

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Identify where conflict comes from.

Conflicts arise when two or more parties feel that they are in the right in a given situation.

Conflicts arise when someone feels that justice and/or fair play have been violated.

The simplest conflict resolution is communication.

Sometimes a simple explanation suffices.

Sometimes apologies and forgiveness are necessary.

EFFECTING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Contact all parties and ensure a willingness to resolve the conflict.

Find common ground to build willingness.

If these attempts fail, contact an outside, objective party for mediation.

Timing is important.

If possible, wait until strong feelings have subsided.

Be sure that the meeting time is acceptable, appropriate and mutually agreeable to all parties.

Identify a “safe place” for negotiation.

A “safe place” is a place where people can comfortably take the risks involved in honest communication about meaningful issues.

If possible, identify a private, neutral room, preferably a space that isn’t “owned” by one person or the other.

Conflict resolution requires “give and take” communication on everyone’s part.

Everyone must feel absolutely free to tell their side of the story in an environment conducive to fair play.

Be prepared to explain your side clearly ... and be prepared to listen with an open mind to the other side.

Establish ground rules for civil, constructive dialog:

- One person will speak at a time.
- We will make every effort to listen to one another with respect and an open mind.
- We will seek to understand one another’s point of view and be flexible about different perceptions on the issue at hand.
- We will agree to honor the confidentiality of our discussions within reasonable parameters that are clear to all of us.

Take a “listening stance” into the meeting.

“Seek first to understand; then to be understood.”

If we dedicate ourselves first to active listening, we will improve the other person’s willingness to listen to our ideas and feelings.

“Creative problem-solving strategies are essential to positive approaches to conflict management. We need to transform the situation from one in which it is ‘my way or the highway’ into one in which we entertain new possibilities that have been otherwise elusive.”

“Collaborative approaches to conflict management require us to engage in the moment of dialogue in profound and meaningful ways.”

“Negotiation requires profound courage on the part of all parties: it takes courage to honestly and clearly articulate your needs, and it takes courage to sit down and listen to your adversaries. It takes courage to look at your own role in the dispute, and it takes courage to approach others with a sense of empathy, openness and respect for their perspective.”

“It may be possible to avoid conflict without actually resolving the underlying dispute, by getting the parties to recognize that they disagree but that no further action needs to be taken at that time.”

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

continued

Express your needs clearly and specifically.

Use “I-Messages” as tools for clarification.

Build from what you have heard; continue to listen well.

Approach problem-solving with flexibility.

Identify issues clearly and concisely. Break down problems into manageable size.

Generate options while deferring judgment (“brainstorm” about possible solutions). Don’t reject ideas or possible solutions too quickly.

Summarize and restate.

Manage impasse with calmness, patience and respect.

Impasse is the point where the parties cannot reach an agreement

Stay focused and ask the following questions: What is the main goal? What is the desired outcome of this discussion? What will happen if this conflict is not resolved? Does this impasse mean that we’re throwing out all of the results we’ve already agreed to?

Strategies for managing impasse:

Take a break. Reaffirm the ground rules. Stay calm. Remember to listen. Make a conscious decision to be patient. Try to understand. Be flexible. Explore alternatives. Change the subject and/or fix a smaller problem. Find common ground.

Build an agreement that works.

Ask the following questions to gauge the success of the resolution you have built.

Do all parties feel that the agreement is fair and reasonable?

Is the agreement balanced? Is everyone properly represented in its implementation?

Is the agreement specific enough to proceed? Does everyone understand what we need to do and when we need to do it?

Is the agreement future-oriented? Will the solution work not only for now, but in the future?

Follow established ICES procedures and rules for ICES meetings.

Be friendly to everyone. Discourage polarization.

Be courteous and polite, and conduct meetings with professionalism.

Learn and follow the rules of good conduct as outlined in your State Bylaws, ICES Bylaws and/or *Robert’s Rules of Order*.

Take your Handbook, State Bylaws and ICES Bylaws to meetings.

Outline the rules at the beginning of the meeting in a professional, courteous, non-personal manner.

Enforce the rules fairly and evenly with everyone, including the leadership. Leadership should set the example of professional conduct.

—Grace McMillan, Representatives Liaison, 02-07

“Conflicts are normal experiences within the work environment. They are also, to a large degree, predictable and expectable situations that naturally arise as we go about managing complex and stressful projects in which we are significantly invested.”

“Conflict tends to be accompanied by significant levels of misunderstanding that exaggerate the perceived disagreement considerably. If we can understand the true areas of disagreement, this will help us solve the right problems and manage the true needs of the parties.”

“If we develop procedures for identifying conflicts likely to arise, as well as systems through which we can constructively manage conflicts, we may be able to discover new opportunities to transform conflict into a productive learning experience.”

“Conflict resolution skills and strategies build stronger, more cohesive organizations and more productive relationships.”