

It Pays to Address Conflict

“In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.” – Theodore Roosevelt

Conflict avoidance can lead to a dysfunctional work environment. When you accept a behavior or incident that you know is wrong, you are creating barriers in your organization. Conflict that is allowed to fester creates resentment, disengagement and ultimately leads to your good people leaving to find a less drama ridden place to work.

If left unaddressed, unresolved conflict can result in loss of productivity, employee turnover and even loss of customers. Research estimates that 95% of people in the workplace struggle to confront colleagues and managers about concerns and frustrations. Furthermore, employees waste 8 to 10 hours on gossip and other unproductive activities for every unaddressed conflict in the workplace. The result? Each avoided ‘crucial conversation’ can cost a company about \$2000.ⁱ

Those “crucial conversations” that don’t occur may seem insignificant in the moment, but they build upon each other and ultimately create obstacles that hinder overall organizational performance.

The Opportunity in Difficult Conversations

Behind almost every difficult conversation exists an opportunity for growth, for both you and the other person. *If you choose to frame it that way.*

When you foster a culture of open communication as a leader, giving and receiving feedback can be a rewarding experience. It builds trust and it creates an environment where it is safe to share ideas. Different perspectives and opinions encourage innovation and progression. Coming to a resolution may not be easy, but organizations that embrace open communication, even when it’s time for those difficult conversations, have the strongest cultures.

Next time you have to handle an issue head-on try our six tips for a successful conversation:

1. Acknowledge your differences. “I want to listen to your point of view so I can see the situation from a different perspective than my own.”
2. Be direct but open. “In the end, I know we both want what’s best for our organization and both of us need to put effort into it working out.”
3. Talk about the impact of the situation (on you, on others, on the organization) “Tell me how you think this has affected our goal of increasing employee engagement.”
4. Recognize how your role played a part in the situation. “I did not realize that changing that process impacted your team in that way, so tell me more.”
5. Ask questions! “How has this situation impacted you? Your work?”
6. Discuss together a plan for improvement & commit to it. “What will help us to avoid this happening in the future? What can I do to make this easier for you the next time?

Know someone who has been avoiding a difficult conversation? Let us help! We have only two coaching spots available for new or seasoned leaders, supervisors and managers. Coaching calls are private, confidential and typically take place bi-weekly. Contact us at info@cultureoutcomes.com for more information!

This article was written by team member, Allison Duda.

ⁱ NewsDay Business Columnist Jamie Herzlich “Address workplace conflict or it could cost you.”