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**Case Study on**

**“Train your Employees to resolve their Own Conflicts with Co-Workers”  
(The Art of Conflict Management)**

**DECEMBER 2018**

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## CASE SUMMARY

Employees working together ought to share a special bond for them to deliver their level best. It is essential for individuals to be honest with each other for a healthy interpersonal relationship and eventually positive ambience at the workplace.

The purpose of this case study is to focus on the hidden facts of communication such as human feelings, egos and emotions at the workplace resulting into conflicts. A learning on inter-personal relationship and organizational effectiveness levels enhances understanding the concern of the workers, which means retaining, developing, motivating, communicating to contribute their best to the organization. In this case study different situations have been narrated which we confront in our day to day working. This can be used in the training session to provide an overview about how employees can manage and resolve workplace conflict.

*Disclaimer: The case study has been designed as a story taking place in our day to day working environment. The scenarios narrated are near to real time situations which occur in our day to day working. The persons, activities and attitudes attributed to them, names, etc. are either fictional or are partly adapted from/ inspired by disparate instances to suit the purpose of appreciation of challenges, which an officer may face in their workplace. This is only a guide to be used in training.*

## Reading Material

### “Train Your Employees to Resolve their Own Conflicts with Co-Workers” (The Art of Conflict Management)



#### 1. Synopsis

When two individuals have different opinions and neither of the two is willing to compromise, conflict arises. A state of disagreement among individuals is called as conflict.

Conflict can occur in any organization when employees with different backgrounds and priorities work together. Workplace conflict is almost inevitable when employees of various backgrounds and different approaches to their jobs are brought together for a shared business purpose. Conflict arises at workplace when employees find it difficult to reach to mutually acceptable solutions and fight over petty issues. Differences in attitude, mindsets and perceptions give rise to conflicts at the workplace.

Conflict can be expressed in numerous ways such as insults, non-cooperation, bullying and anger. Its causes can range from personality clashes and misunderstood communication to organizational mismanagement. Its various negative effects can include work disruptions, decreased productivity, project failure, absenteeism and termination. Emotional stress can be both a cause and an effect of workplace conflict. No one ever has gained anything out of conflicts. Conflict must be avoided as it leads to negativity and spoils the ambience of the workplace. Conflict can—and should—be managed and resolved.

## 2. Common Causes of workplace conflict



### Conditions creating conflict situations

According to Kirchoff and Adams (1982)<sup>1</sup>, there are four distinct conflict conditions, i.e., high stress environments, ambiguous roles and responsibilities, multiple boss situations, and prevalence of advanced technology.

Filley (1975)<sup>2</sup> identified main conditions which could initiate conflict situations in an organization. “These are:

- (i) Ambiguous jurisdiction, which occurs when two individuals have responsibilities which are interdependent but whose work boundaries and role definitions are not clearly specified.
- (ii) Goal incompatibility and conflict of interest refer to accomplishment of different but mutually conflicting goals by two individuals working together in an organization.

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<sup>1</sup> 1. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w7504e/w7504e07.htm> - Produced by: Natural Resources Management and Environment Department -Title: Management of agricultural research: A training manual. Module 4: Leadership, ...FAO CORPORATE DOCUMENTARY REPOSITORY

<sup>2</sup> Filley, A.C. 1975. Interpersonal Conflict Resolution. Glenview IL: Scott, Foresman. Adopted from Structured Training Module: Leadership, Team Building and Performance Enhancement by RTI Kolkata

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Obstructions in accomplishing goals and lack of clarity on how to do a job may initiate conflicts. Barriers to goal accomplishment arise when goal attainment by an individual or group is seen as preventing another party achieving their goal.

(iii).Communication barriers, as difficulties in communicating can cause misunderstanding, which can then create conflict situations.

(iv) Dependence on one party by another group or individual.

(v) Differentiation in organization, where, within an organization, sub-units are made responsible for different, specialised tasks. This creates separation and introduces differentiation. Conflict situations could arise when actions of sub-units are not properly coordinated and integrated.

(vi)Association of the parties and specialization. When individuals specialized in different areas work in a group, they may disagree amongst themselves because they have different goals, views and methodologies owing to their various backgrounds, training and experiences.

(vii)Behaviour regulation. Organizations have to have firm regulations for individual behaviour to ensure protection and safety. Individuals may perceive these regulations differently, which can cause conflict and negatively affect output.

(viii)Unresolved prior conflicts -which remain unsettled over time create anxiety and stress, which can further intensify existing conflicts. A manager's most important function is to avoid potential harmful results of conflict by regulating and directing it into areas beneficial for the organization.”

Conflict is more common between an employee and staff members senior to him or her, conflict between an employee and his or her same line employee, junior staff members.

Some of the common Causes of workplace conflict are :-

- Interpersonal styles or attitudes –Differences in age ethics or values may lead to conflicts
- Workplace behaviors regarded by some co-workers as irritating.
- Unmet needs in the workplace.
- Perceived inequities of resources.

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- Unclear expectations - Employee not sure what is expected, how to accomplish job or what results are required
- Lack of clear jurisdiction or boundaries - Lacking boundaries, conflicts may arise over funds, space, time, personnel or equipment
- Competing job duties or poor implementation of a job description—for example, placing a non-supervisory employee in an unofficial position of "supervising" a new employee or no segregation of duties between employees.
- Organisational change - Change in teams, diversity or the work environment, mismanagement of organizational change and transition.
- Ineffective or poor communication - Mis--understandings due to poor listening, faulty perceptions or incorrect assumptions comments taken out of context

### 3. Importance of Interpersonal Relationship at Workplace – <sup>3</sup>



“Interpersonal relationship refers to a strong association among individuals working together in the same organization. Employees working together ought to share a special bond for them to deliver their level best. It is essential for individuals to be honest with each other for a healthy interpersonal relationship and eventually positive ambience at the workplace.

An individual spends around eight to nine hours in his organization and it is practically not possible for him to work all alone. Human beings are not machines who can work at a stretch.

We need people to talk to and share our feelings. Imagine yourself working in an organization

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<sup>3</sup>Dr. C. Velmurugan Librarian, Velammal Engineering College, (International Journal of Business Management and Leadership. ISSN 2231-122X Volume 7, Number 1 (2016), pp. 1-5 © Research India Publications <http://www.ripublication.com> Interpersonal Relationship and Organizational Effectiveness

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with no friends around!!!!!!!We are social animals and we need friends around. An individual working in isolation is more prone to stress and anxiety. They hardly enjoy their work and attend office just for the sake of it. Individuals working alone find their job monotonous. It is essential to have trustworthy fellow workers around with whom one can share all his secrets without the fear of them getting leaked. We must have friends at the workplace who can give us honest feedback.

A single brain alone can't take all decisions alone. We need people to discuss various issues, evaluate pros and cons and reach to solutions benefiting not only the employees but also the organization on the whole. Employees can brainstorm together and reach to better ideas and strategies. Strategies must be discussed on an open platform where every individual has the liberty to express his/her views to promote open communication. Interaction on a regular basis is important for healthy relationship.

Interpersonal relationship has a direct effect on the organization culture. Misunderstandings and confusions lead to negativity at the workplace. Conflicts lead you nowhere and in turn spoil the work environment.

We need people around who can appreciate our hard work and motivate us from time to time. It is essential to have some trustworthy co workers at the workplace who not only appreciate us when we do some good work but also tell us our mistakes. A pat on the back goes a long way in extracting the best out of individuals. One needs to have people at the workplace who are more like mentors than mere colleagues.

It always pays to have individuals around who really care for us. We need colleagues to fall back on at the times of crisis. If you do not talk to anyone at the workplace, no one would come to your help when you actually need them.”

An individual needs to get along with fellow workers to complete assignments within the stipulated time frame. An individual working all alone is overburdened and never finishes tasks within deadlines. Support of fellow workers is important. You just can't do everything on your own. Roles and responsibilities must be delegated as per specialization, educational qualification and interests of employees. An individual needs help of his fellow workers to complete assignments on time and for better results.

#### 4. Effects of Conflicts – (The positive and the negative) <sup>4</sup>

A well-functioning work environment is one in which employees communicate with respectful, inoffensive language; show tolerance and acceptance of differences among each other; and demonstrate respect for all individuals in the organization regardless of position, status or tenure.

##### The negative effect



Unresolved issues of interpersonal tension and conflict can create emotional stress for employees, politicize the workplace and divert attention from the organization's mission. If employees/employers do not address conflicts, they will escalate into larger problems, discrimination and harassment complaints may increase, and the employer's reputation could be damaged. Other possible consequences of failing to manage workplace conflict can include:

- **Absenteeism.** Unscheduled absences higher stress levels among employees and a decrease in overall employee performance.
- **Unionization.** When employees perceive their employers as unfair, they are more inclined to seek outside resources such as a union to help protect them and to negotiate on their behalf on matters such as employment, compensation and benefits.
- **Litigation** - An employee who cannot achieve a resolution of a workplace conflict may seek outside legal help, which can cause an organization to mount a costly defence or agree to an expensive settlement. Lawsuits resolved in an employee's favour can result in significant financial penalties for the employer and can even produce criminal or civil sanctions.

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<sup>4</sup> As taken from Importance of Interpersonal Relationship at Workplace.  
[www.managementstudyguide.com/interpersonal-relationship-workplace-importance.htm](http://www.managementstudyguide.com/interpersonal-relationship-workplace-importance.htm) -  
January 2018

## The positive effect



1. It encourages healthy debate and argument:

What conflicts do is that they encourage debate and competition which is good for almost any environment. Also, it improves team culture and allows people to learn more. Here employees learn how to handle situations in a professional manner without having to hurl any insults. If you feel there is a particular idea that won't work, don't let it just pass by. Raise the topic and let people talk about it.

2. Allows your team to work towards their goals:

With more workplace conflicts, you can expect your team to accomplish its goals in no time. This does sound surprising to most of us but is very true. When team members are putting up with disagreements and arguments at your work place, they are automatically able to work towards the goals that should be reached.

3. Brings inside the working environment a sense of commitment:

Another benefit of conflicts is that it boosts a sense of commitment among team members and employees. However, you should make sure that everyone has the chance of express themselves and say what's on their mind. It doesn't matter if their opinions aren't always positive.

4. Clarifies all doubts and queries:

Conflicts are another interesting way to clarify all doubts. In an environment where ideas and opinions are not the same, the possibilities of conflicts are doubled. And it cannot be stopped. In fact, disagreements will occur no matter what. So it is best to allow a conflict to occur. This conflict situation will not only clarify all doubts but also improve work environment.

5. Removes all stress and anxiety:

One of the biggest advantages that come with workplace conflicts is that it takes away all your stress and anxiety. People who are involved in the argument tend to become more relaxed after they have acted cathartic. Therefore it is always advisable to let those emotions flow.

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Let people talk about their problems and what they feel like when they are around someone they don't like. This will definitely create a calm environment in the future.

### 6. Increases Productivity Immensely:

Workplace conflicts are the best way to increase productivity. Advantages of conflict resolution are like, people belonging to a particular work group will naturally learn how to become more productive. Instead of spending a lot of time recognising the fact that a problem does exist, it is best to take immediate action, dealing with conflict.

### 7. Allows change to happen faster:

One of the most surprising benefits that come with workplace conflicts is that it leaves more room for changes to occur. If you make the mistake of ignoring a problem like it doesn't exist, things are never going to change. They will always be the same. This will lead to stunted growth and you will witness very limited chances of improvement in the environment. When workers begin to show their differences, it is always a better idea to work through them.

### 8. New ideas are created in the process:

With conflicts, new ideas are always created. You can always come up with new techniques and ideas when there is a disagreement at your work place. This is because a problem always allows something new to happen. So don't always try resolving conflict in the workplace, the moment it occurs. Let it stay and grow for a while. You will see things change and create on their own dynamically over time.

### 9. An opportunity to see things in a newer way:

If everybody agreed with everything, would there be anything new to learn about? Of course not! But with the entry of conflicts, there are new reasons to check out different perspectives and learn about new techniques to handle new situations. Some of the best ideas of the world have always come out of ashes and the process of solving conflicts and problems in a creative manner will soon begin to reach a very satisfactory manner.

### 10. Improves relationships among people:

Working through disagreements and problems can often bring the best out of people. And this is exactly what conflicts do! Their respect and understanding for each other is improved significantly during this time. People also get to know each other better. So next time there is a problem, both of them will know how to solve it.

### 11. Leads to positive outcomes in general:

Better working relationships and improved skills are also some of the biggest advantages that come with conflicts here. It leads to better performance and innovation as well.

## 5. Types of conflict <sup>5</sup>

### Levels of Conflict

The five levels of conflict are intrapersonal (within an individual), interpersonal (between individuals), intragroup (within a group), intergroup (between groups), and intra-organizational (within organizations).

### **Intrapersonal Conflict**

Intrapersonal Conflict, which occurs within an individual, often involves some form of goal conflict or cognitive conflict. Goal conflict exists for individuals when their behaviour will result in outcomes that are mutually exclusive or have compatible elements (both positive and negative outcomes).

Approach-approach conflict is a situation in which a person has a choice between two or more alternatives with positive outcomes; for example, a person can choose between two jobs that appear to be equally attractive.

Avoidance-avoidance conflict is a situation in which a person must choose between two or more alternatives, and they all have negative outcomes. For example, employees may be threatened with punishment in the form of demotion unless they do something they dislike spend much time travelling on their job, for example.

Approach-avoidance conflict is a situation in which a person must decide whether to do something that had both positive and negative outcomes, for example, being offered a good job in a bad location.

### **Interpersonal Conflict**

Interpersonal conflict involves two or more individuals rather than one individual. Two managers competing for the same promotion, two executives manoeuvring for a larger share of corporate capital - examples of conflict between individuals are legion and quite familiar.

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<sup>5</sup> (i) Thomas and Kilman (1972) developed a model that identified five common strategies or styles for dealing with conflict. (ii) Adopted from Structured Training Module: Leadership, Team Building and Performance Enhancement by RTI Kolkata

### **Intragroup Conflict**

Intragroup Conflict A group experiencing intragroup conflict, may eventually resolve it, allowing the group to reach a consensus. Or the group may not resolve the conflict, and the group discussion may end in disagreement among the members. A study of a large number of groups engaged in business and governmental decision making, tried to identify some the conditions that lead to (1) the successful resolution of conflict (consensus or (2) the failure to resolve conflict (disagreement).

### **Inter-Group Conflict**

An organization is a collection of individuals and groups. Inter-Group Conflict can occur between or among teams, groups or departments as when teams vie with one another for resources or more recognition.

### **Intra-Organizational Conflict**

Four types of intra-organizational conflict exist: ( 1) vertical conflict (2) horizontal conflict (3) line-staff conflict and (4) role conflict. Although these types of conflict can overlap, especially with role conflict, each has distinctive characteristics.

**Vertical Conflict:** Vertical conflict refers to any conflict between levels in an organization; superior-subordinate conflict is one example. Vertical conflicts usually arise because superiors attempt to control subordinates.

**Horizontal Conflict:** Horizontal Conflict refers to conflict between employees or departments as the same hierarchical level in an organization.

**Line-Staff Conflict:** Most organizations have staff departments to assist the line departments.

The line-staff relationship frequently involves conflict. Staff managers and line managers typically have different personal characteristics. Staff employees tend to have a higher level of education, come from different backgrounds, and are younger than line employees. These different personal characteristics are frequently associated with different values and beliefs, and the surfacing of these different values tends to create conflict.

### **Life positions**

Another way of looking at relationships between people is through the concept of 'life position', sometimes referred to as the basic position or existential position. A person's life

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position at any given time expresses in some way just how that individual is relating to others in terms of thinking, feeling and behaving.

There are four basic life positions, shown below referred to as the OK corral.



### Examples of Life Positions

The idea of life positions can be demonstrating the following examples.

1. 'Hey, we did a good job there', says the boss.  
'Yes, things are really going well for us now', says the subordinate  
(I'm OK, you're OK)
2. 'Your work is not up to the standard I need in this department!' says the boss  
(I'm OK, you're not OK)
3. 'I wish I could keep on top of things the way you can', says the subordinate  
(I'm not OK, you're OK)
4. 'Well, I don't know what to do and you don't know what to do. What a mess!' says the boss.  
(I'm not OK, you're not OK)

## 6. Understanding conflict styles <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Understanding conflict styles - As narrated by Uma Sekaran Professor and published in Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited, New Delhi on Organisational Behaviour Second Edition

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Resolving Behavioural Conflict - Various researchers have identified five primary strategies for dealing with and reducing the impact of behavioural conflict. Even though different authors have given different terminology to describe these strategies, the basic content and approach of these strategies remain the same. These are:

A combination of these dimensions results in five conflict behaviours:

- ✓ Competing
- ✓ Accommodating
- ✓ Avoiding
- ✓ Collaborating
- ✓ Compromising

Each style is appropriate in particular contexts and learning how to be strategic when approaching conflict is ideal.

Out of habit, most of us rely on one or two approaches to handling conflict because of the way we were raised, our job responsibilities, past experiences, or even cultural norms. And, because we are more comfortable with some modes more than others, it is easy to overuse or underuse them and as a result create unintended consequences.

### 1. Accommodating Motto: "Whatever"



The way we handle conflict with a colleague at work may be very different than with a friend or spouse. Our response will be dictated by how important the issue is, and how much energy we put into it.

**“What may appear as the truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another person. But that need not worry the seeker. Where there is honest**

**effort, it will be realized that what appeared to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree” – Mahatma Gandhi**

The accommodating style is unassertive and cooperative. The goal of this stance is to yield. Typically a person using this conflict mode neglects his or her needs to satisfy the concerns of the other person. There is an element of self-sacrifice and this stance is concerned with preserving the relationship versus attaining goals. The mode is also known as an appeasement or smoothing style and is the opposite of competing.

Example

Catch phrase: "It's ok with me, whatever you want."

Pro : Can preserve harmonious relationships, can admit there is a better way

Con : Can lead to resentment by not getting your needs met, can diminish your influence, martyr

**2. Competing Motto: "It's not enough that I win - you must lose."**



The Competing style is a power-oriented mode that is high in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness. The goal of this stance is to win. In this mode the individual aims to pursue one's agenda at another's expense. This may mean standing up for one's needs, defending a cherished position and/or simply trying to win. The goal is deemed very important. This style is also referred to as a forcing or dominant style.

Example

Catch phrase: "My way or the highway."

Pro : Decisive, assertive, addresses personal needs

Con : Can damage relationships, shut others down

**3. Avoiding Motto: "I'll think about that tomorrow."**



The avoiding style is both unassertive and uncooperative. The goal of this stance is to delay. In this mode an individual does not immediately pursue his or her concerns or those of another. There is indifference to the outcome to the issue and the relationship and the person withdraws or postpones dealing with the conflict. This style can provide a needed respite from the situation or it can inflame things if the issue keeps being pushed aside. This mode is also known as flight.

Example

Catch phrase: "I will think about it tomorrow."

Pro : Doesn't sweat the small stuff, delays may be useful

Con : Avoidance builds up and then blows, important issues don't get dealt with, it can take more energy to avoid then deal at times

**4. Collaborate - Motto: "Let's find a solution that works for all of us."**



The collaborating style is both assertive and cooperative. The goal of this stance is to find a win-win situation. Typically this mode is concerned with finding creative solutions to issues that satisfy both individual's concerns. Learning, listening and attending to both the

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organizational and personal issues are addressed with this conflict style. It takes time and effort. This mode is also known as a problem solving or integrative style and it is the opposite of avoiding.

Example

Catch phrase: "Two heads are better than one."

Pro : Finds the best solution for everyone, which leads to high commitment, higher creativity in problem solving, team-building

Con : Takes time and energy; if applied to all conflicts it can be draining and unnecessary

5. Compromise **Motto: "You win some, you lose some."**



The compromising style lands one right in the middle of being assertive and cooperative. The goal of this stance is to find a quick middle ground. Parties find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution by having each person give up something and split the difference. This mode is also known as sharing.

Example

Catch phrase: "Let's make a deal."

Pro: Fixes things quickly, satisfies needs of both parties, finds temporary settlements to complex issues, has backup up strategy when competition or collaboration fails

Con: Can play games, bypass longer-term solutions, compromises found may be dissatisfying and may need to be revisited

### **A note on conflict styles:**

All the styles are relevant, useful and when used strategically, can help you navigate conflict with success. Most people have an instant reaction to the names of the conflict styles deeming

some of them better than others. People can be quick to pass judgment, believing that competing style as bad and collaboration as good.

Learn to keep your value judgments in check. Each style is useful and necessary. The more an individual can move with ease between the conflict styles and use them when the timing is right, the more adept one will become at navigating tension and conflict. If you think one is better than the other, you will be locked into certain styles that will not serve you or you will judge others who may employ those styles at times. Obviously if someone is competing in every situation, this will have negative impacts on that person and those around them. The trick is to understand when to use which style.

## **7. What is the best way to manage conflict**



**Workplace Conflict Resolution: The Definition** Workplace conflict resolution involves a range of interventions that are designed to resolve or reduce employee conflict, disputes, relationship difficulties and grievances.

Neil Crawford <sup>7</sup> observed that “Conflict is the most personal and the most expensive problem in the workplace. For this reason, managers and workers should be empowered to change the positive energy that arises from conflict into creativity and process improvement. A more harmonious work environment can lead to greater motivation, as well as staff satisfaction. When employees are able to deal usefully with conflicts that previously left them

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<sup>7</sup> Neil Crawford (#) Authors: Neil Crawford, BPIR.com Limited Researcher Assistance: Kevin McKenna, BPIR.com Limited (Welcome to Volume 4, Issue 8, of the BPIR.com Management Brief series

incapacitated, employers can expect improvements in productivity to be the end result. Conflict resolution procedures provide an opportunity for negotiation, and they offer a way of meeting the needs of opposing groups. Obviously, a key aim of conflict resolution is to defuse conflict before it leads to more serious problems, which in extreme cases can include litigation.”

*Although supervisors and managers have a major responsibility to ensure that workplace conflicts are resolved, several experts say that the first steps to settling differences should be taken by employees themselves.*

Resolution Methodologies Kelly Mollica,<sup>8</sup> a leadership development specialist with the Centre Group, and associate professor of business at Bethel College in the United States, writes that it is important that managers do not become involved in the resolution of all workplace conflicts. Managers seeking to deal with all such conflicts will be drawn away from more important work, create a climate of dependency and deprive employees of the opportunity of solving their own problems.

“Resolving workplace conflicts does not require top-down interventions”, Mollica says.” A manager who confronts one employee with another's complaints may be seen as taking sides. If that happens often, it can be interpreted as bias in favor of certain employees, thereby undermining the manager's authority. Moreover, employees should not be overly dependent on their managers. Organizations need people who can handle day-to-day issues on their own, think independently, analyze problems, come up with solutions and take steps to implement them. This includes both task-related and people-related problems.

## **Different Roles in interpersonal relationship<sup>9</sup>**

### **The role of individuals in interpersonal relationship**

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<sup>8</sup> Resolution Methodologies Kelly Mollica a leadership development specialist with the Centre Group, and associate professor of business at Bethel College in the United States

<sup>9</sup> (Source :- As taken from Importance of Interpersonal Relationship at Workplace. [www.managementstudyguide.com/interpersonal-relationship-workplace-importance.htm](http://www.managementstudyguide.com/interpersonal-relationship-workplace-importance.htm))

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



Conflicts play an important role in spoiling relationship among employees at the workplace and must be controlled at the initial stages to expect the best out of individuals.

For individuals, organization should always come first and all other personal interests must take a backseat. Fighting with fellow workers on petty issues is childish. Be professional. Do not take things to heart at the workplace as no one is working for himself or herself. You might not like someone else's style of working but remember ultimately the organization must benefit out of it.

An individual ought to respect his colleagues. Treat your fellow workers as members of your extended family. Ignoring minor issues helps in avoiding conflicts in interpersonal relationship. Try to understand your colleague's point of view as well.

Avoid lobbying at the workplace. An individual should keep his personal and professional life separate. Do not favour anyone just because you like the individual concerned or you know him personally. At work, every employee irrespective of his family background and relation with the management needs to be treated as one. Ignoring or bad mouthing someone just because you do not like him is simply not acceptable. Such things give rise to unnecessary stress and eventually employees fight and spoil relationships amongst themselves. You need people around who can give you suggestions and help you when required. You can't work alone.

Remember there is a difference between being aggressive and rude. A sense of competition is essential among employees but make sure you adopt healthy means to prove yourself. Jealousy, backbiting, criticism, leg pulling give rise to disagreements among individuals and spoil their relationships.

Think before you speak. Do not hurt anyone. There are several other ways to express your displeasure at work. Do not overreact at workplace. Stay calm and composed.

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Avoid being arrogant. Be polite to everyone. Greet people and do enquire about their well being. A simple smile goes a long way in managing conflicts and strengthening interpersonal relationships at workplace.

Evaluate issues carefully. Do not jump to conclusions. It is always better to sort out differences amicably rather than fighting and spoiling relationships. Voice your concerns in an open platform and try to reach to a conclusion mutually acceptable to all. Do not always see your own personal interests. Learn to control your emotions.

Communicating effectively reduces the chances of errors and eventually manages conflicts amongst employees at the workplace.

### **The role of employees in interpersonal relationship development**



Individuals need to get along well with their fellow workers for a positive ambience at workplace and also for healthy interpersonal relationship. It is essential for individuals to trust each other at the workplace for better relations. It is almost impossible for employees to work alone. Everyone needs people around to discuss things and reach to better solutions.

It is important for employees to stay positive at workplace. Do not always find faults in your fellow workers. Remember no one on this earth is perfect. No matter how bad the other individual is, one needs to maintain the decorum of the workplace. The best way is to ignore the one you do not like rather than indulging in conflicts and spoiling relationship. Conflicts turn friends into foes.

Be a little more adjusting. Things can't always be the way you like. Listen to others and understand their point of view as well. Don't see your personal interests always.

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Never ever under estimate your fellow workers. You never know when someone comes up with a brilliant idea. Treat everyone with respect. Ignoring people leads to frustration and eventually spoils relationships at workplace. Listen to all. Giving importance to few and sidelining others create problems among employees. Such things demotivate employees to give their best. They start treating office and work as a burden.

Never be partial to anyone. Employees performing well should be appreciated in front of others. Those who are not performing up to the expectations must be asked to pull up their socks next time irrespective of the relation they share with you or with the senior management. One of your team members can be your best friend but when it comes to results and targets, even he should not be spared. Work should never be mixed with personal relations.

It is unethical to spread rumours around at the workplace. Backbiting, leg pulling, criticism are the biggest reasons of displeasure among employees. Learn to be straightforward. If you feel your colleague is doing something wrong, tell him on his face rather than discussing with others. Making fun of others is unprofessional.

An individual should be trustworthy. If any of your colleagues has confided something in you, do not backstab him. Do not walk up to your boss and reveal all his secrets. Learn to keep things to yourself.

Avoid being arrogant. Don't show unnecessary attitude to people around. You might be heading a particular department but that does not mean you have the authority to be rude to people around. You are getting paid for your services and no one will tolerate your dominant and bossy nature. Leave your ego behind the moment you step inside your office.

Think before you speak. Make sure you do not hurt people. Never ever insult anyone intentionally.

Greet your colleagues even if he/she is not from your team. It hardly matters. A smile can actually make a difference.

**The role of managers in interpersonal relationship.**



A team manager is just like captain of the ship who has the responsibility of taking all his crew members along. For a team leader, his team is just his baby and he needs to take care of each and every team member. Never be partial to anyone. Avoid favouritism towards employees.

Interact with your team members on a regular basis. Make sure you speak to everyone, else individuals might feel ignored. Call your team for meetings at least twice in a week. Enquire about their well-being. Ensure if everything is going well with them. This way employee feels happy and shares a healthy relationship with superiors. Interaction is essential as it helps break ice among people.

Avoid comparisons among your team members. Do not shout on any of your employees in public. Call the individual concerned to your cabin and make him realize his /her mistakes without being rude. Speak to your team members directly rather than passing on messages through someone as information might not reach in its desired form creating misunderstandings and eventually spoiling relationships.

Remember a manager's role is not just to sit in closed cabins for the whole day. Sit with your team members and help them plan their day. Help them in their day to day work.

Managers must be accessible to their team members. Problems start when employees find it difficult to get in touch with their bosses. Do keep in touch with them through smses if not meet them regularly. Lend a sympathetic ear to their problems. Your team members must be able to fall back on you at times of crisis.

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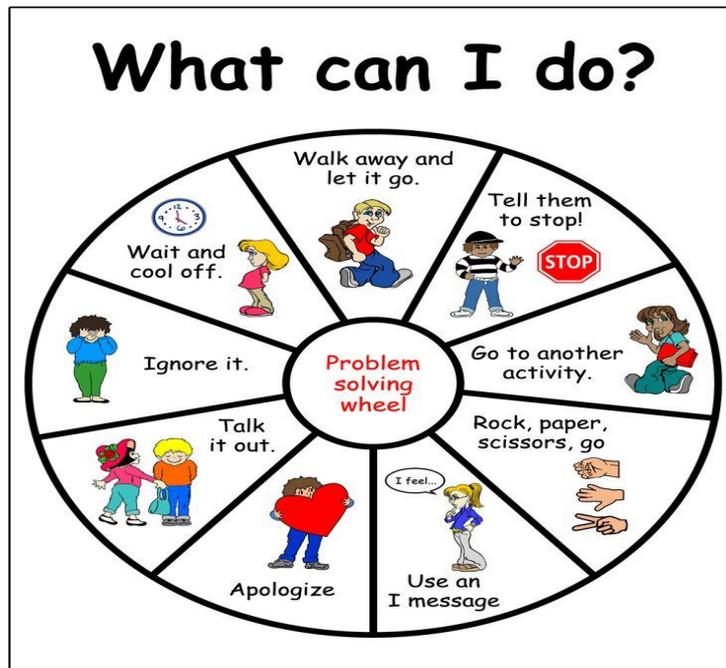
Intervene immediately in case of conflicts among your subordinates. Your team members might fight over petty issues but it is your responsibility to guide them and reduce the chances of a major conflict. Do not ignore even the minor issues. One problem left unattended can become a major concern later.

Sit with individuals, counsel them and motivate them to discuss issues and reach to something which would benefit not only the employees but also the organization on the whole.

Ask your team members to have their lunch together. You can also join them once in a while. Boss's presence does make a difference. Take them out for picnics and small get together. Such informal meetings not only bring employees closer to each other but also to their superiors. Motivate them to celebrate important festivals at workplace. Delegate responsibilities and ask them to take charge individually. This way they start believing in you and the organization and eventually share a healthy relationship with all.

Employees performing well must be appreciated and suitably rewarded for them to deliver results every time. Do not be harsh to others who did not perform well this time. Being rude to them will not solve any of your problems; rather individuals would go against you.





### Ways to deal with conflicts

When it occurs, conflict must be resolved equitably and quickly. It is also important, though, to try to forestall it—that is, to create an environment in which corrosive conflict, as opposed to constructive conflict, is less likely to occur in the first place. The foundation of such a culture is employee relations, the process of building strong relationships between managers and employees based on fairness, trust and mutual respect. It takes time, effort and money to create such a work environment, but it is beneficial. A good employee relations climate supports motivation, loyalty and high performance among employees, and it encourages them to try to achieve the best results possible for their organization.

Creating a strong employee relations strategy as under:-

- Interactive communication. Communication that is clear and two-way can help build trust between employees and their managers
- Trust. The absence of trust among employees and managers can compromise communication in either or both directions. Trust Is the Foundation of the organisation.
- Ethics. If employees do not perceive their manager as having good business ethics, they will indirectly question the manager's motives, which may cause stress and reduce performance.

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- Fairness. All employees should be treated in a consistent manner under the same circumstances. Superior performance, however, should still be recognized and rewarded.
- Empathy. Managers need to be alert and sensitive to their employees' feelings, and showing empathy and awareness is central to establishing a trusting relationship with employees.
- Perceptions and beliefs. Perceptions can be essential in employee relations. Employees respond positively when they believe the organization's policies and practices are fair and its communication is truthful. Frequent, honest communication helps ensure that employees' beliefs and perceptions are consistent with reality in the workplace.
- Clear expectations. Employees need to know what to expect from their managers. No one likes to be surprised with new or conflicting requirements, which can cause stress and distract employees from the job at hand.
- Conflict resolution. Although conflicts arise in every organization, the methods to handle them vary. Employers must deal with issues head-on and resolve disputes fairly and quickly.

### A Framework to Minimize Conflict

There is no single strategy to create a positive workplace climate. A number of tools are used in various combinations to stimulate employee engagement and to minimize conflict. There are, however, several essential tools HR professionals can use to create a positive workplace climate.

The following are types of conflict resolution techniques available to organizations:

**Facilitation** :-A neutral employee in the organization—often an employee relations manager—acts as a facilitator, not to judge the merits of the dispute or to render a final decision, but to help both sides decide the best way to settle the dispute

**Mediation**:- A mediator is a neutral third party who helps the conflicting parties explore innovative solutions to their dispute. Mediators can be internal employees trained in conflict management and mediation, or they can be trained external professionals who have no perceived conflict of interest with the employer. The willingness to resolve a dispute through mediation should be voluntary

**Arbitration** :-This is typically the most formal, costly and time-consuming method of resolving disputes. Witnesses may be presented and cross-examined, and an arbitrator issues a binding decision.

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Which of the following most accurately describes the approach your organisation takes to address internal conflict?

Resigned (e.g. "that's the way it is, its up to the powers that be")

Collaborative (e.g. joint working / problem solving)

Accommodating (e.g. agreement with some element of sacrifice)

Avoidance (e.g. walking away)

Aggressive (e.g. shouting or threatening)

Compromising (e.g. demonstrating elements of give and take)

Ignoring (e.g. paying lipservice)

**(Source :- As taken from Importance of Interpersonal Relationship at Workplace. [www.managementstudyguide.com/interpersonal-relationship-workplace-importance.htm](http://www.managementstudyguide.com/interpersonal-relationship-workplace-importance.htm) - January 2018)**

## II. Teaching and Learning Objectives

Employees working together ought to share a special bond for them to deliver their level best. It is essential for individuals to be honest with each other for a healthy interpersonal relationship and eventually positive ambience at the workplace.

The purpose of this case study is to focus on the hidden facts of communication such as human feelings, egos and emotions at the workplace resulting into conflicts. A learning on interpersonal relationship and organizational effectiveness levels enhances understanding the concern of the workers, which means retaining, developing, motivating, communicating to contribute their best to the organization.

Through this case study which can be used in the training session an attempt has been made to provide an overview about how employees can manage and resolve workplace conflict by:-

- Creating an awareness in the participants with regard to the different aspects of interpersonal relations. To emphasize the need for independent thinking, (i.e. avoid being instigated by others) and also on the active listening skills that can minimize conflicts
- Discussing the need for interpersonal relationship in workplace, the factors affecting interpersonal relationship in workplace and how interpersonal relationship in workplace can be improved and sharpen the requisite skills and orient attitudes of participants by improving conflict management skills.

By the end of this training course, the participants will have:

- Defined confrontation and their role in managing conflict in the workplace to ensure they maximise individual and team performance.
- Identified their preferred style/s in influencing others and managing conflict and the additional strategies that they need to use to successfully resolve the conflict situation
- Demonstrated their skills in resolving conflict and confrontation
- Have identified a plan to apply and enhance their communication skills in the workplace to address existing conflicts

### 1. Teaching Plan

Time Plan– two sessions -75 minutes each session

60 minutes – theoretical concepts covering Interpersonal Relationships and Conflict Management

20 minutes for reading of the case,

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30 minutes for discussion on the situation brought out,

25 Addressing the issues (Recommendations and solutions)-

15 minutes for summarization

### 2 General Guidelines

1. Ensure that each participant reads the case study before initiating discussion on the case-let
2. Initiate discussion on the case-let by summarizing the situation and leaving it open to the participants to share their thoughts
3. Encourage the participants to discuss freely. **There is no right or wrong answer. Always be open to unplanned outcomes.**
4. Encourage the participants to relate to similar events that they have encountered and the manner in which they had reacted.
5. Also, gently encourage the participants **to look at their own failures and not just find fault** with others. Encourage them to find solutions that they can implement (not on what others should do)
6. There might be some participants who tend to dominate the discussion. There might be others who do not participate. Gently nudge the quiet ones to talk, so that the views of most of the participants could be shared in the class
7. If the discussion deviates too far from the planned objective, gently bring it back to the topic by asking some leading questions
8. Note down the key outcomes of the discussion

The class may be divided into small groups. Give the case study. After they read the case study, the groups may be requested to go through the issues pointed out and identify possible solutions. After the groups have identified solutions, the issues may be discussed in the class

### 3 Instructors Material – (Refer Relevant Reading material) EXHIBTS

Discussions may be guided around the following issues

Exhibit 1	Why conflicts arises?
Exhibit 2	Conditions leading to conflict situations in organizations?
Exhibit 3	Why Interpersonal Relationship at Workplace is important?
Exhibit 4	Effects of conflicts
Exhibit 5	Levels of Conflict
Exhibit 6	Different types of conflict handling behaviour
Exhibit 7	Ways to deal with conflict situations

**EXHIBIT - 1** - Ask participants: "What is a conflict?" "Why does it arise?"

Encourage participants to share their experiences of different types of conflict in their organizations. Some of these may have been resolved, while others would have remained unresolved. What effects had these conflicts been on the working of the organization? After a brief discussion on these issues, observe that, as interdependence increases, conflicts are bound to increase. There are several reasons for conflicts to arise. Some of these may be difficult to identify.

**Refer to Relevant Reading material before proceeding with the discussions.** Show and point out that disagreement among people is the underlying basis of conflict. People disagree because they see things differently, want different things, have thinking styles which encourage them to disagree, or are predisposed to disagree. Conflict is a 'clash of interests, values, actions, views or directions.

People may experience any of the following at work

- ✓ A severe problem with a colleague
- ✓ Feeling undermined
- ✓ Being unable to carry out your job because of another person
- ✓ Being unable/unwilling to talk to colleagues

**EXHIBIT 2- Refer to Relevant Reading material before proceeding with the discussions**

Discuss the main conditions which influence an organization towards conflict situations. Observe that very often these situations cannot be easily changed.

Conflict situations arise because of fear, force, fair or funds. Fear is an imaginary concern for future. Force of any kind initiates and concludes conflicts. Fair is the sense of fairness, which determines the moral values of an individual. Interpersonal conflicts arise because of differences in personality, perceptions, status and ideological and philosophical outlooks. Other causes of conflict can be communication gaps; personality differences; substandard performance; disputes over approaches, responsibility and authority; lack of cooperation; or competition for limited resources.

Ask the participants what could be the Common Causes of Conflict.

People differ, so they:

- ✓ see things differently
- ✓ want different things
- ✓ have different thinking styles, which prompts them to disagree
- ✓ are predisposed to disagree
- ✓ have different personalities
- ✓ have different status
- ✓ have ideological and philosophical differences
- ✓ have different goals
- ✓ have different approaches
- ✓ are influenced by fear, force, fairness or funds

**Exhibit 3 – Refer to Relevant Reading material before proceeding with the discussions**

Discuss with the participants why Interpersonal Relationship at Workplace is important ?

Ask the participants, in a difficult situation with someone, what people may tend to do?

- ✓ Obtain support from another person within the organisation to resolve the problem ?
- ✓ Remain silent ?
- ✓ Seek revenge / retaliation ?
- ✓ Talk to the person in question ?
- ✓ Talk to the HR department ?

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- ✓ Raise a grievance ?
- ✓ Talk to a lawyer / in house legal team ?
- ✓ Take sickness leave ?
- ✓ Consider taking sickness leave ?
- ✓ Resolve the problem with the person in question directly ?

Interpersonal relationship refers to a strong association among individuals working together in the same organization. Employees working together ought to share a special bond for them to deliver their level best. It is essential for individuals to be honest with each other for a healthy interpersonal relationship and eventually positive ambience at the workplace. Thus

- ✓ There is a need for interpersonal relationship at workplace
- ✓ Employees need to be cordial to each other
- ✓ Developing Interpersonal relationship at workplace is very important

### **Exhibit 4 – Refer to Relevant Reading material before proceeding with the discussions**

Discuss the effects of conflicts on an organization - The negative and positive effects. They may help diffuse more serious conflicts, stimulate a search for new facts or resolution, increase group cohesion and performance, and demonstrate the power or ability of the conflicting parties. Conflicts could hinder smooth working or the decision making process, or create competing coalitions or reduce productivity.

#### **Positive effects:**

- ✓ Diffuses more serious conflicts
- ✓ Stimulates a search for new facts or resolutions
- ✓ Increases group cohesion and performance
- ✓ Demonstrates measure of power or ability

#### **Negative effects:**

- ✓ Hinders smooth working
- ✓ Hampers the decision making process
- ✓ Causes the formation of competing coalitions
- ✓ Reduces productivity

**Exhibit 5 – Levels of Conflict -Refer to Relevant Reading material before proceeding with the discussions and Exhibit and discuss Levels of Conflict-The five levels of conflict**

- ✓ Intrapersonal (within an individual),

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- ✓ Interpersonal (between individuals),
- ✓ Intragroup (within a group),
- ✓ Intergroup (between groups), and
- ✓ Intraorganizational (within organizations).

Also explain with examples the Life Positions - by demonstrating the following examples.

- ✓ 1. 'Hey, we did a good job there', says the boss.  
Yes, things are really going well for us now', says the subordinate  
(I'm OK, you're OK)
- ✓ 2. 'Your work is not up to the standard I need in this department!' says the boss  
(I'm OK, you're not OK)
- ✓ 3. 'I wish I could keep on top of things the way you can', says the subordinate  
(I'm not OK, you're OK)
- ✓ 4. 'Well, I don't know what to do and you don't know what to do. What a mess!' says  
the boss.  
(I'm not OK, you're not OK)

### **Exhibit 6 – Refer to Relevant Reading material before proceeding with the discussions**

**and** Exhibit and **discuss** five different types of conflict handling behaviour: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding and accommodating

- ✓ Competing - "It's not enough that I win - you must lose."
- ✓ Accommodating - "It's ok with me, whatever you want."
- ✓ Avoiding - "I'll think about that tomorrow."
- ✓ Collaborating - "Let's find a solution that works for all of us."
- ✓ Compromising - "You win some, you lose some."

**Exhibit 7 – Managing conflict - Refer to Relevant Reading material before proceeding with the discussions** Exhibit and discuss - ways of dealing Conflicts through understanding interpersonal relationship

- ✓ Understanding the role of employees in interpersonal relationship
- ✓ Understanding the role of individuals in interpersonal relationship
- ✓ Understanding relationship development the role of Managers in interpersonal relationship

### **Managing conflict**

- ✓ Analyse the situation and identify the likely source of the conflict situation,
- ✓ Calibrate the productiveness of the situation, and
- ✓ Neutralize the unproductive conflict situation

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- ✓ Allow time for cooling down.
- ✓ State the problem to the other person.
- ✓ Leave the person for some time.
- ✓ Collaborative (e.g. joint working / problem solving)
- ✓ Accommodating (e.g. agreement with some element of sacrifice)
- ✓ Avoidance (e.g. walking away)
- ✓ Aggressive (e.g. shouting or threatening)
- ✓ Compromising (e.g. demonstrating elements of give and take)
- ✓ Ignoring (e.g. paying lipservice)
- ✓ Resigned (e.g. "that's the way it is, its up to the powers that be")

## What happened – Case Story

The scenarios narrated here are near to real time situations faced in our day to day working in any organisation let it be a Government or the Private Sector. The basis for preparation of the scenarios was through analysis of the questionnaire issued to officials and interactions with the participants during training sessions.

The cases narrated are between an employee and staff members senior to him or her, conflict between an employee and his or her same line employee and junior staff members. The facilitator may discuss many more such type of instances during the training sessions. These caselets are only illustrative but not exhaustive.

### **SITUATION – 1**

Rahul works as an Assistant Audit Officer and loves his job very much. He is hardworking and always on time at work. His co-worker Jimmy also an Assistant Audit Officer often comes late to work and tries to find loopholes, so he can do the least amount of work. Both are working in the same section and report to the same Senior Audit Officer. The in-charge Senior Audit Officer was recently transferred and additional charge was with another Senior Audit Officer.

As per General Office Procedures if an employee comes late to work, he has to meet his Supervisory Officer before starting work. One day Jimmy came in 45 minutes late to work.

Out of concern, Rahul reminded Jimmy about General Office Procedures, stressing he should meet his Supervisory Officer. Jimmy got angry and told Rahul that their Supervisor will never know he was late and that Rahul should not interfere in his matters. Jimmy continues to come late for the next few days. Jimmy's late coming was effecting the other employees in the section. Upset with Jimmy's behavior, Rahul decides not to talk to him. Tensions were growing between the two, leading to mental disturbance as well work disruptions.

### **Analysis**

Let's analyze this situation. Obviously, Jimmy's behavior at work is unacceptable, but what about Rahul's? Look at the following statements that summarize each of Rahul's actions and respond to them.

1. What type of conflict is it?
2. Rahul did not confront Jimmy about using loopholes to get out of work.
3. Rahul watched Jimmy be late often before he finally reminded him of the tardy policy at work.

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4. Rahul did eventually speak to Jimmy about the tardy policy/procedures.
5. Rahul then watched Jimmy come in late for several days in a row, after this reminder. He said nothing else to Jimmy or a supervisor.
6. Rahul refuses to speak to Jimmy anymore.
7. Do you think Rahul did the right thing? For each action, state whether you agree with his decision or not. If you don't, what would you have done differently? What do you think would be the results? Respond to these questions and how would you resolve it?

### **SITUATION – 2**

Shri L, M and D are three Senior Auditors with 20 years of service and X is an Auditor with six years of service posted in the same section. Although they all usually work at the same job level, X on passing SAS exam has been promoted and asked to assume the duties as AAO until another AAO is posted in the same section. X is an obedient, hard-working and knew the work inside and out, having been worked as Auditor for 6 years in the same wing and with the same staff/colleagues. X has three Sr.Adrs, one DEO and one MTS under his control. He has to report to his SAO. L, M and D are regarded as reliable employees. However Mr. D seems to work on his own priorities. X being in charge of the section had instructed the staff to carry out certain works. D insists on finishing his work first rather than complying to X directions on urgent work. The two are regularly at odds, since D is not willing to take direction from X, the young boss has to get the work done by his staff who are much senior in age than him.

#### **Situation of Mr. X**

My excitement carried me through my first few months on the job. I was exceedingly polite, cheerful, and helpful towards the much older team I was sent in to manage. My job was progressing wonderfully until one official, at least 25 years my senior, interrupted me mid-sentence and asked with frank incredulity, “How old are you?”

Although I expected to hear that question at some point, it nevertheless stopped me dead. I didn't anticipate how much it would hurt, or how personally I would take it.

Over the next few weeks, the age references kept coming. I heard everything from “You look like my grandson” to “Are you even old enough to remember 9/11?”

It was disheartening to see that my age was undermining my reputation and identity in the workplace, but I was determined not to let it dictate my performance. Throughout this journey

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of managing a group of people who were considerably older than I was, I discovered some valuable insights.

### **Analysis**

1. Was there a conflict? If it were a conflict, what led to this conflict?
2. Why do you think the Mr. D the Senior Auditor condescending towards X?
3. What are the sources of conflict?
4. Do you need to be prepared to change your perspective?
5. Is this conflict really worth it?
6. Does this Conflict Have a Personal Dimension?
7. What challenges are faced in choosing the best alternatives for a course of any action?  
Why is it necessary to study Employee Behaviour?

## **SITUATION 3**

Sushama and Raju work in GST wing. Sushama is a part of GST hqrs section and deals with tour programme and vetting of Local Audit Reports. Raju's work is dependent on Sushama's because his work is submission of Draft Audit Paragraphs for the Audit Reports, which puts him in a different section. The work of Raju is time bound and sensitive.

Sushama's performance is good, but most of the time she is unable to keep up with the timelines. This delay in her deliverables makes Raju work under pressure to finish his tasks on time. Raju's reputation would be at stake for not delivering on time. Due to this interdependence at the workplace, Raju gets upset with Sushama when he doesn't receive the material for preparation of DAPs on time. Raju is apprehensive to report to higher officer as Sushama is in good books of the higher officer and is also very influential. Tension has flared up between the two due to unfair workloads, unjust recognition, favouritism, to different views on how a task should be completed.

The conflict shows a failure in one's accountability towards another.

## Analysis

Now let's analyze this scenario. Raju and Sushama must work together, but how should he deal with Sushama's faults? Write down your response to the following questions and how would you resolve it?

1. Should Raju approach Sushama directly before going to the higher level Officer? Why or why not?
2. How has a lack of communication made this situation worse?
3. How can Raju better use communication to resolve this issue? What should he say or not say?
4. At what point should Raju resort to going to higher level officer?

## **SITUATION 4**

Manoj having put in twenty years of service was being considered for promotion as Supervisor by Administration Wing and subsequent posting in Section A. Manoj was a very soft spoken and mild person. He had worked for the organisation for twenty years. Before being promoted he was called by DAG(Admn) and asked "Manoj, what do you think about being made supervisor of Section A when Shekhar retires next month? What do you think being a supervisor is all about?" Manoj knew he was being considered for the promotion and had given this question some prior thought. He replied "Well Sir, I have several years of experience in the department so I can handle the technical side of the section. What, I would concentrate on as supervisor would be planning, organizing and controlling the activities of the section to improve the performance of the department" DAG(Admn) replied, "That is a good answer, but where would people fit into the picture?" Manoj replied, "Well I have dealt with people all my life. I can handle that aspect of the job with ease." The DAG(Admn) replied, "I agree you have dealt with people all your life, but do you really think you understand their behaviour and does it make any difference in the way you would supervise the section?" Manoj had a puzzled look on his face and answered, "I really hadn't given that much thought. I assumed I knew all about people and didn't think it had anything to do with how I would run the section."

Situation – The Friendly supervisor

With several years of experience in the department, Manoj was considered the fastest and most accurate and sincere who had ever worked for the Boss. Manoj has the best attendance record

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in the department and Boss considered him his most dependable employee. He was very well liked by staff and they considered him to be a good personal friend. As a supervisor Manoj does a good job handing out work assignments, but he does little else to supervise his staff.

Manoj got a real problem with his staff after taking the charge as a Supervisor. Apart from hrs duty he was asked to lead field party consisting of three officials who were new recruits to conduct field audit of a very important XXX department. The new recruit come on force as young, inexperienced and we send them out to field audit. They seem to like the importance as Auditors they get, the contact they develop with the audited entities and the public. To certain extent, their action is involved in collection of data and examination of records and assist the supervisory officer in conduct of audit. To form the opinion, the auditor gathers appropriate and sufficient evidence.

The problem occurs when these young force get to duty headquarters station. These young force hate to do the paper work and because of dislike, the job is frequently put off or done inadequately. This lack of attention gets to hurt when they have to complete the assignment by submitting the clear factual reports which must be highly detailed and unambiguous. As soon as one part of a report is shown to be inadequate or incorrect the rest of the report is suspected. Poor reporting probably causes to lose more cases of sustainable observations than any other factor.

Manoj does not like to criticize the staff and does not enforce office rules. No matter what the auditors do Manoj would not take any action. He makes no attempt to check the work of the auditors for compliance with quality standards or to see that work is complete on time. In fact, he spends most of his time doing the auditors job to complete the assignment. The human resource department have been receiving an increasing number of complaints from various staff of different departments about the poor quality of work and about the slow turnaround time of the work. A number of the complaints target towards Manoj's poor supervisory skills, complaints were also received about the auditors under Manoj taking excessively long coffee breaks and spending time on personal phone calls. The Human resource department convey the complaints to Manoj's Boss who has been asked to inquire and rectify the problem. When Boss talked to the auditors, they told him that Manoj frequently invites them to his house for dinner or to play bridge. It appears to boss that the auditors all like Manoj as a friend, but they are becoming concerned about his lack of supervisory skills.

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Boss mentions to Manoj that he should focus his effort on improving the work of the auditors. He replied, “These men are my friends and I don’t feel right cracking down on them”. Manoj is aware that these young Auditors don’t budge inspite of repeated instructions. They have the tendency to do what they want and don’t want to be instructed.

### **Analysis**

1. What is the problem in the present case?
2. Can an individual effectively manage a group and be a close personal friend with group members?
3. What should the Boss do to ensure that the work of the Auditors will improve?
4. Should Bobby have been promoted to office supervisor?
5. If you were Manoj what would you do? Would you continue the supervisor’s job? Would you no longer be friends with the Auditors?
6. Do you need to be prepared to change your perspective?
7. What is interpersonal relationship?
8. Why is interpersonal relationships important in workplace?
9. What Are the Dangers of Being Too Friendly Supervisor to Employees?

### **SITUATION – 5**

Marilyn, has been with the organisation for twenty-five years. Marilyn has never married and expects to stay on as supervisory officer until she retires. All was going well until a new member, Thomas joined the section under Marilyn. Marilyn had a great team, but this one employee in particular just had a bad attitude. Thomas, age 24, has been on the job for the last one year. This is his first appointment after completing his graduation. He has long hair and is very bright, intelligent well equipped with current affairs , IT savy, aggressive, opportunist and not participative. This was an employee Marilyn inherited when she became Supervisor. This employee was always negative, did not act as part of a team, and was arrogant in everyway. Marilyn talked to Thomas to try and inspire and encourage (including documenting this verbal warning), but after a short period of time, the employee fell back into their usual ways,

Thomas was too confident and arrogant to accept the way people do things and embrace it. Only a few weeks after Marilyn spoke to him, a loud disagreement between Thomas and another colleague occurred on the main floor. It was loud enough to have people stop in their corridor wondering what was happening.

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Immediately after this incident, Marilyn talked to Thomas and another colleague of Thomas about how conflict in the workplace is unacceptable, gave a verbal warning to one of the employees, and a written warning to Thomas stating that if this behavior continues, suspension and/or termination would be the next step taken. These warnings were done separately as not to embarrass the employee.

It was a bit of a shock to Thomas that a written warning was issued, however, Marilyn made it perfectly known that this was not the first time they met because of his team-affecting behavior. Marilyn also was not quite as caring as she was initially. She took out the notes from the previous meeting and went over what was discussed, including that a written warning would be given if the behavior continued. With this documentation, the employee had no choice but to accept the written warning.

However, the bad behaviour of Thomas continued. Almost immediately, Thomas and Marilyn also started to have differences, and now it was escalating to the point where something had to give. The differences were open and in public. Marilyn called Thomas in her office and said, "You young long-haired guys are all alike. You think the world owes you a living. What do you want? I am at my wits end trying to find out what makes you tick. I don't have any real quarrel with your performance, but you sure rub me wrong. What do you have to say for yourself?"

### **Analysis**

1. Was it a conflict? If it were a conflict, what led to this conflict?
2. How would you answer Marilyn's question if you were Thomas? How can you explain the personality clash in this incident?
3. What is going on here in terms of Marilyn's perception of Thomas? What are some of Marilyn's motives? Thomas's motives?
4. Was it due to clash of egos or emotions or feelings or lack of communication?
5. How is this Conflict Affecting the Office ?
6. What can you do to navigate the waters with these talented yet difficult employees?

### **SITUATION - 6**

Conflict can manifest itself in a variety of forms and to varying degrees, but the causes often include differences between expectations, goals, values and personality styles. When conflict

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escalates to the point where a supervisor needs to get involved, the situation has often gotten to a critical stage. Within an organization, it is imperative that employees, and especially management, be as proactive and resolute in identifying and resolving these types of issues. If this does not happen, the results can be poor work quality, communication problems, resignations and even lawsuits.

When you have an employee who is disruptive in any way, they need to be dealt with before it becomes habit forming. Don't wait until the bad apple has spoiled the lot. Talk to them right away. State that their disruptive behavior is disrupting harmony in your department. If this did not work, the employee will most likely disrupt the harmony again, however, this time you can give a written warning with more of a stern approach. Warnings of possible suspension or termination are usually quite effective

### Scene 1

A fellow employee, Phil, has not been contributing equally to complete the normal weekly work at hand. Phil claims he is contributing, but that he is swamped with other work and the emotional aftermath of a bitter divorce. Some fellow workers are upset that he has been so lax and feel that they should take their complaints about Phil to the supervisor. You are good friends with Phil and know he is not lazy but feel that he may be overdramatizing his problems a bit. You brought up the topic with Phil over coffee, but he was defensive and maintained his innocence he even accused you of not sympathizing with him.

### Questions

1. Define the problem, identify the individual(s) causing the problem.
2. What alternatives are there to the course of action your fellow employees want to take (filing a complaint with the supervisor)?
3. How might your suggestions improve the situation without involving the administration or hurting Phil's professional reputation?

### Scene 2

A fellow worker, Alice, has been reporting to the boss the progress of your group in such a way that it appears that she is the central force and the ideal person in the group. This is not true since her contributions have been about equal to the others. The other group members don't know she has been advancing her position in the organization at the expense of others (and maybe even making others look unproductive). You know what Alice is doing. Alice and you

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are in the same rank, and you like her and work well with her. You feel, however, that her easy and regular access to the boss and inaccurate reporting of the group's progress will ultimately undermine the others in the group.

1. Define the problem, identify the individual(s) causing the problem.
2. How might your suggestions improve the situation without involving the administration or hurting Alice's professional reputation?
3. Considering your relationship with Alice, what are your options, short of saying nothing?
4. Develop several solutions that will allow the team to continue to work well together ?

### Scene 3

Recently, you and three or four other members of your group have been increasingly aware of personal disagreements and unspoken resentments among the people with whom you work. There is no official procedure to handle such problems, and you realize that, not only is productivity (personal and collective) suffering, but that everyone appears to be unhappy in general with the declining working conditions these problems have created.

### Analysis :-

1. You feel the same way and would you like to do something to improve the situation. Considering the fact that these three or four other individuals are also aware of the problem, what can you do?

### SITUATION – 7 - "I Am The Boss' & 'So What?'"

"Never look who is right and wrong. Always look what is right and wrong." – Prof.M.S.Rao, Corporate Trainer in Leadership Development. <http://profmsr.blogspot.in/2009/11/case-study-from-profmsrao-i-am-boss-so.html>

When you look at individuals there will be involvement of egos and emotions. In contrast, when you look at the issues there will be no individual preferences and prejudices. Better judgment prevails.

Susan was working in a GOI organisation as a Human Resource (HR) Manager. Her role was to ensure smooth functioning of office administration. She was a smart worker and built reputation for herself from superiors for the last five years. The top management also respected

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and consulted her on crucial decisions. She did not talk to anyone unnecessarily at the work place and she meant business. She was 32 years old. She was bold and beautiful. She was polite and well mannered. She was a woman with strong character. But she was stubborn by nature. However, it was rumoured within the organization that she was divorced by her husband because of arrogance and stubbornness.

Ron joined the same wing of Susan who was hard working and was yet to prove his abilities and establish his credentials. Before joining this organization, he had 10 years of industry experience in a different organisation and he was 39 years old. He was a hard worker and rose from ranks. He learnt bitter lessons in his life and knew the value of life. But he was adamant by nature. Both Ron and Susan respected each other and had been working together.

Susan was introvert, by nature, and rarely mingled with other employees. At the same time, she never kept ill will against anybody. She was a principled woman with worldly experience. She was combination of education, intellect and beauty with grace which was a rare combination for any woman. She was good at heart and helpful. Seeing the close and cordial relations between Susan and Ron, a few people working in the office felt jealousy. Since Susan rarely socialized with others and her cordial relations with Ron upset a few of their colleagues especially two female colleagues - Ann and Beth.

Ron also never socialized with anyone as he believed in his office work although he was an extrovert by nature. Ron initially moved closely with a colleague by name John. But John started speaking ill of Susan to Ron which Ron did not appreciate. John said that Susan was a divorcee and her husband divorced because of her arrogance. He also said that Susan was a woman of weak character. Gradually Ron distanced himself away from John who tried to settle his scores with Susan as they worked together in the past on a project. Ron was basically an independent thinker and never paid attention to such negative comments and he followed his heart rather than looking things from the mind of others. Ron did not appreciate negative things being talked by John against Susan whom he respected from the core of his heart.

Ron's getting with Susan cordially upset a few and especially two female colleagues Ann and Beth. They tried to create rift between them by talking ill of Susan with Ron. Ron never liked to entertain negative people and was totally against office politics. Since their strategy failed to work, they attempted to poison the mind of Susan who initially resisted the same. Gradually Susan stopped talking to Ron and the latter did not know the reasons but Ron sensed some problem. However, he interacted with Susan in the same way to keep the things going on

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smoothly. Since Susan began neglecting Ron, he also began concentrating on work and avoided Susan totally except whenever there was need for official interaction and communication.

In fact, Susan touched the subconscious mind of Ron. As a result, Ron began thinking about Susan often and deeply. Ron was not able to concentrate on his work properly. At heart, Ron was thankful to Susan as she helped him to groove within the system. He developed admiration towards her but never revealed to others at the workplace even to Susan. In brief, Susan touched the heart of Ron.

One day, Susan told Ron to collect questionnaire from the participants on the topic Art of Conflict Management . Ron got up from his cubicle and asked her whether to hand over the same to DAG X. She said, “Yes”. Ron was energetic by nature; he rushed immediately to get the questionnaire and collected from the candidates. Subsequently, Ron rushed to the DAG X and handed over the questionnaire and had conversation with him for some time and came out from the room.

Susan who was waiting outside the DAG X.’s cabin took Ron to nearby room with anger and shouted at him. Both had heated conversation for some time which is mentioned below:

Susan questioned Ron, “Who told you to hand over the questionnaire to DAG X.?”

Ron replied, “When I asked you, you told me to hand over to DAG X.. Therefore, I handed over to him.”

Susan shouted, “You rushed inside the room. But I told you to hand over to Y.”

Ron said, “You told me to hand over to DAG X. Therefore, I handed over to DAG X.” And he added, “Why do you make it a big issue?”

Susan shouted, “You did not listen properly and your behavior is not good”.

Ron did not want to hurt her and asked, “Ok! Tell me, in which way my behavior is bad? I will change my behavior.” He added further, “You keep something else in your mind and talk something else outside. I don’t like this. I am straightforward. I respect you a lot from the core of my heart. But every time, you listen to negative people and rush to wrong conclusions about me.”

Susan said, “Stop talking all that! Next time don’t repeat like this.”

Ron pacified, “Ok! I will not do like this. But it all happened due to your miscommunication and let us close the issue here itself.”

Ron finally said, “I am sorry if there was any mistake on my part”

Susan cooled down her temper and said, “Now you go outside the cabin.”

Ron left the cabin puzzled and shocked. It was first time in his life a woman took him to task for none of his mistakes. Since he respected Susan he didn't like to hurt her in any way by arguing with her.

Outside the cabin, a few office friends enquired Ron to find out what had happened inside the cabin. He did not reveal what really happened inside the room as he was basically a confidential person by nature.

After 15 minutes, Ron called Susan telephonically and explained clearly that things went wrong due to improper communication. He once again apologized her for the incident. Susan said that she was in a position to take action against him but said that she would not initiate any action against him. Ron asserted that he was not concerned for any kind of action but concerned if Susan was hurt.

The incident depressed Ron for many days as he failed to understand where he went wrong. He was not worried about the incident but more worried as he liked Susan very much. It disturbed his peace and sleep. He sought an appointment with Susan several times to communicate the same but the latter never gave such an opportunity.

### **Analysis**

1. Was it a conflict? If it were a conflict, what led to this conflict?
2. Was it due to clash of egos or emotions or feelings or miscommunication?
3. Who was responsible for this conflict - Susan or Ron or both Ann and Beth?
4. Was there anything hidden between these two personalities?
5. Did the real issues come up or anything still hidden between these two personalities?
6. What were the other hidden reasons, if any?

**(Caselet has been phrased as per our requirement Permission to use the case study as narrated at Situation 5 – “I am the Boss” “So What” has been sought from Professor M.S.Rao, Ph.D.** He is the Father of “Soft Leadership” and Founder of MSR Leadership Consultants, India. He is an International Leadership Guru with 37 years of experience and the author of 37 books including the award-winning ‘21 Success Sutras for CEOs’ URL: <http://www.amazon.com/21-Success-Sutras-Ceos-Rao/dp/162865290X>. He is a sought-after

keynote speaker globally. He is passionate about serving and making a difference in the lives of others. He shares his leadership wisdom freely with the world on his four blogs. His vision is to build one million students as global leaders by 2030 URL: [http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.in/2014/12/professor-m-s-raos-vision-2030-one\\_31.html](http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.in/2014/12/professor-m-s-raos-vision-2030-one_31.html). He is a dynamic, energetic and inspirational leadership speaker. He can be reached at: msrlctr@gmail.com.)

## CASE ANALYSIS OF THE CASELETS

### “Train your Employees to Resolve their Own Conflicts with Co-Workers”

#### Case analysis – Situation 1

##### **Resolution Example:**

Interpersonal conflicts arise due to contrasting ethics, beliefs and values. At this stage, the difference in opinions must be discussed openly to come to a solution. In this case, Rahul and Jimmy should sit together and share their thoughts and concerns. Being a colleague, Rahul is concerned about Jimmy and wants to ensure that no disciplinary action is initiated for not following General Office Procedures. Rahul needs to allow Jimmy to share his reasons for coming late to work quite often. Both men should speak with respect and not out of anger. If a resolution is not possible between them, Rahul should report Jimmy's behavior to their supervisor. He should include the tension between the two men and seek future actions to reduce it.

When Faced With an Imperfect Member/Team, Ask Yourself: 'What do I Do?'

##### **Firstly Embrace conflict.**

When conflict arises, don't avoid it or pretend nothing has happened. As time goes on, tension will build -- and the conflict only will get worse. Deal with these uncomfortable issues as soon as possible, before problems and bad feelings become embedded in everyday work.

If you notice a conflict between employees, encourage them to find a way to work it. If conflict develops between two teams, it's a good time to improve interdepartmental communication. If you have a conflict with one of your employee, address it head on and in private.

##### **Talk together.**

Set up a time and place so you can talk for an extended span without outside interruptions.

When you do meet, each person should have adequate time to say what he or she believes the other party needs to hear. Don't let any individual monopolize the conversation or control the topic. Each person should talk about the disagreements and how he or she feels about the situation.

Remember, this is not the time to attack or assign blame. Focus on the problem, not your opinion of the other person's character.

## **Case Analysis- Situation 2**

### **Resolution Example**

**Q. 1** Was there a conflict? If it were a conflict, what led to this conflict?

Yes, there was a conflict – being conflict of position. Position difference in any organization describes senior and junior level of working. Seniority comes with experience, knowledge, hard and smart work, however at times a less experienced employee is promoted could be on account of passing departmental exam or on seniority basis. The more knowledgeable and experienced person would not want to work under the promoted less experienced employee. In the present case Mr.X was promoted and posted in the section which he was dealing prior to his promotion and has all seniors by age and experience working under him. This created difference in team and leading to conflicts.

**Q. 2 & 3.** Why do you think the Senior Auditors condescending towards X? **What are the sources of conflict?**

The workplace consists of individuals who all have their own perspective. Some employees have strong beliefs, which they are not willing to compromise. These beliefs can conflict with coworkers creating conflict.

In the present case Mr. D seems to work on his own priorities rather than complying to X directions on urgent work. There could be an element of jealousy and ego problem as Mr. X is very young and had become his boss.

Working in any organization involves a lot of team work as the organization cannot function with the qualities of a single individual. To avoid conflict with these workers, Mr. X must try to accept or initiate more tolerance of those with differing values and negative behaviour.

**Q 4.** Do you need to be prepared to change your perspective?

Sometimes we just need to change our perception or our perspective on a problem in order to change the approach we take to solving it. Is the problem really as big an issue as you thought at first? Are there alternative ways of looking at the problem? Do you need to get more information before deciding that it is a problem in the first place? You may just need more information in order for you to feel better about whatever is going on.

**Q 5.** Is this Conflict Really Worth it?

There are some workplace conflicts that are necessary, inevitable, and even productive. But the vast majority of conflicts are petty and minor. Some conflicts can be resolved simply by asking the party involved if it's a fight they really need to be having. Encouraging them to take a step back from the situation often illustrates just how small the conflict really is. The behaviour of Mr. D could be resolved in due course of time if Mr.X can be more accommodative.

**Q 6.** Does this Conflict Have a Personal Dimension?

Conflicts that arise from issues that are exclusively related to work can be worthwhile, even important. But it's more often the case that a personal problem has crept into the mix and amplified the situation. Fully understanding the nature of the problem is a prerequisite for resolving it. The conflict here has a personal dimension due to clash of egos and jealousy

**Q. 7** What challenges are faced in choosing the best alternatives for a course of any action? Why is it necessary to study Employee Behaviour???

**Answer :-** Interpersonal Skills includes the ability to discuss issues openly with team members, be honest, trustworthy, supportive and show respect and commitment to the team and to its individuals. Fostering a caring work environment is important including the ability to work effectively with other team members.

The challenge here is generation gap. There's a generation gap living inside workplace and it may be wreaking havoc on productivity. The fundamental differences in how various age groups approach work are becoming more pronounced, creating workplace rifts.

One of the quickest and easiest ways to resolve a conflict is to simply make an effort to understand the other person's perspective and necessarily to study employee behaviour by :-

### **1. Get to know your employees**

You can't gain respect by simply commanding it, said Rishav Gupta, CEO of iCoachFirst. Instead, you should make it clear that you want to get to know your team members as individuals, recognizing their individual strengths and work habits rather than bucketing them by generation or other characteristics.

Setting up "knowledge-sharing sessions" by creating opportunities for teams to come together, can get to know each other and vocalize their ideas and opinions, swap knowledge and get on the same page, team members not only gain more mutual understanding and respect, they would also recognize that their manager appreciates what each individual brings to the table and wants to learn from them all. This would be helpful for teams with different generations.

### **2. Value Their Life Experience - Make changes when necessary, but respect tradition**

Many young people come into an organization looking to make a change, said Adam Povlitz, president of Anago Cleaning Systems. When managing someone older, it's important to understand how and why they are doing things a certain way before we change it.

A senior would say 'that's how we've always done it'. Make it clear that the changes are important to achieve overall goals and take the time to explain the rationale behind it

### **3. Be supportive and collaborative**

In a team dynamic where there is a significant age gap between manager and employee, it's natural that some competition may arise. The young leader may feel like they have to "outdo" their older employees to prove their competence, but this can breed insubordination and resentment.

One way to encourage support and collaboration is to ask your employees for help, especially when it comes to learning a skill they possess.

Sometimes we feel like asking for help creates a weakness in the relationship between manager and their staff, [but] it can actually help to build loyalty and trust to show vulnerability"

### **4. Use Them as Mentors**

Let them coach and encourage the younger workers. Most older workers have a wealth of knowledge and experience that they would love to pass on. Give them the opportunity to do so and your entire organization will benefit.

### **Case Analysis- Situation 3**

#### **Resolution Example**

Conflicts related to the interdependence of work often results if timeliness are not followed by both the teams. This can be due to lack of communication between both the teams or by the high level officers. In such a scenario it is required to listen to both the parties to understand the problems.

Raju should first approach Sushama directly to see whether the issue can be resolved in a respective manner. If he is unsuccessful then he needs to address the situation with his direct officers. Overall the conflict could be due to lack of process and acceptance criteria set by both the teams. Based on everyone's view point problem solving option should be chosen to reach a fair agreement.

When Faced With an Imperfect Team, Ask Yourself: 'What Would I Do?'

Workplace conflict can occur in a variety of ways: between two employees, among entire teams or between supervisors and the team members they manage. As difficult as the issue might seem in the moment, resolving team conflict is possible.

#### **Firstly Embrace conflict.**

When conflict arises, don't avoid it or pretend nothing has happened. As time goes on, tension will build -- and the conflict only will get worse. Deal with these uncomfortable issues as soon as possible, before problems and bad feelings become embedded in everyday work.

If you notice a conflict between employees, encourage them to find a way to work it. If conflict develops between two teams, it's a good time to improve interdepartmental communication. If you have a conflict with one of your employee, address it head on and in private.

#### **Talk together.**

Set up a time and place so you can talk for an extended span without outside interruptions.

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When you do meet, each person should have adequate time to say what he or she believes the other party needs to hear. Don't let any individual monopolize the conversation or control the topic. Each person should talk about the disagreements and how he or she feels about the situation.

Remember, this is not the time to attack or assign blame. Focus on the problem, not your opinion of the other person's character.

Find common areas of agreement, no matter how small:

- Agree on the problem
- Agree on the procedure to follow
- Agree on worst fears
- Agree on some small change to give an experience of success

### **Case Analysis – Situation 4**

**Q1 & Q2.**What is the problem in the present case? And Can an individual effectively manage a group and be a close personal friend with group members?

Answer:- Some managers cultivate friendly relationships with their subordinates because they believe that employees will work harder for someone they like. While this may be true in many cases, being too friendly with employees can lead to many issues.

Being a supervisor may appear to be an easy job that simply requires telling employees what to do, but this isn't the case. A supervisor faces challenges in running a fair and effective workplace. The biggest challenge of being a supervisor may differ, depending upon individual strengths and weaknesses, but some typical duties and goals challenge many supervisors

The problem in the present case is that Manoj is a Friendly supervisor and being accommodative in workplace and trying to cultivate friendly relationships with his subordinates to avoid any conflict.

As a manager, all relationships should be bounded and defined. They're not about liking, chemistry, or personality. Relationships that are personal can only produce disappointment in the long run. Separating the personal and professional relationship can be a problem. The challenge is to understand that personal feelings have no business in the workplace. Is

In case of Manoj, his close personal relationship with his employees proved catastrophic, the other Auditors took advantage of him often taking longer breaks and becoming lax in their work. Manoj,

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was unable to supervise, this led to many complaints being put against him and the department. To manage the group Manoj has to have a meeting with the human resource department as well as his superior Boss on how to handle office and personal relationships, as well as implementing stricter rules to ensure efficiency in work.

**Q 3** What should the Boss do to ensure that the work of the Auditors will improve?

As a manager it is Boss's responsibility to ensure that the Auditors improve their performance, and to help Manoj the supervisor, to enforce rules. Holding a workshop/training on office relationships can help Manoj to understand by 'cracking' down on his friends only then can there be proper work done. The Boss can also speak to the Auditors under Manoj to be aware that taking advantage of friendship within the workplace is not ethical as it would cause problems within an organisation.

**Q.4** Should Bobby have been promoted to office supervisor?

No, it was right to promote Manoj to the position of office supervisor he has been working in the organisation for ten years and has been a productive employee. But he lacked the ability to separate his personal relations with his co-workers against the demand of the organisation.

**Q 5** If you were Manoj what would you do? Would you continue the supervisor's job? Would you no longer be friends with the Auditors? Do you need to be prepared to change your perspective?

Answer :- As a supervisor it is Manoj's duty to orient and train, assign work, evaluate performance, approve time records and requests for time breaks, resolve complaints and discipline employees including enforcing rules.

If I were in Manoj's place I would neither quit nor cut away from social niceties, rather I would adopt a democratic style of management as well as I would change attitude towards employee relationships and find balance maintaining friendly relations with co-workers as well as looking over their work; it is unavoidable that clashes will occur with the other Auditors which may potentially damage relationships.

**Q 6 & 7.** What is interpersonal relationship? & Why is interpersonal relationships important in workplace?

Answer:-

Interpersonal relationship refers to a strong association among individuals working together in the same organization. Employees working together ought to share a special bond for them to deliver their level best. It is essential for individuals to be honest with each other for a healthy interpersonal relationship and eventually positive ambience at the workplace

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Interpersonal Skills includes the ability to discuss issues openly with team members, be honest, trustworthy, supportive and show respect and commitment to the team and to its individuals. Fostering a caring work environment is important including the ability to work effectively with other team members

Therefore, a strong association between employees working together in the same organization is called interpersonal relationship. Employees must get along well for a positive and healthy work environment at the workplace.

An interpersonal relationship can develop between any of the following:

- ✓ Individuals working together in the same organization.
- ✓ People working in the same team.
- ✓ Relationship with immediate family members and relatives.
- ✓ Relationship between friends/Co-workers

Interpersonal relationships that you form at work serve a critical role in both your work success and career progress. Positive interpersonal relationships will allow effective communication and understanding among employees.

**Q 8** What are the dangers of being too friendly Supervisor to Employees??

Answer :

The best way to approach the situation is to speak with those you are personal with and make it clear that you must keep the personal and professional relationships separate.

### **Overworked Supervisor**

Some managers are people-pleasers and want their employees to like them at all costs. Some employees use this to their advantage to neglect their actual work responsibilities. Rather than risk "being mean" to these employees, managers may take on their subordinates' tasks, as well as their own. This can lead to overworked managers who become burnt out. It's very important that managers learn how to delegate responsibilities to employees, as well as hold them accountable for their work. When this doesn't occur, not only may the manager become overworked, but employees are not able to progress and become better workers.

Averageness flourishes

When managers are fearful of upsetting their subordinates' feelings, because they are friends with them, mediocrity may flourish in the workplace.

Problems aggravate

Problems, such as interpersonal conflicts or lack of productivity, are often allowed to aggravate when the manager is too friendly with employees. The people-pleaser manager doesn't want to risk upsetting his work friends or losing his invitation to happy hour, so he doesn't reprimand employees when they break the rules or don't follow set procedures. This may lead to other employees becoming resentful or unmotivated to follow the rules. Small issues can get out of control quickly in this type of scenario as well.

#### Loss of Respect

Respect for the manager, whether or not he is liked, is often the key to a successful boss-subordinate relationship. When the boss is more concerned about his personal relationships with employees, rather than his professional role and responsibilities, staff and other management team members may lose respect for him. If this occurs, then they do not obey directives or want to learn from him.

### **Case Analysis – Situation 5**

#### **Resolution Example**

Conflict can manifest itself in a variety of forms and to varying degrees, but the causes often include differences between expectations, goals, values and personality styles.. Within an organization, it is imperative that employees, and especially management, be as proactive and resolute in identifying and resolving these types of issues. If this does not happen, the results can be poor work quality, communication problems, resignations and even lawsuits.

Many employees who are very difficult, however, can also be exceptional contributors. High-maintenance employees are often perceived as demanding, uncooperative, and arrogant. Yet they can be an organisation's most creative, driven, innovative, and best-performing workers.

A major reality if workers are usually given responsibilities which do not match their skills, they would more likely perform poorly in their various fields.

In the present case, the conflict between Marilyn and Thomas is interpersonal and the conflict is due difference in values and attitudes. There was clash of egos and lack of communication. Marilyn should have been more compassionate towards Thomas's personal appearances.

It is very important to communicate the right way. Right means of communication with the right attitude, right tone and right language is very important whenever you talk to anyone at your workplace to avoid workplace conflict. Marilyn could have utilized a better interpersonal communication skill to deal with Thomas as Marilyn has no major issues with the Thomas's

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performance however the bad behaviour of Thomas was bothering Marilyn. Marilyn' motive was to keep Thomas motivated and trying all hard to find out what keeps him motivated, he being very talented.

Further, here probably, Thomas was not given responsibilities matching his skills. However, Thomas should have conveyed his point to Marilyn rather than behaving rudely.

Despite repeated warnings Thomas had also not changed his behaviour. When an employee is disruptive in any way, it needs to be dealt with before it becomes habit forming. Not to wait until the bad apple has spoiled the lot. Talk to them right away. State that their disruptive behavior is disrupting harmony in your department. As individuals Marilyn and Thomas should respect each other. Marilyn should treat Thomas as member of your extended family and ignore minor issues w.r.t hair etc this would help in avoiding conflicts in interpersonal relationship. Marilyn should try to understand Thomas's point of view as well. Marilyn should have addressed the situation immediately, directly and respectfully.

### **Here are some suggestions to help navigate for Marilyn**

**Make them aware.** A manager must make sure the employee is aware of the problems they are causing in the workplace. It is easy for an employee to be completely blind to his or her distracting behavior. Management should arrange to meet with the employee to explain how the behavior is affecting his coworkers and the office environment. Awareness is the first and most important step in dealing with an employee who has a difficult personality.

**Gain understanding.** The employee needs to show a willingness to change his demeanor and personality. The manager will need to provide additional support in order to motivate the employee to change.

**Be thoughtful about assignments.** To the extent possible (and naturally this isn't always controllable), provide some especially substantive, challenging assignments that will fully utilize and stretch their considerable skills. Such assignments can also engage them and bring out their best.

**Be direct and give ample feedback.** – communicate the issues as precisely as possible.

**No drama.** When conflicts arise, as they inevitably do, stay calm. Some challenging employees even enjoy being provocateurs. Not to be drawn into the fray and pull rank and lose temper, however tempting that might be.

**Document clearly.** Thorough documentation is always necessary for clear fact-based evaluations, assessing objectively whether goals are achieved or not. Solid documentation is also essential should you need to build a case for termination.

## **Case analysis to Situation 6 (Scene 1,2 &3)**

### **Scene 1**

**Q1** Define the problem, identify the individual(s) causing the problem.

Answer: Phil is not able to complete the assigned work. There could be various reasons for this:

- Phil is swamped with work and he is not having sufficient time to complete it
- Phil is distressed because of the emotional turmoil that he is going through so he is not able to devote the time required to complete the assigned work

**Q2** What alternatives are there to the course of action your fellow employees want to take (filing a complaint with the supervisor)?

Answer: It is ok to bring it to the attention of the supervisor that Phil is lagging in his work. However, it is important that the supervisor does not make a judgement about Phil without investigating the causes for Phil's behaviour. The reasons can be :

- a) Phil is really overwhelmed with work assigned to him and despite working long hours he is not able to complete assigned task
- b) Phil is going through emotional turmoil and therefore he is not able to complete the assigned task. In this instance, the supervisor ought to sympathize with Phil and provide a temporary support to Phil so that no work is left pending. But while distributing work to other team members, supervisor should clearly state to Phil this is at best temporary arrangement and sooner than later he should start contributing to the assigned tasks.

**Q3.**How might your suggestions improve the situation without involving the administration or hurting Phil's professional reputation?

Answer: If as a colleague you don't want to bring Phil's issue with the supervisor then you will have to have frank conversation with Phil about his behaviour at the workplace. You should advise

him that he should seek help by bringing the problems that he is facing to the attention of his supervisor.

### **Scene 2**

**Q 1.** Define the problem, identify the individual(s) causing the problem.

**Answer:** Alice is claiming credit for the work that her colleagues have performed. More importantly her colleagues don't know this unethical behaviour of Alice. Her colleagues don't know that she is claiming credit for their work

**Q 2. & 3** How might your suggestions improve the situation without involving the administration or hurting Alice's professional reputation? Q 3. Considering your relationship with Alice, what are your options, short of saying nothing?

**Answer:-** You need to have frank conversation with Alice explaining to her that she is not doing correct by claiming credit for other's work. That if her team members come to know of this then they might be de-motivated and will not be able discharge their responsibilities to best of their abilities bringing down the performance of the entire group. Also, inform her that if her team members bring this behaviour of her to the attention of management then the management wi

**Q 4** Develop several solutions that will allow the team to continue to work well together?

**Answer :**

- a) Bring it to the attention of Alice's supervisor that she has been claiming credit for the work that her team members have been performing
- b) Have a frank conversation with Alice as described in Question 3
- c) Bring it to the attention of Alice's colleagues that she has been claiming credit for their work

### **Scene 3**

**Q** You feel the same way and would you like to do something to improve the situation. Considering the fact that these three or four other individuals are also aware of the problem, what can you do?

**Answer:** Conflicts are good so long as outcomes are positive. To benefit from the conflict there should be a brainstorming session where the group should identify hindrances and problems in effective discharge of their responsibilities. Once all the problems are identified the group should devise procedures and processes to mitigate the problems.

### **Case Study Analysis: Situation 7**

In any communication, there has to be feedback whether the receiver has understood the message. In this case, Ron rushed to hand over the resumes without taking clear confirmation from Susan. It was mistake on the part of Susan for not taking feedback after her communication. Whatever it may be, it is not an issue worth to become a conflict. There are hidden data of communication such as feelings, emotions and egos which have not been clearly expressed by Susan. Both Susan and Ron developed filters in their minds. In fact, both are equally responsible for this conflict.

Susan has the attitude of 'I am the boss' and Ron has the attitude of 'So what?'. Probably Susan lacked independent and original thinking as she was under the influence of Ann and Beth who were litigants and did not like Susan getting well with Ron in the initial probationary period. Finally, both Ann and Beth were successful in separating both Susan and Ron by flaring up the issue. In contrast, Ron was not influenced by the negative comments made against Susan by John such as she was a divorcee and she was a woman of weak character with lot of arrogance. Ron was intelligent enough to smell the differences John must have had with Susan as they collectively completed a project in the past. Ron, being an experienced person knows that some differences must have cropped up between both Susan and John while execution of project. Ron was good by nature as he did not like the badmouthing of Susan by John. Right from the beginning Ron had good impression about Susan. Ron never hurt Susan although he was humiliated by Susan in the cabin. Ron was always defensive while Susan was offensive. It shows Ron's character. Ron was also a gentleman as he did not carry forward the negative comments made by John to Susan. However, Ron was also at fault as he mixed his personal emotions with professional activities thus weakening his position within the organization.

In fact, something bugged Susan that resulted into sudden outburst and thus humiliating Ron. The solution lies only when both Susan and Ron come together and take a relook at the issue and communicate with each other. It not only removes the barriers but also builds the bridges between both of them. It helps in better relations and ensures peaceful working environment.

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In any conflict, the real reasons usually don't surface. Besides, it is very difficult to probe the heart of a woman. Probably Susan was influenced by two negative colleagues Ann and Beth as she lacked independent thinking. She looks like an intellectual fool as she was easily instigated by both Ann and Beth. In brief, Susan was a puppet and Ann and Beth were puppeteers.

It is also a classic example of emotions playing a crucial role in deciding professional relationship. In any working environment, people of opposite sex often develop soft corner and admiration for each other. Same thing happened between Susan and Ron. It seems Ron and Susan like each other internally but they failed to express themselves properly.

At the instigation of Ann and Beth, Susan being a senior succeeded in silencing and humiliating Ron by misusing her official authority as she might have read the signals of Ron's body language as he liked her. There is also a possibility that Susan made Ron a scapegoat to protect her professional image built over for the last 5 years within the organization. When Ron apologized once again just after the closed door cabin conflict, Susan's threat of initiating action against Ron was an indication of her superiority complex (bossism, of course, not sadism) and stubbornness and also growing insecurity within herself.

They should keep their personal emotions and feelings away for making the working environment conducive and productive. The attitude of 'tit for tat' is no solution for managing the conflicts within the organization. Probably it was the reason why Ron apologized and came out of the cabin after heated arguments. He was intelligent enough to apologize and to come out the cabin, else Susan might fix Ron on sexual harassment case as she was not at all in a mood to think independently and also she was poisoned by Ann and Beth who vitiated the working environment by badmouthing and bringing politics within the organization.

John told Ron that Susan as a woman of weak character with lot of arrogance and it was rumored within the organization that Susan was divorced by her husband due to these reasons. However, Ron did not pay heed to John as it was Susan's personal matter; if it happened to be true. Ron looked Susan from a very positive perspective like a woman who has huge potential and a long a way to go in her career. Ron was also the kind of person who separates personal matter from professional matter. As Ron distanced John for badmouthing against Susan, Susan too should have distanced from the badmouthing and litigant colleagues. If it were done so, the conflict could have been averted.

## Summing up

Conflicts are inevitable in any organization. A modest level of conflict can be useful in generating better ideas and methods, inspiring concern and stimulating the emergence of long-suppressed problems.

Conflict management strategies should aim at keeping conflict at a level at which different ideas and viewpoints are fully voiced but unproductive conflicts are deterred.

Basic problems in inter-group behaviour are conflict of goals and communication failures. A basic tactic in resolving conflicts, therefore, is to find goals upon which groups can agree, and to ensure proper communication and interaction. Some conflicts arise because of simple misconceptions, which can be overcome by improved communication.

Although supervisors and managers have a major responsibility to ensure that workplace conflicts are resolved, the first steps to settling differences should be taken by employees themselves.

Moreover, employees should not be overly dependent on their managers. Organizations need people who can handle day-to-day issues on their own, think independently, analyze problems, come up with solutions and take steps to implement them. This includes both task-related and people-related problems

However, supervisors and managers should manage conflicts effectively rather than suppress or avoid them. To manage them, a manager needs to ask 'What?' and 'Why?' - and not 'Who?' to get at the root of a problem. In the process of resolving conflicts, many problems can be identified and solved by removing obstacles and creating a new environment of individual growth. If conflicts are not managed properly, they can be damaging, as they waste a lot of energy and time, and invoke tension, which reduces the productivity and creativity of those involved.

THANKYOU