

The 6 step workplace conflict resolution process

The workplace environment is a peculiar one. You often find yourself spending more time with your co-workers than some family members and friends. You form a bond that can often lead to pleasant interactions and even life long friendships, but other times, conflict arises that leads to difficult and uncomfortable scenarios.

When these situations take place, you have to walk the line between maintaining your professionalism and getting the resolution you need regarding the issue.

That's when it's crucial for you to practice conflict resolution to come to a peaceful solution. Here is a 6 step workplace conflict resolution process to help you achieve the desired result, no matter your conflict management style.

Address it head-on

Conflict is healthy. It's how you address conflict that can make your work environment feel toxic and unhealthy. When a dispute arises, it's best to address it head-on. When you ignore it, it's like putting a bandaid over a bullet wound. The root problem is not being treated, and over time it will only get worse.

Have a conversation

Once the conflict has come to a head, it's time to meet and find a resolution. Conflict resolution should take place in person whenever possible. Handling it over the phone, email, text message, or another method is generally not the best way to communicate. However, today, more companies offer remote positions that make meeting in person impossible. In those situations, a phone call or video conferencing form of communication is best.

The conversation should only involve those who are experiencing the issue. Having additional onlookers is not recommended when resolving conflict.

During the conversation, you want to focus on 3 things - talking, listening, and finding a solution.

Listen to the other party

Do you remember the concept of having two ears and one mouth so you can listen more than you talk?

That can't be truer than when in a conflict resolution situation.

When the other person is talking, you want to give them your full attention. Interrupting them or making inappropriate nonverbal gestures or sounds is disrespectful and can quickly break down the communication you have.

You can use active listening techniques such as repeating back what is said to you and nodding your head to

show that you hear and comprehend what is being said. Your goal is to fully understand the other person's views regarding the issue so you can move forward in coming up with a resolution.

Even if something is said that you don't agree with or feel is untrue, it's still important to listen and understand that they are speaking from their perspective.

Communicate your side

Just as you need to listen to the other person, you also have to communicate about the situation from your vantage point.

One good rule of thumb is to remember that your focus should be on the problem behaviors, not the personality traits of the person. When you speak about someone's personality, it often feels like a personal attack.

For example, you can say, "I don't like when you continually cut me off during meetings" instead of "You're bossy and rude during our staff meetings."

The first statement focuses on the behavior, while the second statement focuses on personality traits. When the latter statement is made, one is more likely to become defensive, which breaks down communication.

Come to an agreement

Once all parties have voiced their viewpoints and opinions, it's time to focus on coming to an agreement regarding the conflict. Remember, that is the ultimate goal of conflict resolution. The purpose is not to blame the other person and wait for an apology. It's to come to a mutual understanding regarding the matter at hand in hopes of it not occurring in the future.

In coming to an agreement, you can ask questions similar to these to get on the same page.

- What can I do better next time in a similar situation?
- I want to find ways to nip this in the bud if this happens again. How can we make that happen?
- I want us to get better at handling this type of issue. What's the best way to go about that.

Apologize and move on

Once there has been a conversation about the matter at hand, this final step is crucial. You have to apologize/accept the apology, whichever is applicable in your situation and move on.

If you played a role in things going awry, admit it, and apologize for your role. Don't just give a general "I'm sorry," but express why so there's clarity regarding how you contributed.

On the other end, you have to forgive the other person and move on. If you continue to hold on to negative feelings regarding the situation or person, it can add to toxicity in the workplace and become more of a distraction than it needs to be.

Don't focus on the past issue or the fact that it could happen again in the future. Instead, put your energy toward the resolution that was developed so you can move on.

Develop healthy workplace conflict resolution habits

Conflict in the workplace will happen. It's part of the environment. With that knowledge, you want to develop healthy and mature conflict management strategies so you can handle any issues that might come your way while at work.

When you approach conflict resolution with a focus on finding the solution, you set yourself up for greater odds of successfully reaching a conclusion that works for all involved parties.