

3 Spires Learning

3 Spires “Light” Learning Team Leader Toolkit - Employee Engagement



Managing Individuals – Resolving Conflict & Dealing With Problems

“Developing Tomorrows Leaders”

Managing Individuals

“Resolving Conflict & Dealing With Problems”

How To Use This Toolkit

Different team leaders are at different stages and this toolkit provides a basic guide from which team leaders can pick and choose topics they need support on.

Working successfully in teams does not necessarily come naturally to many of us; it is an acquired skill in need of guidance and support.

This toolkit provides practical hints and tips on areas such as team leadership, performance and communication.

It aims to aid managers when they are looking for practical ideas on how to address issues raised in everyday situations.

Each section covers the following areas:

1. Using this section
2. Practical hints and tips
3. Comments from top scoring managers
4. Questions for you

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Using This Section

Conflict is inevitable within teams.

It is not bad or harmful if handled correctly. In fact, it can lead to far greater creativity and innovation by challenging assumptions, values and proposals.

This section gives a method for handling such challenges in order to get to a collaborative win-win solution.

Teams also often experience behavioural problems which if not tackled can reduce effectiveness and lower morale.

This section gives a simple process for intervening and a range of levels at which it can be done.

Analysing Why Conflict Is Occurring

Here are some typical causes of conflict in teams:

Objectives

- The team's goal or objective is unclear or unacceptable to one or more members of the team.

Perception

- Some aspects of the task are interpreted based upon past experiences. These experiences influence the way in which the members of the team see themselves or the task.
- An example might be: *'Management will never go along with this solution (because) they have never done so in the past'*.

Emotions

- Emotions can cloud judgement, confuse facts and feelings and get things out of proportion. (They are also a tremendous source of energy and morale so should not be ignored!).

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Communication

- The complexity of human communication, both verbal and nonverbal, always provides an opportunity for misinterpretation of meaning or intention.

Present The Issue Unemotionally

- Use an "I" message and ask for the other party's help.
- An example might be: *"I feel frustrated with your proposal - can we agree to work together on this? I really need your help"*.

Clarify And Define The Issue

- "Here's how I see the problem... what do you think is the issue?"

Understand The Other Person's Position

- Listen without judgement or rebuttal.
- Ask for clarification (probe as needed). For e.g.. *"Can you tell me more about that?"*

Give Your Point Of View

- Use "I" statements - express it assertively and take ownership for it. Test for understanding.

Jointly Develop An Objective Or Condition On Which Both Parties Agree

- "What are we both after?"
- "Under what conditions will we both be satisfied?"
- "The problem will be solved when..."

Brainstorm Alternatives

- Put judgement on hold.
- Jointly choose one alternative as a tentative solution.
- Jointly decide how each party will know if the solution is working.

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Intervening When There's A Problem

The approaches a leader can use when teams are going off track includes:

Avoiding

- Getting out of the way, avoiding confrontation.

Passive/Accommodating

- Willing to help, being kind, obliging others.

Compromising

- Seeking concessions on both sides.

Aggressive/Competitive

- Rivalry, winners and losers.

Assertive/Collaborative

- Working jointly for solutions and results.

"Always listen to both sides of the story before making hasty assumptions"

"Make sure you always remain impartial"

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Questions For You

1. Think of the time you last experienced conflict on your team, what did you do?
2. Do you let emotions or favouritism cloud your judgement?
3. Do you avoid conflict in your team, or do you handle it constructively?
4. Have you ever expelled a member of a team? Thinking back, could this have been avoided?

Hint

- **Don't avoid conflict. Handled constructively it can lead to creative insights.**
- **You are after a win/win situation - don't let people 'win' the argument at the expense of others losing.**
- **If you're unsure, don't intervene; let things develop further.**

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