

# THE LEADER'S GUIDE TO RESOLVING CONFLICT

STOP THE DRAMA, START THE DIALOGUE: HOW LEADERS RESOLVE CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE



## WHAT TO REMEMBER ABOUT CONFLICT...

Conflict is not a failure. It is a signal that smart people see different facts, risks, or incentives

## WORKPLACE CONFLICT SITS IN THREE BUCKETS

### TASK

Task conflict is about **the content of the work**—requirements, risks, or priorities.

### PROCESS

Process conflict is about **how the work gets done**—roles, handoffs, or decision rules.

### RELATIONSHIP

Relationship conflict is **about identity and history**—tone, trust, or perceived fairness.

## WHY RESOLVING CONFLICT EARLY MATTERS

Unresolved conflict compounds—leading to stress, turnover, and errors.

When leaders address issues early and fairly:

### SPEED IMPROVES

Risks surface sooner, and small problems stay small.

### QUALITY IMPROVES

Decisions are based on contextual information.

### ENGAGEMENT IMPROVES

People feel heard and understand the “why.”

## HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICT IN A WAY PEOPLE TRUST

### DECIDE WITH SHARED STANDARDS

Tie options to your values. Decide & prioritize together where you can. When you must decide as the leader, explain the trade-offs you weighed and why this path fits the standards.

### ASK AND LISTEN

Ask clear, curious questions—like “What led to the choice?” or “What would make it easier next time?”—then summarize to confirm understanding.

### KNOW WHEN TO ESCALATE

For issues involving harassment, discrimination, or legal risk, stop informal mediation and follow policy. Protect those who speak up and explain next steps clearly.

### SHIFT FROM POSITIONS TO INTEREST

Positions sound like “due Friday.” Interests sound like “protect the quality of our work.” Interests open space for additional options or discussion.

### OPEN WITH INTENT & FACTS

State what you’re trying to achieve, describe what happened, and note the impact.



### CLOSE WITH COMMITMENTS & A REVIEW DATE

Say who will do what by when, and how you will know it worked. Summarize in writing today—the shortest path to trust is reliability.

### MIND THE CONTEXT

In remote or cross-cultural work, use structure—video, written summaries, rotating times, and clear confirmation.

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