NM ✦ ADR NEWS

Encouraging Communication Through Mutual Respect

ADR also means "A Dialogue Resource"

NM Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Bureau

We are a state Risk Management program that works with state employees and their agencies to access workplace mediation, communication-based training and alternative resources to workplace conflict. Our goal is to provide state employees an early resource to resolve conflicts in the workplace.

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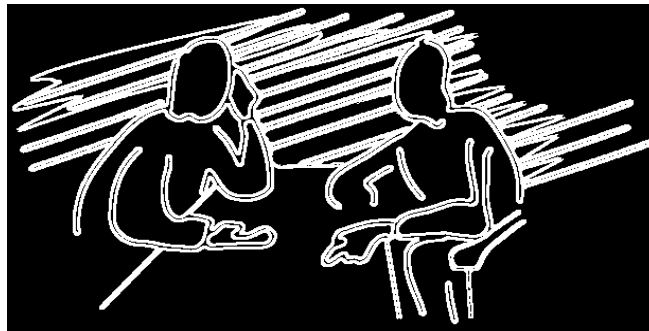**Stefanie Ortega**
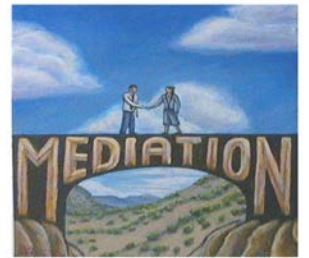Outreach & Training Coordinator
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NEW MEXICO
GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

"Take advantage of the ambiguity in the world. Look at something and think what else it might be."
~ Roger von Oech

The ADR Bureau is now offering online mediation! Click here for a recorded Program Overview to learn about the free services we offer state employees.

ADR EVENTS COMING SOON:

Essentials for Effective Communication
3-hour online training (for all state employees)
May 25, 2021 – click here for details
June 3, 2021 – click here for details
We will consider and try out a variety of essential skills and techniques designed to help us become more effective communicators.

Coffee Talk with the ADR Bureau
1-hour online roundtable (for ADR Coordinators & our Volunteer Mediators)
May 27, 2021 – click here for details
Join us in an informal, roundtable conversation about anything and everything ADR-related!   Bring your top-of-mind concerns and questions and share your ideas, knowledge and resources.

ADR Coordinator Training
3-hour online training (for ADR Coordinators representing state agencies)
July 20, 2021 – click here for details
We welcome new ADR Coordinators, as well as those who would like a refresher course. Come and learn about the new ADR services in State Government!

Classes above are FREE for state employees and space is limited.

NM ADR NEWS

Workplace Conflicts? 5 Tips to Improve Communication
by Kiely Kuligowski

Use these five communication strategies to effectively resolve workplace conflict.

- *Unresolved conflict can impact your company culture, employee performance and retention, and bottom line.*
- *Workplace conflict is often the result of poor communication.*
- *Use clear communication strategies to resolve workplace conflict (e.g., set expectations, respect personal differences, and use active listening skills, neutral terms and open body language).*

Employees are bound to have disagreements from time to time. Whether it's a misunderstanding over who did what, a clash of ideas or a tangle of personal relationships, conflict is inevitable in any workplace. How you handle those conflicts can make a world of difference to the success of your company. There are several communication strategies that employers, managers, HR directors (and even employees) can master to successfully resolve workplace conflict in creative ways.

Importance of conflict resolution in the workplace

Effective conflict resolution skills and policies are imperative in the workplace. While a mismanaged conflict can be detrimental to your business, a properly handled conflict can save your business time and money, as well as improve colleague relationships, employee performance, retention rates, communication skills and workplace culture. With the right communication strategies in place, you can turn a potential crisis into a productive discussion.

Key takeaway: Effectively resolving workplace conflict can improve your organization and increase your bottom line.

How to resolve workplace conflict through communication

Here are five ways to resolve conflict – and improve colleague relationships – through better communication.

1. Address issues immediately and openly.

When a conflict arises among your team members, action should be taken quickly to resolve it. Instead of ignoring or avoiding conflict, accept it and work towards addressing it immediately.

"Not addressing the conflict until a later time allows resentments to simmer," Nick Kamboj, CEO of Aston & James LLC told Business News Daily. It's important to address the issue immediately and transparently.

Erin Wortham, director of talent at Headspring and former people engagement manager at Insights Learning and Development, agreed that fast resolution retains a sense of harmony in the workplace and advised leaders to encourage open dialogue during these discussions. Similarly, in their book, *The Essential Workplace Conflict Handbook* (Career Press, 2015), authors Cornelia Gamlem and Barbara Mitchell said getting to the source of a problem involves honest conversations and a little detective work.

"Get good information by varying the types of questions you ask, such as open-ended questions, close-ended questions, fact-based questions or opinion-based questions," Gamlem said.

2. Set clear expectations.

Managing expectations – both in terms of what you expect from others and what they expect of you – is one of the most important things a team can do to facilitate better communication. Anything you or your colleagues need from each other should be clearly defined and expressed.

Miki Feldman-Simon, founder of IAmBackatWork, made it a point to have set expectations at her company from the start.

"I once worked with a company where people would often interrupt [each other]," she said. "I established a principle where [interruption] was not acceptable. Consistently applying this principle changed the communication habits within my company, making it possible for everyone to voice their opinion."

Knowing what is expected of them can help employees feel more comfortable, thus alleviating conflict-causing tension.

"If people don't understand what the organization, their manager, or their teammates expect, confusion and conflict can result," Mitchell added. "Set expectations early, beginning with the job interview and again during the first days of employment."

3. Build active listening skills.

You may be hearing what your colleagues have to say, but are you actually listening to them? People's minds often wander when others are speaking, especially in a group setting, and they don't truly absorb what's been said. Even in digital communications, it's easy to read a message and immediately forget about it. Gamlem emphasized the importance of creating a culture where people really listen to each other.

"Listening is such an undervalued skill, and it can have a real impact on how often conflicts arise and how they can be avoided," she said.

Additionally, with the application of good listening skills, conflict can be helpful. "Differing opinions and ideas can lead to great innovations," said Lindsay Anvik, a business coach specializing in leadership and productivity. "Take the consistent stance of being open to someone whose opinions differ from yours. This allows you to see things from a new light (and decide when to go to bat for your idea)."

4. Use neutral terms and open body language.

When engaged in a conflict, it is natural to want to be closed off – but this only hinders the chance of resolution. Give yourself (or those in the conflict) time to cool off first. When managing the conflict, speak in a calm, agreeable manner.

Use neutral language and separate the other person from the problem. It is better to speak in "I" language, as opposed to "you" language to avoid the other person feeling attacked. For example, saying "I feel undervalued in my position" is going to be more effective than saying "You don't value my work." Using "you" language will only cause the other person to get defensive, which doesn't bode well for conflict resolution.

In addition to choosing your words carefully, do not underestimate the power of body language and tone. Often, it is not what is being said that propels conflict further, but how someone is saying it. Use open body language to signify your willingness to resolve the conflict and reach an agreement. People tend to mimic those around them, so this can help elicit a calm, open demeanor from anyone else in the conflict.

5. Recognize and respect personal differences.

Opposing viewpoints, behaviors and work styles can cause a lot of arguments and misunderstandings among colleagues, Wortham said. If clashing personalities are the root cause of a lot of your team's problems, work on being more aware of the differences in how you view a situation.

"Whether it be how a meeting was run, how a strategy was deployed or how stakeholders were engaged, recognizing that other people can interpret the same event in different ways is important to remember in order to resolve conflicts when they arise," Wortham said. "[Knowing] how you prefer to communicate and being able to recognize others' communication styles can help build the bridges of understanding."

"Each of us sees and experiences the world differently using our own experiences, values, individual diversity and culture," Mitchell added. "We each interpret what we've heard or seen, give it meaning and draw conclusions based on our experiences. Recognizing that differences exist makes it easier to begin having discussions that help resolve workplace conflicts."

Key takeaway: **Resolve workplace conflict by addressing the issue immediately, setting clear expectations, applying active listening skills, using neutral terms and open body language, and respecting personal differences.**

What causes conflict in the workplace?

Workplace conflict can be the result of several different situations; however, the root cause is oftern poor communication. For example, employee expectations may be unclearly communicated, employees may feel as though they don't have a voice (lack of open dialogue),

or the tone of someone's words may be misinterpreted. Whatever the case may be, miscommunication is often the source, and it can be mitigated through proper skills and policies.

Other causes of workplace conflict can include (but are not limited to):

- *Harassment* – An employee(s) is bullying or harassing.
- *Increase in workload* – An employee's workload is significantly increased, and they feel they are being pushed too hard.
- *Lack of skills or training* – An employee lacks the skills or training to properly do their job.
- *Negative work environment* – Your company culture may be negative or toxic, causing employees to feel unhappy or unsafe.
- *Opposing personalities* – Team members may have drastically different personalities and simply not "like" each other. Employees can also have a "falling out", making it difficult or uncomfortable to work together.
- *Poor management* – A manager may have poor management skills or lack the appropriate leadership style that their team needs.
- *Unfair treatment* – An employee may be treated unfairly. This is often the result of someone in a management position favoring or disliking someone.
- *Unrealistic expectations* – Employees or managers may have unrealistic expectations.

Key takeaway: **Workplace conflict is often the result of poor communication, but there are several other causes as well, including poor management, unfair treatment and harassment.**

Original article found at: 5 Communication Tips for Conflict Resolution in the Wor - businessnewsdaily.com