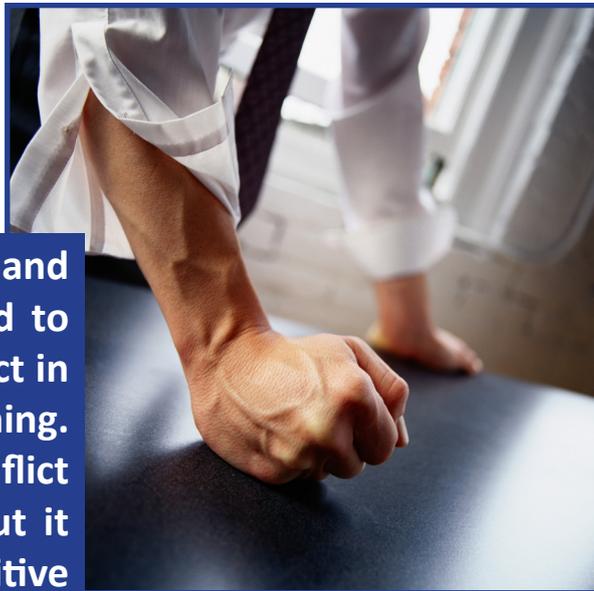


How to resolve conflict



Whenever people are engaged, committed, and fired up, conflict and disagreement is bound to happen. The good news is this - having conflict in the workplace is not altogether a negative thing. This doesn't mean you have to revel in conflict or go out of your way to create trouble, but it does mean that when conflict happens, positive outcomes can come of it.

Although something we try to avoid at all costs, conflict can be the beginning of an interesting learning process. The very best and most efficient workplaces are not the ones without conflicts but those that handle conflicts constructively.

When a workplace is changing and new ideas are being created and implemented, conflict is inevitable. There can be no business change without conflict, but the trick is to make sure that you also have no conflict without change, because that is the truly dangerous thing: conflicts that go on for years, with all parties refusing to budge.

The fact that you have a conflict at work does not reflect badly on you as a manager – it mostly means that your employees (and you!) care enough to disagree strongly. That's a crucial thing, provided that you do something about the conflict instead of just letting it go on forever.

Finding a peaceful resolution to conflict can be difficult, if not impossible, when both parties stubbornly stick to their guns. However, there are five main strategies which can be useful when trying to resolve conflict.

1. Avoidance

This technique is best used when the issue is unimportant or the disagreement is highly emotionally charged.

2. Accommodation

Accommodating is when one party disregards their own personal needs to accommodate the other party. However this can result in feelings of unexpressed resentment and self-sacrifice.

3. Competition

This sets up a 'win-lose' scenario to assert one's viewpoint at the potential expense of another. It can be useful if the objective is more important than the relationship, or in a crisis situation.

4. Collaborating

Working together to find a mutually beneficial solution is one of the best ways to resolve conflict. It honours the abilities and values of each party and seeks to find a solution that suits all involved.

5. Compromising

The aim of conflict resolution is to reach an agreement and most often this will mean compromising.

Remember, there is no 'right' way to resolve conflict. All of the above methods are relevant to different kinds of conflict, so try out different strategies and see what works best for you, and your employees.

