

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: Necessary Skills in Today's Workplace

**BACKPACK TO BRIEFCASE** | **DU SAC À DOS AU PORTE-DOCUMENTS**

**Conflict Competency in the Workplace**

November 20, 2018 | 11:00 am to 12:30 pm

Jim Fielding Innovation and Commercialization Space  
Cliff Fielding Research, Innovation and Engineering Building  
Second Floor | Laurentian University | Sudbury



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# Why Conflict Mgmt is so Important?

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- Intergenerational Differences – major divide between millennials and baby boomers
- Flood of anti-harassment/bullying legislation in recent years
- Greater emphasis placed on creating a civil work environment – partly driven by legislative changes and demands of employees
- Greater level of sophistication in the modern workforce – won't stand for humiliation and ill-treatment



# Conflict Management

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Conflict is inevitable when more than one person associates with one another...





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“Dealing with people is probably the biggest problem you face, especially if you are in business. Yes, and that is also true if you are a housewife, architect or engineer.”

Dale Carnegie, author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*



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- **Conflict occurs inevitably in every form of organization:**
  - ✓ Conflict is a disagreement or clash between ideas, principles, or people. Anger, resentment and displeasure are manifestations of conflict.
- **Conflict left unchecked or unresolved may lead to:**
  - ✓ decreased productivity
  - ✓ poor employee morale



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- ✓ increased sick leave
- ✓ higher turnover rates
- ✓ employee resistance and subtle forms of sabotage
- ✓ communication breakdown
- ✓ deterioration of team concept
- ✓ poor service to clients
- ✓ poor work performance throughout the unit or department



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## Two (2) forms of conflict within organizations:

### ➤ Interpersonal

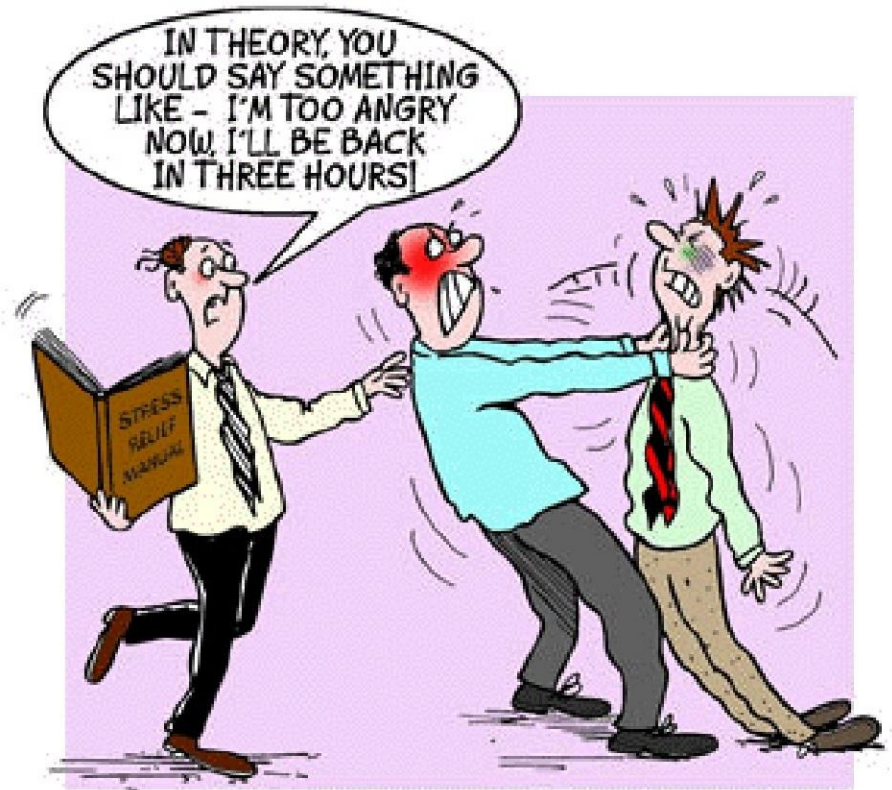
- ✓ conflict or discord between individual people;
- ✓ the nature of the conflict may be due to differences of opinions or personality issues.

### ➤ Organizational

- ✓ conflict with different parts of the organization;
- ✓ the nature of the conflict is broader and involves groups of people.

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## Conflict Management Styles







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## **Conflict Management Styles include:**

- ✓ Competing
- ✓ Accommodating
- ✓ Compromising
- ✓ Avoiding
- ✓ Collaboration



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## **Common Sources of Conflict are:**

- ✓ dissatisfaction with behaviour
- ✓ difference of opinion
- ✓ misunderstanding or confusion
- ✓ dissatisfaction with roles and responsibilities
- ✓ competition for resources, benefits and/or privileges

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## Resolving Conflict





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One of the single most apparent stumbling block is one's failure to understand his/her contribution to the conflict...



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## Resolving Conflict

- Identifying the behaviour tendencies of your employees can help you deal with a conflict before it escalates;
- Behaviours to look for include:
  - ✓ Passive Behaviour
  - ✓ Aggressive Behaviour
  - ✓ Passive-aggressive Behaviours



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## **Be assertive:**

- ✓ Assertive behaviour is generally the most effective method of getting what you want while not taking advantage of others;
- ✓ Assertiveness is the process of expressing thoughts and feelings while asking for what one wants in an appropriate way;
- ✓ Do not avoid “Difficult Conversations”;
- ✓ Being assertive can create a win-win situation.



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## **Initiating conflict resolution:**

- ✓ Avoid making accusations and attributing motives to the respondent – avoid “you” statements;
- ✓ Maintain personal ownership of the problem;
- ✓ Succinctly describe your problem in terms of behaviours, consequences and feelings;
- ✓ Specify the expectations or standards that have been violated;



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- ✓ Persist until understood;
- ✓ Encourage two-way interaction by inviting the respondent to express her perspective and ask questions;
- ✓ Don't "dump" all your issues at once;
- ✓ Appeal to what you share (principles, goals, constraints).





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## **Responding to conflict resolution:**

- ✓ Analyze and respond appropriately to the initiator's emotions;
- ✓ Show genuine concern and interest; respond empathetically, even if you disagree with the complaint;
- ✓ Avoid justifying your actions as your first response;



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- ✓ Ask questions that channel the initiator's remarks from general to specific and evaluative to descriptive statements;
- ✓ Focus on one issue, or one part of an issue at a time;
- ✓ Agree with some aspect of the complaint (facts, perceptions, feelings or principles);
- ✓ Ask the initiator to suggest something more acceptable;
- ✓ Agree on a remedial plan of action.



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## Mediating conflict resolution:

- ✓ Acknowledge that a conflict exists and treat it seriously;
- ✓ Do not belittle the problem or be dismissive;
- ✓ Break down the issues; begin working on one component at a time; start with one of the easier components;
- ✓ Do not take sides, remain neutral;



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- ✓ Focus discussion on the impact the conflict is having and the detriment of a continued conflict;
- ✓ Keep interaction issue oriented, not personality oriented; do not allow a disputant to dominate the conversation;
- ✓ Keep conflict in perspective by identifying areas of agreement or common viewpoint;



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- ✓ Help disputant's generate alternatives;
- ✓ Ensure satisfaction with the proposed resolution and commitment to implementation.



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**Thank you!**