

# SAFETY MEMO

September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – Workplace Conflict



Did you know?

## What is workplace conflict:

A conflict is described by Webster as “to be different, opposed, or contradictory; to fail to be in agreement or accord.” This definition can apply to co-workers at the workplace.

Workplace conflicts have a degree of predictability in that they began with prior behaviour and can be costly to business. It is estimated that unaddressed conflict wastes about eight hours of company time in gossip and other unproductive activities.<sup>1</sup>



## What does a workplace conflict look like<sup>2</sup>?

**Task-based conflicts:** when employees work on an interdependent project and must coordinate tasks so that everyone completes their part in a timely manner.

**Leadership conflicts:** everyone has a different leadership style and form of communication, and everyone responds differently.

**Work style conflicts:** some people prefer to work alone, while others prefer groups. Some people prefer no directions, others need a lot of direction and oversight. Some people like to work late at night, and others function best earlier in the day.

**Personality-based conflicts:** we are all different and hold different viewpoints on how tasks and projects should be approached and completed.

## How do we address these situations?

When we ignore the conflicts and allow the problem to fester, it can cause serious problems not only for the people involved in the conflict but also to other people we work with and around.

1. **Acknowledge the conflict** – begin by admitting that there is a conflict. Look at both sides of the issue.
2. **Talk it over** – discover if there is a time and place you can meet with the other person.
3. **Listen carefully** – avoid interrupting and ask questions for clarification.
4. **Find things you can agree upon** – modify the assessment until you both can agree on the summary of events.
5. **Create a solution** – discuss which areas of conflict are most important to both of you
6. **Develop a plan for resolution and follow through** – Focus on the future and propose possible solutions. Discuss and create ways to stay accountable.
7. **Make necessary changes** – Stick with the plan until all conflicts are resolved. If it's not possible to resolve the conflicts, it may be time explore other options such as job/department changes, or taking on a different role altogether<sup>3</sup>.

Conflict is a part of life whether at home or the workplace and can be a healthy outlet to spur innovation and growth. Effective and high performing teams are those in which members feel safe to voice their disagreement and to be heard by the group. So instead of letting a disagreement escalate, take a proactive approach to working through the conflict and be open to learning a new viewpoint. You never know where your next project inspiration will come from.

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Allen-Short, 10 Tips for Managing Conflict Resolution at Work (2020). <https://giveandtakeinc.com/blog/work-life/10-tips-for-conflict-resolution-at-work/>

<sup>2</sup> Atlas Staffing, 6 Common workplace conflicts and how to deal with them (2018), <https://atlasstaffing.com/blog/6-common-workplace-conflicts-and-how-to-deal-with-them/>

<sup>3</sup> Gene Linetsky, How to resolve a conflict at work (2020). <https://www.wikihow.com/Resolve-a-Conflict-at-Work>