

# 41 Mistakes To Avoid

---

## When Dealing With Conflict At Work

# 41 Mistakes To Avoid When Dealing With Conflict At Work

1. Having a “Combat Mentality” – If you go into it thinking there must be a winner and a loser, you are approaching it all wrong.
2. Not recognizing the cost of unresolved conflict – According to Daniel Dana, author of a book on conflict resolution, “*Unresolved interpersonal conflict in the workplace is one of the largest reducible productivity costs, yet it is the least identified.*”

---

3. Avoiding conflict – A recent survey found that 35% of managers would rather jump out of a plane than deal with conflict. 27% would rather shave their head for charity, and 8% would rather eat bugs.
4. Assuming all conflict is bad – The reality is that healthy organizations and teams can engage in heated debate, and that conflict, when handled appropriately, is good.
5. Taking it personally – It’s probably not about you.

---

6. Oversimplifying the problem – Most issues are complicated, so avoid the temptation to say, “All we gotta do is...” There is probably not a “silver bullet.”
7. Not respecting the other person – The other person is not an “asset” or a line on spreadsheet. Just like you, they have needs, desires, feelings, and maybe even a family.
8. Dealing with it publicly – Confronting someone in front of a group is a coward’s way out. It’s fine to have one or two other people with you, but do it in private.
9. Focusing on the Who – The goal is not to figure out WHO is to blame. Focus more on WHAT happened and less on WHO did it.

10. Using anger – Don't respond to issues when you are angry or upset. Many people use anger to fuel them to overcome their fear of confrontation.
11. Using email – Get a backbone. Do it in person if you can, otherwise pick up the phone.

---

12. Assuming you know all the facts – You need to go in with the position that you are not seeing the whole picture.
13. The Avalanche – Don't let issues pile up over time until you unload like an avalanche, wiping out everything in your path.
14. Speculating about motives – You can judge facts, but you can only speculate/guess why someone did something. You know what happens when you ASSUME.
15. Insults – Lazy, stupid, arrogant, careless, annoying, and other words that describe someone's character or personality should be left out of the conversation.

---

16. Gossip – Talking about a problem with someone who does not have the authority to solve it is called gossip. It is a cancer that spreads throughout a team and must be eliminated.
17. Being 100 % problem-focused – It's important to clearly define the problem, but you also have to tell people what you want them to do differently. What does winning look like?
18. Too many "pillows" – Don't bury the problem between so much positivity, because you don't want to hurt their feelings, that they think they are getting a raise.

---

19. Generalizations – "You are *always* late, causing problems, messing up, etc. You *never* show up on time. *Everybody* says they don't like working with you." Don't be vague. Be specific.

20. Filling the silence – You have been preparing for the “tough conversation” but this may be a surprise for them. Let them process and resist the urge to fill the uncomfortable silence.
  21. Missing the signs – Eye rolling, head shaking, the silent treatment are all signs of conflict, which is best dealt with while issues are small.
  22. “They’ll work it out” – Some managers make the mistake of never getting involved when there is a conflict between two employees
- 
23. The “Go-Between” – On the flip side, some managers feel like it’s their job to talk to Kathy, then talk to Nancy, then go tell Kathy what she said...to try to mediate a solution without getting the people with a conflict in the same room.
  24. “Just avoid them” – Other managers solve issues between people on their team by telling them to “just stay away from each other.” This allows the problem to smolder and doesn’t solve anything.
  25. “Here’s what you’re gonna do” – It is not the manager’s job to prescribe the solution when two people have a conflict (barring any legal issues, harassment, etc.) The people who have a beef with each other need to take some ownership in coming up with a solution. Do you really want your people to bring *every problem they have* to your office so you can solve it?
- 
26. Inconsistency – When it’s OK for Angie to do it, but not Alex...or if a manager’s personality changes every day of the week, people don’t know what the rules are.
  27. Not listening – Having a “tough conversation” with someone is just that. A conversation, a two-way street.
  28. Using a script – This tactic is used to avoid the discomfort of an actual conversation when confronting an employee about an issue.

29. “Ready. Fire. Aim” – This happens when you learn about an issue and start firing off solutions before you have enough information. Unless it is an emergency or life safety issue, you probably have some time to consider it first.
30. Scorched Earth Policy – All bridges are burned. Relationships are destroyed. Hurt feelings are unrepairable. It would be better to skip the drama and just say, “You’re fired.”
31. It’s all about you – Some managers are only looking out for themselves and are only concerned about their own comfort and career.

---

32. Lack of clarity – Bad managers do not set clear expectations, so their people don’t know what winning looks like.
33. No communication – Usually goes along with a lack of clarity. When managers hide behind closed doors and never speak to their people, it creates an environment that is ideal for conflict to fester.
34. Getting sucked in to personal problems – Some of the people you need to confront are masters at rambling on, pulling on your emotions, and creating diversions and distractions, hoping you will go easy on them. It can be their way of avoiding conflict.

---

35. Being one-sided – There are at least two sides to every story, and you would be wise to listen to more than just one of them.
36. Focusing on punishment – While there is a place for discipline, and there must be consequences in some cases...keep in mind that the goal is to resolve the conflict and make the team more successful. Punishment may not always be necessary.
37. Revenge – Some managers feel the need to “get even” or “teach them a lesson,” which creates contempt among their team and makes the situation worse.
38. No training – Few companies invest in conflict resolution training for their people, so it is left up to the individual managers to figure out.

39. No plan – When we're caught off guard, we're more likely to fall back into old, ineffective bad habits...like the combat mentality, or generalizing, or avoiding it all together. The key to effective confrontation or conflict resolution is to have a solid plan for how the conversation needs to go, which takes a lot of the emotion out of it.
40. No system – Teams that lack an established system / process/ protocol for dealing with issues are prone to making more mistakes than an organization that has systems in place to solve problems while they are small.
41. Losing sight of the goal – When there is no training, no plan and no system in place for conflict resolution, it's easy for emotions to take you out of the game. It makes you lose sight of the goal, which is to make the other person more successful, so your organization wins.

Help prevent this by going into conversations with a clear, realistic preferred outcome; the knowledge of how you want your working relationship with your counterpart to be; and having done some careful thinking about any obstacles that could interfere with either.

---

*“Unresolved interpersonal conflict in the workplace  
is one of the largest reducible productivity costs,  
yet it is the least identified.”  
Daniel Dana, author of Conflict Resolution*

If you are looking for practical strategies and techniques for resolving, reducing and preventing conflict in your business,

Visit

[www.resolveconflictatwork.com](http://www.resolveconflictatwork.com)

---

Published by

# **Resolve Conflict** at Work



[www.resolveconflictatwork.com](http://www.resolveconflictatwork.com)

©2015

---