

Solving Conflicts at Work (Part 2)



In last month's article, we explained the first four Rules of Solving Conflict:

- **Rule 1: Keep It Civil**
- **Rule 2: Disagreement Is OK**
- **Rule 3: Keep It Solution-Oriented**
- **Rule 4: Confront the Well, Not the Elephant**

In this article, we discuss the last four Rules.

Rule 5: Talk First, Write Second

Nicholas Epley at the University of Chicago has conducted fascinating research on written versus spoken communication. The bottom line: When we convey a message in writing, there's an excellent chance it will be interpreted differently than we intended. This is because we tend to construe written words more negatively than we do spoken words.

If possible, don't use writing to convey a message that could produce an emotional response. If there's a difficult issue to discuss, arrange an in-person meeting.

There is a highly useful role for writing, however. Following the in-person conversation, [send a note that conveys your understanding of the discussion's key takeaways](#). It will help to cement mutual understanding.

Rule 6: In Meetings, Be a Facilitator

If you lead a meeting, act as a facilitator, not an expert. Express your view only after soliciting the views of others. If someone recommends an idea that you planned to voice, don't take credit; give it away.

Your job is to tap the individual and collective wisdom, experience, insights and ideas in the room and to work toward a resolution, not to build your brand or demonstrate your intelligence.



Rule 7: Senior Leaders Must Be Role Models

You won't get very far unless your most-senior leaders model these behaviors. "The unique responsibility, role and contribution of the leader and leadership team is to hold themselves, their team and all the stakeholders responsible and accountable for our working together," said Alan Mulally, former CEO at Ford Motor Co.

Perhaps Gretchen Carlson, a former Fox News journalist who filed a harassment case against Roger Ailes, then-Chairman and CEO of the network, put it best: "When it comes to workplace behavior, the buck stops at the top."

Rule 8: Conduct Periodic Checkups and Check-Ins

Select a day on your calendar to assess how you're doing. Are the above rules being followed consistently? Are all participants feeling comfortable and working toward shared goals? Are there any adjustments you need to make?

Conclusion

In organizations, people will sometimes rub each other the wrong way. The key to resolving conflict is a non-negotiable commitment to the above rules of behavior. By committing to these principles, you empower everyone in your organization to hold themselves and one another accountable.