



Dealing With Conflict

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

✓

Dealing with Conflict

The Conflict Resolution Process

There are six steps to use when your employees are in conflict:



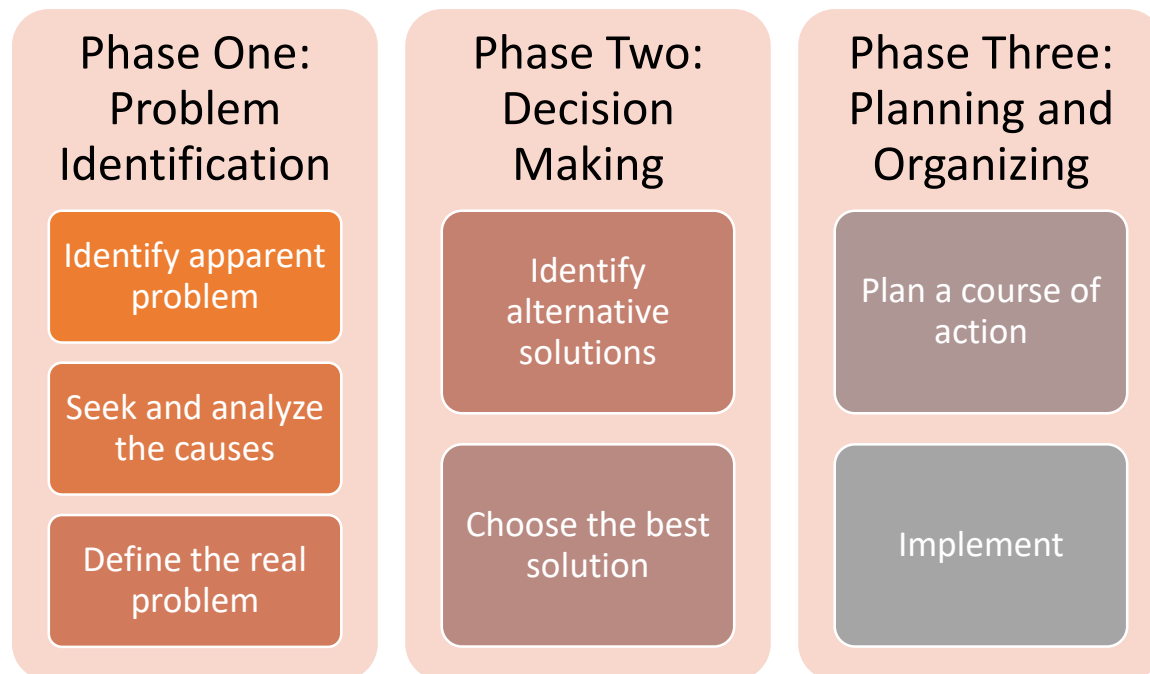
Generally there are four times when supervisors should get involved in a conflict.

- When the employees who are in conflict come and ask you for help.
- When the other employees come to you and ask you to step in.
- When productivity and/or morale are dropping because of the conflict.
- When not dealing with the conflict is starting to make you (as a supervisor) look bad.

The Problem Solving Process

The Problem Solving Model

Problem solving skills are essential for dealing with conflict and keeping your team on track.



Breaking Down the Model

The first stage of problem solving involves proper identification of the problem. This stage is vital since it will enable you to generate the right solutions. Do not rush this stage: make sure you know what the problem is before you proceed.

The second stage involves creativity and decision making. This stage revolves around identifying your options and deciding which option will be the best to solve your issue.

The third stage is about implementation: making a plan and implementing the ideas generated in the second stage.

The Conference

Background Information

You work for a very successful game and system development company called Mazingtendo. The company is a major player in the international gaming industry, competing strongly with companies like Nintendo, Xbox, and Sony. There are about 200 employees, and you all work on a creative game and system development team. Of the members of the team, one of you is the team leader while the others are team members. In the eight years since the company was founded, they have launched three successful game systems, each one more expensive and more successful than the earlier version. The game systems are sold around the world.

This enterprise is expensive, since the time spent in design, programming, testing, and marketing the new release is very time intensive. Your company pays its staff well, but you know that it would also be good to do some training to keep them at the leading edge of game development and see if there are things you could do to reduce the expenses that you already have.

The team leader is usually a former team member; this happens to be true in this case. The team leader gives help and instruction as needed, keeps track of the different projects, and keeps a creative team on track and engaged.

The team members work in an open concept office. There is a big common area for them to meet, talk, troubleshoot, play games, or hang out together. The team gets along well aside from some creative differences at times. They have possessive feelings about some of their ideas, and get possessive about their desk space and individual computers.

Here are some facts about the team members and their projects.

	Years With Company	Average Value Of Projects Completed Each Year
Argon	8	\$650,000
Leslie	7	\$700,000
Robin	7	\$600,000
Pat	4	\$650,000
Mackenzie	2	\$1,250,000

In playing your part, accept the facts as given and assume the attitude supplied in your specific role. From this point on, let your feelings develop in accordance with the events that occur during the role play. When facts or events arise that are not covered by the roles, you can make things up to stay consistent with the way it might be in a real-life situation.

Test Your Knowledge

Team Leader's Worksheet

What is your decision on who goes to the conference?

Did you agree on who would go to the conference?

Are you satisfied with the decision?

Do you feel the employees are satisfied?

If not, who do you think is dissatisfied?

Observer Worksheet

How did the leader present the problem?

In presenting the problem, did the leader display the attitude of asking for help?

Did the leader present all the facts?

Was the presentation of the problem brief and to the point?

Did the leader avoid suggesting a solution?

What things occurred in the discussion?

Did all group members participate?

Was there free exchange of feelings between group members?

Did the group use social pressure to influence any of its members?

On which member of the team was social pressure used?

How did the team leader behave?

Was the team leader permissive?

Did the team leader avoid taking sides or favoring any person?

What were the points of disagreement in the group?

What did the team leader do to help solve the problem?

Did the leader ask questions to help the group explore ideas?

Did the leader accept all ideas equally?

Did the leader avoid hurrying the group to develop a solution?

Did the leader avoid favoring any solutions?

Who supplied the final solution?

What did the team leader do, if anything, to get a consensus on the final solution?

Other Comments

Managing Disciplinary Issues

What is Discipline?

Discipline is part of running an efficient organization. The word "discipline" comes from the word "disciple," which means "to mold or teach." Discipline is not meant as a negative term, although people often think of it in terms of punishment. Discipline can and should be viewed as a positive part of a supervisor's responsibilities. Training and motivating are equally important parts of positive discipline. It is also perhaps the most volatile, explosive, and sensitive area in employee relations.

If you are like most supervisors, you find giving corrective feedback (which is still a form of positive discipline) a distasteful task. Still, it is essential that you do so. You can make it less traumatic on both of you if you follow these suggestions.

- Be positive.
- Be prepared.
- Be realistic.
- Make feedback a part of a two-way conversation. Give and receive feedback.

The session will have been a success if the employee leaves feeling the issues are important, appreciates your comments, and is committed to correcting the problem.

Correcting minor problems as they happen can go a long way toward preventing major problems down the road.

The Disciplinary Meeting

Discipline is usually a last resort step where an employee has been trained, coached, and reprimanded, and performance remains unacceptable. The process begins with a meeting between the employee, the supervisor, the human resource officer, and sometimes a more senior manager in the company. It will also normally include a shop steward in a unionized company.

The meeting clearly outlines the problem behavior and the attempts to find some resolution. The employee is clear about why they are having this meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting, the employee is made to serve some kind of penalty for their behavior, such as being suspended for one to three days with pay. The employee's job for that period of time is to think over options related to keeping their job or not. If they wish to remain with the company, they will come back with a plan for improving performance. If they decide to leave the company, then they have had these few days to make that decision as well.

When the employee returns to work, the same group of people meets again. If the employee's decision is to stay, the group agrees to the employee's plan of action or they hammer out one of their own to which the employee will agree. If there is no agreement, the employee is usually terminated. This was, after all, their last chance. However, if things work out well, the employee remains and their performance improves.

Unions usually have no difficulty with this process as the employee has been treated fairly and has made the decision on their own. Look carefully at your human resource policies and collective agreement, since they will clearly outline the process within your company. These can vary widely and must be

implemented as designed in order for the decisions that you make (especially regarding suspension or termination) to stick.

A Sample Discipline Checklist for a Supervisor

- Proof rule was posted prior to incident
- Proof employee was aware of rule prior to incident
- Proof rule was consistently enforced
- Proof rule(s) given to union, if applicable
- Item(s) involved retained for evidence (if applicable)
- Signed and dated witness statements retained for file (if applicable)
- Documents, policies, and reports retained for file (if applicable)
- Police and medical reports retained for file (if applicable)
- Legal statutes reviewed and complied with (if applicable)
- Proof alternatives were offered to employee (if applicable)
- Proof employee's explanation or request was given reasonable consideration and recorded (if applicable)
- Proof of time, date, and location of incident are accurately recorded
- Proof of work average re: attendance or lates (if applicable)
- Proof all events, observations, and actual statements are accurately recorded
- Proof employee given instruction or training (if applicable)
- Proof employee and/or union received all relevant correspondence
- Proof proper investigation was finalized
- Proof all personnel file requirements have been met
- Proof of previous discipline record and previous discussions with employee have been finalized and recorded (if applicable)
- Proof collective agreement clauses relating to union representation and timelines have been met
- Proof second management opinion obtained (if applicable)
- Proof all evidence double-checked for accuracy
- Proof decision finalized as quickly as possible

Further Reading:

