

# How to Effectively Deal with Conflict in the Workplace



*Presented by:*

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## ROADMAP:

- Workplace Conflict Resolution
- Dealing With Difficult Employees
- Scenarios
- Summary



## Conflict in the Workplace

- Workplace Conflict
  - Can be a serious problem in the workplace
  - Will result in a loss of productive employee time
  - Could result in civil/administrative litigation
    - Costs of defense
    - Costs of an adverse determination
  - Personal liability of managers and supervisors

## How to Resolve Conflict

- Manage
- Identify Opportunities
- Meet Challenges Head-On
- Communicate
- Pay Attention to the People

## Manager's Role

- Prevention through good company culture, training and education
- Proactive and responsive to complaints
- All reasonable steps necessary to prevent
- Prompt, thorough and effective investigations
- Appropriate follow-through

## Key Manager Responsibilities

- Be a positive force/influence
- Communicate Effectively
- Uphold Performance Standards
- Model Appropriate Workplace Conduct
- Filter issues to determine what needs to be raised with HR or management

## Key Manager Responsibilities

- Be a positive force/influence
  - You are the face of the company
  - Negative attitude/interactions reflect on the entire organization
  - Most employee disputes can be dealt with early or avoided through positive communication

## Key Manager Responsibilities

- “Positive Communication” requires that you actively engage your employees.
- It is not okay to ignore issues in the workplace.
- How do you actively engage your employees?



## Key Manager Responsibilities



- Communicate Effectively
  - Clear notice of expectations
  - Opportunity to meet standards
  - Feedback on performance
    - Performance evaluations
    - Disciplinary action
    - Positive praise where appropriate

## Key Manager Responsibilities

- Uphold Company Performance Standards
  - Impose a duty on employees
  - Find a benchmark that can be used to measure performance
  - Requires more professionalism than what the law requires

## Key Manager Responsibilities

- **Model Appropriate Workplace Conduct**
  - The manager's conduct is the standard for employees
    - Employees will not conform to policies if manager does not conform
    - Ignoring issues undermines the policies

## Key Manager Responsibilities

### **Filter of Issues/Disputes**

- Not every workplace dispute needs to be reported to HR or senior management
- Look at the totality of the circumstances
  - Is a protected status implicated?
  - Are factors other than one's ability to perform a job at issue?
  - Not sure whether to involve HR?

## Managing Employees

- **Treat Employees With Dignity And Respect**
  - Find an office or conference room for privacy
  - Start with general, open-ended questions
  - Avoid questions that suggest a bias
  - Avoid editorial comments or legal conclusions
  - Any matter that is potentially significant (such as harassment, discrimination, family leave, retaliation, wage and hour or workplace safety) must be reported to HR

## Managing Employees

- **What to Document**
  - **Performance Assessments**
    - Both formal and informal performance evaluations should be documented
    - Tie the evaluation to job-related standards
  - **Performance Management/Discipline**
    - Give the employee specific information about performance problems and the steps to correct the problems

## Identify Opportunities

- Nip it in the bud!
- Ears and eyes open
- Look for the real issues
- Beware of motives
- Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear!



## Meet Challenges Head-On

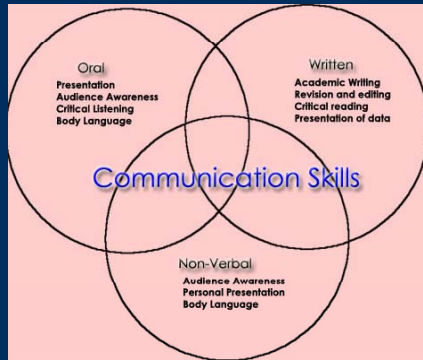
- What elephant?
- Avoiding a problem is not likely to make it go away
- More likely to grow out of control if not addressed





## Communicate

- Two-way process
- Skill
- Clear
- Timely
- Effective



## Communicate

- Consistent
- Personal
- Positive
- Respectful
- Motivational



## Pay Attention to the People

- Don't get carried away by other distractions
- A little bit of employee relations goes a long way
- More and more important in this economic environment



## Identifying Issues

- Silence, bickering, pettiness
- Lack of team approach
- Complaints
- Other symptoms



## Resolving Workplace Issues

- One-on-one
- Group
- Third party
- Goal setting
- Common benefits
- Or else



## Dealing with Difficult Employees

- Direct
- Professional
- Deal with issues
- Avoid traps
  - Legal
  - Personal



## Reality

- Every manager has a tendency to put off those difficult conversations hoping the problem will disappear
- Whether vulgar language, excessive gossip, inappropriate dress, personal hygiene, or performance issues, every manager will face difficult employee issues

## Reality (continued)

- Supervisors need to be skilled and understand what is legal
- More than that, they need to understand what will work
  - How to begin the conversation
  - How to confront difficult employees
  - How to create an atmosphere that engages employees
  - How to discover the truth and learn what is really the cause

## Reality (continued)

- Attitude problems
- Rule breakers
- Does not play well with others
- An excuse for everything
- Keeping a record
- Intentionally difficult

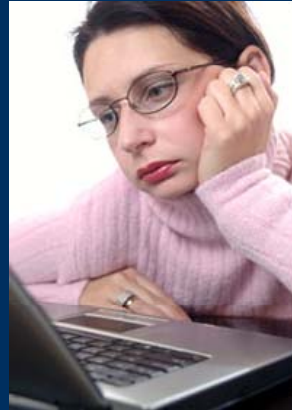


## Reality (continued)

- Address the facts
- No tolerance for threats, accusations and defiance
- Productive ways to counsel employees
- Keep your emotions under control
- Focus on the problem, not the person

## The Right Approach

- We are all in this together
- Do you want to be a part of the team?
- Do you want to succeed?



## Key Points to Remember

- Manage employees
- Deal with complaints and problems
- Realize “perception” is as important as reality
- Remember the goal is to prevent, resolve and avoid claims – not to “win”