

## Understanding the World of Work 2

### I. Work Conflicts

Conflict is an active disagreement or opposition between people with opposing opinions or principles (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). According to Mulkeen (2018), the presence of conflict is not necessarily a negative thing as conflicts also have real benefits for the company. It can increase creativity, force frank exchange of ideas, spark competition to succeed or improve, and challenge existing perspectives and processes, especially if it is effectively resolved.

Osborne (2015), noted that conflicts arise when two (2) people stop listening to each other and approach a situation from their own point of view. Your approach to a conflict may vary depending on your position. A conflict between a manager and his/her subordinate is different from a conflict between two (2) rank and file employees. On the other hand, your level of involvement should also be considered in dealing with this kind of issues. Managers or supervisors are expected to act as a mediator if there are two (2) employees that are in conflict with each other. But there are implications if a manager would impose his/her authority in resolving the conflict (e.g. the rank and file employees will lose the chance to practice their problem-solving skills and handle things on their own). However, it would be different if the managers and supervisors are also involved in the situation.

There are several sources of conflict, namely, poor communication, different values and interests, scarce resources, personality clashes, and poor performance. Handling and resolving workplace conflicts is one of the biggest challenges managers and employees face. Some opt to run away or "battle it out". Either of the two (2) situations

can make a person feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied especially when a resolution is not achieved (Human Resources of the University of Oklahoma, 2019).

These are some of the several ways on how to manage and resolve a conflict (Humber Health Sciences, 2014):

1. Separate person from the problem
  - Use a neutral, calm tone of voice
  - Talk about the problem
  - Listen
  - Note that relationships need to be preserved
2. Focus on the issues, not intent or personal position
  - Avoid calling names
  - Make "I" statements, not "you" statements
  - Avoid assuming motive
  - Use humor appropriately
  - Acknowledge other person's frustration and apologize if necessary
3. Generate a variety of options
  - Ask questions instead of lecturing
  - Allow time for the person to investigate options
  - Give the person a chance to establish his/her own options
  - Ensure equal opportunity for conflicting parties to present options
4. Base agreement on objective criteria
  - Allow all members to put forward their ideas, information, or options
  - Never assume that someone has to win or lose
  - Maintain a timeline to implement the problem-solving option

5. Prepare for failure before it happens
  - Be patient and persistent
  - Know your best alternative plan and when to "take a break," or to "walk away"
  - Ensure all parties know you worked hard to come to a resolution
  - Treat others as you would like to be treated

## II. Office Politics

All workplaces are political to some extent. Practicing *good* office politics enables an employee to promote his/her goals and interests without compromising his/her values and those of his/her organization. Cheek (2019) listed seven (7) good habits to help a person win at the workplace.

1. Be aware that you have a choice

There are two (2) common reactions to politics at work: *fight* or *flight*. Instinctive fight reactions will only cause more resistance to whatever you are trying to achieve, while instinctive flight reactions only label you as a pushover that people can easily take for granted. Instead of acting on your instincts, study and practice making well-thought-out actions and decisions.

2. Know what you are trying to achieve

Focus on the business objectives instead of looking at the differences in people's positions or opinions. In the light of what's best for the business, discuss the pros and cons of each option. Remember that if the business does not win, then nobody in the organization wins.

Steer away from petty issues and position yourself as someone who is interested in getting things done. Your boss will also come to appreciate

you as someone who is mature, strategic and can be entrusted with bigger responsibilities.

3. Focus on your circle of influence

There are often issues which we have very little or no control over such as corporate policies, client demands, or boss mandates. Gossiping and complaining are common responses to these events. But other than short term emotional outlet, what tangible results do gossiping really accomplish?

Instead of feeling victimized and angry about the situation, focus on the things that you can do to influence the situation — your circle of influence. This is a very empowering technique to overcome the feeling of helplessness. It removes the victimized feeling and also allows others to see you as someone who knows how to operate within given constraints.

You may not be able to change or decide on the eventual outcome, but you can walk away knowing that you have done the best within the given circumstances.

4. Don't take sides

It is possible to find yourself stuck in between two (2) power figures who are at odds with each other. You find yourself being thrown around while they try to outwit each other and defend their own position, all at the expense of you getting the job done. You can't get them to agree on a common decision for a project, and neither of them wants to take ownership of issues; they're too afraid they'll get stabbed in the back for any mishaps.

In cases like this, focus on the business objectives and don't take side with either of them – even if you like one better than the other. Place them on a

common communication platform and ensure open communications among all parties, so that no one can claim “I didn’t say that”.

#### 5. Don't get personal

There are times that you will get angry with people. But resist the urge to give that person a piece of your mind and teach him/her a lesson. People tend to remember moments when they were humiliated or insulted. Even if you win this argument and get to feel really good about it for now, you’ll pay the price later when you need help from this person. What goes around comes around, especially at the workplace.

Another reason to hold back your temper is your career advancement. The last thing you will want is to make it difficult for your boss to champion you for a promotion because other managers or peers see you as someone difficult to work with.

#### 6. Seek to understand before being understood

We are more inclined to getting others understand us than understand them first. Surprisingly, seeking to understand is a very disarming technique. Once the other party feels that you understand where he/she is coming from, they will feel less defensive and be open to understand you in return. This sets the stage for open communications to arrive at a solution that both parties can accept.

Trying to arrive at a solution without first having this understanding is very difficult; there’s little trust and too much second-guessing.

#### 7. Think win-win

Office conflicts happen due to differing interests. We are taught that someone else needs to lose for us to win. On the other hand, we are also afraid to let someone else win because it implies losing for us. But in business and work, that does not have to be the case. Learn to think in terms of “how can we both win out of this situation?” This requires that you first understand the other party’s perspective and what’s in it for him. This is an enduring strategy that builds allies and helps you win in the long term.

### III. Goal Setting

#### A. Three (3) Strategies to Assess Your Company or Organization

- SWOT analysis  
This will help you identify your business' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Benchmarking  
This will allow you to compare your business or organization in similar businesses and/or organization in your industry or location in terms of averages on income and expenses. It will help you assess how your business is performing.
- Market research  
This seeks to identify customer needs, trends, and changes in the market or technology.

#### B. Setting Goals, the SMART Way

A goal should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely.

Example:

Overall Goal	I want to grow my gardening business.
Specific	I will gain four (4) new clients for my

	business.
Measurable	I will measure my progress by keeping track of how many new clients I gain while maintaining my current client base.
Achievable	I will gain four (4) new clients as I currently have four (4) available spaces in my fortnightly client scheduling diary.
Relevant	Adding clients to my customer base will allow me to grow my business and increase my income.
Timely	I will gain four (4) new clients for my gardening business within three (3) months filling my current available diary places.
SMART Goal	I will gain four (4) new clients for my gardening business within three (3) months filling my current available diary places. This will allow growth to my business by increasing our number of clients and eventually our revenue.

### C. Staying on Track

After formulating a SMART goal for your company or organization, you will need to figure out how to achieve them. Here's a list of things to consider when planning your strategy to achieve your goals:

- Time frame

Think how long do you expect a task will take to complete. Set a realistic start and finish date to achieve your goal (e.g. Phase 1 of the plan will take one [1] month to finish while Phase 2 only requires two [2] weeks. As a result, the project will be on its full implementation within two [2] months.).

- Actions

Describe the actions you are going to take in detail in order to achieve your goal (e.g. Research three [3] different cake suppliers and list down their pros and cons.).

- Responsibilities

Write down the person or the team responsible for achieving each step (e.g. Bert will look for an appropriate venue for the event; the Advertising Department will create a 30-second TV commercial for the event.).

- Resources

Detail your budget, staffing requirements, and any supplies you will need (e.g. We will need the Advertising, Sales, and Marketing Department at the beginning of the project. The acquirement of needed materials will be handled by the Purchasing, and Logistics Department. We were granted by the upper management a total of PHP 10,000,000 for this project.).

- The desired outcome

Describe what you expect from your actions and how you'll know when the goal has been achieved (e.g. We will be able to sell all the tickets for the concert one (1) month before the event.).

## IV. Decision-Making

### A. Factors that Affect the Decision-Making Process

There are two (2) internal factors that could affect an individual in his/her decision-making: intuition and reasoning. Intuition, or *gut feeling* as we call it, is formed through the collection of a person's past experiences and personal values. Though it reflects one's learning about

life, intuition is not always based on reality but only in a person's perception about a given scenario. As a result, intuitions may not be very mature (skillsyouneed.com, n.d.). On the other hand, *reasoning* refers to the use of facts and figures available to make decisions. A decision which is based on reasoning is devoid of emotions. This is generally used when a decision is of simple nature and urgent.

#### B. Steps to Effective Decision-Making

According to the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth (n.d.), using a step-by-step approach in decision-making enables a person to make more calculated decisions by organizing relevant information and defining alternatives. The steps below are said to increase one's chances of arriving at the most satisfying alternative.

##### 1. Identify the decision

You realize that you need to make a decision. Try to clearly define the nature of the decision you must make. This first step is very important.

##### 2. Gather relevant information

Collect some pertinent information before you make your decision: what information is needed, the best sources of information, and how to get it. This step involves both internal and external “work.” Some information is internal: you’ll seek it through a process of self-assessment. Other information is external: you’ll find it online, in books, from other people, and from other sources.

##### 3. Identify the alternatives

As you collect information, you will probably identify several possible paths of action, or

alternatives. You can also use your imagination and additional information to construct new options. In this step, you will list all possible and desirable alternatives.

##### 4. Weigh the evidence

Draw on your information and emotions to imagine what it would be like if you carried out each of the alternatives to the end. Evaluate whether the need identified in Step 1 would be met or resolved through the use of each alternative. As you go through this difficult internal process, you’ll begin to favor certain alternatives: those that seem to have a higher potential for reaching your goal. Finally, place the alternatives in a priority order, based upon your own value system.

##### 5. Choose among alternatives

Once you have weighed all the evidence, you are ready to select the alternative that seems to be the best one for you. You may even choose a combination of alternatives. Your choice in Step 5 may very likely be the same or similar to the alternative you placed at the top of your list at the end of Step 4.

##### 6. Take action

You’re now ready to take some positive action by beginning to implement the alternative you chose in Step 5.

##### 7. Review your decision and its consequence

In this final step, consider the results of your decision and evaluate whether or not it has resolved the need you identified in Step 1. If the decision has not met the identified need, you may want to repeat certain steps of the process to make a new decision.

For example, you might want to gather more detailed or somewhat different information or explore additional alternatives.

*Resolving conflicts at work: employee information.* (2019, March 13). Retrieved from <https://hr.ou.edu/Employees/Career-Development/Resolving-Conflicts-at-Work>

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