

EFFECTIVE OFFICE COMMUNICATION - MANAGING CONFLICT

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Conflict is inevitable. No matter what type of job you are in, at one time or another, you will be faced with conflict. How you handle that conflict, the choices that you make, can have a distinct impact on your relationships with others and on your career.

The work world of today is more stressful than ever. Often, individuals with competing goals lay yourself open to conflict as they seek recognition. In addition, the goals of individuals are sometimes out of sync with the company mission - this occurs when a company fails to communicate shared values. Increased market pressure requires decisions to be made today, not tomorrow, often with limited evidence to review. All of this creates a highly charged environment that is ripe for conflict to occur.

There are a variety of styles for addressing conflict discussed in the text - withdrawal, accommodation, forcing, compromising and collaboration. Most of us rely on one or two of these strategies and apply them to all conflicts we face vs. examining situational factors in choosing a strategy. Recognizing that there is a time and a place for each of these is important to understanding conflict management strategy.

There will be times when you need to give constructive feedback to team mates, subordinates or even a superior. Knowing how to give constructive criticism can be the difference between a successful conflict interview or a failure. One method for communicating constructive criticism is to create a feedback sandwich.

Start and end your comments with something positive and sandwich the criticism in between. People tend to focus on what they hear first and last, so this is a good strategy for managing the relationship impact of giving constructive feedback.

Some other considerations...

Give the feedback as close in time to the behavior as possible.

Imagine disciplining your child six weeks after he/she wrote on the wall with a crayon. That would not be very effective. Providing constructive feedback to subordinates or teammates is no different. If it is worth addressing, it should be addressed in a timely manner.

Use non-threatening language.

When language is used that puts the receiver on the defense right from the start, the focus on this issue is lost and it becomes personal. Instead of "you" are the problem, phrase it, "we" have a problem.

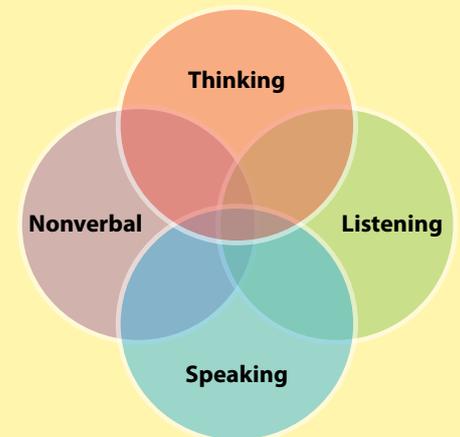
Demonstrate the impact that the behavior has on others and on company goals.

Sometimes people fail to see the big picture - pointing that out can help a person to see why certain rules, methods or procedures are important. If they are important, they are more likely to comply. This will also allow the receiver to save face.

Ensure that the receiver understands your feedback.

Sometimes a person may be unclear even after you have explained it. He/she may be hesitant to ask questions for fear of reprisal. Leaving the conflict interview assured that there was a mutual understanding is a foremost priority.

The Four Communication Skills



Work together to identify useful solutions.

The point of giving constructive criticism is to help the receiver to improve. Since hiring and training new employees is very costly, it makes good business sense to manage relationships with good employees with care. Demonstrating your investment in a mutual solution, will ultimately demonstrate respect for the receiver which is important to the maintenance of the relationship.

In summary

When you find yourself on the receiving end of the constructive criticism, remember your objective in the situation which is to come to a shared understanding of the issue. Viewing conflict interviews from this perspective will help you to avoid defensive reactions and work toward resolution.

Discover the communication secrets of making people like you [<http://www.shibaresumes.com>] (click on communication link)

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