

CONFLICT RESOLUTION 101: KEEPING YOUR COMPOSURE

I write quite a bit about effective teamwork in the workplace because it gives team members and leaders a view of how great a team can be. Of course, real life tends to throw obstacles at our best-laid plans. And sure as the sun will rise, we'll experience a conflict of one kind or another—whether between team members, a team leader or a customer. Dealing with this conflict is one of the most important teamwork skills we can develop.

Here's an example from my own career. Several years ago, I was part of a 12-person team that was responsible for producing events in different cities around the country. My responsibilities included arranging accommodations and making sure they were paid for appropriately. I would reserve a block of hotel rooms ahead of time, and these were directly billed to a master account. (Any incidental charges, like room service, would be billed to individual credit cards.) Anyone who's traveled under this arrangement knows that billing to the master account has to be set up a day or two ahead of time so that appropriate authorizations can be made.

When we reached our hotel in Atlanta, bleary-eyed from being on the road for several days already, I went to the front desk to check us in only to be told that the hotel sales team had not communicated to them that a master account would be used for billing. That was a problem. Even worse, I knew that my executive director was coming in and that he had a mercurial temper.

Long story short, my executive director showed up before I could work out a solution with the hotel desk staff. Sure enough, he went ballistic.

That's where the hotel staff did something impressive, something I saw as a great example of conflict resolution. They retained their composure. They allowed my director to vent. They did not use the words "calm down." (Never, ever tell someone to calm down—it does not calm them down in the least, and often escalates the situation.) And they worked with him to resolve the billing issue. We all had a room to sleep in that night.

Conflict is something that we all approach differently. We all have a vast array of different experiences, and this sometimes dictates how we cope.

Still, it's critical to know how to respond in conflict situations.

In my book, "One Team, One Dream," I go into detail about how to recognize and respond to conflict. That includes a self-assessment of your own conflict management style, which will help you to recognize how you most often deal with conflict and solve problems. I outline five major styles of conflict management, each of which has their

pros and cons. I also detail the three stages of conflict, with Stage 3 being the highest. (You can imagine what stage my executive director hit right away in the above tale.)

Ideally, no one wants to have serious disagreements with anyone—whether a co-worker or leader. There are ways to face and address conflicts at all three stages to manage and resolve them and keep everyone working smoothly together.

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A diverse, twenty-year background in real estate, mortgage banking, event planning, and production, as well as radio and television broadcasting, created a perfect storm that put Gregg Gregory where he is today. Gregg works hard to ensure that different personalities can work together successfully to accomplish your organization's mission, goals, and objectives.

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