

WESTERN SPORTS MEDIA INTERNAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

Is there a correct way to handle conflict? What are the effects of poor conflict management? Conflict in the workplace might be inevitable, as employees have different personalities, goals, and opinions. Learning how to handle conflict efficiently is the key to preventing it from hindering employees' professional growth. Conflict resolution is only a five-step process:

Step 1: Identify the source of the conflict. The more information you have about the cause of the conflict, the more easily you can help to resolve it. To get the information you need, use a series of questions to identify the cause, like, "When did you feel upset?" "Do you see a relationship between that and this incident?" "How did this incident begin?"

As a mediator, you need to give both parties the chance to share their side of the story. It will give you a better understanding of the situation, as well as demonstrate your impartiality. As you listen to each disputant, say, "I see" or "uh huh" to acknowledge the information and encourage them to continue to open up to you.

Step 2: Look beyond the incident. Often, it is not the situation but the perspective on the situation that causes anger to fester and ultimately leads to a shouting match or other visible—and disruptive—evidence of a conflict.

The source of the conflict might be a minor problem that occurred months before, but the level of stress has grown to the point where the two parties have begun attacking each other personally instead of addressing the real problem. In the calm of your office, you can get them to look beyond the triggering incident to see the real cause. Once again, probing questions will help, like, "What do you think happened here?" or "When do you think the problem between you first arose?"

Step 3: Request solutions. After getting each party's viewpoint on the conflict, the next step is to get each to identify how the situation could be changed. Again, question the parties to solicit their ideas: "How can you make things better between you?"

As mediator, you have to be an active listener, aware of every verbal nuance, as well as a good reader of body language.

Just listen. You want to get the disputants to stop fighting and start cooperating, and that means steering the discussion away from finger pointing and toward ways of resolving the conflict.

Step 4: Identify solutions both disputants can support. You are listening for the most acceptable course of action. Point out the merits of various ideas, not only from each other's perspective, but in terms of the benefits to the organization. (For instance, you might point to the need for greater cooperation and collaboration to effectively address team issues and departmental problems.)

Step 5: Agreement. The mediator needs to get the two parties to shake hands and agree to one of the alternatives identified in Step 4. Some mediators go as far as to write up a contract in which actions and time frames are specified. However, it might be sufficient to meet with the individuals and have them answer these questions: "What action plans will you both put in place to prevent conflicts from arising in the future?" and "What will you do if problems arise in the future?"

This mediation process works between groups as well as individuals.