



How to Manage Conflict

What may have been an enjoyable group can turn into a virtual no go area! It can start with a small disparity of opinion and escalate into a full-scale crisis that brings your group to a standstill and leaves every one on edge. There are positive outcomes that can be achieved through managing conflict successfully. With this understanding and the co-operation from all, it is possible to work towards a win/win situation that normally resolves with a far better result. This is where both sides work together to produce a better solution meeting the needs of both parties. The conflict can be a chance to create new understandings, processes and innovative solutions.

There are some basics skills and concepts that need to be remembered in a time of conflict.

- Tackle conflict early when it is a small irritation rather than a major problem. This will in turn end sources of dissatisfaction by allowing the conflict to be resolved directly and immediately. The longer you leave it the more time and effort will be needed to resolve it.
- Negotiate and work together towards a resolution. Make sure that each differing view is heard and shown respect for their right to have a view. Listen and understand why they hold the view. Be clear about what exactly their concerns and worries are. Look for common ground so that exact points of disagreement can be isolated and combine differing opinions and interests thus working towards new balances and agreements.
- Manage the emotions by handling your own and the others' anger and frustration. Avoid inflammatory language but be assertive in stating your case. Avoid accusations and anger. Tackle the difference but don't make it about personalities.
- Open up the discussion with what can be done to make it possible. Break the problem into smaller parts. Think about removing the areas of disagreement and what is left won't seem so difficult.

The agreement needs to be clearly understood, or the original conflict may return. Ensure that the solution is specific and one that everyone can stick to. Check that all parties share the responsibility for making it work and ensure that some form of review is built into the agreement.

Managing conflict well and early can increase the motivation and energy of the group members, and encourage creativity and innovation. It may create greater cohesiveness within the group. So negotiate, manage and find solutions for your conflicts.

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