

Reducing Conflict 99 Too Much Conflict

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There are many sources of conflict within any organization. I will describe the general situation in an organization with low discord. Then, I will share give some specific causes of why conflict flares up in weak cultures.

Some organizations experience a lot of friction and others do not. That observation provides a clue to how to control it.

Why does conflict in organizations occur?

The most basic cause of organizational conflict is weak leadership. Where we see excellent leadership at work there is very little discord. That generalization is because excellent leaders create the kind of culture that does not support disputes. Sure, there are going to be differences of opinion, but a strong culture of trust beats back systemic struggles.

A culture of trust means that people respect others and support them where possible. Differences do occur, but they are usually resolved quickly due to good communication.

Friction between groups is possible, but it does not become a long-term issue. The groups discuss their issues and come up with compromises. Since respect and trust are the underlying cultures, struggles are short-lived.

What are the root causes of fights that persist in weak cultures?

1. **Communication breakdown.** Miscommunication or lack of effective communication can lead to disputes. Many times people do not understand the other side.
2. **Differences in goals and objectives.** When individuals or departments within an organization have conflicting goals or objectives, it can result in discord. Each party may prioritize their own objectives, leading to disagreements and clashes.
3. **Limited resources.** Controversy can arise when there are limited resources, such as budget, staff, time, or equipment. Competing for scarce resources can cause tensions between individuals or departments within an organization.
4. **Power struggles.** Organizations often have hierarchies and power structures. Controversy can arise when there are struggles for power, influence, or control.

Power imbalances, perceived favoritism, or clashes between different departments or individuals can lead to discord.

5. **Differences in values and beliefs.** Diverse organizations bring together individuals with different backgrounds, values, and beliefs. When these differences clash, problems can arise. Disagreements on how things should be done, differing ethical perspectives, or cultural clashes can contribute to friction.
6. **Organizational change.** Major changes within an organization, such as restructuring, mergers, or new leadership, can create conflict. People may resist change or have different ideas about the direction the organization should take.
7. **Role ambiguity.** When roles and responsibilities within an organization are unclear or overlapping, controversy can arise. Uncertainty about who is responsible for what can result in misunderstandings, finger-pointing, and discord among team members.
8. **Interpersonal dynamics.** Differences in personalities, work styles, or communication styles among employees can lead to conflicts. Conflicting personalities or personal issues that spill into the workplace can disrupt teamwork and create tension.

Summary

The best way to avoid confrontation in an organization is to have a culture of high trust and respect. Leaders create an atmosphere in which trust will grow. Organizations must recognize and address the sources of conflict proactively to foster a healthy and productive work environment.

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