

Top Tips for Handling Conflict in Your Team

A degree of conflict is inevitable in any team or organisation. As a leader or manager, handling conflict within your team is a key skill that can help to ensure your team continues to be effective, and relationships between individuals remain healthy and productive. Following these suggestions will help you to take action effectively if conflict occurs in your team.

Create a positive working environment

Conflict is less likely to occur in positive working cultures where mutual trust and respect abound. You can create this kind of environment by treating everyone in your team fairly and equally, providing them with praise and recognition, and being open and honest at all times.

Learn to spot the signs of conflict

Although they are often quite subtle, you can start to detect the signs of conflict simply by being aware of the interactions within your team. Conflict might be reflected in team members' body language (e.g. crossed arms, leaning away from the person they're talking to), facial expressions (e.g. frowning, gazing down or into the distance), or tone of voice.

Deal with conflict as soon as it occurs

Conflict is usually borne out of small annoyances or disagreements that can be easily resolved when addressed early. However, if ignored, these seemingly small issues can quickly escalate and prevent the individuals from working effectively together. If you notice conflict between your team members, it is extremely important to take action and help them resolve the situation before it spirals out of control.

Set some ground rules for discussing conflict

If you become aware of conflict between team members, it is a good idea to bring them together to talk about the problem. Before getting the conversation underway, set some ground rules. Team members should listen to one another, respect one another's points of view, and refrain from interrupting each other. The tone of the conversation should be calm, rational and non-threatening. It is therefore important for team members not to engage in this kind of discussion if they are feeling angry or emotional.

Don't take sides

Even if you feel as though you empathise or agree with one individual in particular, it is important that you remain objective while discussing conflict between team members. Your role is to help the team members address the issues causing the conflict and to reach a resolution that works well for both of them.

Seek advice and guidance

If you are faced with a complex or challenging conflict situation in your team and are unsure how to handle it, seek some support before taking action. You may wish to consult your line manager or a trusted colleague who is particularly adept at handling conflict. Your HR department (if you have one) may also be able to provide you with help and support in this regard.

Develop your team's conflict management skills

It is important for team members to understand conflict and feel confident about resolving situations independently. To this end, you may wish to liaise with your Learning and Development department to discuss the possibility of offering **conflict management skills training** to the team or wider organisation. You might also wish to explore the possibility of introducing conflict management as a **core competency** in your organisation with the help of the appropriate individuals (e.g. your HR department or line manager).

Evaluate your conflict management skills

After handling a conflict situation in your team, spend some time **reflecting** on how effectively you did this. Consider what you did well, as well as what you might wish to do differently in the future. Make a note of these observations, so you can refer to them next time you are required to handle conflict within your team. You might also find it helpful to solicit some

feedback from the team members involved to find out how effective they felt you were at helping them resolve the situation.

Related Items

Related Resources

- Preventing Conflict
- Resolving Conflict
- What Causes Conflict in Teams?