

Conflict Management

Competency Development Activities

Competency Definition

Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact.

Developmental Activity Levels

All (A)

Applies to all competency levels

Beginner-Basic Knowledge (B)

A person at the Beginner-Basic Knowledge level has limited experience applying the competency. He/she applies general knowledge in common situations but has limited practical experience in applying the competency in a work environment presenting more complex situations.

Mid-level (M)

A person with mid-level proficiency has applied the competency repeatedly and successfully in the performance of his/her job but still has much to learn about the advanced aspects or behaviors associated with the competency. A person at this level can usually apply the competency on his/her own.

High (H)

A person at the High level has extensive knowledge of and experience with this competency and can apply the competency exceptionally well on the job without assistance. At this level one is an expert and has enough experience to teach the competency to others.

Articles, Books, and Websites

A Alternative Dispute Resolution / Conflict Management Resource Guide.

This site lists a variety of resources (e.g., websites, articles) for handling conflict.

A Conflict Resolution Program: Communication Tips.

This site provides definitions for conflict management strategies and tips on implementing them.

A Fisher, Roger and Ury, William, Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In, Penguin USA, December, 1991.

This book provides practical guidelines for executives offering a concise strategy for coming to

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mutually acceptable agreements in every sort of conflict.

M Weiss, Jeff & Hughes, Jonathan, Want Collaboration? Accept--and Actively Manage—Conflict, Harvard Business Review, March, 2005. HBR: R0503F

The authors of this article offer six strategies for effectively managing conflict. The first three strategies focus on the point of conflict, and the second three focus on escalation of conflict up the management chain. Together they constitute a framework for effectively managing discord, one that integrates conflict resolution into day-to-day decision-making processes, thereby removing a barrier to cross-organizational collaboration.

Activities

B The next time that you disagree with a colleague, treat the situation not as a conflict, but as an opportunity to gain a better understanding of ideas that differ from your own and to clarify your own viewpoints.

B When a conflict situation arises, discuss it with your supervisor: how the conflict arose, what actions occurred, what statements were made, and how the conflict was resolved. Determine with your supervisor whether the conflict was being caused by such reasons as: differences in goals, competition for resources, failure in communication, misinterpretation of information, disagreement over standards, etc. Next, ask your supervisor for feedback on how you handled it.

B Analyze your conflict management style using an assessment instrument (see the TSA Career Coaching Service for ideas on which instrument to use). Find out whether you avoid dealing with conflict, treat the problem superficially, use power, see compromise, or use confrontation.

M Take time to observe conflict resolution processes at work or in community organizations and analyze the factors that account for successful resolution.

M Facilitate a constructive problem solving dialogue with key individuals of groups when there is a conflict. Clarify the consequences of not resolving differences, identify potential opportunities for compromise, and summarize the benefits of reaching a mutual resolution for everyone involved.

Coaching Suggestions for Managers

B Assist team members with handling problematic situations or conflicts effectively by helping them see the other point of view and developing mutually beneficial solutions to issues. To the extent possible, allow team members to resolve their own issues to build respect among team members and ownership for the solution. Intercede only when the problem or conflict threatens important business results or customer relationships.

M Empower your employees to deal with on-the-job conflicts by providing them latitude to deal with small issues (within the SOPs). Empower them to think through alternative ways to

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resolve conflict situations. This will give them a feeling of ownership of the problem.

M Have team members observe you or another manager mediate a dispute or conflict. Then debrief, walking through the critical events and outcomes. Staff/team members can learn through exercises in which you and other colleagues take on (role-play) the various roles in a mediation process.

M Where observation is permissible, have team members observe you or another manager mediate a dispute or conflict. Then hold a debrief, walking through the critical events and outcomes. Staff/team members can learn through exercises in which you and other colleagues take on (role-play) the various roles in a mediation process.