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Conflict Resolution

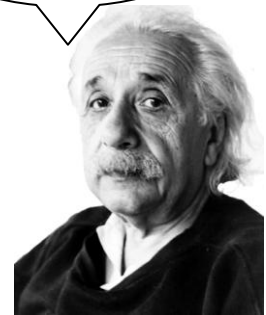
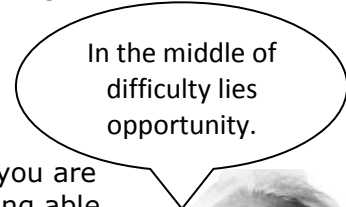
Objectives

After completing this topic, you will be able to:

- List when and where to address conflict
- Explain the perspective of each party in a disagreement
- Prevent (or mitigate) conflict escalation

Overview

Whether you are a party in a disagreement or you are simply mediating between your employees, being able to resolve conflicts is a key communication skill for supervisors and managers. Being hands-off and avoiding confrontations with employees makes you a weak manager and makes the confrontations inevitable; whereas effective managers with good communication skills have to face confrontations less often. When conflicts do occur, they are less "painful" because you are solving small problems as they arise rather than waiting until they become big ones.



Location, Location, Location

In *General Communication*, you learned to "praise in public, reprimand in private." You also saw that feedback should be timely, specific, and sincere. So how does that apply to conflict resolution?

Type of conflict	Private	Public	Timing
With peers			
With employees			
Between employees			
w/ whole team			
w/ clients			

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eLearning: Individual Differences

Think about how outgoing or reserved you are. Then consider whether you are more task-oriented or person-oriented to see where you fall on the **STEP** personality chart. Are you a: **S**upervisor? **T**rainer? **E**xecutive? Or **P**rogrammer-type?



The instructor will provide a link to the eLearning lesson on how to adapt your style to individuals in order to be perceived as more cooperative and less confrontational.

Steps to Resolution

You are all employed by the same company and are working toward a common goal, so remember to work as allies. Use this mnemonic to recall the steps of conflict resolution:

Be calm

Explain the problem from your point of view

Ask for the other parties' viewpoints

Listen!

Look for possible solutions together

Indicate what each party agrees to do to resolve the problem

Express your support for the plan

Set follow-up date(s) and **S**ummarize

It's not *whether* you disagree, *how often* you disagree, or *what* you disagree about. It's *how you argue* that determines whether a

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disagreement turns into a conflict or into a resolution.

Try to use "I" statements to help you avoid placing blame or sounding accusatory:

Using "I" Statements	
When you...	⇒ Describe behavior without judgment, exaggeration, labeling, attribution, or motives.
I feel...	⇒ How does behavior affect you? It's probably some variation of joy, sorrow, anger, or fear.
Because I...	⇒ Describe connection between observed facts and provoked feelings.
[Pause]	⇒ Let the other person respond.
I would like...	⇒ Describe desired change.
Because...	⇒ Why might the proposed change help?
What do you think?	⇒ Listen. Discuss options and then compromise.

Activity: Dispute Mediation

The instructor will provide you with instructions and a role-playing sheet.

Preventing Conflict, A Self-Assessment

Preventing conflicts in the future requires improving communication skills now. After completing it for yourself, consider copying this self assessment checklist (by Robert Bacal, 2009) to distribute to your staff.

1. Actively solicit feedback about your own communication and communication within the organization. Ask staff questions like:
 - When we talk, are you generally clear about what I am saying?
 - Do you think we communicate well around here?
 - Have you got any ideas about how we could communicate better?

Consider including these questions (or similar ones) in your performance management process or staff meetings.

2. Working with your staff, define how you should communicate in the organization. Develop consensus regarding:
 - How disagreements should be handled
 - How horizontal communication should work (staff-to-staff)

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- How vertical communication should work (manager-to-staff and staff-to-manager)
- What information should be available and when

Once consensus is reached, support the achievement of these goals through positive reinforcement and coaching.

3. Look at how the structure of your organization impacts communication. Indirect communication (communication transferred person-to-person) is notorious for causing problems. Consider increasing direct communication, where the person with the message relays it directly to the receiver.
4. Learn about—and use—active listening techniques. This will set a tone and contribute to a positive communication climate.