

>> D. Tolleson: Well I'm here today with Matt Costello.

Matt is from the CADR office in the Department from Washington and he will share with us a little bit about what their office does, in addition kind of talking about some of the different programs they have, one especially being Core Plus.

So Matt, welcome to the broadcast today.

>> Thank you.

Thank you for having me.

>> D. Tolleson: We're glad to have you here.

It's good to get some new faces on here so they're not seeing Don all the time.

But also just to hear some more information about what you guys do.

So, what do you do?

>> Well, I'm in the office of collaborative action and dispute resolution within the office of the Secretary and what we do is we try to promote use of conflict management skills, collaborative problem solving, that sort of thing to really improve the type of work we do.

We do a really good job, I think, certainly in the Fish-&-Wildlife Service, of working with external stakeholders and that sort of thing and kind of building collaborative problem solving, coming up with a solution.

We don't necessarily do as great of a job within the Department doing that, and so our office kind of promotes that and says, you know what the same tools and techniques you're using to engage the external stakeholder, talking with them, being honest, interspace negotiation, that sort of thing, you can do inside, too.

Both between offices and bureaus if you have a disagreement or even between individuals.

>> I know one term I hear talked about a lot is this Core Plus.

Can you tell me a little bit about what the -- what it is?

Is it a program?

A training class?

>> Core Plus, it's a little difficult to describe.

It's what we consider integrated conflict management system.

Those of you -- it has some ADR components.

I say ADR because I think that's one thing some folks may have heard of.

ADR is your typically mediation, facilitation, that sort of thing where you sit down and have a discussion about some problem that arose, usually you have a mediator or somebody who helps you have that discussion and you then move forward to find a resolution.

With ICMS, integrated conflict management system, like Core Plus tries to do, is try to cover the wide range of issues related to conflict.

ADR is just reactive.

It's once there is a problem, how do we fix it.

ICMS tries to talk about how do we take care of issues before they become a problem.

We spend a lot of time on working on things like training, communication skills training, conflict management skills training.

And the basic part of the training is called getting to the core of conflict and helps people recognize conflict, how to respond to conflict, how to see resolve the conflict and reflect on it, and what have you learn so next time you can resolve the conflict as early as possible and at the earliest possible level before it's gets so ugly it becomes a dispute, it's starting to drag down the office, it's impacting the work that the office is doing as well.

So we try to really give people a number of processes and options to resolve any conflict they may have.

>> D. Tolleson: So how is this different than looking at performance -- we -- we do supervisor training a lot and we hear people talk performance, we hear them talk conduct, conflict.

Do you address those other things?

>> With Core Plus pretty much anything can be addressed.

You talked about conflict and performance, and I just have two really quick statistics I like to throw in.

One is from the Dana Measure of The Financial Cost of Organizational Conflict, and it stated over 65% of performance problems result from strained relationships between employees, not from deficits in individual employees' skills or motivation.

The other one is from Leadership quarterly, an issue in 1996, and it says 42% of a manager's time spent addressing conflict in the workplace.

With those two statistics, you see we're wasting lot of energy trying to deal with conflict when it's become this big ugly thing hanging down.

We see an issue that conflict is not bad necessarily.

That's one of the things Core Plus is based on.

Conflict is an opportunity for growth.

It's also natural.

Conflict is going to happen in any organization.

So what we try and do is understand that and take care of that conflict, find a way to use that conflict as a starting point.

The problem is when people avoid conflict, it just keeps growing and festering and becomes a dispute.

So say you and I have a disagreement on how we want to complete a project.

There are two options.

We can sit down and talk about it and try and come up with, here's how we're going to solve this conflict and get the project done.

Usually what we find is when we do that we come up with a better solution.

It's a little bit you, little bit me, little bit somebody else, but we take care of those things.

We work together.

The other option is we don't do anything, we get angry, we don't talk, and it keeps festering and festering and becomes a dispute and now I no longer care about the best way to solve the problem.

I just want to make sure my way is the way to solve the problem and that your way isn't.

We become really confrontational.

What we try and do with Core Plus is avoid that.

We try to find a way that we can all work together, find the best solution and repair any possible relationships.

Because we understand even after I've this disagreement with you, there's going to be another project in a month we're going to have to work on again.

If we spent all this time being adversarial and I want you to lose and I want to be right, that's not going to do us any good next time we get to another problem that we have to solve together.

>> I heard you mention earlier – you were talking both you mentioned conflict and you mentioned dispute.

I've heard both of those terms tossed around before.

Do they line up?

Are they different?

>> They're a little bit different.

As I said before, one of the things we went with Core Plus and ICMS is the acceptance that conflict is natural.

It's going to happen.

When any two people are around and they have difference of opinion you're going to have conflict.

But conflict is not necessarily bad.

A disagreement is a chance to build a better agreement, to work together, to come up with a new creative idea maybe we haven't thought about.

The problem is if you let a conflict linger and don't do anything to resolve it, it becomes a dispute, and when it becomes a dispute, it becomes adversarial.

It's me versus you, not my idea versus your idea looking at them on the merits.

It's I get really entrenched in my position and I have to be right.

Mine is the right way to do it.

So what we do with Core Plus is we try to offer a wide range of processes and options through training and things like that to teach you how to recognize conflict and take care of it really early to sometimes we realize that people do avoid -- you do get a dispute.

We offer different processes and options like mediation, facilitation, that sort of thing to take care of and resolve the issues once they have become a dispute so we can take care of the issue, wipe the slate clean, rebuild our relationship so that next time we have a problem we can learn from it and work from there.

>> D. Tollesson: Ok. Good. Good.

It's a good distinction there on the conflict.

So often people hear the word conflict and they go to the bad place.

>> Right.

>> D. Tollesson: It's like sometimes -- I've said this before to folks, it's like, you sometimes need it if nothing else to get that kick in the butt to get you moving.

>> Right.

We talk about this and actually one of the first exercises we do in the getting to the core conflict is we ask people what they think of, instant word when you hear conflict, most are angry, heated, emotional, bad, and every one once in a while you'll get somebody who says opportunity, exciting or something like that.

What we try to focus on is conflict is going to

happen.

To give it all these negative connotations doesn't do anybody any good.

What we can do is use this opportunity.

How can we twist that conflict that's going to happen and make it something good, make it an energizing moment for us to create something.

>> Cool. Let's say I'm a supervisor out there and either I have something brewing between me and one of my staff people and I'm kind of flustered, don't know how to handle it, or maybe it's a situation where I have a couple employees that they're kind of getting at each other and, again, I'm not sure what to do.

Is that something where I would go ahead, then, and contact you?

Do I pick up the phone and say, hey, Matt, I'm having a problem, or are there are resources within the bureaus?

How does the whole program work?

>> There's both.

One of the things I wanted to mention, thank you for bringing up the different kind of conflict, any type of conflict can be handled through Core Plus, we can address it.

It can be anything from a formal EEO complaint, a grievance, that sort of thing, to just, I don't know why, but me and Don aren't getting along.

Can somebody else us figure out what's going on?

One of the best ways to contact us, you can always contact our office directly.

It is the Office of Collaboration Action and Dispute Resolution. You can find it on the web.

It's DOI.gov/CADR.

I know our website is very outdated.

I apologize. We are actually working on transitioning to a new one.

Or also contact our office and we have actually in each individual bureau what's called a BDRS, bureau dispute resolution specialist.

Their job is kind of to oversee Core Plus and some of our environmental conflict resolution things within the bureau.

Unfortunately right now fish's BDRS, Angie Graziano, is serving a detail with the Secretary so our office is handling everything for fish right now.

When you contact us, it's a confidential conversation.

It's between me and you or whoever in our office handles it and it's really talking about processes and options and finding what works best for you.

The great thing with Core Plus is, with some of the other traditional complaint processes, EEO, decision, that sort of thing, somebody is telling you this is your solution to the problem, this is who is right, who is who is wrong.

Core Plus is about allowing you, the person who has the problem, to find the solution to the problem.

You get to own it.

So what we do is try and work through that and find the best process for you.

We'll be very candid.

Sometimes as much as we support the use of ADR, it's not the right thing.

If you have -- if you and I are having a fight and I need to be proven right, going into mediation is not going to work because you're not going to get that.

Mediation is about you and I trying to resolve our problem and repair our relationship and our communications moving forward.

If I need to hear you were right and need somebody to tell me that, mediation isn't right.

But we'll also help you find what is that right process for you.

>> D. Tolleson: So in closing here, anything else that you want to share with us about Core Plus or CADR or --

>> I guess if nothing else, just the fact that Core Plus provides a safe place to have a confidential conversation with someone and kind of talk through what's really bothering you, what we can do, what's out there as far as processes and options to make the workplace a little bit better, and we talk about there's a wide range of processes and options that we offer, full spectrum, from really proactive, giving you individually the skills to do this, the training skills, that sort of thing, to conflict coaching, say, if you're not real comfortable getting in conflict, you get really nervous, we can coach you and teach you how to handle conflict better, to the conflict has happened, you have a dispute, now we have to deal with it.

We can help you there, too.

We try to provide a safe place to have that conversation with someone and figure out what will work best.

As I said before, if it's not us, we'll help talk you through what's the right direction, where to go, who to contact to really find the right process and option for you to solve your problem.

>> D. Tolleson: Great.

And so if we're, again, just to clarify, if we're looking for this type of service right now in the Fish-&-Wildlife Service, we need to go ahead and call you guys because Angie is on the detail to the Department.

>> Right.

You can contact our office directly.

I gave you the website.

We'll put the phone number up as well.

You can also e-mail as well.

You find me in the directory.

It's Matthew Costello.

Pretty much anybody in HR or EEO will be able to tell you how to get in touch with us.

There's a lot of different places to reach us.

We are more than happy to talk to you.

We also -- our office is particularly busy, call us, we can find somebody.

There are folks out in the Fish-&-Wildlife Service who are practitioners who actually do some of the mediation and training and that sort of thing.

We can put you in touch with someone there if you're more comfortable talking to some somebody in the bureau or if you don't want to talk to anybody in the bureau, we can put you in touch with somebody in one of the other bureaus. We actually have a roster with about 80 folks who do internal mediation for us that we utilize and they are usually collateral duty folks.

And we also have private practitioners if you need private practitioner.

It is really all about options.

Everything we do is options.

The process, who runs the process, that sort of thing, we give you all the choices and help you make an informed decision.

>> D. Tolleson: If somebody is interested in taking the course, getting to the core of conflict, are there locations and things listed on your website?

Is it through DOI Learn?

>> They will all be in DOI Learn.

If you go in through DOI Learn, look for the office of collaborative action dispute resolution and they should all be offered under that.

Since we did mention the course a couple of times, I will mention it's a four or eight-hour course.

We can kind of tailor it to your needs.

It's communication skills.

It's conflict management skills.

It's conflict awareness.

Figuring out your own particular conflict style.

Myself, I'm generally more aggressive in the conflict.

It's teaching me, and I do this, to realize ok I'm being aggressive and the person I'm talking to shrinks in conflict.

I need to be careful not to dominate them and have a

good conversation.

It talks a little bit about interspace negotiation.

How when we have that issue we can get rid of the other fluff and talk about the fundamental things.

So do that or contact our office.

We're more than happy to set up a session for you all as well.

I do want to put this little plug in, we just developed a four to eight-hour communication skills training as well that's kind of an add-on.

It's the next phase of getting to the core of conflict, called getting to the core of communications, because we find a lot of the conflicts are people don't know how to talk or interact with each other.

Now that we tell you here is how the conflict happens, here's how to recognize the conflict, we give you the communication skills to alleviate the conflict, resolve it and move on.

>> D. Tolleson: Thank you very much, Matt.

Really good information.

So as I said before, we're going to go ahead in the next segment is going to show Jack and he is going to be doing the Coach's Corner with giving you some of those tips on what you as supervisors can do as to try and help mediate some of those conflicts going on in your own workplace.

Thank you, Matt.

Appreciate it.

>> Thank you.