

Conflict Resolution at Work

Ben Dattner, Ph.D.

Dattner Consulting, LLC

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- Introduction
- Context and causes
- Processes
- Recommendations
- Conclusion

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Conflicts in the workplace:

- Are based on real or perceived differences of interest
- Have both substantive and symbolic aspects
- Involve organizational politics, along with intergroup, interpersonal and intrapersonal processes

Context and causes

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- People and groups have a tendency to see situations as win-lose rather than win-win
- Interactions in the workplace can positively or negatively impact one's social standing and self perceptions
- It is easy for trust to break down and for competition to turn into destructive conflict between individuals and groups

Processes

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- Interpersonal processes can lead to self-fulfilling cycles of interaction, both positive and negative
- Intrapersonal processes can lead to self-fulfilling cycles of thought and action, both positive and negative
- Conflicts quickly escalate and become about the conflicts themselves, rather than the underlying issues
- When pride has been damaged, people seek revenge and go beyond the optimal “tit for tat”

Recommendations

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- Be honest with yourself about what is really at stake
- Be open with others about your real needs and concerns
- Don't bluff or escalate
- Look for opportunities to find win-win solutions
- Describe the possible costs and risks of continuing the conflict
- Verify that the messages you are trying to send are the ones that are being received

Recommendations (continued)

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- Always keep reconciliation and resolution in mind
- Challenge the position, not the person, and convey supportiveness and positive regard for the person
- Frame things positively rather than negatively
- Convey a commitment to mutually beneficial, superordinate goals
- Proactively address others' concerns
- Allow others to save face

Conclusion

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- Conflict is an inevitable part of organizational life, and the right degree and kind of conflict can be beneficial
- Conflicts often take on a life of their own that minimizes the potentially beneficial results
- If the processes that can make conflicts destructive are attended to, conflicts can either be minimized, resolved, or avoided
- Self awareness and social awareness can make the difference between constructive and destructive conflict

Ben Dattner, Ph.D.

ben@dattnerconsulting.com

212-501-8945

www.dattnerconsulting.com
