

Conflict Management Strategies

This infographic provides five strategies to leverage team conflict in a productive way. Applying these tips will improve your conflict management and help you capitalize on teaching moments within your team.

1 Ask for Help to Understand

- Approach teammates from a position of cooperation, seeking their help to understand the dynamics; use open-ended questions.
- Example: “I think I’m missing something here. Can you help me understand how this will address the current situation?”
- This provides an opportunity for additional team input with the chance to help steer the plan in a better direction.

2 Use “And” not “But”

- Express a contrary opinion by adding “and” with your viewpoint, instead of “but.”
- Example: “You think we need to leave room in the budget for a team building event and I’m concerned that we need that money for employee training. What are our options?”
- This engages your teammates’ problem solving skills, which are inherently collaborative instead of combative.

3 Discuss the Underlying Issue

- Walk through the logic behind a suggestion and seek other ways to accomplish the goal. Aim to gain agreement on the importance of the problem you’re trying to solve, then work together to explore solutions
- Example: “I was a little surprised with your suggestions about the budget cost overruns. What is your goal based on your suggestions?”
- This ensures you’re working towards the same shared goal.

4 Ask About the Impact

- Use an open-ended question to discuss concerns.
- Example: “Ok, we’re contemplating launching this program to only our East Coast employees. How is that going to land with our West Coast employees?” This approach feels much less aggressive than saying “This will make our West Coast employees angry, and we’ll lose credibility.”
- This demonstrates that you’re open to ideas and curious about the right approach.

5 Use Hypotheticals

- Ask about hypothetical situations to spark imagination and creative thinking.
- Example: “I hear your concern about getting the right people to pull off this new initiative. If we could get the right people ... what could the initiative look like and what would those people need to make it successful?”
- This helps keep potential tension at bay. When meeting resistance, ask teammates to imagine a different scenario.