

Conflict Management for Managers and Supervisors

All managers and supervisors should be able to recognize and deal with conflicts in the workplace. This includes those that are in progress and it includes knowing how to deal with a conflict before it actually becomes one.

As a supervisor you should recognize that you are, in fact, the first line of defence in a conflict. Both parties may turn to you to settle the conflict, you need to do this satisfactorily, without taking sides.

The best way to resolve or diffuse a potential conflict is to meet with those involved on a one to one basis. You need to act in a professional manner and evaluate the situation from both sides. If the conflict involves several people then it may be best to call an open type of meeting. This can be done in a conference or board room.

It is up to the supervisor or manager to deal with these issues quickly and get everyone working as a team again. Most conflicts seem to crop up in larger companies. This is just because of the high number of employees. The more people that are involved in a project the more likely a conflict or dispute will occur.

In a smaller company, most employees including the management team meet more regularly. They know each other more closely and have formed a tight knit team. Everyone knows each other's likes and dislikes so projects and tasks can easily be assigned without causing any issues. With fewer people to deal with it is much easier to resolve a conflict before it escalates.

If you hold a managerial position one way you can avoid conflicts is to provide regular feedback to your team. When your team members know they are doing a good job and are appreciated for it, they will continue doing so.

Think about it, how would you feel if every day you work your hardest but no-one ever thanks you for it. You start to feel as though you are not appreciated and resentment towards your superiors builds. When they do come and ask you to do something you are most likely to react in a negative way.

The best advice we can give any supervisor or manager today, is to acknowledge how your team is working. Provide them with the correct type of feedback so they can either improve their performance or feel appreciated.

While you may often be telling other supervisors how well your team is working, you haven't told them. They are the ones that are helping build your reputation so don't forget to communicate with them.