



Workplace Conflict and Conflict Mitigation

Workplace conflict is a form of conflict that takes place within the work environment. Although it can become a serious problem, measures can be taken to identify it and resolve those factors leading to it. Some factors related to these conflicts are common in all workplaces; however, these conflicts are usually influenced by the unique features of the organization within which they occur. These organizational features may be the hierarchical structure or the type of business, or the particular culture.

In almost all cases, these conflicts detract from the business at hand and therefore have a negative influence on the business. Some companies respond to workplace conflict by designing and implementing their own conflict mitigation programs, simple or complex; others bring in external professionals to assist with these problems; still others do little or nothing at all and simply allow the conflict to resolve itself. This last approach can lead to serious organizational and financial problems for obvious reasons.

Since the workplace is often an inherently stressful environment, some level of conflict is likely, but how much is considered to be a detriment to the operation? This can be answered by saying that any conflict that affects a business decision adversely is a detriment, and it follows that almost all conflict is a detriment. So some program should be devised to explicitly address all forms of conflict, small to large.

However, it can also be argued that mild conflict can actually lead to a more robust decision and a more profitable solution to a problem. As the old saying goes: "Necessity is the mother of invention." This idiom has often been used to describe the amazing inventions that have resulted from warfare. When people have their lives on the line, they tend to work out ingenious solutions to solving wartime problems. In a similar fashion, workplace conflict may lead to a sort of competition that results in a better solution.

Questions For Conflict Mitigation in the Workplace

- Does your workplace harbor certain managers who routinely fight amongst themselves concerning projects or other business entities?
- Is there any formal program in place to mitigate and resolve conflicts between employees?
- Do you know of any bad business decisions that have been made as a result of workplace conflict?
- Are conflicts generally resolved in your workplace or do they tend to fester and remain unresolved?
- Does management effectively intervene to resolve conflicts or do they remain passive and inactive?