

Successfully Managing Workplace Conflict

Participant Workbook
Presented by IMA Leadership Academy

TODAY'S AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Workplace Conflict Basics
3. Addressing Conflict
4. Strategies and Techniques
5. Close



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After this session, you'll be able to:

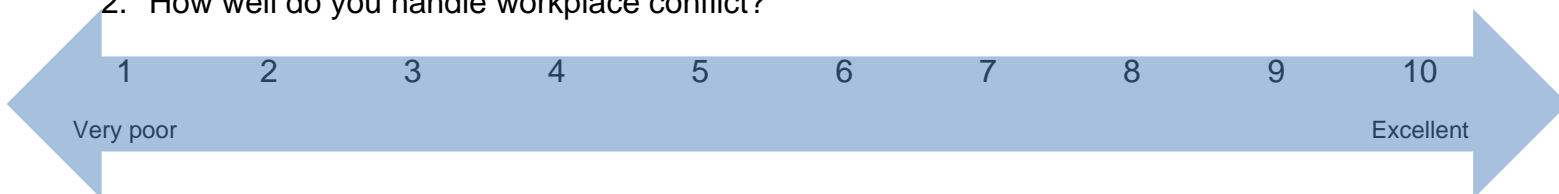
- Define conflict and conflict management.
- Identify the reasons for and ways to address conflict in the workplace.
- List strategies for successfully managing workplace conflict.

REFLECTION

1. How often do you encounter conflict in your workplace? (Circle one)

Daily Several times a week Weekly Several times a month Monthly Quarterly Less often

2. How well do you handle workplace conflict?



WHAT IS CONFLICT?

Tension resulting from forces acting in opposition to each other.

A situation that involves **strong** emotions because one or more parties **perceive** a threat.



SOME FACTS ABOUT WORKPLACE CONFLICT

In the
United
States

Employees spend
2.8 hours per week
dealing with conflict

That is approximately
\$359 billion
in paid hours

Which is the equivalent of
385 million
working days

In the
United
Kingdom

485,800 people
resign each year
due to conflict

Costing **£14.9 billion**
in replacement costs and
lost productivity

Additionally, **874,000** take
sick days annually due to
conflict at an estimated cost
of **£2.2 billion**

Source: See Bibliography [13,53]

PRODUCTIVE VS. UNPRODUCTIVE CONFLICT

Productive Conflict	Unproductive Conflict
Open exchange of ideas on the actual issues	Repetitive and frequent arguments over trivial matters
People feel respectfully heard	People feel frustrated, often resulting in sarcasm, denial, and disrespect
People are comfortable voicing their opinions	People feel unsafe and attacked
Preserves relationships	Destroys relationships

Source: See Bibliography [44]

BENEFITS OF PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged employees • Improved relationships • Improved employee morale • Needed changes identified • More innovation • Better work outcomes • More inclusive environment • Opportunities to learn and grow | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher job satisfaction • Issues of importance uncovered • Greater clarity • Assumptions questioned • Better solutions to problems • More authentic communication • Personal and organizational goals achieved |
|--|--|

Source: See Bibliography [2,5,16]

WHAT IS CONFLICT MANAGEMENT?

Resolve issues using appropriate **influencing** skills and tools to achieve successful **business goals** and arrive at the best **organizational outcomes**.

ACTIVITY: SOURCES OF WORKPLACE CONFLICT

With others in the workshop, identify as many sources of workplace conflict as you can in three minutes.

Then get with another small group to compare your lists, adding to each of them.

COMMON REASONS FOR WORKPLACE CONFLICT

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to change • Unclear or unrealistic job expectations • Poor communication • Personality differences • Poor work habits • Work habits that irritate a coworker • Preexisting mindsets • Power dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of common performance standards • Competition for resources • Different interests • Poor management • Unfair treatment • Perceived inequities • Poor work environment • Lack of equal opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying and harassment • Competition • Misunderstanding • Inadequate training • Conflicting objectives • Noncompliance with rules and policies • Poor relationship skills • Unmet needs in the workplace | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misalignment with company values • Increase in workload • Tolerating mediocrity • Intolerance of failure • Dishonesty • Side stepping problems |
|--|---|--|---|

Source: See Bibliography [7,26,27,28,30,33,48]

THE ROOT ELEMENTS OF EVERY CONFLICT

PROBLEM	What are the viewpoints, conflicts, and disagreements to be settled?
PEOPLE	Who are the parties directly involved in the problem? What are their values, needs, concerns, and time restrictions?
POWER	Who is in control? Who has the most to gain and to lose? Who needs resolution most?
POSITION	What is each person's opening position? What are the internal and external needs and concerns behind their opening positions?
PROCESS	How is the discussion to proceed? How are the positions to be resolved, problems to be settled? What can be done to establish a positive rapport with this person?

SIX ACTIONS FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

1. Focus on the organization's vision and goals.
2. Assist in clarifying roles and responsibilities.
3. Clarify perceptions of the issue.
4. Empower employees to solve problems.
5. Make mutually beneficial agreements.
6. Maintain a sense of humor.



PAIR AND SHARE

What is one thing you can do to better manage conflict in your workplace?

HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO CONFLICT?

Write a few words or phrases that describe how you react to conflict in general.

UNHEALTHY AND HEALTHY RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

Unhealthy Response 	Healthy Response 
Unable to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person	Able to empathize with the other person's viewpoint
Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions	Calm, nondefensive, and respectful reactions
Rejection, isolation, and shaming	Readiness to forgive and forget; moving past the conflict without resentment and anger
Unable to compromise or desiring to punish the other person	Able to seek compromise without desiring punishment
Fearing or avoiding conflict; expecting a bad outcome	Believing that facing conflict directly is the best thing for everyone

Source: See Bibliography [38]

TWO PHASES OF CONFLICT



EMOTIONAL
Just listen

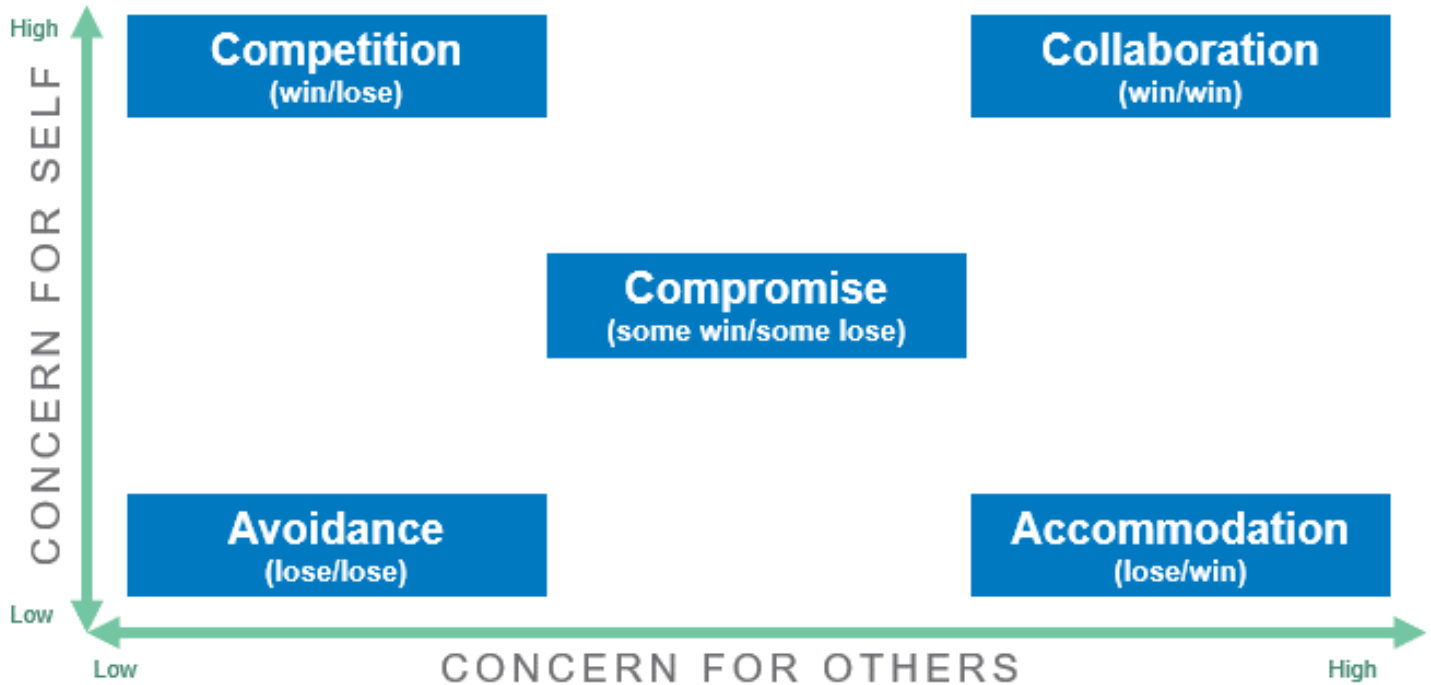


RATIONAL
Discuss the issues

Constructive Ways to Calm Your Anger

- Agree to postpone the conversation until you can calm down
- Excuse yourself and leave the room
- Talk to someone who is calm
- Breathe deeply while you count to ten
- Do something physical to release the anger from your body
- Get some fresh air

APPROACHES TO CONFLICT



Source: See Bibliography [4,6,11,37,52]

PAIR AND SHARE

Think for a moment: What is your most usual approach to conflict? Then share this with someone nearby.

WHEN TO USE EACH APPROACH

Style	Appropriate Use
Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When quick, decisive action is vital • On important issues where unpopular actions need implementing • On issues vital to company welfare when you know you're right • Against people who take advantage of uncompetitive behavior
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you find that you're wrong • When issues are more important to others than they are to you • When building social credits for later issues • To minimize loss when you're outmatched and losing • When harmony and stability are especially important • To develop subordinates by allowing them to learn from mistakes
Avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an issue is trivial or when more important issues are pressing • When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns • When potential disruption outweighs the benefits of resolution • When letting people cool down and regain perspective • When the need to gather information supersedes immediate resolution
Compromise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When goals are important but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes • When opponents with equal power are committed to mutually exclusive goals • When attempting to achieve temporary settlements to complex issues • When arriving at expedient solutions under time pressure • As a backup when collaboration or competition is unsuccessful
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To integrate two sets of concerns when both are too important to be compromised • When your objective is to learn • When merging insights from people with different perspectives • When gaining commitment by incorporating concerns with a consensus • When working through feelings that have interfered with a relationship

Source: See Bibliography [7]

CONFLICT ACROSS CULTURES

- Work with prototypes rather than stereotypes.
- Be respectful and maintain cordiality.
- Finding a compromise may help both parties see the others' point of view.
- You must find a way to talk about conflict in order to resolve it.
- Work to understand the underlying catalyst for the conflict, not just the visible conflict.
- Effective communication is key.
- Learn about other countries' cultures and get to know individuals.

Source: See Bibliography [9,35,40]

MANAGERS DEALING WITH CONFLICTING EMPLOYEES

- Meet privately with each individual to discover the main issues.
- Maintain a neutral stance at all times.
- Sit down with both individuals for a conflict resolution meeting.
- Keep the discussion on track and focus on behavior rather than attitudes or perceptions.
- Allow each party to speak for an allotted period of time.
- Reinforce the value of the employees but also the harm their conflict is causing to the team and the organization.



- Have the individuals think of solutions and choose one together.
- Consider probation or termination if the employee won't cooperate.
- Follow organizational policies and use organizational resources

Source: See Bibliography [8]



ACTIVITY: DEVELOP A PLAN

With your small group, develop a plan for handling your assigned conflict scenario from the list below. Be prepared to give a one-minute summary of your group's plan to the rest of the class.

Scenario #1

You got off on the wrong foot with a new coworker, Samuel. He asked you for help in responding to an inquiry, but you refused to lend a hand because you were working on a tight deadline. There has been tension between you two ever since. Now you need Samuel's help on a project, but he isn't being very responsive. How do you handle the situation?

Scenario #2

You're frustrated because your colleague in France keeps messaging you at 5 a.m. (your time). They send you seemingly urgent requests when you're sleeping or just waking up, and you're tired of being bombarded with 11 requests before you've even sat down at your desk. You get the feeling they don't like you very much. How do you approach the situation?

Scenario #3

You have to do a presentation at work. There is an audience member, Saul, who always makes sarcastic, off-topic comments after your presentations, and other employees always respond with laughter. You feel the comments are meant to undermine your authority. Saul has a lower rank than you do but isn't a subordinate and works in another department. How do you handle the situation?

Scenario #4

You have a co-worker, Michele, who likes to talk about politics, and you find her political views to be a little extreme. You like Michele and want to get along with her. You have thought of just pretending to agree with her or letting her know that you would rather talk about other subjects. But you suspect that Michele will be insulted if you go with the second option, and you're uncomfortable pretending to support views that are getting more and more extreme. How do you approach the situation?

Scenario #5

You have two subordinates, Jerry and Darian, who share an office. Jerry likes to talk about his family and personal life but Darian thinks the workplace is for work and not a place to vent. Darian used to listen to Jerry politely, but you notice that he's slowly getting angrier and angrier. Jerry is also getting more irritated with Darian since Darian stares at the computer and tunes out Jerry when he talks, which Jerry finds very rude. You think that sooner or later Jerry and Darian are going to have a major fight. How do you handle the situation?

STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

- A-E-I-O-U model
- R.I.S.C strategy
- “I” vs. “you” statements
- General tips

A-E-I-O-U Model

Assume the other person means well

Express your feelings

Identify what you would like to happen

Outcome expected

Understand next steps



Source: See Bibliography [19,31]

EXAMPLE A-E-I-O-U CONVERSATION

- A:** I believe that you’re concerned about the impact of new state legislation on our units. Maybe you’re worried about me being able to get the workshops organized in time.
- E:** Right now, I feel that you either doubt my ability to cope or don’t believe that I will get it sorted out.
- I:** I will prefer to let you know if I need assistance and give you an update in our biweekly one-on-one meetings.
- O:** This would ensure that the workshop goes ahead on time and that you’re kept up to date with progress and any problems that develop.
- U:** Could we agree to this approach for the next two weeks?

Source: See Bibliography [19]

R.I.S.C. STRATEGY



Report: Describe the behavior that has affected you.

Impact: Express the impact of this behavior on you.

Specify: Explain specifically what behavior you would prefer.

Consequences: State the positive and/or negative consequences of the requested change in behavior.

SAMPLE R.I.S.C. SCRIPT

R: When you interrupted me today at our staff meeting...

I: I felt discounted and that you didn't value what I was saying.

S: I would appreciate it if you would let me complete talking about my idea before you offer yours. Are you willing to do this?

C: [Positive] If you do wait until I'm finished talking, I will do the same for you and actively listen to your ideas.

[Negative] If you don't stop interrupting me, I will call you out on this behavior in the staff meeting.

PAIR AND SHARE

Share with a partner whether you have used either the A-E-I-O-U model or the R.I.S.C. strategy before and if so, how it went.

If you haven't used either of them, share how one of them might have impacted a recent conflict you observed or were involved with.

“I” VS. “YOU” STATEMENTS



“I” Statement	“You” Statement
Is assertive	Is passive or aggressive
Assumes responsibility	Blames others
Acknowledges my needs	Denies my own needs
Focuses attention on the problem	Focuses attention on the other person

Source: See Bibliography [12,20,21]

ACTIVITY: TRANSFORM THESE SENTENCES

Reword each sentence below so that it’s an “I” statement.

1. You never let me know the priorities around here.
2. You promised to have the report to me yesterday, and you still don’t have it done.
3. You always argue with people when they ask you to quit.
4. I feel that you’re getting angry.
5. You always let others work on office projects, but you never ask me if I’m interested.

GENERAL TIPS FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

- Raise issues early
 - Manage your emotions
 - Acknowledge criticism
 - Practice active listening
 - Ask questions
 - Pay attention to the feelings
 - Focus on resolution rather than on winning
- Focus on the present
 - Know when to let something go
 - Give the other person some space
 - Listen to the other person
 - Assess your attitude
 - Assess your approach
 - Don't take ownership of other people's issues

Source: See Bibliography [12,15,27,30,31,38]





FOURSQUARE ACTION PLAN

Answer each question below in reference to what you learned or were reminded of in this workshop.

<p>How do you feel about what you learned or were reminded of?</p>	<p>What are the most important concepts you learned or were reminded of?</p>
<p>How will you benefit from what you learned or were reminded of?</p>	<p>What actions will you take in response to what you learned or were reminded of?</p>

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