



Some Common Causes of Workplace Conflict

- Personality differences - This is likely the most common cause of workplace conflict, and it can occur in even the most advanced and well-managed workplaces.
- Power struggles - This cause of conflict is also very common and can exist from the lowest position up to the senior managers of a larger operation.
- Poor communication skills - This also is near the top of the list when it comes to frequency.
- Seniority issues - This occurs usually when there are problems with the organizational structure and when it is not well understood.
- Misunderstandings over company mission, vision, and direction - Although this can be seen as a subset of “poor communication skills,” it also can be seen differently. True, it does imply a failure on management’s part to effectively communicate the company agenda, but it is a more critical problem.
- Inadequate performance - A simple example would be when one member of a team lets another one down by performing in a substandard way.
- Lack of adequate leadership skills - This leads to misunderstandings, usually as a result of poor communication skills on the part of the manager.
- Jealousy between coworkers - Various reasons can exist for jealousy, but it almost always leads to some form of conflict that has adverse implications for the operation.
- Misunderstanding about responsibilities - This can be a simple result of miscommunications or it can be a result of poor management skills.
- Competition for resources - An example of this would be when a highly sought after project arises and two candidates compete for it.
- Misunderstandings about organizational structure - Here we often have a communication issue since the rank of individuals is in question for some reason.
- A difference in basic values - An example of this would occur when two employees come from different cultures and those cultures have fundamental beliefs that are in conflict with those of the other culture.

- Personality (psychological) problems - This needs no explanation since if an employee has personality problems, he or she may be unable to adequately function in the workplace, and conflict may result.

It could be argued that an effective first step in reducing workplace conflict would be to address each of the above issues individually. When they do not exist or are limited in the workplace then it becomes a work environment in which conflicts are minimized. When conflicts arise after these issues have been addressed, other tools are necessary to respond to and mitigate them.