

Reducing Conflict 86 Intentional Conflict

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Intentional conflict is rare but deadly in an organization. You do not see this very often because in most organizations people are at least trying to get along. I believe that people working in close proximity have a remarkable ability to drive each other crazy.

Intentional conflict is a different animal

Intentional conflict is caused when one person tries to get under the skin of another individual. The root cause of the angst can be any number of different factors, but the results are the same. There is a constant bombardment of annoying actions by one person with the purpose of riling up the opponent.

Conventional conflict reduction techniques, such as a mediator or teambuilding are less effective in this situation. You need to change the corrective approach to have any hope of resolution. You must start further back.

Start with why there is intentional conflict

Recognize that the person is going against human nature. People instinctively know that getting along with their peers leads to a happier life for them. There must be a reason for acrimony beyond the normal give and take. Do some analysis and ask why this person would go out of his way to be mean constantly.

Stopping intentional conflict requires addressing the root causes of the conflict and implementing effective communication strategies. Here are some steps you can take to stop intentional conflict:

1. **Try to identify the root causes.** Determine the underlying causes of the conflict by actively listening to each party and gathering information about the situation. It could reflect jealousy, revenge, extreme bias, fear, systemic hatred, or a number of other factors.
2. **Promote effective communication.** Encourage open and honest communication between the parties involved. It helps to clarify misunderstandings and reduce tension.
3. **Encourage compromise.** Help the parties to find common ground and identify areas where they can compromise. Finding areas of agreement helps to reduce tensions and leads to a resolution.
4. **Use a mediator.** If the conflict is particularly difficult to resolve, consider using a mediator to help facilitate the negotiation process.

5. **Promote positive relationships.** Encourage positive relationships between the parties involved in the conflict. Finding peace helps to build trust and reduce the likelihood of future conflicts.
6. **Address underlying issues.** Address any underlying issues that may be contributing to the conflict. Power imbalances, discrimination, external conditions, or cultural differences can cause the problem.

Remember that stopping intentional conflict takes time, patience, and a willingness to listen and understand different perspectives. It may also require the involvement of trained professionals such as mediators, conflict resolution specialists, or mental health professionals.

Start small

If you are facing this condition in your group, recognize that you have a major problem. In most situations, people are willing to at least listen to the issues and work toward solutions. With this condition, you are dealing with a person who is sick and needs help. You are not going to cure stage-four cancer with an aspirin.

Get some professional help and look for tiny clues relative to the history of this problem. You want to uncover the genesis of such a negative attitude toward another person. It could be a long-gone incident that colored the relationship. It could also be a stereotypical attitude from the person's upbringing.

For example, suppose your mother was murdered by a person of a particular nationality. That situation might make it impossible for you to accept another person from that country.

Worst comes to worst, cut the cord

If all the above steps do not lead to a better situation, then you need an analysis. Is keeping this disruptive person on the team a wise decision? Recognize there are some bad apples in this world and take decisive action.

Conclusion

Resolving a case of intentional conflict is a daunting task. Do not ignore the problem hoping it will go away.

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