

# The Top 5 Strategies for Conflict Resolution

## 1. Don't Ignore Conflict

If you're someone who dislikes dealing with conflict, it might seem tempting to just put your head in the sand and pretend it doesn't exist, hoping it will resolve itself on its own. While this sometimes can happen, the truth is that the vast majority of the time, this will only cause the situation to get worse. Ignored conflicts have a tendency to fester over time and reappear at inopportune moments, so do your team a favor and address conflicts when they occur, nipping a potentially toxic situation in the bud as soon as you recognize it.

## 2. Clarify What the Issue Is

If you're dealing with a conflict between two members of your team, it's important that you get all the facts. Sit down with both individuals (separately, at first) and find out exactly what the issue is - how are both individuals perceiving the situation? What needs are not being met? What does each party see as an appropriate resolution? Make sure that all parties involved understand that you are acting as an impartial mediator, and let them know they can feel comfortable to share sensitive information.

## 3. Bring Involved Parties Together to Talk

Once you've had a chance to talk to all involved parties separately, bring them together so that they can hash out their differences in a neutral environment. This is a time for brainstorming, active listening, and being open to different perspectives - the goal is to come to a common understanding of what the problem is, what role each individual is playing in the conflict, and what some possible solutions might be.

## 4. Identify a Solution

After both parties have had a chance to discuss the situation at hand, it's time to identify what a satisfactory resolution might be - and how they can get there. Ideally, by this point, both parties will understand the other's side, and oftentimes the conflict will be resolved just through facilitated, open dialogue. However, if the situation requires further resolution, you will need to step in and help them negotiate a reasonable solution. This phase can require some time and effort, as it requires both parties to set aside their differences and preferences and find some common ground to work towards (which may involve not getting everything they want out of the situation). Then, work with both individuals to come up with a concrete list of steps that will result in the solution being achieved.

## 5. Continue to Monitor and Follow Up on the Conflict

Just because a solution has been identified and addressed doesn't mean it will just go away. As a manager, it's your responsibility to check in with both parties to ensure that the conflict has truly been dealt with, and that the steps identified to reach a solution are being followed. If all seems to be going well, simply remember to stop and observe from time to time, just to see if things really are going smoothly or if there are still lingering tensions under the surface that need to be handled. If it's clear that the solution didn't work, or wasn't the right resolution for the situation, make sure to be proactive in working with both parties to readjust expectations, identify alternative solutions, and continue their dialogue to create a positive and health work environment.

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