

# DEALING WITH

There are few challenges that can derail your team faster than interpersonal conflict. Ask any business leader what is one of the toughest parts of their role and they often respond by talking about how to have the 'hard' conversation with team members about their negative behaviors. Being able to address overt conflict between your team members is part of your role. As a team member, you often see and hear issues before your manager does. This means you can address the issue before it becomes one which creates animosity and negativity in your team. The next pages explain what conflict is and how to deal with it appropriately.

## What causes conflict?

- Conflict can arise when there are differences in goals, strategies, interests, desires, opinions or values.
- Conflict may also arise as a result of a personal dislike between team members.
- Conflict usually arises when:
  1. The stakes are high
  2. Emotions are heated

We need to build our resilience to these factors and keep our composure. This reduces the possibility of 'losing it'.

Conflict doesn't just happen. It tends to build over time. Small frustrations add up and people lose their desire to adapt to others. This escalates and overt conflict is the result. As a leader, you have a critical role to keep the team in check and manage the small signs of conflict before they turn into something bigger.

## Conflict Cues

- Noticing the signs of Conflict.
- Take action before it escalates.



# CONFLICT

## Conflict Levels

Hey! This is important. Make sure you pay attention!

- Each interaction has a different degree of impact.
- Not all difficult interactions are worth confronting.
- Concentrate on addressing those behaviors which are affecting your team's performance.
- Out of character behavior – may be best to simply let it go, as confronting it may have an even worse effect, especially if they were just having a bad day.

This is not 'textbook' stuff... You have to use your best judgment when dealing with conflict in your team.

Add your own to these lists:

### Negative Results of Conflict

- Team members feel defeated or demoralized.
- A climate of distrust and suspicion.
- Team members feel anxious, stressed, and often inadequate.
- Communication can be disrupted, leading to a lack of cooperation and information not being conveyed.
- Poor work and team relationships.
- Decline in productivity.
- Development of cliques within teams.

•

•

•

### Positive Results of Conflict

- Increases motivation and creativity.
- New ideas as team members look for new approaches.
- Leads to clarification of issues and ideas.
- Encourages team performance and cohesion.
- Develops tolerance.
- Increased trust can be developed within relationships.
- Assists with evaluation of existing systems and processes.
- Increases productivity and sense of achievement.'

•

•

•

# DEALING WITH CONFLICT ACTIVITY

What are some potential signs of conflict in a team? Have you noticed any of these signs in your team?

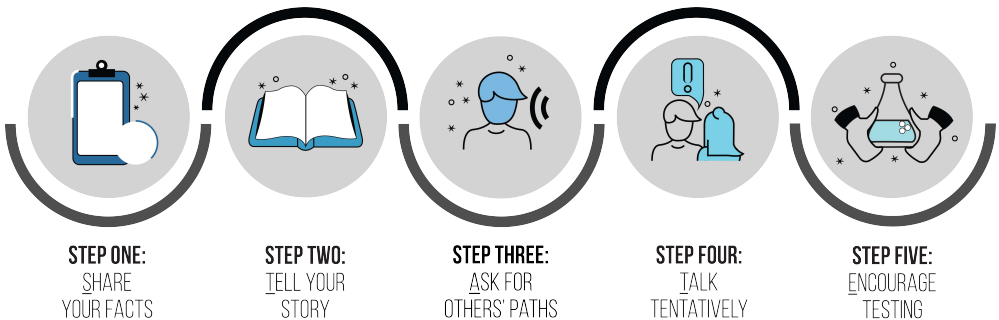
What action can you take to deal with this conflict?

# DEALING WITH CONFLICT USING CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

Below is a proven method for dealing positively with conflict. Take a moment to review the steps detailed on the next page, and discuss with others how you could use this model within your team. Role playing the STATE my Path Model as a team, is an effective method for learning and understanding the model. Try it and see how it goes.

## STATE My Path

If you notice that the other party is feeling threatened, take steps to make them feel safe. Do not continue your conversation until they feel safe.



## NOTES:

# DEALING WITH CONFLICT ACTIVITY

## STEP 1: SHARE YOUR FACTS

- Begin the conversation by stating the facts (as you see them).
- Facts are the least controversial.
- Facts are the most persuasive.
- Facts are the least insulting.

## STEP 2: TELL YOUR STORY

- Be confident – rational conclusions are drawn when the facts are right.
- Don't pile it on – don't lay all your grievances down at once.
- Look for safety problems – detect if the other party is feeling threatened.

## STEP 3: ASK FOR OTHERS' PATH

- Don't assume you have all the information. Ask for their perspective.
- Balance confidence with humility. Encourage others' to share their facts, stories, and feelings, and listen carefully. Be willing to reshape your view as additional information surfaces.
- Be humble - welcome their observations, opinions, and feelings.

## STEP 4: TALK TENTATIVELY

- Helps to reduce their defensiveness.
- Talking tentatively can increase our influence as we are suggesting that everyone can make mistakes.
- Be tentative and sensitive - do not persecute them.
- Do not begin by suggesting their behavior or mistake does not matter - talking tentatively is more about letting them learn and move forward.

## STEP 5: ENCOURAGE TESTING

- Actively invite the other party to share their solutions to the issue.
- Ensure the other person feels safe and can respond freely without fear.

Consider a potential future conflict / a conflict from the past and how you would manage the interaction using these five steps.

## **STEP 1: SHARE YOUR FACTS**

## **STEP 2: TELL YOUR STORY**

## **STEP 3: ASK FOR OTHERS' PATH**

## **STEP 4: TALK TENTATIVELY**

## **STEP 5: ENCOURAGE TESTING**