
Tool 12-2

Conflict Management Strategies

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Choose your battles. Determine if this challenge is important enough to warrant intervention.

Set ground rules. Set boundaries to ensure that participants do not resort to personal attacks.

View conflict as an opportunity. Conflict is a sign of differing viewpoints. Those viewpoints keep workplaces from becoming stagnant and losing their creative edge. Remind the parties involved that conflict is an opportunity to look at innovative and unusual solutions.

Schedule a session. Do not jump into conflict management when parties are in a rush, emotional, don't have all the facts, or are under pressure. Schedule the session for a better time.

Do your homework. Get all the facts before beginning a conflict management session.

Meet privately. Follow the adage of "Praise in public, counsel in confidence." Enlist the fewest number of people necessary to reach a solution.

Ask for a preliminary vote. If you are not sure how many people are in disagreement on an issue, take an initial vote to determine the extent of the conflict.

Find areas of agreement. Find areas parties agree on and work from there to determine a solution.

Stick to one issue. If other issues come up during a conflict management session, table them.

Ask questions. Use questions to discover if the challenge is the issue or a symptom of a larger issue.

Listen. Sometimes people just need to vent. Allow them to tell their stories two full times to help remove the emotion and get all the facts. Then direct the discussion toward a solution.

Ask for solutions. Use the formula of "Don't bring a problem without also bringing a potential solution."

Walk in their shoes. Have participants trade sides so that each looks at the issue from the other's point of view.

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List pros and cons. List these publicly so the group can review them.

Review precedents. Review similar situations that were resolved satisfactorily for possible solutions.

Say “I” instead of “you.” Instead of “You drive me crazy,” try “I feel uncomfortable when you . . . ”

Use teamwork language. Use language that removes the concept of one person against another. Put both on the same side against the problem. “What can we do to solve this?”

Collaborate. Define the conflict management session as a problem-solving situation and have all parties work together to solve it.

Brainstorm. Use a creative, no-judging session in which all ideas are thrown in for consideration.

Compromise. Look for what each party will and won’t give up and find the middle ground.

Seek alternatives. If one side has a solution and the other side has a differing solution, use those two solutions to create a third alternative solution.

Take a break. When emotions become involved or the conflict escalates, it’s a good idea to step away from the discussion and regain perspective.

Enlist an objective negotiator. When all parties have a vested interest in the outcome and have reached an impasse, bring in an outside negotiator to assist in the process.

Assert authority. Sometimes the only answer is to say, “Do it.”

Follow up. Ensure that you have follow-up procedures built into your plan so that a challenge doesn’t have to be addressed again.
