

NAVIGATING CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE



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DEFINITION

Conflict is simply the energy created by the gap between what we want and what we're experiencing

Nate Regier, author of *Conflict Without Casualties*



PREVENTION

If there are people in your organization, you will have conflict.

You can mitigate it to some extent.

- Communicate organizations values and hold people accountable to
- Create and maintain positive employee relations
- Lead by example
- Praise and train

PREVENTION... ISN'T ALWAYS NECESSARY

There are times when conflict can be reduced or avoided by including everyone in the decision-process.

There are other times when the decision is not everyone's to make and including them is inappropriate at best, and likely counter-productive.

Learn the difference.

COST OF

- Increased stress and anxiety
 - decreased productivity and satisfaction
- Feeling of being defeated and demeaned
 - lower morale and increased turnover
- Climate of mistrust
 - poor teamwork and cooperation
- Financial
 - estimated \$359 billion in lost time and productivity

TYPES OF

- Status
 - Who's in charge? Where does the buck stop? What department owns the project?
- Task/Process
 - What's the project goal? What needs to be done?
 - What should be done first? Are we deciding by consensus or a single person? Are we playing hardball with a client or compromising?
- Work Style
 - Collaborative vs alone. Deadline vs. work ahead. Linear vs iterative...
- Relationship/Personality
 - Personal feeling are involved, especially feeling disrespected.

TYPES OF ... WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- In some ways, it doesn't.
 - Costs add up regardless; tensions still mount; work is stalled...
- However...
 - Type of contact can impact
 - Length
 - Significance
 - Urgency
 - Strategy for navigating

OTHER LAYERS



TEMPTATION WHEN CONFRONTED WITH CONFLICT



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If we define conflict as energy that's created by the gap, then the real question is

How are we going to use that energy?



BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUALS

- Opens eyes to new ideas; better understanding of others' perspectives
- Surfacing of assumptions that may be inaccurate
- Clarification of individual views that build learning & insight
- Healthier relationships, morale, and commitment
- Opportunity to differentiate ourselves
- Practice emotional control



BENEFITS TO TEAMS

- Consideration of a broader range of ideas → a better, stronger idea
- Better problem-solving & better decisions
 - The critique of ideas encourages a more thorough evaluation of them
- Helps us see patterns of behavior
- Increased closeness with each other and relationships clear of irritations. Increased loyalty and cohesiveness, enhanced performance and productivity



BENEFITS TO ORGANIZATION

- Focus attention on problems that need to be solved but have been ignored or neglected
- Earlier problem-identification
- Improved productivity
- Practice emotional control
- Healthier, happier employees



ONCE ACKNOWLEDGED, WHAT DO WE DO?

MANAGE...

1. Be in charge of; oversee; supervise; administer; run
2. Succeed in surviving or in attaining one's aims, especially against heavy odds; cope

ONCE ACKNOWLEDGED, WHAT DO WE DO?

RESOLVE...

1. Settle; sort out
 2. Decide firmly on a course of action
I resolve to...
- In medicine: cause a symptom to subside

ONCE ACKNOWLEDGED, WHAT DO WE DO?

NAVIGATE

1. Plan and direct the route or course
2. Travel (a stretch of terrain)
especially carefully and perhaps
with difficulty



ID preventative strategies for the future

Stay engaged/Check-in/Monitor progress

Agree to move on

Identify Action Items and Responsible Parties

Agree on/Commit to Next Steps

Determine ways to meet the Common Goal

Agree on the source of the conflict

Define Acceptable Behavior/Common Goal

IF YOU'RE "THE BOSS" ...

- Resist the urge to tell people how to resolve the issue
- Success is more likely when the parties come to a solution together and have ownership of it
- May have to mediate

IF THE CONFLICT IS WITH YOUR MANAGER...

- Relearn/ask about expectations
- Define up front what the gap is between what you want and what you're experiencing
- Define how you would ideally like the problem fixed
- Be cognizant of the dynamic between the two of you*
- Know when it's time to involve HR

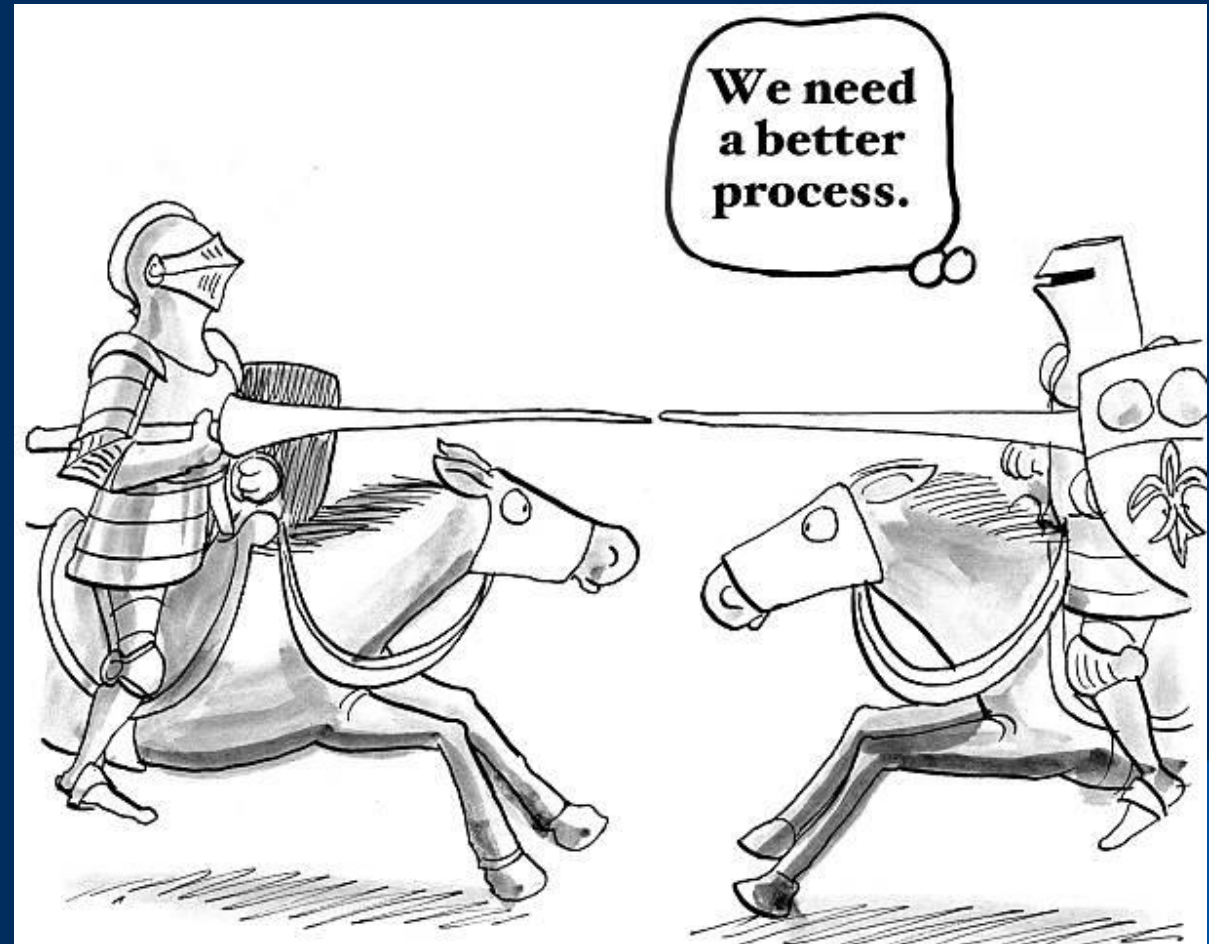
ALL-PURPOSE TIPS & STRATEGIES

- View conflict as an opportunity
- But pick your battles.
 - Don't create conflict for the sake of conflict.
- Find/Create a safe and private place to have a conversation
 - Be face to face. Do NOT have the conversation over email, et al.
- If conflict is happening within a team, include the whole team in the conversation
- If conflict is happening with one person on the team, deal with that one person*

ALL-PURPOSE TIPS & STRATEGIES

- Act quickly. Don't let conflict get moldy.
- Stick to the issues
- Take a time out if necessary
- Seek win-win.
- Understand the WIIFM Factor* What's In It For Me
- If win-win isn't possible
 - Do the right thing.
 - Don't play favorites.
 - Be transparent about rationale

...resolution can normally be found with conflicts where there is a [mutual] sincere desire to do so. Turning the other cheek, compromise, forgiveness, compassion, empathy, finding common ground, being an active listener, service above self, and numerous other approaches will always be successful in building rapport if the underlying desire is strong enough.



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