

GOTCHA!

Resolving Conflict at Work



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Workplace conflict is a BIG problem; one that just won't go away. Think about what keeps you up at night. Most executives and entrepreneurs I coach start with \$\$\$\$ and then quickly go to their employees.

Whether it is sales, marketing, IT support, administrative support, the common denominator is how the people get along to get the work done.

Here are some recent studies that should keep you even more awake at night than you already are.

Did you know that whether the economy is up or down “people stuff” is what sets companies apart from one another?

1. A whopping 93% of workers report being “negatively affected by an inability to deal with conflict on the job
2. Well over half, 69% avoid confronting co-workers on issues of accountability
3. Human resource professionals report having to intervene with conflict situations at least 3 times a week
4. Over 104 of employees in the retail, food, and leisure industries claim to experience hostility at work every day
5. Senior executives and business owners spend more than half their time resolving staff personality conflicts; this is double the time spent in the 1980's
6. Health care expenditures are 50% higher for workers who report high stress levels; and stress is created by conflict-ridden work environments

Are you feeling like you are carrying a big burden on your back? Well, guess what? The impact of conflict at work is a deal breaker; it is expensive and really takes the fun out of any creative work that could and should be done in a fast and furious frenzy of creative energy.

Not done yet, just a little more pain and we can solve the problems. To get a full sense of the financial hemorrhaging, you also need to factor in other big-ticket item such as lawsuits, the cost of employee turnover (estimated at 30% to 150% of an employee's salary) the untold loss of absenteeism, and reduced production due to a distracted and stressed workforce.

Almost done, one more study done by the American Management Association: employees spend about 25% of their time, or two hours a day, partaking of unproductive squabbles with colleagues.

So, you ask “Why do tensions get so dialed up at work?”

Good beginning question to start the search for answers. I'll skip the many sub-reasons and go right for the core of the problem. Conflict runs rampant in the workplace because of our natural and universal tendency to bring our families with us to work.

Yikes,” you say, “that is impossible. I dropped the kids at school and my wife works on the other side of town. So, what are you talking about?”

Workplace flare-ups go deep. If we look, really look, we can track them back to patterned behavior we learned as kids in our original organization, the family. We bring these patterns with us into our present work organizations. I wish it were not that way, however, that is the way it is.

Think about gravity.. We have to learn to appreciate the fact that it keeps our feet planted firmly down on the planet. And thanks to gravity, if a ball is thrown high in the air it will, no matter what we intend, fall to earth and if we happen to be standing in its trajectory it will bop us on the head.

This is what we know about workplace conflict.

We know that professional relationships are filled with emotional tensions, just as are relationships at home. We strive to be wise, philosophical, and mature in our professional dealings. Much of the time we are.

And then, that guy over there sets your teeth on edge because it reminds you of how your older brother used to mock you, or someone makes a mess in the community kitchen and you get angry when you find yourself cleaning up again, just as you always used to do when your mother never cleaned up after dinner. Suddenly you are mad, frustrated, and upset and you are not really sure why.

This reality is played out again and again, everywhere on the planet; this is the underbelly of what all the workplace statistics concerning conflict are ultimately about.

Okay, okay you say, I got it. The big question is what I do about it. Okay, okay, just take the Conflict Resolution Profile Quiz. Help is here!!!!

Be sure to visit our website at www.ceoptions.com.

Sylvia Lafair, PhD, is an award winning author, executive coach, transformational leader, work place solutions expert, and leadership development educator. Lafair is the author of “Don’t Bring It to Work” winner of 9 book awards and “GUTSY: How Women Leaders Make Change”, winner of 6 book awards to date. CEO inc.’s executive leadership program, “Total Leadership Connections™” (TLC) is now in its 14th year and has been recognized by Leadership Excellence as one of the best “leadership programs” in the country.

Please email Sylvia at Sylvia@ceoptions.com for information about transformational leadership development.

Did you know?

One-fourth of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives.

-Northwestern National Life

Three-fourths of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago.

-Princeton Survey Research Associates

Problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints than are any other life stressor-more so than even financial problems or family problems.

-St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Co.