

Successfully Managing Workplace Conflict

Presented by IMA Leadership Academy

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The Association of
Accountants and
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Asking Questions



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Featured Presenter

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Corporate Controller and HR Manager
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David Barnett's Biography

- David Barnett is a CPA, CMA, speaker, and author, and has worked for companies such as Johnson & Johnson, Newell, and Fiskars. He speaks around the country on topics including Excel, Outlook, goal setting, networking, time management, customer service, company culture, remote teams, and more.
- He is currently the Corporate Controller and HR Manager for NetAlly in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He has been an active member of IMA and a member of the Leadership Academy faculty since 2017.

Course Goal and Agenda

Conflict is inevitable. It has both negative and positive outcomes, but many people try to avoid it. The **goal of this course** is to help management accountants become aware of the skills and techniques needed for successfully managing workplace conflict.



- Introduction
- Workplace Conflict Basics
- Addressing Conflict
- Strategies and Techniques
- Close

Learning Objectives

AFTER THIS SESSION, ATTENDEES WILL BE ABLE TO:



DEFINE conflict and conflict management.



IDENTIFY reasons for and ways to address conflict in the workplace.



LIST strategies for successfully managing workplace conflict.

Reflection

1

How often do you encounter conflict in your workplace?

2

On a scale of 1-10, rate how well you handle workplace conflict.



Workplace Conflict Basics



What is Conflict?

Tension resulting from forces acting in opposition to each other.

A situation that involves **strong** emotions because one or more parties **perceive** a threat.



Some Facts about Workplace Conflict

In the U.S.



Employees spend
2.8 hours per week
dealing with conflict



That is approximately
\$359 billion
in paid hours



Which is the equivalent of
385 million
working days



In the U.K.



485,800 people
resign each year
due to conflict

Costing **£14.9 billion**
in replacement costs and
lost productivity

Additionally, **874,000** take sick
days annually due to conflict at an
estimated cost of **£2.2 billion**

Productive vs. Unproductive Conflict

Productive Conflict	Unproductive Conflict
Open exchange of ideas on the actual issues	Repetitive and frequent arguments over trivial matters
People feel respectfully heard	People feel frustrated, often resulting in sarcasm, denial, and disrespect
People are comfortable voicing their opinions	People feel unsafe and attacked
Preserves relationships	Destroys relationships

Benefits of Productive Conflict

- Engaged employees
 - Improved relationships
 - Improved employee morale
 - Needed changes identified
 - More innovation
 - Better work outcomes
 - More inclusive environment
 - Opportunities to learn and grow
- Higher job satisfaction
 - Issues of importance uncovered
 - Greater clarity
 - Assumptions questioned
 - Better solutions to problems
 - More authentic communication
 - Personal and organizational goals achieved



What is Conflict Management?

Resolve issues using appropriate **influencing** skills and tools to achieve successful **business goals** and arrive at the best **organizational outcomes**.



Sources of Workplace Conflict

Identify as many sources of workplace conflict as you can in three minutes.



Common Reasons for Workplace Conflict

- Resistance to change
 - Unclear or unrealistic job expectations
 - Poor communication
 - Personality differences
 - Poor work habits
 - Work habits that irritate a coworker
 - Preexisting mindsets
 - Power dynamics
- Lack of common performance standards
 - Competition for resources
 - Different interests
 - Poor management
 - Unfair treatment
 - Perceived inequities
 - Poor work environment
 - Lack of equal opportunities
- Bullying and harassment
 - Competition
 - Misunderstanding
 - Inadequate training
 - Conflicting objectives
 - Noncompliance with rules and policies
 - Poor relationship skills
 - Unmet needs in the workplace
- Misalignment with company values
 - Increase in workload
 - Tolerating mediocrity
 - Intolerance of failure
 - Dishonesty
 - Sidestepping problems

The Root Elements of Every Conflict

PROBLEM

What are the viewpoints, conflict, and disagreements to be settled?

PEOPLE

Who are the parties directly involved in the problem?

What are their values, needs, concerns, and time restrictions?

POWER

Who is in control?
Who has the most to gain and to lose?
Who needs resolution most?

POSITION

What is each person's opening position?
What are the internal and external needs and concerns behind their opening positions?

PROCESS

How is the discussion to proceed?
How are the positions to be resolved, problems to be settled?
What can be done to establish a positive rapport with this person?

Six Actions for Conflict Management

- ① Focus on the organization's vision and goals
- ② Assist in clarifying roles and responsibilities
- ③ Clarify perceptions of the issue
- ④ Empower employees to solve problems
- ⑤ Make mutually beneficial agreements
- ⑥ Maintain a sense of humor



Consider:

What is one thing you can do to **better manage conflict** in your workplace?



Poll Question #1

Of the six actions for conflict management,
which is most important to you?

- a. Focus on the organization's vision and goals
- b. Assist in clarifying roles and responsibilities
- c. Clarify perceptions of the issue
- d. Empower employees to solve problems
- e. Make mutually beneficial agreements
- f. Maintain a sense of humor



Poll Question #1 Results



Addressing Conflict



How Do You React to Conflict?

Write down a few words or phrases (page 7 in your workbook) that describe **how you react to conflict** in general.



Unhealthy and Healthy Responses to Conflict

Unhealthy Response



Unable to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person

Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions

Rejection, isolation, and shaming

Unable to compromise or desiring to punish the other person

Fearing or avoiding conflict; expecting a bad outcome

Healthy Response



Able to empathize with the other person's viewpoint

Calm, nondefensive, and respectful reactions

Readiness to forgive and forget; moving past the conflict without resentment and anger

Able to seek compromise without desiring punishment

Believing that facing conflict directly is the best thing for everyone

Two Phases of Conflict



EMOTIONAL

Just listen



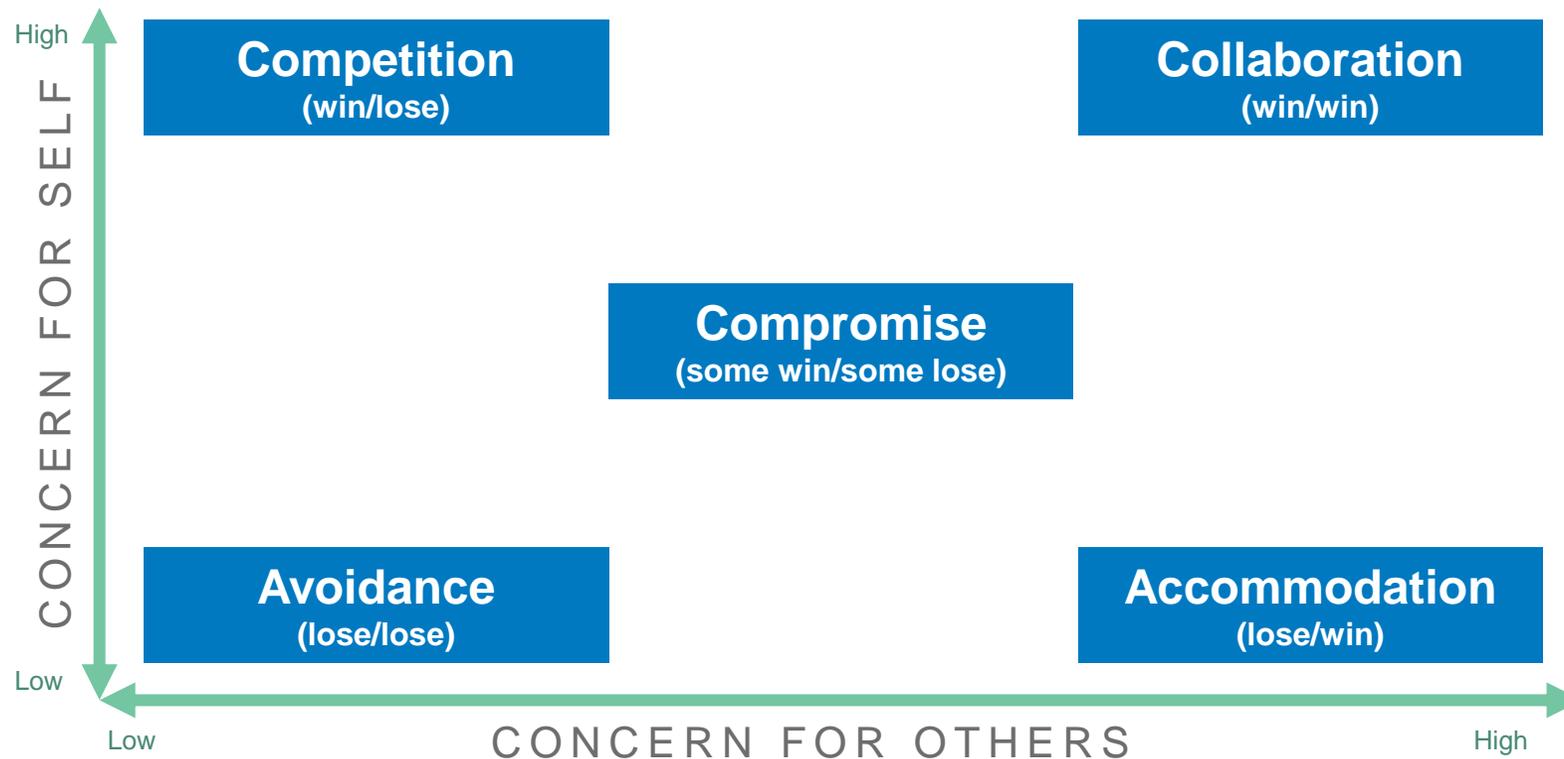
RATIONAL

Discuss the issues

Constructive Ways to Calm Your Anger

- Agree to postpone the conversation until you can calm down
- Excuse yourself and leave the room
- Talk to someone who is calm
- Breathe deeply while you count to ten
- Do something physical to release the anger from your body
- Get some fresh air

Approaches to Conflict



Think for a moment:

What is your most **usual approach** to conflict?



Poll Question #2

Of the five approaches to conflict, which is **the approach you use the most**?

- a. Competition
- b. Accommodation
- c. Avoidance
- d. Compromise
- e. Collaboration



Poll Question #2 Results



When to Use Each Approach

Style	Appropriate Use
Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ When quick, decisive action is vital▪ On important issues where unpopular actions need implementing▪ On issues vital to company welfare when you know you're right▪ Against people who take advantage of uncompetitive behavior
Accommodation	
Avoidance	

When to Use Each Approach, *continued*

Style	Appropriate Situation
Compromise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ When goals are important but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes▪ When opponents with equal power are committed to mutually exclusive goals▪ When attempting to achieve temporary settlements to complex issues▪ When arriving at expedient solutions under time pressure▪ As a backup when collaboration or competition is unsuccessful
Collaboration	

Conflict across Cultures

- Work with prototypes rather than stereotypes.
- Be respectful and maintain cordiality.
- Finding a compromise may help both parties see the others' point of view.
- You must find a way to talk about conflict in order to resolve it.
- Work to understand the underlying catalyst for the conflict, not just the visible conflict.
- Effective communication is key.
- Learn about other countries' cultures and get to know individuals.

PW-11



Source: See Bibliography [9,35,40]

Managers Dealing with Conflicting Employees

- Meet privately with each individual to discover the main issues.
- Maintain a neutral stance at all times.
- Sit down with both individuals for a conflict resolution meeting.
- Keep the discussion on track and focused on behavior rather than attitudes or perceptions.
- Allow each party to speak for an allotted period of time.
- Reinforce the value of the employees but also the harm their conflict is causing to the team and the organization.
- Have the individuals think of solutions and choose one together.
- Consider probation or termination if an employee won't cooperate.
- Follow organizational policies and use organizational resources.

PW-11



Source: See Bibliography [8]

Develop a Plan

Take a few minutes to **develop a plan for handling one of the potential conflicts** described on page 11 in the workbook.



Poll Question #3

As a manager, what have you found **most difficult when dealing with conflicting employees?** (or expect to find most difficult)

- a. Maintaining a neutral stance
- b. Keeping the individuals focused on behavior rather than attitude or perceptions
- c. Getting the individuals to agree on a mutual solution
- d. Dealing with individual's emotions
- e. Some other aspect of dealing with the conflict



Poll Question #3 Results



Strategies and Techniques



Strategies and Techniques

A-E-I-O-U
model

R.I.S.C
strategy

“I” vs.
“you”
statements

General
tips

A-E-I-O-U Model

- A**ssume the other person means well
- E**xpress your feelings
- I**dentify what you would like to happen
- O**utcome expected
- U**nderstand next steps

Example A-E-I-O-U Conversation

- A** I believe that you're concerned about the impact of new state legislation on our units. Maybe you're worried about me being able to get the workshops organized in time.
- E** Right now, I feel that you either doubt my ability to cope or don't believe that I will get it sorted out.
- I** I would prefer to let you know if I need assistance and give you an update in our biweekly one-on-one meetings.
- O** This would ensure that the workshop goes ahead on time and that you're kept up to date with progress and any problems that develop.
- U** Could we agree to this approach for the next two weeks?

PW-13



Source: See Bibliography [19]

Poll Question #4

Have you **used the A-E-I-O-U model** before? If so, how did it go?

- a. Yes, and it went very well
- b. Yes, and I need more practice with it
- c. Yes, but I didn't realize I was using it
- d. No, I haven't used it before



Poll Question #4 Results



R.I.S.C. Strategy

- R**eport: Describe the behavior that has affected you.
- I**mpact: Express the impact of this behavior on you.
- S**pecify: Explain specifically what behavior you would prefer.
- C**onsequences: State the positive and/or negative consequences of the requested change in behavior.

Sample R.I.S.C. Script

R When you interrupted me today at our staff meeting...

I I felt discounted and that you didn't value what I was saying.

S I would appreciate it if you would let me complete talking about my idea before you offer yours. Are you willing to do this?

C **[Positive]** If you do wait until I'm finished talking, I will do the same for you and actively listen to your ideas.

[Negative] If you don't stop interrupting me, I will call you out on this behavior in the staff meeting.



Think for a moment

...whether you have used either the **A-E-I-O-U** model or the **R.I.S.C.** strategy before and if so, how it went.

If you haven't used either of them, consider how one of them might have impacted a recent conflict you observed or were involved with.



“I” vs. “You” Statements

“I” Statement	“You” Statement
Is assertive	Is passive or aggressive
Assumes responsibility	Blames others
Acknowledges my needs	Denies my own needs
Focuses attention on the problem	Focuses attention on the other person

Activity: Transform These Sentences

Reword each sentence below so that it's an "I" statement.

1. You never let me know the priorities around here.
2. You promised to have the report to me yesterday, and you still don't have it done.
3. You always argue with people when they ask you to quit.
4. I feel that you're getting angry.
5. You always let others work on office projects, but you never ask me if I'm interested.



General Tips for Managing Conflict

- Raise issues early
 - Manage your emotions
 - Acknowledge criticism
 - Practice active listening
 - Ask questions
 - Pay attention to the feelings
 - Focus on resolution rather than on winning
- Focus on the present
 - Know when to let something go
 - Give the other person some space
 - Listen to the other person
 - Assess your attitude
 - Assess your approach
 - Don't take ownership of other people's issues



Poll Question #5

After reviewing all this information on managing conflict, **identify your current level** with the conflict management competency.

- a. I have limited knowledge, skills, and/or experience with conflict management.
- b. I basically understand that conflict is inevitable, and that avoidance isn't a solution.
- c. I have applied some knowledge of conflict management to actual conflict situations.
- d. I'm skilled at managing workplace conflict.
- e. I'm an expert in conflict management.



Poll Question #5 Results



Close



Review

- ① Think about what you have just learned. If you had to explain the main idea to someone else, what would you say? Write your explanation in a sentence or two.
- ② What are the six most important concepts, strategies, or tips from this training?



Review

What is conflict?

What is conflict management?

Productive vs. unproductive conflict

Benefits of productive conflict

The root elements of every conflict

Six actions for conflict management

Healthy and unhealthy responses to conflict

Two phases of conflict

Five approaches to conflict

Conflict across cultures

Managers and conflicting employees

A-E-I-O-U model

R.I.S.C. strategy

“I” vs. “you” statements

Personal tips for managing conflict

Learning Objectives, *revisited*

AFTER THIS SESSION, ATTENDEES WILL BE ABLE TO:



DEFINE conflict and conflict management.



IDENTIFY reasons for and ways to address conflict in the workplace.



LIST strategies for successfully managing workplace conflict.

Foursquare Action Plan

How do you feel about what you learned or were reminded of?

What are the most important concepts you learned or were reminded of?

How will you benefit from what you learned or were reminded of?

What actions will you take in response to what you learned or were reminded of?

Questions and Answers



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Thank You to Our Featured Presenter!

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Final Reminders

- ▶ **Complete the Evaluation poll** – 2 options
 - On your screen
 - Evaluation Survey icon at the bottom of your console
- ▶ **Access to your CPE Certificate** – 2 options
 - Click the “CPE” icon at the bottom of your console
 - or
 - Click the link in your post-event e-mail
- ▶ Please print a copy of the CPE certificate for your records.
- ▶ Your CPE credit will be automatically recorded in your transcript.



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