



Leader Tool Team-based Conflict

The pandemic has forced us to look more closely at the way we work particularly in terms of team and people interactions and dynamics. The way that our teams function is crucial to our workplace culture and productivity. Suppose we adopt an approach of creating teams based on aptitude, skills and diversity. In that case, we create endless potential but also a natural breeding ground for differences in approach and opinions, and if this isn't acknowledged, it could lead to potential conflict. Setting teams up for success:

- Acknowledge diversity and celebrate differences. Encourage team members to be honest about what they are excited about and also their concerns. Some teams find it useful to do a quick SWOT analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to make sure everyone is aware of what each member brings to the table.
- Model clear, open and frequent communication. Regular check-ins and agreed goals, milestones and recognition of roadblocks. Work through solutions to allow members to move forward without frustration.
- Conflict can arise over disagreements over what exactly it is that needs to be done. The team will be looking for clarity and may have different views depending on their area of experience. It is important for people to express their ideas and thoughts and to focus on the outcome – what does success look like?
- Conflict that occurs over differing working styles, personal prejudices and assumptions can be the most damaging. A leader's role is to encourage expression, debate and challenging conversations in a respectful way as this leads to creative problem-solving. The leader keeps the focus on the collective goal.
- High performing teams are often characterised by looking for solutions which involve the whole team and working pre-emptively to create an environment for the team to succeed. Conflict can be healthy if it is worked through, and to take out the personal. Conflict increases when people feel criticised, differences are expected; personal criticism is not.
- Team cohesion is directly linked to conflict management. Teams who are comfortable with having courageous conversations and can be open and direct in addressing conflict can develop a more dynamic, healthy and constructive team environment and are rewarded by great outcomes.
- Teams who work through conflict grow in confidence and trust and are better equipped to deal with challenges and innovate. We all know the sense of satisfaction when we work with a "dream team".
- See conflict as a natural part of moving forward; it is complex, and not all conflict will lead to a positive outcome. As a leader, recognising when you need to step in and work towards a resolution is an important part of your role.

Please also refer to our previous conflict tools and tips in the [Employer Login Area](#).

[Mediation and Conflict Management](#) services are available when conflict is complex, and progress is slow and difficult. If you have any further questions or would like to discuss a specific concern contact our Manager Support Hotline or your Relationship Manager. As always, as your EAP we are here to support your people whatever the nature of their concerns, please contact **AccessEAP** on **1800 818 728**.

