



WORKPLACE TRUST LEADER HANDBOOK

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Email: info@eu15.co.uk

Website: www.workplacetrustleaders.com



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Forward

The Handbook and the companion [Online Training Module](#) will provide the SME Manager with the confidence to make informed decisions as well as the permission to use third party intervention resources such as conflict coaching, conciliation services, conflict resolution, and facilitation sessions and brings with it some emotional intelligence training.

Topics to be covered in the Handbook include:

- Develop Active (Deep) Listening Skills
- Build Emotional, Spiritual, and Cultural Intelligence
- Improve Ethics, Civility, and Leadership
- Understand Personal and Unintentional Bias
- Practice Neutrality and Withholding Judgment
- Learn the Restorative Process
- Understand the Behavioural Transition Process
- Understand Workplace Bullying, Harassment, and other Negative Behaviours
- Perception Awareness - of yourself and others
- Responding to Challenges
- Motivations and Forgiveness
- Expressive Body Language
- Becoming a Trust Leader
- Incidents and The Drama Triangle
- Facilitating Productive Group Discussions

The objective of this Workbook is to provide information to understand the effect that Trust Leaders might have on workplace conflict culture. Participants will learn the value of Trust Leaders at both the top and line levels of organizations and the role that trust can play in creating a harmonious workplace. The existing workplace culture is a community of individuals, who, collectively, are the organization and who, individually, are people with real human needs and concerns. Those needs and concerns, as well as unresolved or unaddressed workplace conflict, can be dramatically affected by the anxiety experienced in daily activities and in stress caused by major changes.

Participants will learn ways to listen to understand versus listening to reply as well as ways to appropriately address conflict. They will learn that conflict is not innately positive or negative but neutral until the conflict is either managed positively or negatively. The environment in which they work and contribute their time, energy, creativity, and interaction is their community, and the quality of their contributions affects the mission of the company as well as its members. The value an employer places on its people should be a measure of enlightened leaderships' concern for a healthy and profitable workplace. The information presented in this Workbook addresses the need for a positive conflict management structure which will have a significant impact on productivity, harmony, and the bottom line.

The objective of this Workbook is to provide information to understand the effect that Trust Leaders might have on workplace conflict culture.

1. HIRING AND PROMOTING PEOPLE TO MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

In today's economy, organizations are faced with the challenge of continuously improving efficiency to remain competitive. This means strict oversight and tight controls on those elements that effect an organization's cost structure. Historically, the focus has been on tangible costs that are easily identifiable and can be accurately measured. Now, to continue down the path of efficiency, many businesses are focusing on costs that do not appear on the financial statements and that may not be easily measured with traditional systems. In a more culturally complex and age diverse workplace, managers must appreciate and better understand the filters and differences in communication and listening and develop the emotional intelligence required to be an effective leader.

The preservation of workplace relationships, resolution of disputes, advocacy in conciliation and early intervention, and interest-based approaches to conflict are attainable through training, education, and coaching.

ON TRUST LEADERS

We all know them, we confide in them. They exist in our every group. They are the people we turn to whenever we and others need to vent. It is to them that we look for advice, solace, and comfort. We dump our problems on them, our concerns, and our fears. They willingly seem to take on our and others' issues.

But what about them? They have a personality that makes them natural trust leaders in every group they occupy; their workplace, their faith organization, their children's organizations, their neighborhood. Our burdens become theirs unless they have learned or been trained to protect themselves. If not they often burnout, become cynical, and resentful. They should be the peacemakers but without help they become victims.

A happy workforce is a productive workforce

2. BUILDING EMPLOYEE SKILLS

Many everyday types of workplace conflict can be constructive if the participants interpret and choose to deal with the conflict that way; otherwise, outcomes can be positive or negative. There are disputes that grow out of prejudice, ignorance, cultural traditions, or misplaced aggression, and these are disruptive as well as destructive. Conflict management training provides employees the ability to deal effectively with many types of conflict situations. Much like preventative medicine, raising self-awareness relative to conflict, minimizes its harmful effects. This way, training becomes proactive and serves a preventative role in eliminating the discomfort of non-productive communication or destructive conflict. Self-aware managers and workplace leaders are more likely to attend to issues early in the conflict cycle, thereby maintaining healthy relationships and productive communications.

The emotional energy to suppress conflict takes mental and physical energy away from productive work. The trust leader skills training increase participants' understanding of the nature of conflict, which can be classified into five conflict modes: Avoiding, Competing, Accommodating, Compromising, and Collaborating. With this understanding, employees gain an awareness of which conflict mode dominates their own behavior and can begin to understand what triggers their conflicts and how best to address it. We may not be able to change the direction of the wind but we can adjust our sails to get where we must be.

Appropriate communication and listening skills are essential to any preventative approach to dealing with conflict. Communication is not merely talking and waiting to talk, and listening is so basic we take it for granted. Unfortunately, most of us think of ourselves as better listeners than we really are. Genuine listening means suspending emotion, memory, desire, judgment, and, for a few moments at least, being present for the other person. Productive communications within the workplace can mean the difference between profitability and mediocrity.

The ability to separate positions from interests and to competently ask for what you need is at the heart of preventative conflict management. Learning and using principled negotiation skills raises the probability of both parties receiving what each desire, resulting in a win-win outcome. This training is all about getting what you need from others. Behavioral scientists have conducted studies and experiments over the past several decades to learn how people can influence others' attitudes and actions. Now, there is a substantial body of systematic research to demonstrate that certain interactions can lead people to accept a proposal or comply with a request that they might otherwise reject. These principles do not involve the merits of the proposal or request but the way in which it was communicated.

Many managers feel they should be able to handle every dispute on their own. An effective manager knows when to ask for assistance for the purpose of determining the best course of action in problem solving. This training outlines the dynamics of conflicts and various tactical alternatives associated with resolving them. It provides the manager with confidence to make informed decisions as well as the permission to use third party intervention resources such as conflict coaching, conciliation services, conflict resolution, and facilitation sessions and brings with it some emotional intelligence training.



People of all occupations report the most uncomfortable and stressful part of their job is the interpersonal conflicts that they have daily between themselves and co-workers or supervisors. Stress, often because of incivility, is as much a business issue as it is a health issue because it costs so much in employee burnout, turnover, higher absenteeism, lower production and increased health care costs. Improved communication could reduce stress at work. If managers would learn how to hold workers accountable without being harshly critical or how to interact with supervisors on sensitive issues and promote competence in others, a healthier workplace can be achieved.

We spend plenty of time complying with mandated regulations, but are we aware of emerging workplace problems and issues? Unhealthy relationships within the workplace are a leading cause of employee turnover. Employees have high expectations and expanding legal rights, while today's increasingly diverse workforce only adds to interpersonal challenges. The training provided in the [Online Training Modules](#) will give SMEs the tools to recognize problems and turn organizations into a harmonious workplace.

HUMANS ARE DISPOSABLE?

When did we as humans begin to believe that some other humans are disposable? We do that every time we decide a problem, a crisis, a tragedy belongs totally to another group and that it does not affect us or, that we simply cannot relate since it is 'their' problem - whomever they are. The day that you begin to re-understand that no person or group of people is disposable is the day your life will change and maybe theirs as well.

When did we start to believe that justice is only for me and my tribe. Justice only exists when it is equitably applied to all, no matter what tribe they belong to. Justice must be universal or it is simply not justice it is simply privilege. When did we decide that punishment is the only way to correct negative behavior? Are we truly ready to accept for ourselves the punishment that we bestow on others? For if we believe punishment promotes accountability then we do not understand accountability, since only a person can hold themselves accountable. We can only punish unless we endeavor to help 'supposed' offenders to find a way to re-integrate into society in positive ways. Punishment does not hold a person accountable, restorative practices promotes individual accountability and positive reintegration.

And when did we decide that equity only applies to us and our tribe and not all humankind? We need to foster equity for everyone regardless of tribe, if we are ever to become civilized. We must reject the notion that some people are disposable, that punishment is ours to dispense, and that equity is for us to decide. Only when we can understand these questions can we hope to continue on our shared journey to civilization.

3. DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF ALL EMPLOYEES IN EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Developing active listening skills throughout an organization is the single most important trait that can be developed and nurtured. We cannot function if we do not understand each other. As simple as that sounds most people have never been taught to listen to understand and so they spend their time listening to respond. When we listen to respond we never truly understand or connect. It is often the basis for wrongful assumptions, conflict, frustration, and negative conflict.



Active Listening

As far back as early Chinese civilization, the importance of listening was understood. The Chinese symbol for listening illustrates key elements for active listening.

Showing Respect to the Speaker

Showing respect to the speaker (attending skills) includes:

1. Look at the speaker and always keep the other person in view, so you can observe reactions and body language and generally maintain eye contact with the speaker.

2. Show that you are interested in what the speaker is saying. Encourage by unobtrusive use of “yes,” “I see,” “um hum.” Use positive body cues at appropriate points, such as nods, smiles, note-taking, furrowed brow, etc.
3. Most of the time, lean slightly forward toward the speaker. Keep an open, relaxed posture and keep physical movement to a minimum.
4. Engage the speaker by looking for opportunities to subtly mirror his/her cues. Do not mimic but look for ways to be congruent. For example, if he/she speaks slowly, match that cadence.
5. Draw the speaker out. Say something like, “I’d like to hear a little more about that, could you elaborate?”
6. Try to listen to what is not being said – identify what’s missing that you might expect to hear in these circumstances.
7. Observe how things are said – the emotions, the attitudes behind the words may be more important than what is actually said. Look beyond the mere words the speaker uses and remember the importance of tone of voice and body language and posture.
8. Say little yourself. You cannot listen while you are talking.
9. Show that you are listening and interested by asking questions, and giving feed-back, reframing, and summarizing. Be careful, however, in the early stages to not interrupt the speaker’s flow.

Asking Questions

Questions serve three basic purposes:

1. To show you are listening, especially in the early, trust building stage.
2. To gather and organize information, particularly in the problem identification and solving stage.
3. To express in question form what otherwise might be an academic statement: for example, “Are you sure that can be done?”

Generally, questions should be open-ended, not closed-ended. Closed-ended questions can be answered “yes” or “no,” or with a specific answer like “eight” or “November.” Closed-ended questions may encourage the answerer to stop talking. While open-ended questions cannot be answered so simply, they encourage the speaker to talk and explain in complete sentences. Open-ended questions are good because they invite a person to open up and tell his/her story.

Questions should be open-ended, not closed-ended

Listen with your eyes, your mind, your compassion

Listen with your eyes, your mind, your compassion,not just your ears. Listen to understand, not to respond. There will be ample time to respond once you understand and the speaker senses you understand. And because you now understand your response can be one of compassion demonstrating your full attention, complete with open ended questions and delivered with an affirming tone and open body language.

Listening to understand is a gift that you can bestow on others while you receive a tremendous return on investment. I learn very little when I am listening to respond and at best, I only amplify my own ignorance as I convince myself of my own importance. When I listen to understand whole new vistas open before my eyes and I engage in learning.

Open ended questions continue the learning phenomenon as deeper understanding creeps into my consciousness. It is a gift: a gift to me, a sharing of humanity, a reaffirmation of human connection, an ancient adaptation that elevated human beings to find connections, humanity, and survival. Listening to understand is an act that defines love of life.

And when did we decide that equity only applies to us and our tribe and not all humankind? We need to foster equity for everyone regardless of tribe, if we are ever to become civilized. We must reject the notion that some people are disposable, that punishment is ours to dispense, and that equity is for us to decide. Only when we can understand these questions can we hope to continue on our shared journey to civilization.

Feeding Back, Reframing, and Summarizing

When the speaker pauses it is an opportunity to confirm that you have been listening and that you understand by **FEEDING BACK** what you have heard or observed to the speaker. It is also a way to check that your perception of what you think you heard or observed is accurate, as well as a way to validate for the speaker what he/she is feeling.

To feed-back, repeat or paraphrase what the speaker has said or displayed as unspoken feelings. Sometimes, repeating the last couple of words of a speaker will encourage him/her to continue, but you do not want to parrot the speaker's actual words and sound like a mimic. Paraphrase instead but be conscious of particular words that seem important to the speaker and use them, if appropriate, in your paraphrasing.

REFRAMING is a special way of feeding back and is one of the listener's most important tools. It is restating what a party has said to capture the essence, remove negative overtones, and move the

process forward. Reframing also is a way to translate a positional statement into a statement of interests or needs. An example of this is a manager or supervisor angrily saying, “He’s so irresponsible, I can’t rely on him to do the work I assign on schedule.” Simple feedback might be, “so it really bothers you if he isn’t on schedule”; while a reframed response would be, “so being on schedule and following instructions is important to you.” Either response may be appropriate, and the difference is subtle; the first might be better at an early point in trust building, while the latter might be better stated later, during problem solving.

SUMMARIES are part of most feedback, but sometimes you may want to focus particularly on a summary. At major transitions, such as after one person has told his version of how the matter in discussion is viewed, the listener may want to summarize pertinent and major points of interest or concern.

Managing the Flow of Communication

Stick to the speaker’s subject. You may want to go somewhere else but give the speaker time to finish. Don’t be too quick to move on when the speaker repeats things. Remember, repetition may indicate that:

1. The subject is very important to the speaker.
2. The speaker needs to feel that you’ve really heard him/her on the subject.

This is a cue that you should feedback what the speaker is saying. If repetition continues, ask if there is anything else as important that needs mentioning.

Be comfortable with silence. People will talk when they have to, and silence can be a powerful tool in emotional dynamics.



4. KEEPING STAFF MEMBERS INFORMED, WHICH WILL ADD TO AN ENVIRONMENT OF TRUST

Basic Communication

A primary purpose of communication is to influence the attitudes and behaviors of those we address.

To achieve precision and effectiveness in communication:

- ☐ A message must be **conveyed**
- ☐ The message must be **received**
- ☐ There must be a **response**
- ☐ Each message must be **understood**

A. To convey a message:

- ☐ Point of view must be expressed clearly, simply, and effectively
- ☐ Refrain from assumptions (do not commit assumicide)
- ☐ Think as an intellectual but speak as a common person
- ☐ Consider the mode of conveyance (oral, written, or some combination)
- ☐ Be mindful of semantics and acronyms
- ☐ Remove “you know” and other fillers from your speech

B. To receive a message:

- ☐ There are good reasons for not listening well...the speed of average human speech may vary from 150 to 175 words per minute.
- ☐ We fall into the listening gap of daydreaming, rebutting, responding too soon, or boredom

Barriers To Communication

- ☐ Language- vocabulary, ambiguity, jargon, rambling
- ☐ Psychological- emotion, assumption, mood

- ☐ Structure- distance, time, method, equipment
- ☐ Situational- noise, discomfort, intrusions

Communicator's Weakness

- ☐ Inappropriate tone or approach
- ☐ Unskilled
- ☐ Lack of information
- ☐ Poor listening
- ☐ Lack of preparation
- ☐ Prejudice
- ☐ Sending solutions/conclusions

Methods To Remove Message Barriers

- ☐ Approach with a positive attitude
- ☐ Keep your emotions in check
- ☐ Maintain your concentration
- ☐ Find something to get interested in
- ☐ Relax and don't hurry
- ☐ Change perspectives
- ☐ Use active listening

Active Listening Points Of Concern

- ☐ Be aware of inherent difficulties in listening
- ☐ Most words have more than one meaning (there are 14,000 different meanings to 500 most commonly used words in the English language alone)
- ☐ Messages must be decoded for their intended meaning. We often soften the message just to be polite
- ☐ Listen to the person as well as the message

Active Listening Traits

- ☐ Analyze what's being said
- ☐ Separate the relevant from the irrelevant
- ☐ Test your understanding of what you hear
- ☐ Consider the implications
- ☐ Anticipate but do not prejudice the speaker

Active Listening Skills

□ Clarify

1. What has this person told me?
2. Are there any vague or inexact parts of the message? If so, what are they?
3. How can I express this so the speaker will clarify it?
4. Listen and observe to see how useful the clarification is.

Paraphrase

What has the other person said?

1. What is the content of the message? What is she trying to tell me?
2. How can I restate the main message and rephrase it?
3. Listen and see if the speaker confirms your response.

Summarize

What have we talked about so far?

1. Are there any apparent themes or patterns? Is there anything that keeps resurfacing in the discussion?
2. How can I sum up the patterns or themes of our conversation?
3. Listen and see if others confirm your summary response or not.

C. To respond to a message:

Remember proper etiquette in responding:

- Watch monopolizing the conversation
- Don't change the subject prematurely
- Be careful of stepping on other's sentences
- Hold your temper...outbursts are rarely useful in negotiation
- Silence is powerful
- Ask a question, turning the discussion back to the other party
- Allow the other party a method to save face

D. To understand a message:

Did you say what I think you said, or did I think I heard what I thought you were going to say?

Factors causing misunderstandings:

- High hopes
- Muddled message

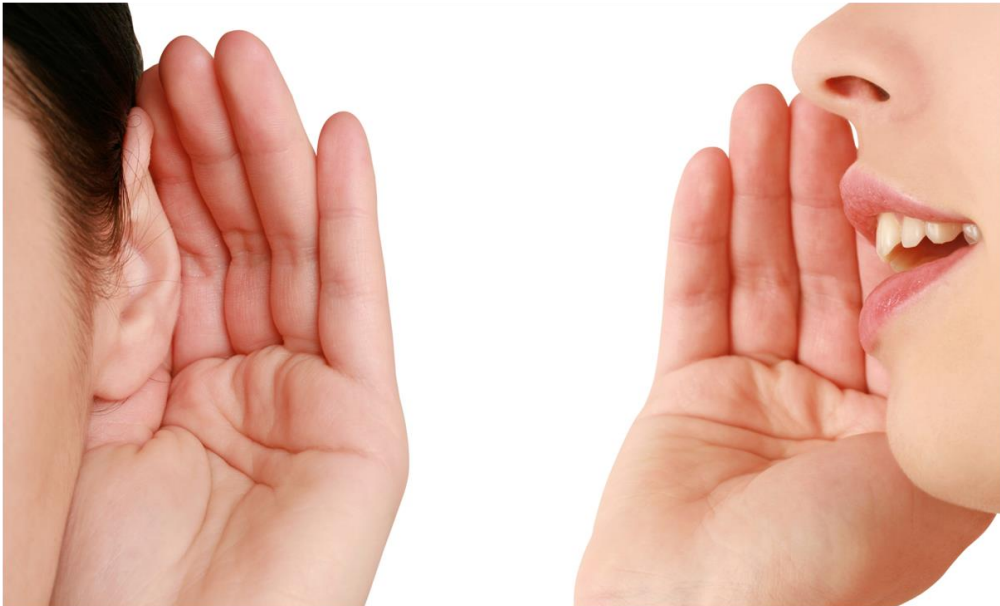
- Missing message

Seek feedback

- “What should we do about this?”
- “How will you handle this?”
- “What is the order of priorities?”
- “What is your view?”

Receiver's Weakness

- reluctant to receive
- not paying attention
- lack of familiarity with the subject
- prejudice



5. ACTING WITH INTEGRITY AND KEEPING COMMITMENTS

What is Emotional Intelligence?

The concept of emotional intelligence has become a very hot topic of psychological research in recent years, especially in regards to how it affects today's workforce. Businesses are essentially people, so anything that impacts the effectiveness of people's minds also impacts the businesses they run or work for. In fact, many experts now believe that a person's emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) may be more important than their IQ and is certainly a better predictor of success, quality of relationships, and overall happiness.



It's interesting to note how the concept of emotional intelligence has evolved over the years, from its inception as something called "social intelligence" all the way back in the 1930's, to "emotional strength" in the mid-20th century, to its current terminology, "emotional intelligence."

But whatever we call it, emotional intelligence is, in layman's terms, our level of ability to:

- Recognize and understand our emotions and reactions (**self-awareness**)
- Manage, control, and adapt our emotions, mood, reactions, and responses (**self-management**)
- Harness our emotions to motivate ourselves to take appropriate action, commit, follow-through, and work toward the achievement of our goals (**motivation**)
- Discern the feelings of others, understand their emotions, and utilize that understanding to relate to others more effectively (**empathy**)
- Build relationships, relate to others in social situations, lead, negotiate conflict, and work as part of a team (**social skills**)

Why is Emotional Intelligence Important?

Physical Health - The ability to take care of our bodies and especially to manage our stress, which has an incredible impact on our overall wellness, is heavily tied to our emotional intelligence. Only by being aware of our emotional state and our reactions to stress in our lives can we hope to manage stress and maintain good health.

Mental Well-Being - Emotional intelligence affects our attitude and outlook on life. It can also help to alleviate anxiety and avoid depression and mood swings. A high level of emotional intelligence directly correlates to a positive attitude and happier outlook on life.

Relationships - By better understanding and managing our emotions, we are better able to communicate our feelings in a more constructive way. We are also better able to understand and relate to those with whom we are in relationships. Understanding the needs, feelings, and responses of those we care about leads to stronger and more fulfilling relationships.

Conflict Resolution - When we can discern people's emotions and empathize with their perspective, it's much easier to resolve conflicts or possibly avoid them before they start. We are also better at negotiation due to the very nature of our ability to understand the needs and desires of others. It's easier to give people what they want if we can perceive what it is.

Success - Higher emotional intelligence helps us to be stronger internal motivators, which can reduce procrastination, increase self-confidence, and improve our ability to focus on a goal. It also allows us to create better networks of support, overcome setbacks, and persevere with a more resilient outlook. Our ability to delay gratification and see the long-term directly affects our ability to succeed.

Leadership - The ability to understand what motivates others, relate in a positive manner, and to build stronger bonds with others in the workplace inevitably makes those with higher emotional intelligence better leaders. An effective leader can recognize what the needs of his people are, so that those needs can be met in a way that encourages higher performance and workplace satisfaction. An emotionally savvy and intelligent leader is also able to build stronger teams by strategically utilizing the emotional diversity of their team members to benefit the team as a whole.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is still not completely understood, but what we do know is that emotions play a very critical role in the overall quality of our personal and professional lives, more critical even than our actual measure of brain intelligence. While tools and technology can help us to learn and master information, nothing can replace our ability to learn, manage, and master our emotions and the emotions of those around us.

6. PROTECTING THE INTEREST OF ALL EMPLOYEES

What People Say They Appreciate in Others

Management surveys say that what people like best is to be managed well, appreciated, and respected as a unique person.

The following characteristics are what people say they like to see in others. Notice there is no mention of money or intelligence level.

People like people who have manners...they mean someone who makes a request and says “please;” someone who says “thank you;” someone who says “excuse me” when they interrupt or bump another; someone who uses their name and greets them before bursting into agendas or requests for assistance.

People like people who are sincere and who listen to them...this means to really listen and not just go through the motions of appearing to care about what is being said. People who create an encouraging listening space are most appreciated.

People like people who are authentic...we like people who do what they say they will do and keep the trust we instill in them. We like them to walk the walk as well as talk the talk, and we like consistency so we know what to expect.

People like people who appreciate them...and they like to be told.

People like people who are upbeat and positive...cynical people create a toxic environment and a negative force that can be magnetic to attract more negativity.

People like people who are multidimensional and express their feelings as well as their thoughts and ideas...life is full of this and that, changes in mood, opinions, and perspectives. We like to hear all about this from someone else, not be greeted with a flat, un-dimensional personality; someone who is able to be enthusiastic, supportive, calming, energizing, and concerned is most appreciated. We like someone who is able to experience the full range of feelings and be able to meet the needs of the occasion.

People like people who have time for them...this is the gift of respect and recognition we all crave to receive.

People like other people who show respect...respect for their time, respect for boundaries, respect for feelings, and respect for space.

People like people who are engaging...we like people who encourage us to open up and who show real interest in a conversation and know how to keep it going; people who respond to what we say or do and let us feel their presence; people who listen to our feelings and acknowledge them.

Words

Words can be wounding or wondrous; they can lift up or tear down.

Words can range from clear and concise to complex and confusing...”upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear”; “the soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert”; “when shot at, the dove dove into the bush”; “the bandage was wound around the wound”; “there was a row among the oarsmen about how to row”; “they were too close to the door to close it”; “since there is no time like the present, she thought it was time to present the present.”

Words can come from the heart to say “I love you,” “I believe in you,” or “I’ll stand by you”... or they can fall out of a mouth with little meaning at all.

Words can be a code that requires a key to understand...and without that key, all kinds of misinterpretation and suspicion can fill the void. We tend to be creative, when required, in a mostly negative or worrisome way.

Words written down can be remembered while words only spoken tend to fade...words can be either eloquent or plain, yet their impact is determined in the heart.

Words can be sincere or empty promises...one offers life-giving nutrition while the other offers empty calories.

Words can rhyme in time or be contrasts that last...words can make you stop and think or they can make you fast forward and skim.

Words can be rich in meaning or show you the meaning of being rich.

Words can point you to their author...they can also point you to whom or what the author seeks.

Words can say a lot by not saying much...they can open an ear or they can open a heart.

Words can motivate or they can deflate...they can personify and connect or they can be merely white noise to a busy mind.



7. ADOPTING AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Improving Workplace Relationships

How to Get Along Better with People At Work

Develop a Positive Attitude

- Avoid negative thought and criticisms...truth speaking requires of you that you can endure your vulnerability in situations where important interests and needs are at stake. Overcoming your fears and showing respect for the feelings and viewpoint of others can create a positive climate even though there may be disagreement with the actual content of those views.
- Be less judgmental and more accepting of others...all too often, negative reactions are caused by differences in personalities, values, actions, or aspirations between people. While an impartial person would view them not as right or wrong but only observe that there are differences, you are more likely to treat the other with disdain, which reaction can be reciprocated and then with reprisal causing a like reaction and so forth and so forth...

Do Not Jump to Conclusions

- Gather as much information as possible...an ability to reconsider interpretations is important for authentic relationships and for personal development.
- Reacting defensively to situations without knowing the whole story can cause misunderstandings; so you should respond, and not just react... are you willing to accept the possibility that your images of reality and accuracy may be one-sided, biased, or wrong and are you willing to permit information contradicting your images to influence or change your interpretation of the other person or the situation?

Improve Your Communication Skills

- Listen carefully and focus on the speaker's message; this will allow you to respond appropriately and avoid misunderstandings...clear your mind and find ways to remove distractions; valuing the speaker means filtering out the noise and distractions within your head. To anticipate what the speaker is attempting to say or finishing sentences or thoughts is subtle degradation masked as help; be patient and allow the other person to set the pace, because if you rush you may stifle the real message.
- When the speaker is finished, state your understanding to ensure there is no misinterpretation...paraphrase what has been said to demonstrate you care and understand. Anytime you demonstrate a willingness to listen with a minimum of defensiveness, criticism, or impatience you are giving the gift of understanding and earning the right to have it reciprocated.

Resolve Conflicts Early

- When a negative situation does arise, do not let it fester, be direct, but courteous...anybody can become angry but to be angry with the right person and to the proper degree and at the appropriate time and for the right reasons is not so easy. Speak directly to the other person and use "I" statements; understanding one another is a give and take process and the best way to get the listening you need is to make the other person feel listened to first. Being listened to means you are taken seriously, that your ideas and feelings are known, and that what you say matters.

- Develop a plan of action to address the problem with your co-worker then work together toward resolving it before bringing it to your supervisor...keep an objective eye on the real problem and detach your feelings about the person presenting it.

Set Boundaries

- Developing friendships with co-workers is a natural process, however, it is important to set boundaries to ensure that the friendship does not interfere with your work relationship. There is sometimes a need to be assertive without coming off as arrogant, aggressive, and offensive. The art of this balance is being confident enough to be assertive of personal rights and boundaries while respectful of others.

Treat All Co-workers with Respect

- Be respectful by paying attention, listening carefully, and responding appropriately...good communication skills are mutual respect skills and each person should show respect for the other as well as respect for self. You can demonstrate respect by listening fully and affirming that you understand what that person means and you respect yourself when you assert or propose your own legitimate self-interest without aggression. To have a complete communication each person must both get and give.
- Always be courteous and professional...your reputation and how you are viewed by co-workers and others transcends this conflict.
- Regardless of the situation, try not to lash out or be rude...when the communication process breaks down you might assume that the other person did not say what he or she meant or did not hear what you were saying, but good communication means having the impact you meant to have; every message must pass through a filter of the speaker's clarity of expression and the listener's ability to comprehend what was said.
- Be open and honest about your feelings and allow others to do the same...helping someone identify and acknowledge their feelings tends to reduce the intensity of those feelings and allows all parties to better focus on the underlying problems or issues. Don't be afraid to recognize or affirm that someone is showing their feelings so that empowering that individual may improve communication.

Understand and Accept Personal or Cultural Differences

- When you and a co-worker do not see eye-to-eye, try looking at things from the other person's perspective. You will both be more productive if you recognize the need for cooperation to reach common goals and mutual interests. There are cultural differences in talking and listening and especially gender differences. Empathy means making an honest effort to understand where the other person is coming from, not necessarily joining in those feelings because two people are allowed to have different feelings, but recognizing the other's feelings.

8. DISPLAYING COMPETENCE IN SUPERVISORY AND OTHER WORK TASKS

Conflict Is Not the Problem, Conflict Is The Messenger

CONFLICT IS NORMAL

Conflict is a normal part of human relations and is the messenger pointing to a potential problem. Conflict is neither positive nor negative, but how the problem is handled will determine how it turns out. Having a manager tell them to work it out themselves could be viewed as dismissive and demonstrate lack of concern for what might be delicate and significant to the parties.

If their issues are addressed in a proper manner, each employee explains why their concept is important and what they are trying to achieve. If the discussion is facilitated by a trained neutral, there is a good chance that they will listen and hear some important parts of each other's plan and motivation. Often, once they really hear each other, they will combine their ideas and generate a joint concept. The new model can be superior to either of the original individual ideas and can prove to be positive on numerous fronts, not only for a better plan but for more workplace harmony and teamwork.

If the problem is ignored and not attended to, resentment grows and each employee might enlist others to 'their side' thereby wasting time and productivity. If this continues, it either fits into an already existing toxic workplace or can become the foundation for growing resentment, disengagement, and workplace drama. It can turn the workplace into a petri-dish for negative relationships and discontent. Having a defined conflict management process within the workplace can promote a healthy workplace, whereby, all conflicts are addressed with most having positive outcomes.

The challenge of introducing any major changes to the workplace will be negatively affected if the organization does not have an established conflict management system in place. For, if there are unresolved conflicts existing beneath the surface of the workplace, those conflicts could burst open when the stress of change arises with the introduction of robotics and artificial intelligence. The result could be a greater challenge with an adverse outcome.

It is, therefore, extremely valuable for organizations to have a positive conflict management system in place. If so, employees will have a higher level of trust, will have more positive work relationships, and be more open to explanations of the value of the change they are seeing.

CONFLICT CAN BE POSITIVE

Conflict can be positive and healthy, as well as a learning and growing experience. When conflict is dealt with in a positive way it can be helpful to our personal needs and purposes.

Unfortunately, conflict also has a negative impact when people not only disagree but cause hurt feelings and fractured relationships. There are options for finding a better way to manage or deal with conflict. This can be a first step on the way to improving communication, solving a problem, and building trust and cooperation.



9. LISTENING WITH RESPECT AND FULL ATTENTION

Take a moment and consider your current workplace and how conflict is addressed or not addressed.

1. Do you have or are there unresolved conflicts in your workplace?
2. How do you react to conflict, how does it make you feel?
3. Have you left a company or changed departments to avoid unresolved conflict?
4. Do you believe a third-party neutral could have resolved a previous conflict that you endured?

Becoming a Workplace Trust Leader

Are you aware of the manner in which you handle conflict and do you believe that it has a bearing on the creation of a positive state of mind?

When people are confronted with conflict, the available styles of dealing with it are accommodating, forcing, avoiding, compromising, or collaborating with each other. What might be the most appropriate manner of reacting often depends on the circumstances, our personalities, prior interactions, and the political or economic power one has over the other.

Conflict happens when people disagree about something. Despite the fact that we have a lot of similarities, as long as everyone is different from everybody else, we will have conflicts. It happens, and it is a natural part of life and work. In order to have productive and constructive interactions, there must be informal processes, skills, and techniques for approaching and resolving disagreements.

This is what you can do:

- **Assure a fair process**.....the process of interaction is just as important as the outcome. People tend to react positively when they believe they are being treated fairly; when they feel their concerns are being heard; and when they feel the game rules are neutral and fairly applied. When people believe the process is fair, they are more willing to accept and support the results.
- **Don't react**.....take the necessary time to cool down and resist the natural instinct. Anybody can become angry, that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the proper degree and at the appropriate time and for the right reasons is not so easy. Give yourself the gift of time to think. This can assist you in remaining focused on identifying and discussing the real needs and interests of people, and it can also help them work past the emotional stress of the moment.

- **Deal with emotions**.....helping someone identify and acknowledge their feelings tends to reduce the intensity of those feelings and allows all parties to better focus on the underlying problems or issues. All feelings are neutral and valid to the person holding them, but it is how you deal with the feeling that places a value on them. Don't be afraid to recognize or affirm that someone is showing their feelings so that empowering that individual may improve communication. Once you understand the role emotions play in communications, you will be able to place yourself in the other person's shoes. That old cliché means you have empathy, a quality that can be cultivated by developing genuine interest in other people.
- **Attack the problem and not the person**.....keep an objective eye on the real problem and detach your feelings about the person presenting it. Ask clarifying or probing questions to better understand the actual issue and do not blame but try to view the situation from the other person's perspective. Be careful to check assumptions and consider sharing your perceptions as a way to verify them for accuracy.
- **Practice direct communication**.....speak directly to the other person and use "I" statements such as, "I think...", "I feel...", "I need" and be clear about points of agreement. Use positive body language to show attention and ask questions to clarify that you understand. Paraphrase what has been said to demonstrate you care and understand and begin to become more conscious of your communication style and your ability to empathize with the feelings of others. As you develop a greater sensitivity to the needs and desires of family, friends, or associates you will gain their respect, which will lead to more effective communication of those unique thoughts that result from your creativity. Anytime you demonstrate a willingness to listen with a minimum of defensiveness, criticism, or impatience you are giving the gift of understanding and earning the right to have it reciprocated.
- **Look past positions to underlying interests**.....a position is a person's limited view of what solution is necessary to solve the problem, but until needs and underlying interests are ascertained it is not possible to generate options that will be mutually beneficial and agreeable. You must ask what is important and why it is before underlying motivations can identify what is fueling the dispute. Understanding one another is a give and take process and the best way to get the listening you need is to make the other person feel listened to first. Being listened to means we are taken seriously, that our ideas and feelings are known, and that what we say matters.
- **Focus on the future**.....any ongoing relationship you have with someone is longitudinal and can be altered to be constructive and improved. What just happened may be important or it may be trivial depending on how you want to make it appear just now. Remember, in a marathon you must pace yourself and believe that things will improve if only you give it the chance.

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10. EXHIBITING EMPATHY AND SENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF STAFF MEMBERS

What People Say They Appreciate In Others

People like people who have manners...they mean someone who makes a request and says “please;” someone who says “thank you;” someone who says “excuse me” when they interrupt or bump another; someone who uses their name and greets them before bursting into agendas or requests for assistance.

People like people who are sincere and who listen to them...this means to really listen and not just go through the motions of appearing to care about what is being said. People who create an encouraging listening space are most appreciated.

People like people who are authentic...we like people who do what they say they will do and keep the trust we instill in them. We like them to walk the walk as well as talk the talk, and we like consistency so we know what to expect.

People like people who appreciate them...and they like to be told.

People like people who are upbeat and positive...cynical people create a toxic environment and a negative force that can be magnetic to attract more negativity.

People like people who are multidimensional and express their feelings as well as their thoughts and ideas...life is full of this and that, changes in mood, opinions, and perspectives. We like to hear all about this from someone else, not be greeted with a flat, un-dimensional personality; someone who is able to be enthusiastic, supportive, calming, energizing, and concerned is most appreciated. We like someone who is able to experience the full range of feelings and be able to meet the needs of the occasion.

People like people who have time for them...this is the gift of respect and recognition we all crave to receive.

People like other people who show respect...respect for their time, respect for boundaries, respect for feelings, and respect for space.

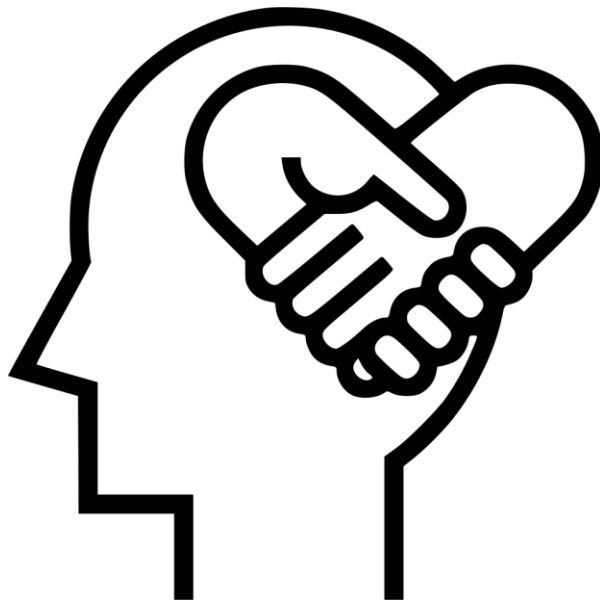
People like people who are engaging...we like people who encourage us to open up and who show real interest in a conversation and know how to keep it going; people who respond to what we say or do and let us feel their presence; people who listen to our feelings and acknowledge them.

We don't usually stop to examine patterns of misunderstanding in our lives, because we're stuck in our own point of view. Misunderstandings can hurt, and when we are hurt we tend to look outside ourselves for explanations. In this linear thinking we often reduce human interactions to a matter of personalities. When we assume the other person is a jerk, it reinforces our own passivity and lack of willingness to

genuinely interact. We write off people who have a pattern of non-responsiveness, assuming their character is fixed, but it only proves that these individuals trigger many people to play out the reciprocal role in their dramas of two-way disharmony.

GOOD COMMUNICATION

Good communication skills are mutual respect skills and each person should show respect for the other as well as respect for self. You can demonstrate respect by listening fully and affirming that you understand what that person means and you respect yourself when you assert or propose your own legitimate self-interest without aggression. To have a complete communication, each person must both get and give.



11. TAKE THOUGHTFUL RISKS TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND PRODUCTS FOR THE CUSTOMER

How to be Assertive Without Being Rude

There is sometimes a need to be assertive without coming off as arrogant, aggressive, and offensive; or ignoring your self-interests and being perceived as timid, submissive, and a doormat. The art of this balance is being confident enough to be assertive of personal rights and boundaries while respectful of others.

Know the distinction between being assertive versus being aggressive or arrogant... assertive people promote their rights rather than stepping on those of others.

Have clear boundaries when dealing with others... if you are clear where the limits are, then others will know as well.

Affirm yourself and your good qualities... develop self-confidence and positive self-esteem. Who better is there to love you than yourself?

Know what you want... there is a time and place to go along with others, but there is also a time to reach for your own dreams.

Avoid being timid... while aggressiveness steps on the rights of others, being timid sacrifices your own rights. Do not allow others to roll over you.

Be willing to clearly say either yes or no and stand by your answer... allow yourself to develop opinions and maintain them.

Avoid arrogance... dominance and controlling tendencies impinge on others from being themselves.

When opinions are in question give yourself permission to disclose yours... let others know your viewpoint and recognize that it is as significant and anyone else's.

Take responsibility for yourself... do not make excuses and require that others around you also take responsibility for themselves and their actions. Avoid being codependent and be careful not to dominate others with quieter spirits.

Good communication means having the impact you meant to have, but every message must pass through a filter of the speaker's clarity of expression and the listener's ability to comprehend what was said.

Meant does not necessarily mean **Said**...think about the message that is to be conveyed and then say what you think and feel.

Said does not necessarily mean **Heard**...if there are stimuli to detract from good listening what you said may not have been heard.

Hear does not necessarily mean to **Understand**...be attentive to the limitations of the listener and be aware that the subject may not have the same weight or interest level.

Understand does not necessarily mean to **Agree**...even though understood, the other party may hold a different opinion and require more data to have a change of mind.

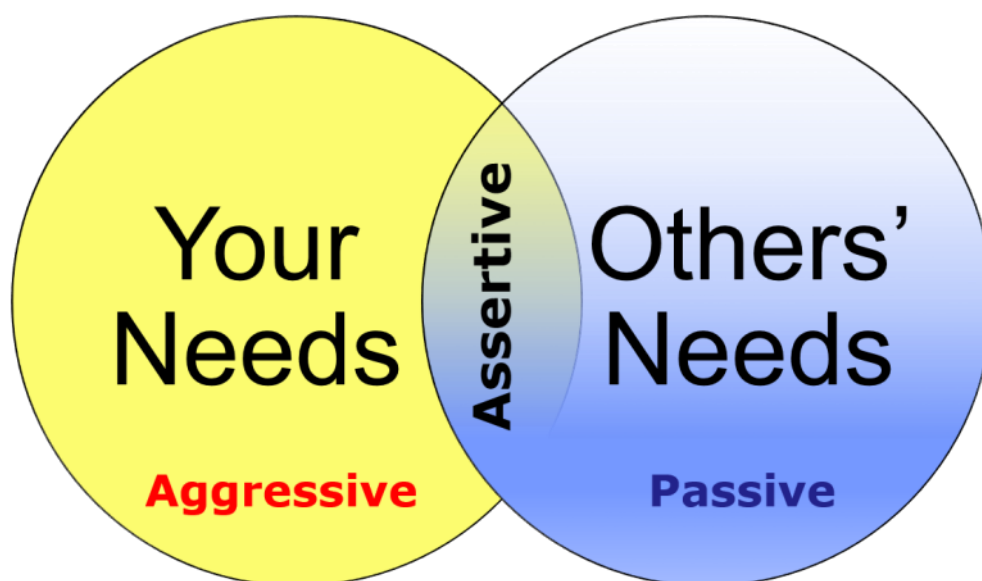
Agree does not necessarily mean to **Keep the Promise**...hurried consent may doom the outcome if memory loss or misunderstanding later occurs.

Keep the Promise does not necessarily mean **To Execute**...not every intention ends up happening, so be sure to have controls and safeguards in place.

To Execute does not necessarily mean to **Make the Change Happen**...be prepared to remind others what was expected by the mutually agreed-upon resolution.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

When the communication process breaks down, we might assume that the other person did not say what he/she meant or did not hear what we were saying. Usually, both parties to a misunderstanding feel that way, but it may be helpful to realize that between speaker and listener are filters to meaning. The speaker, who has an intention of what she wants to communicate, sends a message and that message has an impact on the listener.



PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Labor Leader – Trust Leader

The mayor-elect of a mid-size American city was aware of an eleven-million-dollar shortfall in the municipal budget and asked the Labor-Management Committee to speak with union leaders about this. The Labor-Management Committee selected a small group of five members to meet with leaders from four different unions over several weeks in groups of four or five to determine what could be done to address the financial deficit.

The meetings were cordial and the purpose explained with all questions and concerns answered honestly. The labor representatives expressed concern and actively engaged in discussions of how money could be saved. Many examples of wasteful and frivolous spending were shared and new ideas of efficiency and fiscal responsibility were given by the labor leaders. When the novel approaches to conducting the city's business and corporate responsibilities were implemented, the savings far exceeded the deficit. During the discussions when the labor leaders (trust leaders) were challenged on their recommendations and asked why they had not mentioned these innovative cost savings before, their response was that they had never before been asked.

When trust exists in personal and professional relationships, almost everything else is easier and more comfortable to achieve, including problem solving and conflict resolution. When our actions are consistent with our words, trust can be achieved and arises from our interdependence with others to achieve outcomes we value. Because cooperation cannot be compelled, social interactions are valuable as a foundation for confidence or belief one feels toward another or others to overcome doubt or fear. Trust is the mortar that holds together the stones of the arch we walk through in fulfilling relationships. When trust weakens, the rubble of broken expectations and implied promises impairs communication and recognition of the other person as value to co-existence or cooperation.

Trust Leader Coaching Exercise

Jerri works to support her family, is currently unhappy, and wants to re-invigorate herself to become a “good employee” again. She is emotionally exhausted with conflict at work and doesn't know what to do. This is her story:

“My ‘burnout’ in this current job began last year, when I changed jobs after my husband retired several years ago following a work related accident and returned to school full-time. I never really thought about

being happy in a job until I came to work here. I was always too busy working to even think about being happy in what I did.”

“Here is what I believe has “de-motivated” me: I was ‘promoted’ to a team leader position, although it came with no increase in pay. My supervisor then hired a new team member, without consulting my team, and he just didn’t fit in. In fact, he thinks he knows how everything should be done, and that I am stupid. His words are, “You don’t know what you’re doing, honey.” This team member is constantly bashing me to our supervisor. I feel threatened by him, and he gives me the creeps, sometimes, when he just looks at me.”

“I just don’t see any purpose in the work I do. There just isn’t enough work here to keep me busy, and new ideas or initiatives are not appreciated. I don’t like my co-workers. Half of them seem to thrive on gossip, backbiting, belittling, and judging others, and I just don’t trust them. They aren’t the type of people I would choose to associate with. I need to find a way to re-energize myself. I’m getting scared that I won’t be able to function should I ever get a real job again, where my ideas are appreciated and where I can work hard like I used to. I do love my husband and child and have a happy home life. In fact, that’s what keeps me going. But, if I’m going to spend 50 hours a week working, I’d like to feel good about it, instead of depressed and unmotivated. There is too much hostility in this place for me, and I’m scared of what might happen.”

What might a Trust Leader say to Jerri? Now that you have listened to this employee’s story, what type of dialogue would you engage in with Jerri, and how would you know it was effective? Are there any assignments you would suggest for Jerri?

One Possible Trust Leader Response

Part of a Trust Leader’s job is to listen with the heart, but, at the same time, ask what is really going on underneath the day-to-day ills and complaints you are telling me. On the one hand, you are sharing your sense of hopelessness and powerlessness in your current job...the lack of management support, the lack of compensation, and a workplace that is loaded with gossip. But you are also bringing up something that is really important.

You are observing that you have a right to be happy. It seems that in the past, being busy translated into happiness for you. Now you are neither busy nor happy. You also mention that being busy is not always enough for you. Although we are not always happy in our jobs, we do have choices about the

kind of work we do, the kind of people with whom we work, and the place we work. That's the foundation upon which we can build a coaching relationship.

You and I have some choices about where to concentrate our conversations. We can focus on actions you might take at work that might reduce some of the stress produced by that one team member's abusiveness and your supervisor's lack of support. I have noticed that the more I change the kind of person I am, the more other people around me change. We want to work with your power and influence, and not those areas where you have none. What do you think you can do to relate differently with the team member who disturbs you? What other actions can you take to alleviate or reduce job stress?

At the same time, if we begin exploring what makes you happy or happier in the workplace, the kinds of tasks that challenge you and that you find rewarding, we will give you a canvas to use to paint your next career move.

The choice is yours. I am not advocating leaving this job, unless that is your informed choice. I am suggesting that the clearer you become about the kind of work you wish to dedicate yourself to, the easier it will become to align with people who share a similar vision. Workplace bureaucracies can be very challenging, but I have seen people succeed at all levels. You're off to a great start.

Restoring Harmony To A Toxic Workplace

A VP and a senior technical leader in a large unit of a major university had worked together successfully for several years on a series of complicated and difficult projects. During the time they worked together the culture in the unit either deteriorated, or an existing underlying level of toxicity bubbled to the top. A level of distrust developed and after a difficult and unsuccessful project, a rift developed between the VP and the senior technical leader exacerbated by a series of anonymous letters. Not only was the level of toxicity growing throughout the unit, including death threats, and random acts of personal cruelty, but also trust was completely lost between the VP and the senior leader. It soon became clear that some members of the unit were using the rift between the VP and the senior leader as a way of perpetuating negative attitudes and stirring trouble.

After discussions with both the VP and the senior leader the two parties revealed that each missed the time when their relationship had been one of mutual trust. In recognizing the expressions of loss, bordering on grief, that each expressed, they were each approached separately to see if they would agree to a facilitated discussion or mediation. They both agreed, and during the mediation each of them was able to express not only the effect the loss of trust was having on them personally but how it was

affecting their families. These expressions of the here-to-fore hidden pain that each expressed opened the discussion to the place where each felt the trust was lost. As each realized their assumptions of the other's motives were incorrect, healing began to take place, while the discussion soon turned to mutually crafting new rules of engaging with each other and a pathway to re-establishing trust and mutual respect.

Follow up discussions with each showed that the level of respect had returned, and that additional trust was developing. In the meantime, it was important to provide training and procedures throughout the unit to deal with the toxic levels within the workforce. Active listening training was conducted along with other conflict management techniques.

In addition, the following recommendations were made to the VP:

1. Rearrange the workspaces of as many people as possible to change and improve the physical environment and eliminate 'old memories'. Involve all staff in planning the new space. Spend as little money as possible but use as much staff time as needed.
2. Train all managers in mediation and conflict resolution.
3. Develop a group of elected staff 'Trust Leaders' and provide them with the same mediation and conflict resolution training. Re-elect yearly and make them a 'kitchen cabinet'. VP should work directly with them in their advisory capacity.
4. Share as many documents as possible and ask for input on budget creation, budget cuts, new business opportunities and improved efficiency. There is a pressing need for, not only transparency, but also to eliminate 'middle management information control'. Get everyone involved in the process then make the final decisions at the VP level after appreciated input.
5. Create a department wide set of 'Rules of Engagement' each department would create a list to be shared and then a master list would be developed and would have the agreement of as many members of the department as possible. Final list should be no more than 10 and the conference language of the final discussion, and selection should be saved and shared.
6. Use the same process, as above, to create a department wide 'Code of Conduct'
7. Share the list of agreed too recommendations with the entire department

Since the overall unit was divided into several sub-groups, each sub-group was asked to elect an informal staff Trust Leader for additional training and a chance to join the other nine Trust Leaders in an informal group to meet with the VP on at least a monthly basis. The newly elected staff level Trust Leaders were trained and began meeting regularly with the VP. Within a short period of time the toxicity level of the unit dramatically improved and the 'rumor mill' almost disappeared.

Desperate for control, a small handful of the 'disrupters' tried to destroy the gains made by anonymously attacking one of the leaders of the change. The issue raised was brought to the informal Trust Leader group for their input and advice. The Trust Leaders discussed the issue and decided to deal with the attack at their sub-group levels. Within a week it was obvious that the 'coup attempt' had failed due to the Trust Leaders' actions. Over the next several months the entire unit returned to an appropriate level of civility and the toxic atmosphere disappeared. It once again became a rejuvenated and productive workforce which it had not been for several years.

CHECK POINT

Develop Active (Deep) Listening Skills

Answer these questions **True** or **False**:

1. Most people listen with only 25% efficiency; after a ten-minute oral presentation, the average listener hears, receives, comprehends, and retains only 50% of the message. Within 48 hours we forget half of that again, so we retain only 25% of what we originally heard.
2. Only 7% of communication is conveyed in words alone, with 38% in tone of voice and 55% by body language. Almost 70% of our workday is spent in verbal communication.
3. Listening is not only physiological but also a process of recognizing, interpreting, and understanding the message being sent. There is a difference between listening to respond and listening to understand. Effective communication isn't something that's just acquired, it is a set of practiced skills; skills that can be lost if not practiced and honed on a consistent basis.
4. Our lack of training is compounded when we start school. The average student spends 50% or more of their communication time listening, followed by speaking, reading and writing in that order, however, the time spent teaching each subject is exactly reversed.
5. Since listening is a learned skill, it can be retrained. Hearing is the automatic or involuntary reaction of the nervous system and senses. Listening is a voluntary act that requires concentration.

Turn to next page for results

Results

All statements are TRUE

ADDITIONAL READING

Improving Workplace Relationships

How to Get Along Better with People at Work

Develop a Positive Attitude

- Avoid negative thought and criticisms...truth speaking requires of you that you can endure your vulnerability in situations where important interests and needs are at stake. Overcoming your fears and showing respect for the feelings and viewpoint of others can create a positive climate even though there may be disagreement with the actual content of those views.
- Be less judgmental and more accepting of others...all too often, negative reactions are caused by differences in personalities, values, actions, or aspirations between people. While an impartial person would view them not as right or wrong but only observe that there are differences, you are more likely to treat the other with disdain, which reaction can be reciprocated and then with reprisal causing a like reaction and so forth and so forth...

Do Not Jump to Conclusions

- Gather as much information as possible...an ability to reconsider interpretations is important for authentic relationships and for personal development.
- Reacting defensively to situations without knowing the whole story can cause misunderstandings; so you should respond, and not just react... are you willing to accept the possibility that your images of reality and accuracy may be one-sided, biased, or wrong and are you willing to permit information contradicting your images to influence or change your interpretation of the other person or the situation?

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- When the speaker is finished, state your understanding to ensure there is no misinterpretation...paraphrase what has been said to demonstrate you care and understand.

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- When a negative situation does arise, do not let it fester, be direct, but courteous...anybody can become angry but to be angry with the right person and to the proper degree and at the appropriate time and for the right reasons is not so easy. Speak directly to the other person and use “I” statements; understanding one another is a give and take process and the best way to get the listening you need is to make the other person feel listened to first. Being listened to means you are taken seriously, that your ideas and feelings are known, and that what you say matters.
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- Be respectful by paying attention, listening carefully, and responding appropriately...good communication skills are mutual respect skills and each person should show respect for the other as well as respect for self. You can demonstrate respect by listening fully and affirming that you understand what that person means and you respect yourself when you assert or propose your own legitimate self-interest without aggression. To have a complete communication each person must both get and give.
- Always be courteous and professional...your reputation and how you are viewed by co-workers and others transcends this conflict.
- Regardless of the situation, try not to lash out or be rude...when the communication process breaks down you might assume that the other person did not say what he or she meant or did not hear what you were saying, but good communication means having the impact you meant to have; every message must pass through a filter of the speaker's clarity of expression and the listener's ability to comprehend what was said.
- Be open and honest about your feelings and allow others to do the same...helping someone identify and acknowledge their feelings tends to reduce the intensity of those feelings and allows

all parties to better focus on the underlying problems or issues. Don't be afraid to recognize or affirm that someone is showing their feelings so that empowering that individual may improve communication.

Understand and Accept Personal or Cultural Differences

When you and a co-worker do not see eye-to-eye, try looking at things from the other person's perspective. You will both be more productive if you recognize the need for cooperation to reach common goals and mutual interests. There are cultural differences in talking and listening and especially gender differences. Empathy means making an honest effort to understand where the other person is coming from, not necessarily joining in those feelings because two people are allowed to have different feelings, but recognizing the other's feelings.

Negotiation Tactics for Getting Past No

1. **Don't React** . . . make this an out of body experience and adopt an attitude of detachment.
 - Name the Game . . . what's behind their behavior?
 - Know Your Hot Buttons . . . there are certain physiological responses that impact you, and you may be aware of words or phrases that incite or anger - try to avoid hitting these buttons;
 - Buy Time to Think . . . pause or gather your thoughts; it's all right to be silent and get past the impulse to react...this is a good time for humor or diversion in order to cool down before making a decision or taking a position.
2. **Don't Argue** . . . listen to understand rather than listen to reply.
 - Listen Actively . . . ask questions and paraphrase to show you care and understand;
 - Acknowledge Their Point . . . agree whenever you can and be prepared to offer an apology;
 - Agree Whenever You Can . . . you're building the bridge from your side and asking them to begin theirs;
 - Acknowledge the Person . . . show respect and stay away from hostile bargaining;
 - Express Your Views Without Provoking . . . try not to use the word "but," rather, follow your point with the word "and";
 - Create a Favorable Climate for Negotiation . . . try to breed respect and speak from the first person "I";
3. **Reframe** . . . ask for their advice - few people can resist opening-up to you with their advice and

opinion...it's flattering.

- Joint Problem Solving Atmosphere . . . ask “why do you want this?”; “help me understand why”;
- Ask Problem Solving Questions . . . ask “why not this?”; “what makes that a fair outcome?”; ask “what if” questions for discussion;
- Go Around Stone Walls . . . treat this as an aspiration rather than a demand;
- Deflect Attacks . . . focus on the problem and the person is not the problem;
- Expose Tricks . . . ask for clarification; ask what is the purpose; make reasonable requests;
- Negotiate about the Rules of the Game . . . call the person on their behavior.

4. **Build Them an Beautiful Bridge** . . . you're both going to walk across it.

- Involve the Other Side . . . give them ownership in the resolution; don't sell your ideas but engage them in joint problem-solving;
- Satisfy Unmet Interests . . . ask what's important to them;
- Help Them Save Face . . . do unto others as you would have others do unto you; a person's pride is a very intimate and private part of each of us and should be respected and protected;
- Don't Rush . . . especially at the end, this could unravel the deal.

5. **Use Power to Educate** . . . we are what we know.

- Let Them Know the Consequences . . . try not to be threatening or aggressive but realistic and sincere;
- Discuss Alternatives to Resolution . . . defuse their reaction; use objective standards or outside data; be balanced;
- Keep Sharpening Their Choice . . . once important interests have been identified, the resolution can be crafted;
- Forge a Lasting Agreement . . . coercion or misunderstanding will undo what you thought was done; be precise with expectations;
- Aim for Mutual Satisfaction, Not Victory . . . at some point you both agreed to be respectful winners and to take away from the negotiation what you truly need and not necessarily what you want.

How to Handle Difficult Behavior in The Workplace

Premise: Conflict is a normal and natural occurrence of interacting with one another. The cost of resolving conflict is negligible relative to the cost of leaving conflicts unresolved.

Observations: Conflicts invariably arise between individuals in an organization, between organizational components, or between institutions. It has become part of our job duties; however, some studies suggest that 30-40% of a manager's daily activities are devoted to dealing with some form of interpersonal conflict. A manager's inability to effectively deal with anger and conflict in the workplace may result in a large loss of productivity and adversely impact others who work there. In the workplace there is either real or perceived unfair treatment, emotional abuse, discrimination, sexual harassment, disparate treatment, cross cultural conflict, anger, hostility, or potential violence. Having to endure these conflicts without sufficient tools, resources, outlets, or support, employees are destined to experience discomfort, and this distress can get out of control.

Definitions: Difficult behavior can inhibit performance in others and will only deteriorate if left alone, contaminating more people and incurring hidden costs for the organization. It takes many forms like rudeness, yelling, shunning, mobbing, gossiping, and refusing to talk to or acknowledge others, harassing, incessant complaining to supervisors, ignoring directives, and slow working.

Recommendations: Most conflict within and involving people revolve around unfulfilled needs, primarily the psychological needs of control, recognition, affection, and respect. These needs are natural and quite human in that we all crave them, but when unacceptable or problematic behavior has been rewarded in the past in fulfillment of these needs, difficult behavior motivates the individual. We should try not to reward difficult behavior or reinforce actions or inactions that manifest it. There is no magic pill but there is a prescription to change behavior in others. It takes time and patience to cure such negative characteristics, and it doesn't help to ignore the problem behavior or respond likewise or criticize rather than cure or just brand someone as a problem and be the psychiatrist to their craziness. We can work to prevent unproductive and negative behavior that leads to conflict.

Don't Take It Personally...

It is easy to say but hard to remember when our emotions are blazing with anger, frustration, helplessness, or confusion over the actions of another, who we want to label as stupid, insecure, hostile, inferior, miserable, or other negative coloration. What can happen is that we begin to see that person in that color only and trap them in stereotype with a label that becomes self-fulfilling. Holding onto the resentment of people you have to work with punishes you as much as it does them. You won't change relationships by trying to control other people's behavior, but you can by changing yourself in relation to them. You can place your energy in blaming and deriding someone or you can use it to experiment how to find more productive means of interaction. It's not easy to go back for more of the same old crap concerning somebody time after time, so why do you consistently relate that way? Change something!

Focus On Interests Not Positions...

A basic problem in communication lies not so much in conflicting positions, but in the conflict between each person's needs, desires, concerns, and fears. One person may say to another, "You're such a perfectionist in everything you do around here, and I'm tired of you thinking you're always right." That position is something the speaker has decided upon, but the interest is what caused that decision. The

underlying interest might be a lack of training and a fear of competition with a skilled coworker. The other person may not knowingly be competing but merely trying to do a good job, but the perception enables the conflict. Interests motivate people and are the silent movers behind the hubbub of positions.

Reconciling interests rather than positions works toward resolution. For every interest there usually exist several possible solutions that could satisfy it, but all too often people simply adopt the most obvious position. When you look behind opposed positions for the motivating interests, you can often find an alternative position which meets not only your interests but theirs as well. Reconciling interests rather than compromising between positions also works because under opposed positions lie many more interests than conflicting ones. We tend to assume that because the other person's positions are opposed to ours, their interests must also be opposed. In many workplace conflicts a close examination of underlying interests will reveal the existence of many more interests that are shared or compatible than ones that are opposite.

When a coworker feels threatened by a “perfectionist” in the office and that feeling of intimidation boils over into overt hostility, these two people could become locked in conflict. A closer examination may reveal both want stability in the workplace and a good relationship with each other, but their stated positions separate them and damage their relationship. As positions become concrete and explicit, the underlying interests may well be unexpressed, intangible, and even inconsistent. So, how do you go about understanding the interests involved in a workplace conflict; remember that figuring out the other person's interests may be at least as important as identifying yours?

Perceptions Can Blur Your Vision...

We all know how hard it is to deal with a problem without people misunderstanding each other, getting angry or upset, and taking things personally. A major consequence of human interaction in communications is that the parties' relationship tends to become entangled with their discussions of substance and egos tend to become involved in substantive positions. People draw from comments on substance or unfounded inferences, which they then treat as facts about that person's intentions and attitudes toward them. People tend to see what they want to see and, from all available facts and information, will select and focus on those that confirm their prior perceptions and disregard or misinterpret those that call their perceptions into question. It is important to discuss each other's perceptions and look for opportunities to act inconsistently with those perceptions.

Why Is Listening So Important...

Listening is an art by which we use empathy to reach across the space between us. Passive attention doesn't work. Not only is listening an active process, it often takes a deliberate effort to suspend our own needs and reactions. To listen well you must hold back what you have to say and control the urge to interrupt or argue. The art of listening requires a submersion of the self and immersion in the other. This is not always easy, especially when we are interested but too concerned with controlling or instructing or reforming the other person to be truly open to their point of view.

Anytime you demonstrate a willingness to listen with a minimum of defensiveness, criticism, or impatience, you are giving the gift of understanding and earning the right to have it reciprocated.

Suspending your needs long enough to hear the other person out is part of willing yourself to listen, but suspending your needs is not the same as becoming a non-self. Trying to listen when you're really not up to it dries up your capacity to empathize. Some listeners are so fearful of exerting their own individuality that they become non-selves, tucked into others, embedded in a safe framework of obligations and duties. These people find it easier to accommodate than to deal with conflict, threats of rejection, arguments, or signs of distress in others. Such compliant people may seem like good listeners but aren't really listening if they are nothing but a passive receptacle or reluctant sponge. Listening well is often silent but never passive.

Effective communication is not achieved simply by taking turns talking but requires a concerted effort at mutual understanding. A good way to promote understanding is to take time to restate the other person's position in your own words then ask her to correct or affirm your understanding of her thoughts and feelings. If you work on this process of explicit feedback and confirmation until the other person has no doubt that you grasp her position, she will feel understood, and she will then be more open to hearing from you. The simple failure to acknowledge what the other person says explains much of the friction in our lives. Furthermore, you don't have to be responsible for someone's feelings to be aware of them and to acknowledge them. When two people keep restating their own positions without acknowledging what the other is trying to say, the result is dueling points of view. Whether or not someone is really listening only that person truly knows, but, if someone does not feel listened to, he doesn't feel listened to. We judge whether or not others are listening to us by the signals we see.

What Do Feelings Have To Do With This...

Emotions play an important role in everyday behavior, and there is no thought, attitude, idea, or action that does not have a related emotional counterpart. Because of our childhood conditioning and societal norms, we often suppress or disguise our emotions, but they do exist and exert their force no matter how subtle or indistinguishable a form they take. For example, when a coworker becomes angry at something you have said, instead of expressing the feeling in productive communication he may suddenly request sick leave for the rest of the day. In any relationship between people who are in continuous interaction over a period of time, certain tolerable limits of emotional communication are established and these boundaries are often drawn to not include an honest exchange of feelings. Throughout most of our lives we have developed ways to express disappointment, anger, or discontent in somewhat less than honest terms. Through conditioning and experience some have learned that exhibiting hostility can prove ineffective in solving problems with others and, rather than direct confrontation, circumnavigate the stormy waters by using what is believed to be more socially acceptable forms of expression. This behavior may be functional to a point, since continuous complaining and abrasive individuals become ostracized, but discontent with one's situation should find some form of expression which is rational and by which solutions to problems may be found. If left unexpressed or if expressed irrationally, emotions will inhibit progress in improving relationships. Honest and open communications are necessary for a healthy, growth-oriented working environment, and people must be made to believe that expressing themselves openly is much healthier for all concerned. This can only occur when people feel safe in that expression, trust in the promises of mutual commitment to resolution, and do not fear retaliation for open and honest participation.

One of the secrets of dealing with difficult people in our lives is to figure out how to play the hand we're dealt, rather than complaining and moaning about what that hand is. The reason some people in our

lives remain one dimensional is because that's as far as we go with them. Few workplace relationships last long if all one person does is complain to or about the other. Listening to that person, especially to complaints, can be a burden, but if you have an associate who takes advantage of your willingness to listen, without listening back to you, this emotional burden can be difficult to bear. You can let this go on until it begins to hurt, or you can do something about it. Express yourself. When two people are locked in silent conflict, the best way to break the impasse is to elicit and acknowledge the other's feelings. This applies especially to cases of mutual misunderstanding. Don't be too quick to tell your side, but concentrate first on listening to the other person. Of course, if that person has hurt or annoyed you and doesn't know it, saying something about how you feel may be the only way to keep your resentment from escalating the situation.

Some Simple Principles of Dealing with Difficult Behavior...

- **Use Conflict as a Natural Resource.....**People who work together have different perceptions, and it would be unnatural if they did not disagree from time to time. The conflict generated can be a first step on the road to improving communication, solving a problem, and even building trust and cooperation. Avoidance or hiding conflict can be much more damaging in the workplace than facing it and dealing with it appropriately. You may even find that proverbial silver lining in a dark cloud.
- **Don't React.....**Take time to cool off and gather your emotions. The most natural thing to do when faced with a difficult person or situation is to react. Give yourself time to think and remain focused on identifying the real needs and interests of the other person and yourself. Deep breathing and counting to ten is very helpful.
- **Deal with Feelings.....**Helping the other person identify or acknowledge their feelings tends to reduce the intensity of those feelings and allows the person to focus on the underlying issues. By encouraging and permitting the expression of negative feelings without fear of reprisal or punishment, you have increased the probability that your similar emotional expressions will be better accepted.
- **Attack the Problem, Not the Person.....**Keep an objective eye on the problem and detach any feelings about the person presenting it. Try to understand what the actual problem is and generate possibilities for settling it. Don't attack the other person and try to see the situation from their point of view. If you make assumptions about their behavior, verify by asking or repeat what you thought you heard. Show respect, try not to interrupt, and avoid using hostile words that inflame.
- **Practice Direct Communication.....**Speak directly to the other party. Use "I" statements and be clear about points of agreement, about purpose, and about needs. Use body language to show support and attention. Ask questions to clarify and paraphrase what the other person is attempting to communicate to you. Ask problem solving questions. Other people can provide you with some very important information about yourself, positive and negative, and you can provide equally important information helpful to them. Words alone do not convey this information, so be aware of your body language and tone of voice.
- **Look Past Positions to the Underlying Interests.....**A position is someone's limited view of what solution is necessary to meet a particular need. Until the needs and interests of each of you are ascertained, it is not possible to generate options that will be mutually beneficial and agreeable. Try to identify the other person's physical or psychological needs, along with your common interests. You can bring these interests to the surface or you can leave them submerged only to emerge in unmanageable ways later.

- **Focus on the Future.....**Proving or disproving past allegations may not be of value to a continuing relationship at work. Give the other person ownership in the resolution. Don't sell your ideas but engage in a joint problem solving discussion. Ask what's important and be sure agreement is reached in dignity and respect for each of you. Any ongoing relationship you have with someone is longitudinal and can be altered to be constructive and improved. What just happened may be important or it may be trivial depending on how you want to make it appear just now. Remember, in a marathon you must pace yourself and believe that things will improve if only you give it the chance.

Holding onto the resentment of people you have to work with punishes you as much as it does them. You don't change relationships by trying to control people's behavior but by changing yourself in relation to them. Listening to and showing respect for the people we work with doesn't have to be the same as becoming friends. When deeply felt but unexpressed feelings take shape in the words that we share and come back clarified, the result is a reassuring sense of being understood and a grateful feeling of humanness with the one who understands. If listening fortifies our relationships by cementing a better connection with another, it also fortifies our sense of self. In the presence of a receptive listener we are able to clarify what we think and discover what we feel.

Creating a Workplace Conflict Management System

A workplace conflict management system is based on three important components:

1. Institutional Knowledge
2. Understanding Conflict
3. Recognizing The Negative Impact Of Unresolved Conflict

It is important that everyone involved in an organization understand how important it is to deal effectively with conflict in positive ways. We need to see positive conflict management as an integral part of the organization culture.

A Safe Reporting System for Help in Resolving Conflict

It is important to have a reporting system for employees to report conflict in a way that the employee views as safe. Safe reporting can take several forms. This may be through a trained Trust Leader, Ombudsman, or a web-based or phone-based system. As long as employees see the system as safe, trusted, and fair they will be encouraged to utilize it. Remember, you cannot fix what you do not know.

Trained Neutrals for Resolving Conflict in Positive Ways

Trained neutrals are able to utilize a system of restorative practices and mediation to address conflict in a positive way. Their job is to facilitate a safe and informed discussion with the parties within conflicts. Their role is also important in helping educate the entire workforce in a respectful process to deal with conflict. The Trust Leader might also be a trained Ombuds.

The Importance of a Trust Leader

A Trust Leader/Ombuds in a workplace setting can be a valuable resource to the organization and its people. Conflict is not a phenomenon, and we should expect it when two or more people interact in any enterprise or endeavor. It is a real part of our workplace, and it cannot be avoided. Since it occurs naturally, we might want to focus on how best to deal with it rather than pretend it's not there. The Trust Leader/Ombuds is the lightning rod of conflict and not only attracts people in conflict but seeks out those individuals who appear involved in disputes or disagreements at work. The key is to interact early before an interpersonal conflict spreads among other members of the group. Sometimes conflict cannot be seen, but it is felt in the form of anxiety, stress, discomfort, suspicion, mistrust, low morale, disharmony, and an emotional malaise. If left unresolved, this latent conflict will emerge as overt hostility, and the risk and cost to the organization is greatly enlarged if appropriate and decisive action is not taken.

A Trust Leader/Ombuds can be the eyes, ears, and intellect of the company that recognizes the value and importance of alert and pro-active intervention of common and ordinary complaints, reflected as the value leadership places on the people who work in such a caring environment. It is a form of risk management with the added benefit of allowing people with a problem to work it out in an early and simple way, before it can get out of control or more difficult to manage. Almost every workplace has an unofficial Trust Leader/Ombuds, a person who listens well and can give some advice or feedback to friends and colleagues. Even though it is difficult to measure the value of such interaction, one must assume it does have benefit since it repeats day after day in the workplace. The problem faced by unofficial trust leader/ombuds is that they are subject to burnout and often bring the conflicts they deal with home with them. Also, unofficial trust leader/ombuds have skills linked to their personality and their inherent humanity and therefore often become the unofficial trust leader/ombuds in multiple facets of their lives. They find themselves playing the same unofficial trust leader/ombuds role at their places of worship, their volunteer civic organizations and in their neighborhoods. They become magnets for people needing help and advice. It is no coincidence that they can be subject to burnout and personal stress.

Since the unofficial trust/leader ombuds is needed in all social settings, perhaps formal trust leader/ombuds training cannot only provide for this important service in a more professional way, but also protect them from burnout and stress. Formal training can harness the benefits of intervention by a knowledgeable and competent person identified as the Trust Leader/Ombuds in a confidential and privileged manner and can be of large value to the workplace and to life's other important social settings.

Organizations are social systems in which people are strongly influenced by the organizational culture. Therefore, the most potent tool for improvement is cultural change with the goal to increase the long-term health and performance of the organization, while enriching the lives of its members. People can affect systems as much as systems affect people, and part of organizational development is allowing people to influence the systems which influence them.

Through developmental training, coaching and sustainable learning programs, companies can diminish friction, increase productivity, and reduce escalation of disputes. We recognize conflict, not as the problem, but as the messenger acknowledging that conflict, and, if managed, can be an opportunity for growth.

We should recognize conflict as a tool to improve and build workplace culture and business interests, not a wrecking ball that destroys. In order for the leadership of any organization to better sense the operating environment and adjust its conflict culture, appropriate dispute resolution services recognize and empower people within the organization to better communicate, relate, and resolve conflict before it causes damage. We should all embrace a philosophy and belief that people are important and should be treated as human beings and not simply another capital asset. Accordingly, organizations should identify, help select, and train internal neutrals to act as change agents for the educational culture and/or intervene to conciliate, mediate, or facilitate issues in the early stages of conflict. Organizations can create a policy with a focus to voluntary participation without stigma and with an emphasis on civility, inclusion, problem solving, and collaboration.

Core values that promote trust, diversity, personal and professional growth, mutual respect, civility, and productive communications are absolute necessities in modern, innovative, and successful workplaces. Unfortunately, even the most well-intentioned workplace policies are undermined by unmanaged conflict between individuals, which is a distraction from otherwise productive use of time, energy, and resources as it diminishes internal and external relationships and eventually impacts the bottom line.

The most significant contribution leadership of an organization can make is in creating a culture that focuses on the continuous growth and vitalization of the system.

This Lesson should assist those interested in providing this valuable service as a resource for understanding, continuous learning, and inspiration. In making your case for why learning this important set of skills is important to your organization, the following may be of help as you propose to learn and then apply your new skills to your work environment.

To preserve and grow the human expertise that an employer has developed over time, it must foster teamwork and the internal communities of practice and interaction and encourage social learning from the combine. Individuals can walk out the door and often do so in the face of stressful interpersonal relationships or bullying. These can be the best employees the organization has and the cost of replacing that talent is staggering compared with the cost of listening to their needs. A skill set which includes active listening, productive communication, and a trusting relationship as a coach should be in every administrator's capability and plan.

Research reveals that the most effective leaders at leading and adapting to change at any level in the organization are those that have the highest level of emotional intelligence. Many intractable problems in the workplace are the result of poor communication, the lack of self-awareness, and other emotional intelligence competencies. The components of knowledge, skills, and abilities that comprise emotional intelligence can be learned. Leadership competencies of adaptability, decision making, team building, and communication are essential to a healthy workplace with an emotionally healthy workforce. Leaders should focus on engaging their employees knowing that strong performance will follow. Managers who fail have poor people skills or show inappropriate personal qualities, and, when managers fail to demonstrate necessary qualities of effective leadership, successful execution of the business plan can fail.

The workplace culture is a community of individuals, who collectively are the organization and who, individually, are people with real human needs and concerns. The environment in which they work and contribute their time, energy, creativity, and interaction is their community, and the quality of their

contributions affects the mission of the company as well as its members. The value an employer places on its people should be a measure of enlightened leadership's concern for a healthy and profitable workplace.

Organizational Development Comprehensive Training Programme

The premise of organizational development is:

Organizations are social systems in which people are strongly influenced by the organizational culture. Therefore, the most potent tool for improvement is cultural change.

The goal is to increase the long-term health and performance of the organization, while enriching the lives of its members.

People can affect systems as much as systems affect people. Part of organizational development is *allowing people to influence the systems which influence them*.

For organizational development to work, its users must believe that people are important, not mere "human resources" to be used and discarded. By bringing out the best in their people, organizations can reach optimal effectiveness and increase profits.

Organizational development uses social science to get things done. It targets the organization's culture, including systems, processes, and rewards. By working on "people" issues, it allows positive and lasting change at relatively low cost.

Organizational culture can loosely be defined as the shared assumptions, beliefs, and "normal behaviors" (norms) of a group. These are powerful influences on the way people live and act, and they define what is "normal" and how to sanction those who are not "normal." To a large degree, what we do is determined by our culture. Organizational development transforms the organizational culture (loosely, shared beliefs, values, and behaviors) by working with social and technical systems such as culture, work processes, communication, and rewards.

Organization Development is an effort to increase an organization's ability to improve itself as a humane and effective system. Elements may include:

1. Finding ways to adapt to the changing context while maintaining and enhancing the organization's integrity and internal integration.
2. Establishing structures, processes and a climate that allow it to effectively manage its important and pressing business (e.g. projects, problems, crises, etc.) while giving adequate attention to strategic issues (e.g., long term development and renewal, planning and envisioning, engaging new opportunities, crisis prevention, etc.)
3. Increasing the ability to engage formation issues such as:
 - vision including the defining of identity, purpose, values, organizational culture and related programs and activities.
 - attracting new people (as staff and/or members) who support the vision

- increased competence and commitment
 - creating an alignment, an adequate "fit" among the various aspects of the organization's life, e.g.
 - various sub-systems (people, structure, strategy, processes, etc.)
 - vision & resources of leadership, energy and funds
 - income & expenses
 - physical facilities & program needs and possibilities
 - establishing relationships with external "public" or constituencies that have a stake in the organization.
4. Increasing its ability to adapt to new conditions, solve problems and learn from experience; a capacity for self-renewal.

Organizational development does involve problem solving, but its most significant contribution to an organization is in creating a culture that focuses on the continuous growth and vitalization of the system; it is a normal and vital part of a healthy organization.

CIVILITY AND WORKPLACE TRUST LEADER POEMS

ON LISTENING A GIFT OF COMPASSION

Listen with your eyes, your mind, your compassion,not just your ears. Listen to understand, not to respond. There will be ample time to respond once you understand and the speaker senses you understand. And because you now understand your response can be one of compassion demonstrating your full attention, complete with open ended questions and delivered with an affirming tone and open body language.

Listening to understand is a gift that you can bestow on others while you receive a tremendous return on investment. I learn very little when I am listening to respond and at best, I only amplify my own ignorance as I convince myself of my own importance. When I listen to understand whole new vistas open before my eyes and I engage in learning.

Open ended questions continue the learning phenomenon as deeper understanding creeps into my consciousness. It is a gift: a gift to me, a sharing of humanity, a reaffirmation of human connection, an ancient adaptation that elevated human beings to find connections, humanity, and survival. Listening to understand is an act that defines love of life.

ON LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND

"It's amazing what you hear when you listen"

Yogi Berra

"Do you hear what I hear; do you see what I see?"

Is this only Christmas music or can we actually
hear and see what others see? Is it possible?

What does it take; is it training, hard work,
both or some supernatural gift?

The real gift comes through
abandoning listening to respond
and learning to listen to understand.

I learn very little when my lips are moving, except

perhaps what I already know. How good is that,
 who does it help, unless it is coupled with sharing?
 When I listen to understand, I begin to make a human
 connection. A connection which is quickly lost
 when I interrupt. If my advice is so valuable
 why do I not take it myself? Why should you
 listen when I talk, what is in it for you?

If I try to understand you, your thoughts can
 improve mine and your chance to be truly heard
 might be a completely new experience for us both.
 We both might learn, we might both benefit;
 what a novel idea. Active listening is a gift
 of compassion. You can only keep
 compassion by giving it away.
 You cannot hoard compassion, you cannot
 stockpile it to save it for a rainy day.
 You must actively and purposely give it away
 if you want any chance of keeping some for yourself.

WE ARE ALL SUFFERING FROM SOMETHING

(Dedicated to H. Jean Wright, Ph.D.)

If we pause to consider our common humanity,
 our human connections, and mankind's ongoing
 frailties we might reflect on the truth that we
 are all recovering from something.

If we can ponder our own recovery efforts and
 listen to understand the recovery needs
 of others, we might have a spiritual awakening,
 thereby, taking another small step toward
 civilization.

But only if we share our unique
 stories and bear witness to others, through

understanding their stories, will we find
 the human connections we each crave.
 We are all recovering from something and
 we should never ask “what is wrong with you”,
 but ask, “what happened to you and what is
 your dream for the future.”

All poems in this Handbook are courtesy of John-Robert Curtin.

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