

THE FIVE MOST COMMON TYPES OF CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE

In your leadership career there are many types of conflict in the workplace that you will need to deal with. Personality conflicts by far are the most challenging and frequent.

Interdependence Conflicts.

A person relies on someone else's co-operation, output or input in order for them to get their job done. For example, a sales-person is constantly late inputting the monthly sales figures which causes the accountant to be late with her reports.

Differences in Style.

People's preferred way for completing a job can differ. For example, one person may just want to get the work done quickly (task oriented), while another is more concerned about making sure that everyone has a say in how the work gets done (people oriented). When you understand people's difference in style you can hose down a lot of potential conflict.

Recently I was coaching a client who was complaining about a colleague who had taken 5 minutes to run his eyes over her report (that she had spent 20 hours compiling) and gave her feedback about what to improve.

Talk about angry! She said to me *'How dare he glance over it for 5 minutes and then provide an opinion on it. He is impossible and I'm just going to have to tell my boss that I just can not work with him'*.

When I reminded her about what she had learnt from a "Styles" seminar she had attended, she 'got' straight away that this was a 'style' conflict.

Her Style (Steadiness/Analytical) likes time to make decisions and think things through before making a comment. His Style (Dominating/Driver) makes fast decisions and offers opinions freely. Once we had taken it back to differences in style she clearly saw a way to discuss with him his response to her work and how they could use each other's styles to work more effectively together.

Differences in Background/Gender.

Conflicts can arise between people because of differences in educational backgrounds, personal experiences, ethnic heritage, gender and political preferences. When people learn to accept these differences, be tolerant, understanding and mindful of them then this type of conflict will never arise.

Differences in Leadership.

Leaders have different styles. Employees who change from one leader to another can become confused and irritated by the different leadership styles. For example, one leader may be more open and inclusive whilst another may be more directive.

To avoid this type of disruption make sure that your leadership team have put together a solid set of principles and values that are used to provide consistency in how decisions are made and how people are involved in the business.

Personality Clashes.

These types of conflict in the workplace are often fuelled by emotion and perceptions about somebody else's motives and character. For example, a team leader jumps on someone for being late because she views the team member as being lazy and disrespectful. The team member sees the team leader as out to 'get' him because he isn't one of the 'favoured' children.

How to Handle Personality Clashes

All types of conflict in the workplace can be messy, but differences in personality cause the most grief. Statistics show that 85% of dismissals in the US are due to personality conflicts.

Most of you at some point will experience a personality conflict. So here is possibly one of the most important principles to follow if you want to successfully resolve any conflict you find yourself caught up in... *You Must Identify the Story You've Got Going On.*

You Must Identify the Story You've Got Going On!

There are two types of stories you can tell yourself.

One story puts a halo over your head and enables you to justify to yourself why you have behaved poorly and makes you look the innocent/injured party.

The second type of story is the one you tell yourself about others. This story causes you to see devil horns on the heads of others and has you labelling them in a negative fashion, placing you in a downward spiral of ill-feeling and bad-temper toward them. A few examples:

Situation/Scenario Story You Tell

Situation/Scenario	Story You Tell
Someone lets you down and it's not the first time.	They are irresponsible and unreliable
You let someone down and it's not the first time.	It's because you've been overworked recently.
Someone cuts you off while driving	They are rude, aggressive and inconsiderate.
You cut someone off while you are driving	It's because you are in a hurry and if you don't catch these lights you'll miss your doctor's appointment
One of your peers buys the boss a birthday card	It's because they are soft-soaping the boss and trying to weasel their way in for a promotion.
You buy your boss a birthday card	It's because you are warm and caring.
Someone flies into a rage at the post office clerk	They are bad-tempered

<p>You fly into a rage at the post office clerk</p>	<p>It's because you're tired and this is the 3rd time you've been here trying to resolve the problem and the post office keeps making the same mistake which is costing you money</p>
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Sometimes your stories are accurate, but more often than not they are either inaccurate or incomplete or just completely wrong.

The truth is often somewhere in between the story you've told yourself about why the other person is acting 'that' way and the actual facts.

Identifying your story is important for three reasons:

1. It ensures you don't over-react to a situation
2. You open yourself up to the possibility of holding a healthy discussion ... rather than ambushing the other person with your emotions
3. You begin to sift fact from story.

Use this Exercise to Sift Story from Fact

Think of a conflict you have with someone at the moment. On a piece of paper in the left hand column write down all the stories you are telling yourself about the person. All the feelings, thoughts, judgments, labels, conclusions that are running through your head.

On the right hand column write down all the Facts. These are observable, objective, specific actions and information.

Now write down how your reactions or actions (or inactions) might have contributed to the situation. As you look at your list you may find that the story you have been telling yourself is not fully supported by all the facts. That you have made many assumptions and interpretations about what the other person's behaviour MIGHT mean! Have you ever heard the saying "We judge others by their actions, but ourselves by our intentions"? You don't truly know what the other person's intentions are without asking.

This exercise is not designed to stop you from talking with the other person about the problems you are having with him or her. Its purpose is to help you wash down any over-heated emotions you may have running riot through your body and help you to become a bit more objective about the situation. Then you will be more likely to hold the conversation with less accusation and more curiosity.

Identifying your story is one sure step discovering the truth.

Being top-notch at handling the different types of conflict in the workplace is important. No matter the types of conflict in the workplace, ignoring them and hoping they will go away, is going to cost you. Possibly cost you quite dearly.

If you are a leader in the business it is going to cost you in terms of:

- wasted time listening to people's complaints
- you complaining to others about how tough you've got it (which no leader worth his or her salt should ever do!)
- lost productivity as people spend more time worrying about the conflict than the organisational goals
- absenteeism
- health claims
- people withdrawing emotionally
- employee turnover
- aggression and at times even violence

If you are involved in the conflict you may feel these emotions: *discontent, miserableness, distress, frustration, resentment*. Unfortunately, generally, most people are not adept at leaving these feelings in the workplace at quitting time, so they trundle along home with them impacting on and often causing conflict and tension on the home-front as well.

Is it a luxury to spend money on teaching people how to resolve conflict? Absolutely not! High performance organisations are very aware of the need to train people in the 'soft' skills and spend significant portions of their budget on developing people's social skills.

Learn and master the skills to deal with any type of conflict in the workplace are learnt and mastered and you help you and your people to be far happier and far more productive.

The beautiful thing is that this type of training is a gift that keeps on giving - not only in the workplace but into the wider community. Sadly most people never truly learn the art of resolving differences and turning them into successful conversations, which can trap them in a life of angst, negativity and bitterness.

<http://www.leadership-and-motivation-training.com/types-of-conflict-in-the-workplace.html>