productivity is directly related to how well an employee likes their job and enjoys their work. Fun is a critical element to this. A team that celebrates together, (has fun together), gets more done.
- 3) **Establish mutually agreed upon goals.** Two horses pulling a cart in opposite directions will gain no ground. Those same horses pulling together in the same direction can accomplish more than the sum of each horse, individually. The team must establish and agree upon goals for the team.
- 4) **Focus on making the goals happen.** What happens many times is that goals are written, but stuck on a shelf and ignored until next year. By keeping the goals in constant focus, and measuring progress toward goals, the team will not only accomplish much more, but feel better about the work they do, knowing it is contributing to a greater goal. Focus on outcomes (goals) not tasks.
- 5) **Orient new members to the team well.** The most important two or three days of a new team member's time with an organization are the first few days. It is during this brief period the people decide how long they will stay, whether or not they will like it, how they will fit in. By sharing the values of the organization and the goals of the team, the new member gains a better understanding of what the organization stands for. Share values, first.
- 6) **Delegate effectively.** A successful team relies on each member pulling his/her own weight. While management usually takes delegation as a vertical function, team members need to develop the ability to delegate horizontally, by asking for help. All members must learn and live by the "No Askie, No Helpie" rule. Simply stated, if you don't ask for help, you'll never get it. Ask.
- 7) **Communicate effectively.** There are many channels for communication in an organization. One element of making a team successful is the ability of the members to receive information (horizontally and vertically) and provide information (horizontally and vertically). Failure to communicate effectively can be tied to every failure in history. Strong communication skills is linked to every success. A successful team will learn to communicate well.