

Do you feel like you don't have the skills to deal with conflict in the workplace?

Managers must have the skills in their arsenal to deal with any conflicts that arise in the workplace and have varying techniques to deal with the situation.

Here are three essential skills you have to adopt as a manager to deal with conflict:

Firstly, the key skill you must have is assertiveness.

Being assertive is being confident and forceful whilst considering other people's point of view. One system to use is the DESC system- this involves firstly describing the other person's behaviour, then expressing your feelings, specifying what you want to change and the consequences.

An example of this in action would sound like "John, I've noticed you constantly undermining Jack in the office over the last few weeks, I'm not impressed that you would put a colleague down like this, I'd like an end to this otherwise we will have to call a disciplinary meeting."

Other assertive qualities you will have to show is during any meetings to resolve conflict. You have to explore the reasons for the conflict without making any accusations whilst rejecting finger pointing, name calling and insults.

A further key skill for resolving conflict is active listening.

Active listening needs to be used to relay to the parties involved that you fully understand their feelings and thoughts during conflict resolution. Focus on the words and the tonality to fully comprehend what is being said – you can do this through three separate techniques.

Firstly, you can restate what they've said, this is where you repeat back to them exactly what they have said, but using synonyms instead of word for word repetition.

Secondly, you can paraphrase what they've said. This is when you use your own words to show your own understanding of what the other person meant – you would start this sentence by saying something like "So I think you're saying..." or "You believe that..." to confirm the other person's feelings in the context of the discussion.

Or thirdly you can reframe, where you not only describe what you think the person wants out of the situation, but offer solutions based on these thoughts.

Avoid being overly positive or negative, look for neutral solutions that benefit everyone, for example if you hear a complaint of "I feel like I'm doing all of the work on my own in this department" – you should perhaps reframe it to "I'm hearing that you would really like other people to share the workload more evenly in this department"

A further key skill you require is empathy.

Many managers will make assumptions during conflict that are not true and fail to put themselves into the shoes of others.

You can show empathy by asking questions such as “So you’re unhappy at the moment because you think I should have done something for you this morning – is that right?”

Silently wait for confirmation of the person’s opinion – with empathy you don’t have to agree, however by just acknowledging the other person’s view, you can achieve a win-win solution where both parties come away happier.

So, when next dealing with a conflict situation, take into account the three key skills you require:

Firstly, assertiveness – be confident and forceful but consider other people’s views.

Secondly, active listening – show the conflicting party that not only have you listened to them but taken their emotions and views into consideration.

And finally, empathy – put yourself in the other person’s shoes and don’t make assumptions.