

Reducing Conflict 61 Your Conflict Reduction Reputation

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Do you know your conflict reduction reputation? That is a key element to your success as a leader. Some leaders are really good at resolving issues of conflict while others focus on preventing them. Having a reputation for being good at both things would be great.

The key to preventing conflict

People in any organization are going to have conflicts from time to time. This series has been all about how to resolve conflict in the workplace and in your private life. The key is to anticipate that things will sometimes get people upset. If you have a nose for this common problem, you can often take corrective action before active conflict erupts.

The impact of culture

If you have established a culture of respect and trust, conflict is going to have a hard time taking hold. People will express when something does not feel right before they get upset about it. This open communication gives time for the leaders to go back to their sense of purpose and values.

Follow the body language

Often times impending conflict can be seen in a change in body language. One person may look across the room to a buddy and roll his eyes. It might be a case of raised eyebrows or dilated pupils. Keep a sharp eye out for unusual body language signals. Flaring nostrils or a clenched jaw might signal a person who is ready to explode.

Intervene before the conflict breaks out in the open

There is usually time to calm people down by pointing out that we are all on the same team. You may be able to get the disagreeing individuals to express their feelings in an open discussion.

Sometimes the parties are just not hearing each other. They are talking past the other person, and the points become lost in the vacuum. Keep an ear out for a raised voice or higher pitch than usual. In this instance, it is helpful to have each person slow down enough to give the key points. Then have the other person repeat back what they heard.

Both parties must understand both points of view with an open mind. It is also OK to agree to disagree. Just because you have a different opinion on a topic doesn't mean you cannot work with the other person.

Bring the values into the equation

Often some of the values that people have agreed upon are violated in the heat of conflict. If this is the case, bring the individuals back to a sense of accountability for following the values.

Conclusion

Have a reputation for being a peace-maker in your organization. You can do this by following the tips in this article. Always be alert for the signals of escalating rancor and intervene early for the best result.

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