

Factsheet: Hints and tips for managing conflict in the workplace

According to CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, recent UK policy developments, including the introduction of employment tribunal fees, place more onus on employers to resolve conflict in-house and at an earlier stage. Organisations need to develop both effective conflict resolution practices and robust cultures in which it is easier to challenge without conflict escalating. To achieve this, we need to understand the dynamics of workplace conflict more fully.

What is conflict?

A struggle or clash between opposing forces or a state of opposition between ideas or interests

Areas of work conflict

- Organisational - not understanding facts/procedures
- Different views about what is trying to be achieved
- Opposing views on work strategies
- Opposing values

Main causes of work conflict

- Expectations
- Communication
- Behaviour
- Performance
- Relationships with others
- Bullying

What is the impact of conflict?

- Stress
- Drop in motivation
- Reduced productivity
- Unworkable relationships
- Sickness absence
- Disciplinary processes/dismissals
- Changes in job roles
- Resignations
- Legal disputes

Tackling workplace conflict

To deal with conflict there must be clear policies, procedures and methods in place across the workplace. Means of managing and tackling workplace conflict might include:

Effective line management

Line managers have a key role to play in identifying and dealing with workplace conflict before it escalates.

Mediation

Mediation can be an effective way of bringing conflicted parties together to find a way forward.

Performance management

Where performance issues are at the root of the conflict, effective performance management ensures that people know what is expected, and identifies help and support that may be needed.

Disciplinary and grievance procedures

These provide a clear and transparent framework to deal with difficulties from either the employee or employer and they ensure everyone is treated in the same way in similar circumstances.

VWV's HR consultancy offers a range of services complementing the legal support provided by the firm's education team. The HR consultancy is staffed by highly experienced practitioners who have worked for many years as employment lawyers and now specialise in HR.

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