

Hints and tips for managing conflict in the workplace

Organisations should always have policies and procedures in place to determine how conflict in the workplace should be formally addressed. The Acas Code of Practice: Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures outlines best practice in this regard. Organisations should also develop effective conflict resolution practices and robust cultures in which it is easier to identify and resolve conflict informally at an early stage before issues escalate. . To achieve this, it is necessary 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 and they should receive training so that they are confident to do so.

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 appraisal and 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, Narrow Quay HR offers a range of HR support services complementing the legal support provided by the firm's education team. This includes providing training to SLTs and staff on numerous HR topics, undertaking investigations into grievance or disciplinary issues or support panels convened to hear these matters. Narrow Quay HR is run by highly experienced practitioners who have worked for many years as employment lawyers, therefore providing the best of both worlds in terms of solid legal grounding and HR expertise.

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