

Reducing Conflict 98 Verify

By Bob Whipple MBA CPTD



Any time you are in conflict with another person, it is vital to verify understanding. You may have misunderstood the other person's thinking. You may have miscommunicated your own point of view. Each of you may have differing perspectives on what is going on. There are several ways to verify the different points of view.

In this article, I will share some common ways to verify understanding. I will also give several reasons why verification helps reduce conflict.

Have each party summarize key points to verify

Each party can summarize the key logic behind why they believe as they do. This summary is a way to check that both parties heard the other person accurately. The key points should be listed in brief statements and not couched in long rationalizations. The role of this step is to ensure the key points of contention are clearly understood in both directions.

Reverse roles

It sometimes helps if both people reverse roles. That is, you attempt to argue for the points made by the other person and visa-versa. One caveat with this technique is that both parties must play the game fairly. If I am articulating your side of an issue, I must fully engage in your logic. That also helps to verify understanding.

Solicit the help of a neutral third party

Sometimes having a mediator listen to both sides and describe the issue can help clear the air. You need to verify the third party is truly neutral or the issue starts out as two against one.

Some reasons to verify your understanding

1. **Accuracy.** Verifying your understanding allows you to ensure that you have an accurate picture of the situation. It helps ensure that you have correctly interpreted the information. You minimize the problem of false assumptions.

2. **Clarity.** Conflict can be caused by ambiguity or lack of clarity. This process helps you gain a clear picture of the other person's perspective, intentions, or concerns. It also gives them an opportunity to clarify their position, leading to better communication.
3. **Empathy.** Verifying your understanding demonstrates empathy and a willingness to listen to the other person's point of view. It shows that you value their perspective and are open to considering their thoughts and feelings. This empathetic approach can help de-escalate tensions and foster a more constructive dialogue.
4. **Problem-Solving.** Verifying your understanding is crucial for effective problem-solving during conflicts. It allows you to identify the root causes of the conflict and find common ground or shared objectives. You can work together to find mutually beneficial solutions and move towards resolution.
5. **Building Trust.** Trust is often eroded during conflicts. When you verify, you demonstrate a genuine commitment to resolving the conflict and rebuilding trust. It shows that you are invested in open and honest communication. This verification can lay the foundation for improved relationships in the future.

Summary

Verifying your understanding plays a vital role in conflict resolution. It helps ensure accuracy, clarity, empathy, problem-solving, and the restoration of trust. By taking the time to clarify and confirm your understanding, you increase the likelihood of finding common ground. You are more likely to reach a resolution that satisfies all parties involved.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*, and *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.