

The 5 Steps to Conflict Resolution



You can't run from conflict

When two or more people at work are having issues, is there a “correct” way for a manager to handle the conflict? If it’s handled poorly, what are the effects?

Disagreements in the workplace are inevitable. And training in conflict resolution is necessary for anyone in management—it’s the key to preventing conflict from hindering employees' professional growth.

Here is the conflict resolution process, which works with groups as well as individuals, in five steps:

1

Define the source of the conflict. More information leads to faster resolution. Ask both parties to share their side, with questions like “When did you feel upset?” “Do you see a relationship between that and this incident?” or “How did this incident begin?”

2

Look beyond the immediate incident. A minor issue that occurred months before may have evolved into present-day personal attacks. Ask probing questions to get the warring employees to look beyond their triggers to the real cause.

3

Request solutions. After getting each party’s viewpoint, have them offer suggestions for change. Steer the discussion away from finger pointing and toward cooperation. As mediator, you have to be an active listener, being aware of verbal nuances and body language.

4

Identify solutions both disputants can support. Point out the merits of various ideas, not only from the employees’ perspectives, but in how they benefit everyone. For instance, greater cooperation and collaboration are better for the team and the organization.

5

Agreement. Get the two parties to shake hands and accept one of the solutions identified in Step 4. If needed, write up a contract for them to sign—the main goal is a negotiated agreement that they avoid conflicts in the future.