

Reducing Conflict 96 Document Behaviors

By Bob Whipple MBA CPTD



One simple way to reduce conflicts is to have your group document expected behaviors in advance. I have used this technique in the past, and it has saved a lot of grief over the years.

The trick is to get your team to agree upon a set of rules that they intend to follow. Write down the rules and agree upon some form of consequence for people who violate them. The rules act as a preventive. Everyone in the group has signed up for the consequence if they violate them.

Example of an actual list of team behaviors

The following list of behaviors was taken from a group I supervised several years ago.

- When in conflict we will try to see from the other person's perspective.
- If we disagree, we will do it without being disagreeable.
- We will not leave meetings with "silent no's."
- Everyone will act like an adult.
- The team will build an environment of respect and trust.
- Commitments are always honored.
- Individuals stay positive, even in difficult times.
- Members seek to understand before seeking to be understood.
- We help and support one another.

Why this list helps reduce conflict

Daily operations are sometimes intense and confusing. It is easy to get flustered and forget to live by the rules. Having them written down and agreed to prevents problems from surfacing. People know they will be reminded if they overlook one of the rules. If a pattern arises where the rules are broken multiple times, then disciplinary actions are required.

Accountability is vital

If you have established rules for department, then you **must** enforce them or they will lose their power. If people recognize that you often excuse lapses from the standard,

they will test the limits often. It becomes a game of “Gotcha” where leaders sometimes enforce the rules, but not always.

Recognize good behavior

It is also important that you reinforce people when they model the rules. It is not enough to hold a hammer over people’s heads with a negative consequence. Instead, catch people in the act of modeling the documented behaviors and thank them. That reinforcement is vital because other people will be reminded of the agreements often.

Conclusion

Having a set of documented behaviors can reduce the conflict between people daily. Just remember to hold people accountable if they violate a rule and reinforce them when they follow the rules.

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