

# Describe your experience with resolving conflict within a team.

Certainly! Resolving conflict within a team is an inevitable but crucial aspect of being an Engineering Manager II.

## Example 1

Here's an example of how I navigated a conflict situation within my team:

### The Situation

- I had two talented engineers, Michael and Daniel, working on a critical feature for a new product launch.
- Michael,
  - a highly analytical and detail-oriented engineer, preferred a conservative approach, focusing on tried-and-tested methods.
- Daniel,
  - a creative and innovative thinker, championed a more cutting-edge approach with potentially higher risk but greater reward.
- Their differing styles and opinions led to disagreements on the technical direction of the feature.

### My Intervention

#### 1. Separate Meetings:

- a. I first met with each engineer individually in separate meetings.

- b. This allowed me to understand their perspectives without the pressure of being in the same room and potentially escalating the tension.

**2. Active Listening:**

- a. During the meetings, I actively listened to their concerns, focusing on understanding the technical merits of each approach and the rationale behind their preferences.
- b. I avoided taking sides or assigning blame.

**3. Identifying Common Ground:**

- a. Despite their differences, I also looked for areas of common ground.
- b. Both engineers shared the ultimate goal of delivering a successful product feature.

**4. Facilitated Discussion:**

- a. I then arranged a joint meeting with both engineers present.
- b. During this facilitated discussion, I encouraged them to listen to each other's perspectives without interruption.
- c. I asked clarifying questions to ensure clear communication and helped them identify potential risks and benefits associated with each approach.

**5. Collaborative Decision-Making:**

- a. My goal wasn't to impose a solution but to guide them towards a collaborative decision.
- b. We discussed potential compromises, like incorporating elements of both approaches or conducting a pilot test to assess the feasibility of the more novel approach.

**6. Focus on the Project Goal:**

- a. Throughout the discussion, I kept the focus on the overall project goal – delivering a high-quality and innovative feature that met user needs.

## **The Outcome**

- Through open communication and a focus on finding common ground, Michael and Daniel reached a mutually agreeable solution.
- They decided to implement a hybrid approach, leveraging the stability of Michael's preferred method while incorporating some innovative elements championed by Daniel.
- This collaborative solution not only addressed their individual concerns but also resulted in a potentially more robust and feature-rich product.
- The experience also fostered a sense of teamwork and mutual respect between Michael and Daniel.
- They recognized the value of diverse perspectives in achieving optimal solutions.

## **Key Takeaways**

This example highlights the importance of active listening, facilitating open communication, and guiding team members towards collaborative decision-making.

By focusing on the project's common goals and fostering a respectful environment, technical disagreements can be transformed into opportunities for innovation and improved team dynamics.

## Example 2

Certainly! Here's an experience I had resolving a conflict between two talented engineers on my team:

### The Situation:

Two of my engineers, Sarah (backend) and Michael (frontend), were working on a critical feature integrating a new payment gateway. Tensions arose during code reviews, with disagreements about the approach and technical implementation. While both were highly skilled, their communication styles clashed, leading to frustration and hindering progress.

### Understanding the Source of Conflict

1. **Separate Meetings:** I scheduled separate meetings with Sarah and Michael to understand their perspectives on the technical aspects of the disagreement and their concerns about communication.

### Key Differences

Through the discussions, I discovered

- **Technical Preferences:** Sarah preferred a more robust but complex solution, while Michael favored a simpler approach focused on faster development.
- **Communication Styles:** Sarah was more direct and critical in her code reviews, while Michael felt these reviews were overly harsh.

## Resolving the Conflict:

### 1. Setting the Stage

I organized a joint meeting with Sarah and Michael, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and a successful project outcome.

### 2. Facilitating Open Communication

- **Active Listening:** I encouraged both Sarah and Michael to actively listen to each other's perspectives without interrupting.
- **Focus on the Issue:** Steered the conversation away from personal attacks and focused on the technical merits of each approach.

### 3. Finding Common Ground

- **Strengths and Weaknesses:** We discussed the strengths and weaknesses of both proposed solutions. Sarah acknowledged the efficiency of Michael's approach, while Michael appreciated the long-term benefits of Sarah's solution.
- **Compromise and Collaboration:** We facilitated a compromise where they merged aspects of both approaches. Sarah agreed to simplify her solution, and Michael understood the value of future scalability.

### 4. Communication Guidelines

- **Constructive Feedback:** We established guidelines for providing constructive feedback in code reviews. Focusing on clarity, specific suggestions, and offering alternative solutions instead of just criticism.

## The Outcome

After the discussion, Sarah and Michael were able to work collaboratively. The code reviews became more productive, and they found a solution that balanced immediate needs with future scalability. The feature was successfully implemented on time, and the team dynamic improved significantly.

## Lessons Learned

- **Early Intervention:** Addressing conflicts early on prevents them from escalating and impacting team morale and productivity.
- **Active Listening and Empathy:** Creating a safe space for open communication and understanding each team member's perspective is crucial.
- **Focus on Solutions:** Guiding the conversation towards finding solutions and compromises allows the team to move forward positively.
- **Clear Communication Guidelines:** Establishing clear expectations for communication fosters a more respectful and collaborative environment.

By actively facilitating communication and focusing on solutions, I was able to resolve the conflict between Sarah and Michael, enabling them to leverage their strengths and deliver great work together.