

CONFLICT

Conflict as a Catalyst for Change

The Corporate Vine | Bearing Fruit in Business

Conflict in the workplace is inevitable

If you work with people, then at some point or another, you will experience conflict. The good news is that not all conflict is bad. In fact, conflict is often a catalyst for necessary change. And in all cases, conflict is a tool for learning, giving you a better understanding of yourself, your colleagues, your customers, and the expectations of your job. Although workplace differences can be uncomfortable, even painful, ignoring it will eventually turn conflict into chaos -- and there is no such thing as good chaos. Below are practical notes from *The Book of Best Practices* on how to approach conflict.

Recognize the external sources of conflict

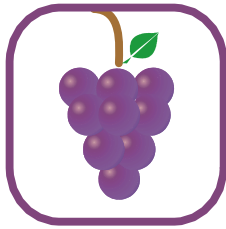
- Misunderstanding of other's points of view
- Ineffective and/or lack of communication

Recognize your internal root of conflict

- Pride; not willing to be flexible to other's needs or value other's opinions
- Desire/competition for more recognition or acceptance
- Desire/competition for higher status
- Desire/competition for more money

Adopt attitudes that alleviate adversity

- The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
- Look inward first; be accountable for your personal conduct and openly acknowledge (apologize) when you have made a mistake and graciously accept the apologies of others
- Try to understand the other person's point of view. Most people are not maliciously trying to hurt others or disrupt the mission, but feel they are making the right decisions
- Look at the "big picture" by finding the common goal that is larger than your differences and work backwards, seeking a shared solution
- Pay careful attention to your own work, then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else
- Do not judge or criticize others, **period**.



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Steps to Resolving Conflict

STEP 1: Lowest Level: Try to resolve disagreements quickly and at the lowest level possible before the storm of conflict appears. Go privately and discuss the situation with the other party involved. Do not focus on who's right and who's wrong; be concerned about coming to a mutual concession.

STEP 2: Informal Witness and Mediation. If the matter remains unresolved, take one or two others with you and return to discuss the conflict situation with the other party involved. This is so the resolution attempt may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. Witnesses should be neutral parties who have no personal interest in the outcome of the resolution. Corporations may want to establish a team of trained mediators to handle such matters.

STEP 3: Formal Mediation. If conflict continues, take the matter to the next higher authority and/or Human Resources.

STEP 4: Recourse and Remedy. If mutual recourse cannot be obtained through formal mediation, the proper officers should take corrective administrative measures. Officers should never take punitive action on the allegation of only one witness. The facts of all sides must be investigated thoroughly and established by the testimony of at least two impartial witnesses. Recourse and remedy should fit the offense and must be properly documented. Any additions and/or amendments to corporate policy as an outcome of the situation must be made and distributed formally throughout the organization.

STEP 5: Let Bygones be Bygones. Once resolution is made and corrective action is taken, be committed to putting all differences aside. Do not hold resentment and do not seek revenge or retaliation.

STEP 6: Learn and Grow. Be determined to learn and grow from the conflict situation. Cooperate with the persons involved to devise a list of "*Lessons Learned*".

* **The Book of Best Practices:** Deuteronomy 19:15-17; Joshua 22:10-34; Proverbs 13:10; Proverbs 17:9; Matthew 5:23-26; Matthew 7:1-5; 12; Matthew 18:15-19; Luke 12:55-59; Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 6:1-6; Galatians 6:1-5; 1 Timothy 5:19