Navigating HR

NAVIGATING HR

The Art of Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution

CONNIE PALMER, CHRL

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This book includes several open resources that have been adapted. Specific section attributions can be found at the bottom of each section, with a note about modifications if applicable.

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Land Acknowledgement Statement

As an Instructor at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario, I acknowledge and honour the Anishinaabe, Huadenoshaunnee, and Lanape people of Southwestern Ontario as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waterways on which Fanshawe College is located. I acknowledge the cultural diversity of all Indigenous peoples and respect the Elders' past, present, and future.

At Fanshawe College, we celebrate the continuous living cultures of the original inhabitants of Canada and acknowledge the important contributions Indigenous people have and continue to make in Canadian society. The College respects and acknowledges our Indigenous students, staff, Elders, and visitors from many nations.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Navigating HR: The Art of Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution – First Edition is a practical guide for the Human Resources professional. With a hands-on approach to problem-solving and conflict resolution, this textbook focuses on the skills needed to resolve workplace conflict. Topics such as collaboration, impartiality and active listening are explored. Case studies, script writing and role-playing are utilized throughout the textbook, allowing readers to practice and apply their conflict resolution skills.

Book Features

Each chapter in the book includes the following:

Fanshawe HR Graduate on Conflict at Work

Each chapter in the book begins by highlighting a Fanshawe HR graduate and their experiences managing conflict in the workplace.

In each chapter, we will highlight a specific skill that will assist any Human Resources professional in the quest to solve problems and resolve conflicts.

👟 Runners Relay Ltd.

Throughout this text, there is an emphasis on the preparation work that a Human Resources professional needs to do to deal with workplace conflict and problem-solving. Roleplaying and scriptwriting provide an excellent opportunity for students to practice their skills before meeting with employees to discuss performance issues in the workplace. A company called Runners Relay Ltd. is used throughout the book as a running case study. Each case study includes scenarios, scripts, script audio and reflective exercise questions for students to work through.

Apply Your Knowledge

Each chapter concludes with a practical exercise allowing students to apply the HR skill emphasized in that chapter. A scenario is presented, providing students with an opportunity to put their newly acquired knowledge into practice.

Accessibility Statement

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CHAPTER 1: IT COMES WITH THE TERRITORY

Chapter Overview

1.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

★ Learning Outcomes

- Explore the concept of workplace conflict from an HR perspective.
- Explain how an HR professional engages in problem-solving and conflict resolution.
- List common factors that influence workplace conflict.

1.1 WORKPLACE CONFLICT

Photo by Sebastian Herrmann, Unsplash License

"The quality of our lives depends not on whether or not we have conflicts, but on how we respond to them."
– Thomas Crum

What is Conflict?

Conflict resolution and problem-solving "comes with the territory" when you work in Human Resources. To better understand how to navigate problem-solving and conflict resolution as a Human Resources professional, it is helpful to begin understanding the definition of conflict. Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines conflict as "an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles."

In the workplace, conflict might exist between two individuals or two departments and could involve customers and suppliers. Regardless of the number of people involved, conflict can disrupt productivity and create an unhealthy workplace. This text will help you to understand the factors that lead to conflict and to address the conflict head-on.

Purpose

This text focuses on the art of problem-solving and conflict resolution for Human Resources professionals. Beginning with Chapter 2, we will provide you with the following resources:

Videos – We will include a video highlighting a graduate from the Human Resources program at Fanshawe College. These graduates have worked in industry as Human Resources professionals and will share their experience with workplace conflicts.

Conflict Resolution Strategies – We will provide you with conflict resolution theories, strategies, and approaches to assist you in your role in problem-solving and workplace conflict scenarios.

A Spotlight on Conflict Resolution Skills – We will spotlight specific skills that a Human Resources professional needs to navigate workplace conflict.

Conflict Resolution Scenarios – You will read case studies and review approaches highlighting the do's and don'ts of conflict resolution.

Practice opportunities – You can practice your problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills as a Human Resources professional. There will be a focus on the importance of preparation and practice before you address these workplace challenges.

1.2 HUMAN RESOURCES CORE COMPETENCIES

Human Resources professionals rely on core competencies such as leadership skills, legislative compliance, analytical skills and strategic planning to perform their jobs. There are additional competencies that lend themselves well to problem-solving and conflict resolution.

Let us look closer at four core competencies that Human Resources professionals rely on to solve problems and address workplace conflicts.

Figure 1.2.1 "Core Competencies" by Sanaz Habibi, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

The Problem Solver

You are known for brainstorming solutions and addressing concerns and challenges in a timely manner.

> *Scenario*: Your day shift Supervisor asks you to hire two additional Production Associates for the day shift as they are experiencing staffing issues. You run an absence report and discover that there is an attendance issue on the day shift.
>
> *Solutio*n: Rather than hire two more employees, you set up employee meetings to address the attendance issues and issue Performance Improvement Plans (PIP) to the impacted employees.

The Conflict Resolution Advisor

You can identify disagreements between individuals and act as an advisor.

Scenario: Your Quality Manager asks you to prepare a termination letter for one of their QA Technicians. You are shocked as this employee has never had performance issues. Your quality manager explains that their QA Technician continues to disagree with every decision they make and is tired of dealing with this individual.

Solution: Rather than preparing a termination letter, you encourage your Quality Manager to sit down with their QA Technician to determine what is behind this recent change in performance. You provide the Quality Manager with questions that will help with the discussion and suggestions based on what they uncover during their conversation.

The Coach

You provide people leaders with useful tips and approaches to address workplace conflict.

Scenario: Your Operations Manager shares that they are hosting an upcoming training session for their Supervisors. One topic on their agenda is the importance of addressing workplace conflict promptly.

Solution: You sit down with your operations manager and provide them with exercises their supervisors could work through during the upcoming training session.

The Communicator

You can communicate with others using verbal and non-verbal communication.

Scenario: Your Office Manager is upset. They are tired of their Administrative Assistant standing in front of them with their arms crossed in front of their chest every time they ask for help with upcoming orientation sessions. They can tell the Administrative Assistant doesn't want anything to do with the orientation sessions based on their defensive body language.

Solution: You meet with your Office Manager and discuss non-verbal communication. You share that while the Administrative Assistant may be uninterested in helping with the orientation sessions, it is also possible they prefer to stand with their arms crossed in front of them as a matter of comfort.

HRPA Competency Framework
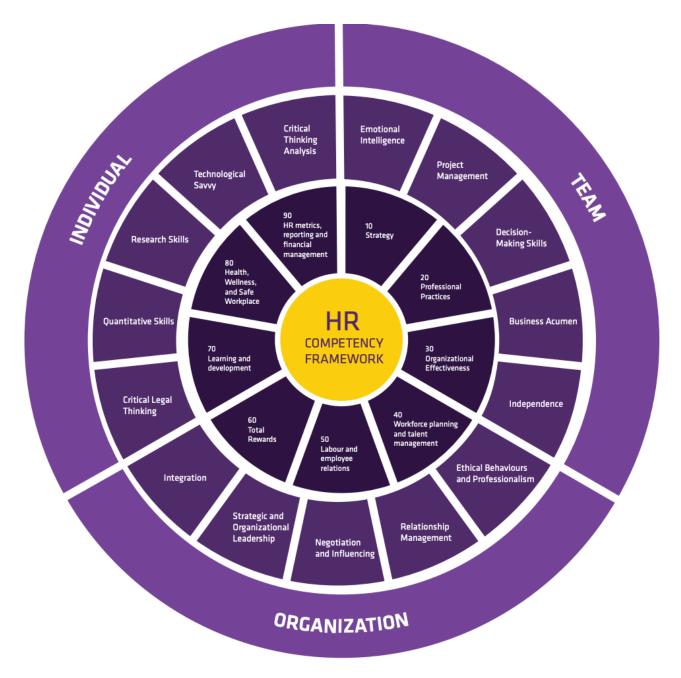
Figure 1.2.1. Competency Framework © by Human Resources Professionals Association All Rights Reserved.

Image Description

A circular HR Competency Framework diagram is divided into three primary sections: Individual, Team, and Organization.

Individual Competencies (left side of the outer circle): Technological Savvy, Research Skills, Quantitative

Skills, Critical Legal Thinking, Critical Thinking Analysis.

Team Competencies (right side of the outer circle): Emotional Intelligence, Project Management, Decision-Making Skills, Business Acumen, Independence.

Organizational Competencies (bottom of the outer circle): Integration, Strategic and Organizational Leadership, Negotiation and Influencing, Relationship Management, Ethical Behaviors and Professionalism.

The inner circle contains core HR functional areas represented by numerical categories:

10: Strategy

20: Professional Practices

30: Organizational Effectiveness

40: Workforce Planning and Talent Management

50: Labour and Employee Relations

60: Total Rewards

70: Learning and Development

80: Health, Wellness, and Safe Workplace

90: HR Metrics, Reporting, and Financial Management

At the center of the diagram is a yellow circle labelled "HR Competency Framework."

Professional Practice for HR Professionals

Human Resources Professional's mandate is to manage the "human resources" of an organization. Their role is to balance the needs of the organization, its people, and society. They have a significant influence on the culture of the organization in creating an efficient workplace. They need to create working relationships that enhance teamwork. Much of the work of HR Professionals follows the four Ps: policy, practice, procedure, and programs. Strategically, HR Professionals must consider the topics listed in the table below. The table highlights the HRPA competencies and topics covered in this textbook.

Table: HRPA Competency Framework in this Textbook

HRPA Competency	HR Topics
10 Strategy	Think and act strategically
	Design a strategy that is diverse, inclusive and equitable for all employees
	Adhere to all federal, provincial and territory laws
20 Professional Practice	Conduct oneself in a professional manner
30 Organizational Effectiveness	Maximize performance of individuals, teams and organization
70 Learning and Development	Develop competencies, skills and talents of individuals, teams and organizations as a whole
80 Health, Wellness and Safe Workplace	Create and maintain a healthy and safe work environment

1.3 WHAT IS BEHIND WORKPLACE CONFLICT?

As a Human Resources professional, you may regularly have employees who act poorly. Additionally, you may witness employees acting in an unusual or inappropriate manner. When this occurs, it is worth asking, "What is really going on?"

Taking the time to ask questions and be curious often results in discovering additional factors impacting the individual in question. These factors usually fall into one of two categories. First, we have workplace factors. These workplace factors occur in most organizations and are predictable. Second, we have personal factors. These personal factors, while unique to each employee, are common among employees, regardless of where they work. Let's take a closer look at each of these factors.

Workplace Factors

Individuals within an organization face similar challenges, which are known as workplace factors. Here is a list of the most common workplace factors that may lead to workplace conflict.

- *Co-workers disagreements*: about how to complete a project.
- *Lack of resources:* finances or time.
- *Job insecurity*: concern a company will close or a job will be eliminated.
- *Workplace conduct:* harassment, teasing or bullying.
- *Work overload:* unrealistic amount of work.
- *Unfair practices:* treatment, favouritism, pay.
- *Lack of career opportunities:* promotions, training, mentoring.

Personal Factors

Similar to workplace factors, there are common factors that individuals face in their personal lives. These personal factors may lead to a workplace conflict. Here is a list of the most common personal factors that may lead to workplace conflict.

- *Grief:* loss of a partner, family member, or friend.
- *Financial issues:* bankruptcy.
- *Marital issues*: separation or divorce.
- *Caretaking issues*: childcare or parental care.
- *Addiction:* medication or alcoholism.
- *Health issues:* illness, injury, and mental health concerns.
- *Work-life balance concerns:* inability to enjoy downtime away from work.

"The Sandwich Generation" by Sanaz Habibi, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Have you ever heard of the "sandwich generation"? When an individual is facing the pressure of taking care of their children and aging parents simultaneously, this is the sandwich generation.

Image Source

Adobe. (2024). Firefly. [Large language model]. https://firefly.adobe.com/

- Prompt: "*Create a photo-realistic image of a person of diverse background hunched over slightly carrying a heavy load of rocks stacked on top of each other on their back*"

Adobe. (2024). Photoshop Generative Fill AI. [Large language model]. https://www.adobe.com/ca/products/photoshop

- Prompt: "Modern style detailed illustration: A cartoon family portrait of an older couple, a middle-aged young man (25 years old), a middle-aged young woman (25 years old), and two young children – a boy and a girl both on one side. The older couple appears to be grandparents on both sides, the man is likely the father, and the children are likely his and her kids. They are all depicted with exaggerated, caricature-like features and expressions, conveying a humorous, lighthearted tone. They are all upset, angry, and shouting. They sit back to back with each other. Young people are on the right side, old people on the left side, with middle-aged young people in the middle. The two young kids are on the right side of the picture, all older people are on the left side, and the young woman and man are in the middle of them, looking directly forward." All further edits by Sanaz Habibi

1.4 DOES HEALTHY CONFLICT EXIST?

Human Resources professionals are responsible for creating and supporting a healthy workplace. You might think there is no place for conflict in the workplace. In fact, not all conflict is bad. Let's look at the difference between healthy and unhealthy conflict.

Photo by Christina @ wocintechchat.com, Unsplash License

Characteristics of a Healthy Conflict

- Those involved remain calm.
- It can move a project forward.
- There is a focus on the problem.
- The situation remains respectful.
- You hear professional language.
- It allows for differing opinions.

Characteristics of an Unhealthy Conflict

- The situation feels uncomfortable.
- There is a focus on the individual.
- You hear bickering.
- It may become loud.
- You hear unprofessional language.
- It involves blame.

The Business Case for Resolving Unhealthy Conflict

Why concern yourself with resolving unhealthy workplace conflict? There are several business reasons to ensure your organization addresses unhealthy conflicts promptly. Some of these reasons include:

- Building collaboration and teamwork.
- Increasing productivity.
- Supporting healthy relationships.
- Developing a workplace culture to be proud of.
- Building inclusivity and belonging.
- Encouraging employee engagement.
- Making informed decisions.
- Welcoming brainstorming.
- Encouraging innovation and creativity.
- Setting your organization apart from the competition.

Practices for Early Intervention and Resolution of Conflict

Conflict is a natural part of organizational life. Yet, leaders often struggle to respond to conflict situations in a timely manner until they escalate, and it becomes too late to restore matters to the level of order and cooperation that was present before conflict arose. The typical reaction in these circumstances is to resort to formal processes to address conflicts, such as the organization's internal discipline process. Then, when employees believe they have been wrongfully disciplined or discharged, organizations find themselves defending their actions in response to internal grievance processes or external actions such as lawsuits or complaints to EEOC or other state or federal agencies. While defending against employee complaints is necessary at times, this reactive cycle will continue if the organization does not afford opportunities for employees to work through their conflict situations before resorting to more formal processes becomes necessary. Leaders should evaluate their organization's effectiveness with early intervention and resolution of conflict in three areas:

Maintaining a conflict-minimal work environment. A "conflict-minimal" environment is desired over "conflict-free" because healthy organizations welcome appropriately managed conflict that is the natural consequence of motivated, creative individuals working through disagreements and tensions to achieve the best possible collective outcomes. Conflict becomes unhealthy when the focus shifts from exploring parties' mutual interests to interactions that are disrespectful, personally hurtful, and harmful to relationships, team efforts, or other important workplace expectations.

Everything we know about creating motivating, engaged work environments applies to efforts to ensure a conflict-minimal environment. Do employees experience daily an environment where respect and collegiality are maintained and offensive, harassing, and bullying behaviors are not tolerated? Do managers seek to facilitate employee success by ensuring they have appropriate resources to perform their jobs and are free from the arbitrary policy and management constraints that characterize traditional "command and control" mindsets? Do performance management practices provide for open feedback, performance and developmental coaching, and supportive correction rather than punitive action when mistakes are made? Do leaders reinforce positive workplace values through behaviors and actions that are congruent with these values?

Leaders make great strides to minimize the presence of unhealthy conflict simply by removing the barriers, arbitrary rules, and hindrances that cause employees to "bump" into one another as they navigate unnatural work settings that keep them from doing their best work.

Building manager and employee capacity to address conflict. Employees are hired and remain employed because they possess skills and competencies based on specific job requirements. They are generally not hired or evaluated based on mastery of so-called "soft" skills such as the ability to get along with others. Without such skills, however, employees who encounter conflict are either left to flounder or encouraged to work with their managers or institutional conflict "specialists," such as employee relations representatives, equity officers, or ombudsman. Floundering is not a helpful option, but neither is sole reliance on the manager or conflict specialist, especially if their intervention is presented as the only available option. A message of dependency is sent when employees are not encouraged at some level to work through their conflict situations, whenever feasible. Managers perpetuate this message if they lack skills to help employees manage their conflict situations.

Leaders must support employees' efforts to acquire skills to manage conflict situations on their own as a matter of first resort. As employees themselves, leaders and managers must receive development support to manage employee conflict more effectively. When employees present behavioral or performance problems, managers must develop skills in delivering unwelcome news in a firm but supportive manner that minimizes employee defensiveness and offers opportunities for correction without unwarranted punitive action. When employees become reactive or accusatory, managers must know how to respond in a manner that is proactive, non-judgmental, and emotionally intelligent. They must also become adept at coaching employees through conflict situations, helping them strategize approaches to address their

conflicts with co-workers, students, faculty, administrators, and others rather than always intervening on their behalf or referring them elsewhere.

For the workforce generally, the organization should seek to provide opportunities for employees to develop essential conflict resolution skills in, among others, listening, assertiveness, collaboration, interest-based negotiation, diplomacy, handling difficult conversations, and developing emotional intelligence. Leaders should also examine the organization's policies and practices for addressing employee conflicts. Does it reinforce knee-jerk dependency on intervention by managers or conflict specialists, or does it convey an expectation of ownership and responsibility among employees, teams, and work units to manage their conflict situations while providing avenues for support when needed?

Providing informal, non-legalistic third-party support. As much as employees should be encouraged to manage their conflicts, organizations should be prepared to provide third-party support through well-trained conflict specialists when needed. Conflict specialists include, among others, organizational representatives who have skills in mediating disputes, facilitating team dialogue and collaborative processes, coaching and counselling employees to help them work through disputes, and supporting leaders and groups in the assessment, design, and implementation of processes that better address systemic conflict.

When developing such capability, leaders should focus on processes that facilitate improved communication and workplace relationships and not simply transactional outcomes. Such processes should do more than address surface issues that resolve, if at all, solely in behaviorally-based outcomes. Better processes explore underlying causes that, if addressed, may lead to more lasting resolutions where parties are reconciled. Developing organizational capability to provide true conflict resolution assistance will minimize use of traditional formal processes as the sole means of "help" and improve employee satisfaction in pursuing such support so that resort to formal processes – whether internal or external – becomes unnecessary.

1.5 HR: A CONFLICT RESOLUTION COACH

Photo by Mimi Thian, Unsplash License

As a Human Resources professional, there are two approaches to conflicts at work. One is to resolve the conflict yourself. The other approach is to coach people leaders to resolve workplace conflicts.

Chapter 1 Exercise 1

You work as the Human Resources Manager for a medium-sized manufacturing facility that employs 55 office staff. In addition, there are 80 employees on the day shift in the manufacturing facility, 70 on the afternoon shift, 50 on the night shift and 12 on the weekend shift. In total, there are 267 employees in this organization. 12 of these employees are people leaders.

DISCUSSION

Option 1. You can choose to coach 12 people leaders to address conflicts in their departments as they arise.

Option 2. You can address any conflicts that arise among the 267 employees. Remember, none of these employees report to you.

Which approach would you take and why?

1.6 MEET THE STAFF AT RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

Throughout this text, you will be introduced to workplace conflict scenarios at Runners Relay Ltd., so it is essential to introduce you to the staff at Runners Relay Ltd. Please familiarize yourself with the employee names, job titles, and biographies, as it will help you understand the role plays and scripts throughout this text.

The Company: Runners Relay Ltd.

Industry: Running Shoes

Company Description: Runners Relay Ltd. was founded in 2015 by owner Frances Trembley (She/Her). Runners Relay is a small manufacturer of specialty running shoes, with a focus on environmentally friendly materials.

Office Staff

Anna Suarez

(She/Her)

Human Resources Manager

Anna has attained her Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation from the HRPA and hopes to apply for her CHRL designation in the next year.

Andres Casso

(He/Him)

Office Manager

Andres is the Office Manager at Runners Relay. Andres has been the Office Manager at Runners Relay for 5 years.

Penn Livington

(They/Them)

Administrative Assistant

Penn hopes to become the Office Manager
at Runners Relay someday.

Sunni Li

(He/Him)

IT Technician

Sunni is a recent graduate excited to work
full-time in his field of study.

Chantal Russo

(She/Her)

Marketing Coordinator

Chantal is taking a course on social media and hopes to apply what she learns at work.

Roman Stanski

(They/Them)

Sales Associate

Roman wants to grow their sales and take a course in public speaking to improve their sales skills.

Harmon Patel

(He/Him)

Safety and Environment Representative

Harmon is passionate about safety and is excited to introduce new training programs to the team at Runners Relay.

Manufacturing Staff

Leonard Swartz

(He/Him)

Operations Manager

Leonard has been hired to lead the manufacturing operation and introduce cost-saving opportunities.

Helga Dietz

(She/Her)

Day Shift Supervisor

Helga worked as a Production Associate for two years before being promoted to Supervisor.

Svetlana Antonov

(She/Her)

Day Shift Production Associate

Svetlana is new to Runners Relay and is job shadowing to learn the processes and equipment.

Mikael Carlson

(They/Them)

Day Shift Production Associate

Mikael is training to drive the new forklift at Runners Relay.

Sam Sellers

(He/Him)

Day Shift Production Associate

Sam was working on the afternoon shift and recently transferred to the day shift at Runners Relay.

Alejandro Rodriguez

(He/Him)

Afternoon Shift Supervisor

Alejandro is being mentored by Leonard Swartz.

Aldona Jablonski

(They/Them)

Afternoon Production Associate

Aldona is in a job rotation focused on learning additional jobs at Runners Relay.

Jamal Greene

(He/Him)

Afternoon Production Associate

Jamal hopes to move to the day shift based on his family's needs.

Steven Thomas

(He/Him)

Afternoon Production Associate

Steven is taking IT courses on the weekends and hopes to transition to an IT position at Runners Relay in the future.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- There will always be a certain amount of conflict within a workplace, and the goal is to ensure it is healthy conflict.
- A positive workplace culture includes a workplace that is free of unhealthy conflict.
- Addressing unhealthy conflict in the workplace is part of a safe work environment.
- Human Resources professionals address workplace conflict by coaching people leaders to address conflict within their departments.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 1, reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Describe the concept of workplace conflict from an HR perspective.
2. Explain how an HR professional engages in problem-solving and conflict resolution.
3. List common factors that influence workplace conflict.

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 1 Exercise 1

CHAPTER 2: APPROACHES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Chapter Overview

2.0 Learning Outcomes

2.1 Fanshawe HR Graduate on Conflict at Work

2.2 The Lesson: The Thomas – Kilmann Approach to Conflict

2.3 How Conflict Escalates

2.4 Spotlight on Human Resources Skills

2.5 Case Study: Runners Relay Ltd.

2.6 Apply Your Knowledge

2.7 Chapter Summary

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

★ Learning Outcomes

- Define the 5 Thomas-Kilmann approaches to conflict.
- Create a list of the pros and cons of each conflict resolution approach.
- Demonstrate the skill of empathy in solving a case study.

2.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=46#oembed-1

Video: "Kateryna Orlova Navigating HR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [4:49] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Kateryna Orlova, HR Advisor
Company	Maple Leaf Foods – London Poultry
How Does Conflict Occur?	Conflict occurs due to misunderstanding. There are two types of conflict: employee-to-employee and supervisor and subordinate.
HR Skills Needed	Listening skills are important. Ask open-ended questions to assess the situation. Mediation can be challenging, as HR professionals must be unbiased and impartial.
The Goal of Conflict Resolution	Ensure both parties understand what went wrong and what steps could have been taken to avoid the conflict.

2.2 THE LESSON: THE THOMAS – KILMANN APPROACH TO CONFLICT

Dealing with Conflict—Different Approaches

Every individual or group manages conflict differently. In the 1970s, consultants Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann developed a tool for analyzing the approaches to conflict resolution. This tool is called the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) (Thomas & Kilmann, 2017).

Thomas and Kilmann suggest that in a conflict situation, a person's behaviour can be assessed on two factors:

1. *Commitment to goals or assertiveness*—the extent to which an individual (or a group) attempts to satisfy his or her concerns or goals.
2. *Commitment to relationships or cooperation*—the extent to which an individual (or a group) attempts to satisfy the concerns of the other party, and the importance of the relationship with the other party.

Thomas and Kilmann use these factors to explain the five different approaches to dealing with conflict: *avoiding, competing, accommodating, compromising and collaborating.*
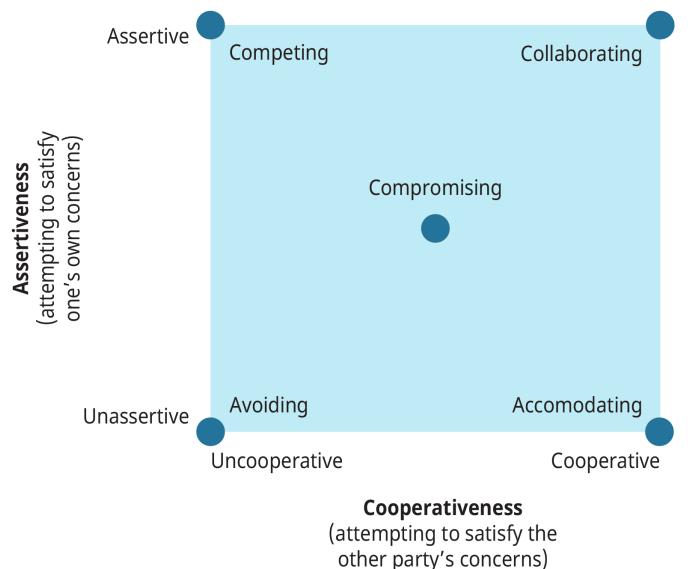
Figure 2.2.1 Approaches to Conflict Resolution. Adapted from Thomas, K. (1976). Conflict and conflict management, In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), Handbook of industrial and organizational behaviour (p. 900). Wiley. Reproduced from Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0. Colour altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

There is an appropriate time to use each approach in dealing with conflict. While most people will use different methods in various circumstances, we all tend to have a more dominant approach that feels most comfortable. One approach is not necessarily better than another, and all approaches can be learned and utilized. To most effectively deal with conflict, it is important to analyze the situation and determine which approach is most appropriate. Let's take a closer look at each approach and when to use it.

Avoiding

An avoidance approach demonstrates a low commitment to both goals and relationships. This is the most common method of dealing with conflict, especially by people who view conflict negatively.

Table 2.2.1 Avoiding

Types of Avoidance	Results	Appropriate When
• Physical flight. • Mental withdrawal. • Changing the subject. • Blaming or minimizing. • Denial that the problem exists. • Postponement to a more appropriate time (which may never occur). • Use of emotions (tears, anger, etc.).	• The dispute is not resolved. • Disputes often build up and eventually explode. • Low satisfaction results in complaining, discontentment, and talking back. • Stress spreads to other parties (e.g., co-workers, family).	• The issue is trivial or unimportant, or another issue is more pressing. • Potential damage outweighs potential benefits. • Timing for dealing with the conflict is inappropriate (because of overwhelming emotions or lack of information).

Competing

A competing approach to conflict demonstrates a high commitment to goals and a low commitment to relationships. Individuals who use the competing approach pursue their own goals at the other party's expense. People taking this approach will use whatever power is necessary to win. It may display as defending a position, interest, or value that you believe to be correct. Competing approaches are often supported by structures (courts, legislatures, sales quotas, etc.) and can be initiated by the actions of one party. Competition may be appropriate or inappropriate (as defined by the expectations of the relationship).

Table 2.2.2 Competing

Types of Competing	Results	Appropriate When
• Power of authority, position, or majority • Power of persuasion. • Pressure techniques (e.g., threats, force, intimidation). • Disguising the issue. • Tying relationship issues to substantive issues.	• The conflict may escalate or the other party may withdraw. • Reduces the quality and durability of the agreement. • Assumes no reciprocating power will come from the other side; people tend to reach for whatever power they have when threatened. • Increases the likelihood of future problems between parties. • Restricts communication and decreases trust.	• There are short time frames and quick action is vital. • Dealing with trivial issues. • Tough decisions require leadership (e.g., enforcing unpopular rules, cost cutting, discipline).

Accommodating

Accommodating demonstrates a low commitment to goals and a high commitment to relationships. This approach is the opposite of competing. It occurs when a person ignores or overrides their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other party. An accommodating approach is used to establish reciprocal adaptations or adjustments. This could be a hopeful outcome for those who take an accommodating approach, but when the other party does not reciprocate, conflict can result. Others may view those who use the accommodating approach heavily as "that is the way they are" and don't need anything in return. Accommodators typically will not ask for anything in return. Accommodators tend to get resentful when a reciprocal relationship isn't established. Once resentment grows, people who rely on the accommodating approach often shift to a competing approach because they are tired of being "used." This leads to confusion and conflict.

Table 2.2.3 Accommodating

Types of Accommodating	Results	Appropriate When
• Playing down the conflict to maintain surface harmony. • Self-sacrifice. • Yielding to the other point of view.	• Builds relationships that will allow you to be more effective in future problem-solving • Increases the chances that the other party may be more accommodating to your needs in the future. • Does not improve communication.	• You are flexible on the outcome, or when the issue is more important to the other party. • Preserving harmony is more important than the outcome. • It's necessary to build up good faith for future problem-solving. • You are wrong or in a situation where competition could damage your position.

Compromising

A compromising approach strikes a balance between a commitment to goals and a commitment to relationships. The objective of a compromising approach is a quick solution that will work for both parties. Usually it involves both parties giving up something and meeting in the middle. Compromising is often used in labour negotiations, as typically there are multiple issues to resolve in a short period of time.

Table 2.2.4 Compromising

Types of Compromising	Results	Appropriate When
• Splitting the difference. • Exchanging concessions. • Finding middle ground.	• Both parties may feel they lost the battle and feel the need to get even next time. • No relationship is established, although it should also not cause the relationship to deteriorate. • Danger of stalemate. • Does not explore the issue in any depth.	• Time pressures require quick solutions. • Collaboration or competition fails. • Short-term solutions are needed until more information can be obtained.

Collaborating

Collaborating is an approach that demonstrates a high commitment to goals and also a high commitment to relationships. This approach is used in an attempt to meet the concerns of all parties. Trust and willingness for risk is required for this approach to be effective.

Table 2.2.5 Collaborating

Type of Collaborating	Results	Appropriate When
• Maximizing the use of fixed resources. • Working to increase resources. • Listening and communicating to promote understanding of interests and values. • Learning from each other's insight.	• Builds relationships and improves potential for future problem-solving • Promotes creative solutions.	• Parties are committed to the process and adequate time is available. • The issue is too important to compromise. • New insights can be beneficial in achieving creative solutions. • There is a desire to work through hard feelings that have been a deterrent to problem-solving. • There are diverse interests and issues at play. • Participants can be future-focused.

What Does Each Approach Need?

There are times when others may take an approach that is not helpful to the situation. However, the only person that you can control in a conflict is yourself. It is important to be flexible and shift your approach according to the situation and the other people with whom you are working. When someone else is taking an approach that is not beneficial to the situation, it is critical to understand what needs underlie the decision to take that approach. Here are a few examples:

Avoiders may need to feel physically and emotionally safe. When dealing with avoiders, try taking the time to assure them that they are going to be heard and listened to.

Competitors may need to feel that something will be accomplished in order to meet their goals.

When dealing with competitors, say for example, "We will work out a solution; it may take some time for us to get there."

Compromisers may need to know that they will get something later. When dealing with compromisers, say for example, "We will go to this movie tonight, and next week you can pick." (Be true to your word.)

Accommodators may need to know that no matter what happens during the conversation, your relationship will remain intact. When dealing with accommodators, say for example, "This will not affect our relationship or how we work together."

Collaborators may need to know what you want before they are comfortable sharing their needs. When dealing with collaborators, say, for example, "I need this, this, and this. . . . What do you need?

All approaches to conflict can be appropriate at some times, and there are times when they can be overused. It is important to take the time to consider which approach would be most beneficial to the situation in question. Taking the wrong approach can escalate conflict, damage relationships, and reduce your ability to effectively meet goals. The right approach will build trust in relationships, accomplish goals, and de-escalate conflict.

Everyone has the capacity to use each approach to conflict and to shift from his or her natural style as needed. We react with our most dominant style when we are under stress, but other styles can be learned and applied with practice and self-awareness. When dealing with others who may not have developed their capacity to shift from their preferred style of conflict, it is important to listen for their underlying needs. By understanding the needs that exist beneath the surface of the conflict, you can work with the other person toward a common goal.

2.3 HOW CONFLICT ESCALATES

Many academics and conflict resolution practitioners have observed predictable patterns in the way conflict escalates. Conflict is often discussed as though it is a separate entity, and in fact, it is true that an escalating dispute may seem to take on a life of its own. Conflict will often escalate beyond reason unless a conscious effort is made to end it.

The following is an example of an escalating conflict based on Speed Leas' theory of conflict (Centre for Congregational Health, 2011). Most people will recognize their own actions in the description.

A conflict begins . . .

- The parties become aware of the conflict but attempt to deal with it sensibly. Often, they will attribute the problem to "a misunderstanding" and indicate that "they can work it out."
- The parties begin to slide from cooperation to competition. ("I'll bend but only if they will first.") They begin to view the conflict as resulting from deliberate action on the part of the other. ("They must have known this would happen.") Positions begin to harden and defensiveness sets in, which creates adversarial encounters. Parties begin to take actions to strengthen their positions and look to others for support. ("Don't you feel this is reasonable?" "Do you know what that idiot is doing to me?")
- As communication deteriorates, parties rely more on assumptions about the other and attribute negative motives to them. ("I'll bet they are going to . . . ," "Those sorts of people would . . . ," "Their thinking is so muddled, they must . . .") Groupthink often takes over as each disputant seeks support from others. ("We have to appear strong and take a united front.") Parties begin to look for more evidence of other problems—their beliefs feed their observations.
- Parties soon believe that cooperation cannot resolve the problem because of the actions of the other, and aggressive actions are planned. ("I've tried everything to get them to see reason." "It's time to get tough with them." "I'm going to put a stop to this.")
- Parties begin to feel righteous and blame the other for the whole problem. Generalizing and stereotyping begin. ("I know what those people are like. . . . We can't let them get away with this.") Parties begin to be judgemental and moralistic and believe they are defending what is right. ("It's the principle of the matter." "What will people say if we give in to this?")
- The conflict becomes more complicated but also more generalized and personalized. Severe confrontation is anticipated and, in fact, planned for, thus making it inevitable. The parties view this as acceptable as the other has, in their mind, clearly shown they are lacking in human qualities. ("He's just

a jerk; we'll have to really hit him hard.")

- All parties appear now to believe that the objective of the conflict is to hurt others more than they are being hurt. ("I'll make you pay even if we both go down over this.") The dispute is beyond rational analysis; causing damage to the other, even at your own expense, is the main focus. ("Whatever it takes . . ." "There is no turning back now." "They won't make a fool out of me.")

- Finally, the destruction of the other, even if it means self-destruction as well, is the driving force. ("If it takes everything I have, for the rest of my life...")

Chapter 2 Exercises

Exercise 1

Complete the following activity to confirm you understand all 5 of the Thomas-Kilmann approaches to conflict.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=56#h5p-1*

Text Description

This activity contains a set of flashcards, which are described below.

Activity Description or Instruction: Remember to fill-in-the-blank with one of the following words: Competing, Accommodating, Compromising, Avoiding, or Collaborating.

1. Card Text: Highly cooperative but unassertive.
2. Card Text: The most moderate approach, which might seem constructive, but can lead to mediocre progress.
3. Card Text: Characterized by the urge to "win at all costs," dominate, and engage in power struggles.
4. Card Text: Unassertive and uncooperative, simply ignoring the problem neglects the need for a solution.
5. Card Text: When a problem seems impossible, this approach tends to ignore it and focus on what is good.
6. Card Text: Can spur teammates to compete constructively, which can result in interesting innovations if managed well.
7. Card Text: Highly assertive and cooperative to find solutions that benefit the whole team and build respect.
8. Card Text: May self-silence good ideas to appease others, which may lead to feeling

resentful.

Solution

1. Accommodating
2. Compromising
3. Competing
4. Avoiding
5. Avoiding
6. Competing
7. Collaborating
8. Accommodating

Exercise 2

Describe in your own words the five approaches to conflict resolution based on your review of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Resolution Strategies.

Exercise 3

List three pros and cons of each of the 5 Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Resolutions Styles.

Exercise 4

Describe which of the 5 Thomas-Kilmann approaches to conflict resolution you align most closely with and why.

"Levels of Conflict by Speed Leas" by The Center for Congregational Health

2.4 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

Empathy

It is important to understand the meaning of empathy before we move forward in this book. Let's look at the Merriam-Webster definition of empathy.

Empathy is the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

While working in Human Resources, employees in your organization will face situations and events that may be difficult and emotional. In Chapter 1, we highlighted some of these situations that may impact your employees. Let's do a brief review.

Photo by Gary Barnes, Pexels License

Some of the work-related situations your employees may face include work overload, a lack of recognition for their work, tensions with a colleague, unrealistic expectations from their manager, being micromanaged, bullying, harassment, lack of advancement, unfair treatment, job insecurity, and insufficient resources to perform their job.

Some of the personal life situations your employees may face include marital or family stress, parental stress, caregiving stressors, grief, illness, financial stress, addiction, and work-life balance issues.

WATCH the following video by Brene Brown to better understand empathy.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=67#oembed-1

Video: "Brené Brown on Empathy" by RSA [2:53] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Chapter 2 Exercise 5

REFLECT

Text Description

This activity contains a set of reflection questions to answer, which are described below.

Activity Description: REFLECT – Applying The Four Qualities Of Empathy
Explain how a Human Resources professional can apply the four qualities of empathy highlighted in the video.

- Quality 1: Perspective Taking

  ◦ Question: Reflect on how this quality can be applied in an HR context.

- Quality 2: Staying Out Of Judgement

  ◦ Question: Reflect on how this quality can be applied in an HR context.

- Quality 3: Recognizing Emotion in Others

  ◦ Question: Reflect on how this quality can be applied in an HR context.

- Quality 4: Communicating Emotions with Others

  ◦ Question: Reflect on how this quality can be applied in an HR context.

- Overall Reflection

  ◦ Question: Reflect on the overall importance of empathy in HR and how these qualities contribute to effective HR practices.

    ▪ How can you integrate these qualities into your daily HR practices?
    ▪ Can you think of a situation in HR where applying one of these qualities would change the outcome?

Explain how a human resources professional can apply the four qualities of empathy highlighted in the video.

- Quality 1: Perspective Taking
- Quality 2: Staying Out Of Judgement
- Quality 3: Recognizing Emotions in Others
- Quality 4: Communicating Emotions with Others

Reflect on the importance of empathy in HR and how these qualities contribute to effective HR practices.

As we move through Chapter Two, we will delve into a workplace scenario that allows a Human Resources professional or a people leader to utilize empathy as they resolve a workplace conflict.

2.5 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

Throughout this text, you will see an emphasis placed on the preparation work that a Human Resources professional needs to do to deal with workplace conflict and problem-solving. As described in Chapter 1, roleplaying and script writing provides an excellent opportunity to practice your skills before meeting with employees to discuss performance issues in the workplace.

The Scenario: An Empathetic Approach

The Company:

 Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

 Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

 Aldona Jablonski (They/Them): Production Associate, Afternoon Shift

 Alejandro Rodrigez (He/Him): Supervisor, Afternoon Shift

The Scenario:

Aldona has recently had performance issues, including poor quality of the running shoes she produces. These quality issues are impacting everyone on the afternoon shift. Aldona is becoming frustrated and getting into verbal arguments with her co-workers daily.

Alejandro Rodrigez is Aldona's supervisor. Alejandro has production associates on the afternoon shift complaining about Aldona's constant disagreements and angry outbursts.

Employee Observations:

"If Aldona yells at me one more time for pointing out the quality of her work, I will speak with HR."

"I wish Aldona would phone in sick; that way, we wouldn't have to deal with the drama on the afternoon shift."

The First Conversation:

Alejandro meets with Aldona to resolve the constant conflict with their co-workers.

> 📊 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:* https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=135#h5p-12

Alejandro: (in front of everyone) Aldona. Come over here!

Aldona: (shocked) Are you speaking to me?

Alejandro: Ya, come over here right now!

Aldona: I'm coming.

Alejandro: Take a seat in my office; we need to talk.

Aldona: (sits down) What are you so upset about?

Alejandro: Me? I'm upset with you!

Aldona: What did I do to make you so mad?

Alejandro: Are you serious? Your performance, your quality, your outbursts. Where do I begin?

Aldona: Give me a break. I am going through a lot right now. I thought you would care.

Alejandro: I have no idea what you are going through right now, and I don't have time to worry about what every team member is going through. We are going to make quality running shoes—nothing more, nothing less. Do you understand me?

Aldona: (with their head down) Yes, I understand.

Alejandro: Good. This is what you are going to do. I want you to apologize to each of your co-workers for your outbursts. Then, I want you to focus on your work and make no mistakes. Can you do that?

Aldona: (stands to walk out of the office) I will do my best

The Exercise

Identify – any concerns about the way Alejandro handled the matter with Aldona.

Discuss – the ways Alejandro demonstrated empathy in his conversation with Aldona.

Create – an action plan and discussion topics to review with Alejandro before he meets with Aldona again to address Aldona's performance issues and outbursts at work.

Coaching Notes:

When meeting with Alejandro, you will remind him of the following:

- Let Aldona know that you recognize these performance issues and outbursts are recent.

- Ask if there is anything that you can help the employee with.

- If you discover there is a stressor, demonstrate empathy.

- Don't forget to offer the employee our free and confidential counselling services provided by our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider.

- Ask how you can support the individual.

- End with an agreement to follow up on your conversation.

The Recommended Conversation:

Alejandro decides to meet with Aldona again to address his approach to the first conversation and resolve Aldona's performance and conflict issues.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=135#h5p-13

Alejandro: (walks up to Aldona) Hi, Aldona. Um, I was wondering if we could meet in my office?

Aldona: Sure, do you want me to visit your office now?

Alejandro: Yes, finish your work, then join me in my office.

Aldona: Sounds good. I will see you shortly.

Aldona: (arrives at Alejandro's office) Hi, Alejandro. Can I come in and sit down?

Alejandro: Yes, thanks for joining me.

Aldona: (sits down) Are you still angry at me?

Alejandro: No. Um, I want to start by apologizing for my abruptness in our first meeting. I want to talk about your performance. It isn't like you to have performance issues, quality problems, or argue with your co-workers. Is there anything going on that I can help you with?

Aldona: Oh boy. I didn't want to admit this to anyone, but I am struggling with the recent death of my mom as I was her caretaker. I'm just lost without her.

Alejandro: Oh, Aldona. I am so sorry for your loss. How long have you been a caretaker for your mom?

Aldona: She was pretty sick when she moved in with me a year ago. I have been doing everything for her, and now I am feeling so low. Lately, it has been hard to concentrate on my work. I am tired of my co-workers questioning my work, so I yell at them, and that seems to keep them away from me.

Alejandro: I didn't realize you were your mom's caretaker. That must have been demanding work but extremely rewarding as well. Now I understand why work has been difficult for you. I am so glad you shared this with me. I want you to know that we have a complimentary Employee Assistance Program that provides confidential counselling services and support. Um, here is the information (passes Aldona an EAP brochure).
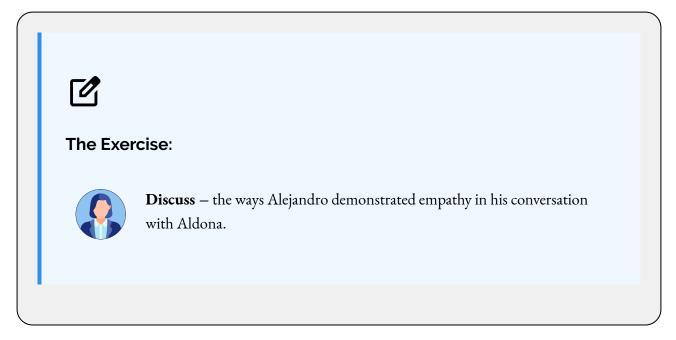
Aldona: (Looking at the brochure) I appreciate this, Alejandro. I didn't realize we had this kind of help available. I am going to make an appointment.

Alejandro: How else can I support you during this troubling time?

Aldona: This talk means everything. I never realized my performance and interactions had gotten out of hand. I can see that I was masking my sadness with anger to keep everyone away. I like my co-workers on the afternoon shift; they are great people. And I like my job; it keeps my mind off my recent loss. I will apologize to my co-workers for my outbursts and focus on making quality running shoes. Instead of yelling at people, I will ask for help when needed.

Alejandro: Well, thank you for your honesty. I will follow up with you next week to see how you are doing ok?

Aldona: That sounds fair. Thanks for the talk today.

The Exercise:

Discuss – the ways Alejandro demonstrated empathy in his conversation with Aldona.

2.6 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You have learned the importance of demonstrating empathy when solving problems and resolving conflicts at work. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read – the following case study. Create a script that demonstrates your ability to resolve a workplace conflict with an emphasis on empathy.

The Company:

Coldway Concrete Ltd.

The People:

Ricardo Ruez (He/Him): Human Resources Manager

Armon Graham (They/Them): Structural Engineer

The Scenario:

Armon has recently had performance issues, including an inability to meet project timelines. When approached by customers to complain about the missed timelines, Armon tells the customers to mind their own business as the project will be complete whenever the work is done. Ricardo hears customer complaints as Armon's supervisor is travelling on company business. These conflicts are impacting Armon's co-workers as well. When you ask Armon's co-workers about Armon, one says they recently went through a lengthy and complicated divorce and lost custody of both of their children. Armon's co-workers believe the divorce has caused Armon's loss of concentration and his ugly interactions with co-workers and customers. Ricardo needs to meet with Armon to address performance issues and customer conflicts.

Employee Observations and Customer Observations:

"I cannot stand working with Armon on these projects. Armon has anger issues and directs them at me if I make a suggestion or ask a question. I am tired of it!"

"As a customer, I want to know what is going on with my concrete project, but Armon is rude and dismissive whenever I ask a question."

The Conversation:

You will be playing the role of Ricardo (the Human Resources Manager). You will meet with Armon to address their recent performance issues and conflicts. You will initiate the conversation with Armon. Your script should be at least one minute long when you read it aloud. Don't forget to practice your empathy skills in your script.

> **Write Ricardo and Armon's Conversation**
> Ricardo:
> Armon:

The Exercise:

Discuss – how a Human Resources professional or a people manager can balance empathy and accountability when dealing with an employee's performance issue that is related to a personal matter such as a death in the family or a divorce.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- The Thomas-Kilmann model highlights the five approaches to conflict: avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, compromising, and competing.
- Empathy is essential for Human Resources professionals when dealing with workplace conflict and problem-solving.
- Preparation and practice are vital to the conflict resolution process.
- You may resolve the conflict yourself or coach a people leader to resolve the conflict.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 2 reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Define the 5 Thomas-Kilmann approaches to conflict.
2. List the pros and cons of each of the Thomas-Kilmann conflict resolution approaches.
3. Describe how a Human Resources professional can utilize empathy when resolving a workplace conflict.

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 2 Exercise 1, 2, 3, 4
- Chapter 2 Exercise 5

CHAPTER 3: COLLABORATION: LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Chapter Overview

3.0 Learning Outcomes

3.1 Fanshawe HR Graduate on Conflict at Work

3.2 The Lesson: Collaboration – Let's Work Together

3.3 Spotlight on Human Resources Skills

3.4 Case Study: Runners Relay Ltd.

3.5 Apply Your Knowledge

3.6 Chapter Summary

3.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

⭐ Learning Outcomes

- Identify the factors necessary to create an environment conducive to collaborative conflict resolution.
- List the benefits of collaboration or working together.
- Apply active listening skills to a workplace conflict scenario.

3.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=300#oembed-1

Video: "Brittany Vaughan NavigatingHR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [5:03] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Brittany Vaughan, HR Manager
Company	Medium-sized nonprofit organization
How Does Conflict Occur?	Workplace conflict can stem from personality conflicts, task failure, stress and personal issues, gossip, etc.
HR Skills Needed	It is important to remain neutral and gain trust with those you are working with. Good note-taking skills are important.
Approach and Solutions	Start with one-on-one conversations first and then schedule group discussions. Meeting rules should be adhered to. A follow-up meeting can be scheduled and resources can be suggested to the parties, such as employee assistance programs.

3.2 THE LESSON: COLLABORATION – LET'S WORK TOGETHER

In Chapter 2, we studied Thomas-Kilmann's five approaches to conflict resolution. One of the five approaches was collaboration. Whether you are assisting two employees or two groups of employees in resolving a workplace conflict, you are unlikely to say, "I want you to resolve your workplace conflict using a collaborative approach." Instead, you will say, "Let's find a way to work together." In this chapter, we will focus on creating an environment conducive to collaborative conflict resolution.

Photo by krakenimages, Unsplash License

Creating a Collaborative Environment

To resolve a conflict using collaboration, you must build and reinforce a culture and workplace that supports collaboration. If your workplace lacks overall cooperation, you can't expect your employees to engage in collaborative conflict resolution.

What does a collaborative workplace look like?

Busy – there are employees visibly working together to solve problems

Structured – you might see meeting rules posted in meeting rooms

Organized – a well-documented plan in place

What does a collaborative workplace sound like?

Quiet – there are conversations rather than arguments

Professional – employees greet one another with respect

Diversified – there is an emphasis on gaining differing opinions

What does a collaborative workplace feel like?

Safe – employees are free to share their goals and opinions

Calm – employees don't have to deal with toxic people or conversations

Welcoming – guests and new employees feel welcomed and included

Establishing the Ground Rules

Photo by Christina @ wocintechchat.com, Unsplash License

Have you ever attended a meeting and there are ground rules? It is common for organizations to establish agreed-upon ground rules. These ground rules guide the meeting and the attendees. Let's look at some common meeting rules.

Common Meeting Rules

– Arrive at the meeting on time
– No talking over other people
– Appoint someone to take minutes
– No working on your electronics during discussions
– Stay on topic

While these common meeting rules are a great starting place, the list must be expanded when a meeting involves

collaborative conflict resolution. Here are some rules a Human Resources professional might want to add to the rules.

Collaborative Meeting Rules

– All brainstorming ideas are welcome
– We encourage active participation by all
– No shouting or swearing
– No blaming others
– Listen with an open mind

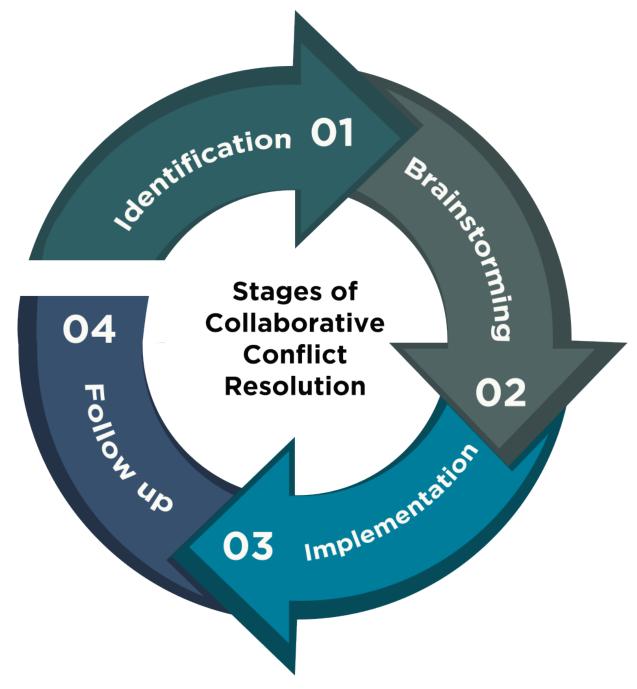# The Stages of Collaborative Conflict Resolution

Figure 3.2.1 "Stages of Collaborative Conflict Resolution" by Sanaz Habibi, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Collaborative conflict resolution is a process. Let's examine its steps in more detail.

Identification

As a Human Resources professional, you need to approach problem-solving and conflict resolution by

identifying the real source of the issue. This first step can take time and may involve discussions with multiple employees to uncover the root cause of the issue. You will utilize skills such as active listening, and your goal is to understand the goals of the employees involved in the conflict. The identification phase requires time as there are several questions you need answered to move the process forward.

Brainstorming

Once you have a clear understanding of the root cause of the conflict and the goals of the individuals involved in the conflict, you should include these individuals in the solution. Here, you can emphasize that we are all "working together." Brainstorming requires each individual to share ideas that might contribute to resolving the conflict. There should be no limit on the number of ideas generated and no comments to shut down an idea. Once all of the ideas have been gathered, a discussion should take place to agree upon a solution that makes sense for everyone involved.

Implementation

Now that you have an agreed-upon solution, it is time to implement a collaborative approach to the conflict. It is an excellent time to remind everyone involved that we are "working together" to solve the issue, as you need everyone to have an open mind and a desire to resolve the conflict. In the implementation stage, everyone will be assigned tasks and timelines. An example might be the need for an individual to apologize to another person for their behaviour, and they must issue the apology by tomorrow. Expectations and timelines must be clear and agreed upon. It is best to put an implementation plan in writing, as it will be revisited in the next phase of this process.

Follow-up

As the final step in the process, you must follow up with the individuals involved in the conflict. You are checking to see if things have improved and if anything that needs to be addressed is outstanding. If you find out the solution did not resolve the conflict, you must re-visit the possible solutions generated in your brainstorming session and change direction. The follow-up stage must continue until all the parties involved in the conflict agree they are satisfied with the solution.

Collaborative Language

When we are involved in the collaborative conflict resolution process, it is helpful to understand the importance of the words we use in communicating with one another. Rather than making statements, it is best to ask questions.

Here are some examples of statements that have been turned into collaborative questions. The collaborative language ends with a question mark.

Statement: It seems like this is important to you.

Question: Why is this so important to you?

Statement: It is pretty clear what is happening here.

Question: Can you tell me what happened from your perspective?

Statement: We should focus on the cost to our business.

Question: What do you want to focus on?

Statement: I know exactly what you mean.

Question: Can you tell me what it has been like for you?

Statement: I think we should invite others to join us.

Question: Do we need to include anyone else in this conversation?

Chapter 3 Exercises

Exercise 1

Now, it is your turn. There are three "statements" below. As a Human Resources professional, how could you turn these statements into questions when resolving a workplace conflict?

- Statement: It looks like we are all finished here. Question:
- Statement: It doesn't look like anyone witnessed this argument. Question:
- Statement: I can tell you are upset right now. Question:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=302#oembed-1

Video: "Collaborative Conflict Management" by Professor Rockey [6:34] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Exercise 2

Discussion **–** In your opinion, which of the collaborative conflict resolution steps highlighted in the above video are most valuable when you work as a Human Resources professional? Why?

3.3 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

Active Listening

In Chapter 3, we will highlight the skill of active listening. Let's start by understanding it. Active listening is a skill for hearing what the other person is "actually" saying. It involves listening to what is said and observing the other person's nonverbal messages.

Active Listening Can Help Overcome Barriers To Effective Listening

Being an active listener starts before you receive a message. Active listeners make strategic choices and take action to set up ideal listening conditions. Physical and environmental noises can often be managed by moving locations or manipulating lighting, temperature, or furniture. Avoid being distracted by psychological or physiological noise when possible. For example, we often know when we will be hungry, full, more awake, less awake, more anxious, or less anxious, and advance planning can alleviate these barriers.

In terms of cognitive barriers to effective listening, we can prime ourselves to listen by analyzing a listening situation before it begins. For example, you could ask yourself the following questions:

1. "What are my goals for listening to this message?"
2. "How does this message relate to me / affect my life?"
3. "What listening type and style are most appropriate for this message?"

Effective listeners must work to maintain focus as much as possible and refocus when attention shifts or fades

(Wolvin & Coakley, 1993). One way to do this is to find the motivation to listen. If you can identify intrinsic and or extrinsic motivations for listening to a particular message, you will be more likely to remember the information presented. Ask yourself how a message could impact your life, career, intellect, or relationships. This can help overcome our tendency toward selective attention. As senders of messages, we can help listeners by clarifying what we're saying and offering well-organized messages tailored for our listeners.

Active Listening Behaviours

We can prepare for active listening and use specific cognitive strategies to help us listen better. We also engage in active listening behaviours as we receive and process messages.

Paying attention is a crucial sign of active listening. Speakers usually interpret a listener's eye contact and body language as a signal of attentiveness. While a lack of eye contact may indicate inattentiveness, it can also signal cognitive processing.

We usually do it unconsciously when we look away to process new information. Be aware, however, that your conversational partner may interpret this as not listening. If you do need to take a moment to think about something, you could indicate that to the other person by saying, "That's new information to me. Give me just a second to think through it." An occasional head nod and "uh-huh" signal you are paying attention. However, when we give these cues as a form of "autopilot" listening, others can usually tell that we are pseudo-listening, and whether they call us on it or not, that impression could lead to negative judgments.

Asking probing questions is another way to directly indicate listening and to keep a conversation going since they encourage and invite a person to speak more. You can also ask questions that seek clarification and not just elaboration. Speakers should present complex information at a slower speaking rate than familiar information, but many will not. Remember that your nonverbal feedback can be helpful for a speaker, as it signals that you are listening and whether or not you understand. If a speaker fails to read your nonverbal feedback, you may need to follow up with verbal communication through paraphrased messages and clarifying questions.

As active listeners, we want to be excited and engaged but don't let excitement manifest in interruptions. Being an active listener means knowing when to maintain our role as listeners and resist the urge to take a conversational turn. Research shows that people with higher social status are more likely to interrupt others, so keep this in mind and be prepared for it if you are speaking to a high-status person or try to resist it if you are the high-status person in an interaction (Hargie, 2001).

Note-taking can also indicate active listening. Translating information through writing into our cognitive structures and schemata allows us to interpret information better and assimilate it. Of course, note-taking isn't always a viable option. It would be fairly awkward to take notes during a first date or a casual exchange between

new coworkers. But in some situations where we wouldn't normally consider taking notes, a little awkwardness might be worth it to understand and recall the information.

In summary, active listening is exhibited through verbal and nonverbal cues, including steady eye contact with the speaker; smiling; slightly raised eyebrows; upright posture; body position that is leaned in toward the speaker; nonverbal back-channel cues such as head nod; verbal back-channel cues such as "OK," "mmhm," or "oh"; and a lack of distracting mannerisms like doodling or fidgeting(Hargie, 2011).

Active Listening and Conflict

When your brain is under the stress of conflict, it is extremely challenging to actively listen to what someone else is saying because, in a conflict situation, you likely disagree with everything coming out of their mouth. Have you ever thought back to a high-conflict situation and realized that you missed a key piece of shared information? Likely because, in the heat of the moment, you were too focused on either getting your point across, making your case, or figuring out how to make this conflict end. Inattentional blindness in conflict means that we are likely to miss key information, verbal or nonverbal. The more effort a cognitive task requires, the more likely you'll miss noticing something significant. This in and of itself can lead to more conflict.

Or what about the difference between the speech and thought rate? You can process information at a significantly higher rate than someone can share with you. In a conflict situation, you can process every previous conversation or conflict you have had with this person and still "hear" what they said. But you aren't really listening when that is happening.

So, what can you do about these challenges in a conflict situation? First, recognize that we are all wired to be distracted AND that you will likely miss something. Second, maximize the attention you do have available by avoiding distractions. The ring of a new call or the ding of a new text is hard to resist, so make it impossible to succumb to the temptation by turning your phone off or putting it somewhere out of reach when you are involved in a conversation if you know that you will be tempted and you know that using your phone will increase inattentional blindness, you must be proactive. Third, don't be afraid to slow down and pause a conversation because you are actively listening to someone. You build stronger relationships by showing people that you are truly listening to them and will give the hard conversations the time they deserve.

Paraphrasing

An essential part of active listening is the art of paraphrasing. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), paraphrasing is "to repeat something written or spoken using different words, often in a humorous form or in a simpler and shorter form that makes the original meaning clearer."

You will note that the definition above emphasizes that you will use "different words" to describe what you heard. You are not trying to repeat the exact words, known as parroting. It shows a true understanding of the original message when you can summarize the content using different phrasing. It is also a chance to check for understanding.

Scenario

Let's look at an example of paraphrasing.

You are the Human Resources Coordinator at an accounting firm. An employee comes to see you with concerns about a co-worker.

> The original statement made by the employee: I know that Maurice is taking reams of paper, boxes of pens, and ink cartridges home with him every day, and he is bragging to people about making so much money off these supplies.

> Your paraphrased statement as the Human Resources Coordinator: To clarify, you have observed Maurice stealing office supplies from our company and are suggesting he is selling them for profit. Is that correct?

This is an opportunity for the employee to agree with your paraphrased statement or to correct you. For example, your paraphrased statement suggests that the individual "observed" Maurice taking home office supplies. The employee might agree with this or clarify they did not see Maurice take home the office supplies. This clarification is essential to a Human Resources professional who is investigating a possible theft, as you need to know if there is a witness or if this theft is based on speculation.

Paraphrasing has two essential benefits. First, it allows you to ensure you have received the message correctly. Second, it signals to the other person that you are listening to them, and you are interested in hearing their message. As you can see, paraphrasing is another way to check for understanding.

Chapter 3 Exercises

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=304#oembed-1*

Video: "The Art of Active Listening | The Harvard Business Review Guide" by Harvard Business Review [7:39] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Exercise 3: Discussion

In the video "The Art of Active Listening," parroting is mentioned.

- What is parroting?
- What is the difference between parroting and paraphrasing?
- What is the benefit of paraphrasing?

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=304#oembed-2*

Video: "The power of listening | William Ury | TEDxSanDiego" by TEDx Talks [15:41] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Exercise 4: Discussion

William Ury explains the value of active listening. How can a Human Resources professional demonstrate active listening when there is a heated conflict between two employees?

3.4 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

It is time to practice our new active listening skills. Let's utilize script writing and role-playing to resolve a workplace conflict at Runners Relay.

The Scenario: An Active Listening Approach

The Company:

Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Andres Casso (He/Him): Office Manager

Penn Livington (They/Them): Administrative Assistant

The Scenario:

Penn Livington has been an administrative assistant for over two years and has made it clear to their manager, Andres Casso, that their goal is to train for the office manager role. Penn has received two performance reviews from Andres in the past two years, but there is no mention of training sessions, performance goals or mentorship that would assist Penn in their goal to become the Office Manager. Penn understands the Office Manager role may not open for a while and is prepared to train for other management roles at Runners Relay.

Penn is becoming disillusioned with their future at Runners Relay. Penn shares their concerns with everyone in the cafeteria each day. Some of Penn's co-workers are concerned that Penn will quit, while others are tired of hearing Penn's constant complaints.

Things have recently escalated as Penn overheard that other office staff members have been sent on public speaking courses, but Penn has not been included in the training. This morning, Penn had a heated conversation with one of their co-workers, asking why they would be sent on this training course as they lack people skills. Everyone in the office could hear the heated conversation, and it caused an uneasy feeling in the office. Everyone is avoiding Penn at all costs.

Employee Observations:

"If I have to listen to Penn complain about their manager and performance reviews again, I will start eating my lunch at my desk."

"I am so tired of the constant bickering between Penn and their co-workers over who should attend which training courses. Penn needs to grow up."

The First Conversation:

Andres received several complaints about Penn and their conflicts with other office staff members. Before approaching Penn, Andres wanted to speak with Anna Suarez in Human Resources, but Anna's door was closed, and Andres needed to end this office conflict immediately. So, Andres decided to meet with Penn.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=306#h5p-18

Andres: Penn, can you stop by my office this morning?

Penn: Certainly, I am free right now.

Andres: Come on in and take a seat.

Penn: Thank you. Do you want to discuss the new hire training program on Monday?

Andres: No, I want to discuss your recent performance.

Penn: Excuse me? You want to talk about me and my performance?

Andres: Yes, I am disappointed in you. I expect a lot from my staff, and you have let me down. I know about your negative conversations in the cafeteria every day, which put me down. I am not impressed. I also know that you have been having fights with co-workers over who should attend training courses offered by the company.

Penn: Let me stop you there. I have been asking you for training courses for the past two

years; you don't even hear me when I speak with you. I want to progress to a management position in this company, and you're holding me back.

Andres: I have no idea what you are talking about. It sounds like you just want time away from your work to take courses so you won't have to do your job.

Penn: I don't want time away from my job; I want to prepare for my next job. Are you listening to me?

Andres: I don't know why you are so preoccupied with training courses. All you need to do is focus on your job, and you will be rewarded with a good pay increase each year. That is why people come to work—for the money.

Penn: This is a lost cause. I will go back to my desk and polish up my resume.

Andres: I'm glad you understand. Thanks for the talk.

The Exercise:

Identify – any concerns with the way Andres spoke to Penn. Did Andres use active listening skills?

Discuss- Andres's approach and how he could improve employee meetings by utilizing active listening.

Create – an action plan and discussion topics for Andres to focus on when he meets with Penn next time.

Next Steps

- You will assume the role of Anna, the Human Resources professional at Runners Relay. You have learned about Penn's recent complaints and conflicts with other office staff.
- You will meet with Andres and coach him on properly addressing this workplace issue, emphasizing active listening and paraphrasing.

Coaching Notes:

When meeting with Andres, you will remind him of the following:

- Let Penn know that you have seen a recent change in their behaviour.
- Ask Penn about their specific concerns with promotions and training courses.
- Employ your active listening skills by paraphrasing what Penn says to gain a complete understanding of Penn's concerns.
- Once you understand the real source of Penn's frustrations, address each concern in detail.
- Confirm that you have addressed Penn's concerns before the meeting ends.
- End with an agreement to follow up on your conversation.

The Recommended Conversation:

Following the coaching session with Anna, Andres decides to meet with Penn again to address his approach to the first conversation and try to resolve Penn's complaints and office conflicts.

> 📄 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=306#h5p-19*

✓ **Andres:** Penn, do you have time to meet with me this morning?

Penn: Absolutely, I can meet with you right now.

Andres: Penn, thanks for joining me in my office.

Penn: Is everything okay?

Andres: I want to check in with you because I have learned that you are quite concerned about your future here at Runners Relay. I'd like to hear from you about your concerns.

Penn: Well, that is part of the story. I am concerned about my future, but I am also worried about my performance reviews. Based on the list of people you're sending to training courses, such as the upcoming public speaking course, I don't think you are listening to me.

Andres: To be clear, you don't feel I have been listening to what you said in our yearly performance reviews. Is that correct?

Penn: Yes. I don't think it is intentional on your part. I have emphasized the importance

of advancing in the company and want to take courses that will help me reach the management level. I wasn't even on the list for the public speaking course. I find myself arguing and bickering with other office staff members as they brag about their upcoming training sessions. I am distraught.

Andres: Penn, I feel that I owe you an apology. I do a fairly good job of writing down goals when I meet with my staff during the annual performance review process, but clearly, I am not revisiting the goals and taking action to make them a reality. I didn't realize until now how passionate you are about advancing in this company. We are lucky to have you and we don't want to lose you.

Penn: I can't lie; I have been considering polishing my resume and sending it out. I need things to change, or I won't stay here. This isn't about money; it is about my goals.

Andres: If I understand you correctly, if we develop an employee development plan tailored to your goals at our company, do you want a career at Runners Relay?

Penn: Exactly! This is what I've been asking for all along. I think you finally understand me.
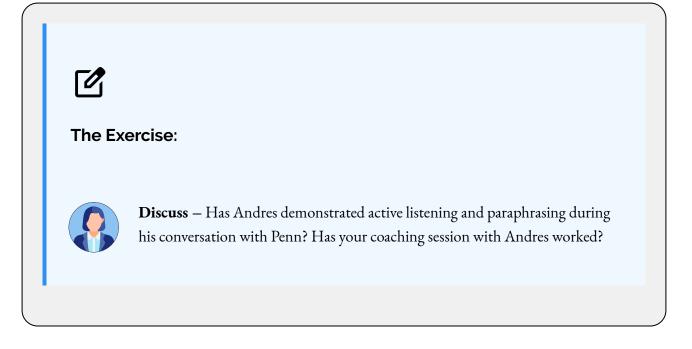
Andres: It shouldn't have taken me this long to understand what you have been trying to tell me.

Penn: So, what's next?

Andres: Let's agree on this. On Friday morning at 9 A.M., we will meet to review your last two performance reviews, create an employee development plan with timelines, and then meet once a month to review the plan to ensure we are on track. Does that work for you, Penn?

Penn: Yes! Thank you, Andres. I feel like a huge weight has lifted off of me. I will start working on some points to discuss at our first meeting on Friday. I feel like an essential member of the team again.

Andres: Wonderful. I will see you on Friday at 9 A.M.

The Exercise:

Discuss — Has Andres demonstrated active listening and paraphrasing during his conversation with Penn? Has your coaching session with Andres worked?

3.5 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You have learned the importance of demonstrating active listening when solving problems and resolving conflicts at work. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read – the following case study. Create a script demonstrating your ability to resolve a workplace conflict, emphasizing active listening and paraphrasing.

The Company:

Raspberry Fields Ltd.

The People:

Alice Miele (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Monique Ouelette (They/Them): Logistics Coordinator

Simran Ali (He/Him): Operations Manager

The Scenario:

Monique has been providing customer service to area grocery stores for three years. Monique ensures local stores receive their orders of fresh raspberries to sell in their stores.

In the past week, Monique forgot to ship three orders of fresh raspberries to local stores, and the store owners are upset. Monique has accused the stores of failing to submit their orders on time, and the store owners have accused Monique of failing to ship the orders. These customer conflicts are becoming a daily occurrence.

Monique sends Alice, the HR Manager at Raspberry Fields Ltd., an email outlining their frustration with their role. They clarified that they could not do the job of two people as the Logistics Assistant recently quit. Monique forwards three e-mails to you. All three e-mails confirm that Monique has been asking for help from their manager, Simran Ali (He/Him), for the past month. Every time Monique follows up with Simran, he talks about giving Monique additional vacation time and a bonus payment for their extra efforts. Monique asks when a new Logistics Assistant will be hired, and Simran indicates that the raspberry season will slow down soon so Monique can have a work-life balance. Monique ends the email to Alice by saying, "Is anyone listening?"

Employee Observations and Customer Observations:
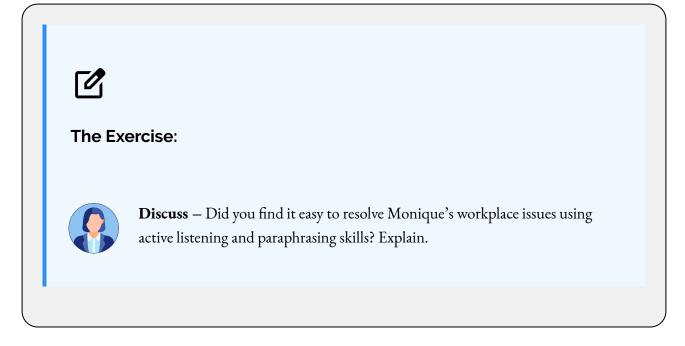
"Our store will give Monique a chance to get our orders right. If not, we must move our business to Raspberry Red Ltd., the competition!"

"As a customer, I cannot believe Monique is trying to blame this shipping error on our company. We don't appreciate being blamed for Monique's laziness."

The Conversation:

Simran is on vacation for two weeks. You are playing the role of Alice, the Human Resources Manager at Raspberry Fields Ltd. You will be meeting with Monique to address their recent customer conflicts. You will initiate the conversation with Monique. Your script should be at least one minute long when you read it aloud. Don't forget to practice your active listening and paraphrasing skills in your script.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=308#h5p-4

The Exercise:

Discuss – Did you find it easy to resolve Monique's workplace issues using active listening and paraphrasing skills? Explain.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Collaboration, or working together, is an effective approach to conflict resolution regardless of the scenario.
- Human Resources professionals should utilize active listening skills when meeting with employees in order to demonstrate a sincere interest in the matter.
- When paraphrasing, you are to summarize what you have heard to check for understanding.
- It is important to create an environment that is conducive to collaborative conflict resolution.
- Collaborative conflict resolution involves identifying the issue, brainstorming solutions, implementing an agreed-upon solution, and following up to ensure the matter has been addressed.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 3, reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Identify the factors necessary to create an environment conducive to collaborative conflict resolution.
2. List the benefits of collaboration or working together.
3. Apply active listening skills to a workplace conflict scenario.

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 3 Exercises 1 & 2
- Chapter 3 Exercises 3 & 4

CHAPTER 4: INTEREST-BASED CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Chapter Overview

4.0 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Fanshawe HR Graduate on Conflict at Work

4.2 The Lesson: Interest-Based Conflict Resolution

4.3 Spotlight on Human Resources Skills

4.4 Case Study: Runners Relay Ltd.

4.5 Apply Your Knowledge

4.6 Chapter Summary

4.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

★ Learning Outcomes

- Identify effective techniques to formulate interest-based approaches in conflict resolution.
- List the benefits of an interest-based approach to conflict resolution.
- Apply "I" statements to a workplace conflict scenario.

4.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=435#oembed-1

Video: "Mark Jackson NavigatingHR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [2:17] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Mark Jackson, Health and Safety Coordinator
Company	Construction Company
How Does Conflict Occur?	Workload expectations and lack of communication.
HR Skills Needed	Interpersonal communication skills, empathy, listening skills and understanding another perons's point of view.
Approach and Solutions	Start by calling a meeting and understanding each party's perspective.

4.2 THE LESSON: INTEREST-BASED CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In Chapter 3, we reviewed the benefits of a collaborative approach to conflict resolution. In addition to being cooperative, it can be helpful to understand the interests of the individuals involved in the conflict. In Chapter 4, we will focus on each employee's interests and the techniques to uncover these interests.

Photo by Amy Hirschi, Unsplash License

What is an Interest-Based Approach to Conflict Resolution?

While there are many ways to approach workplace conflict, an interest-based approach allows you to understand the underlying reasons for an individual's position. It is the equivalent of dissecting their position and uncovering their actual needs.

Chapter 4 Exercises

Let's listen to William Ury explain how he utilizes an interest-based approach to conflict resolution.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=437#oembed-1*

Video: "Interests Behind Negotiating Positions" by William Ury [3:02] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Chapter 4 Exercise 1: Discussion

As a Human Resources professional, how will uncovering an employee's interests help you solve workplace conflicts?

Interests versus Positions

In the video above, William Ury has emphasized the importance of uncovering the fundamental interests of the individuals involved in the conflict. As a Human Resources professional, you must understand the difference between an individual's position and interests.

Positions

A position is the "what." What does the individual say they want? Their position on a given matter seldom explains what is motivating them to take their position. It tends to lack detail and insight. A position may sound like a demand.

Interests

An interest is the "why". When the individual explains their underlying reasoning or motivation for their position, that is their interest in the matter. An interest expresses concerns.

Here is an illustration of positions versus interests.

Position: The manager insists you hire three more team members immediately.

Interest: The manager is concerned the team isn't going to fill the customer orders on time, and they may lose their job.

Position: One of your employees demands a 4% pay increase during their annual performance review.

Interest: This employee recently went through a divorce, and they are concerned about shouldering the cost of living alone.

Position: One of your supervisors refuses to participate in a forklift training session this week.

Interest: This supervisor witnessed a serious forklift accident at their last job, and they are scared to drive a forklift.

Position: An employee says they won't attend the daily staff meeting anymore.

Interest: This employee is concerned they will be asked to provide an update on their department's project, and they are fearful of public speaking.

The examples above show a fundamental difference between a person's position (what they say to you) and their interest in the matter (their concerns). As a Human Resources professional, your role is to facilitate a solution that will address the interests of both parties. If you skip over "interests" and focus on resolving "positions," the workplace conflict may be difficult, or almost impossible, to solve.

Exercises

Here is a YouTube video that highlights an individual's position versus their interests.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=437#oembed-2

Video: "Negotiation: Positions vs Interests (funny explainer)" by Comms Lab [4:10] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Chapter 4 Exercise 2: Discussion

What did you learn about the difference between a position and interests from this video on "the orange"?

The Benefits of an Interest-Based Approach to Conflict

As a Human Resources professional, you should know there are many benefits to utilizing the interest-based approach to problems and conflicts. Equally, there are some challenges. As with most things, the more you practice the interest-based approach to conflict, the easier it will become. Let's look at some of the benefits and challenges you may experience during this process.

Benefits

There are real benefits to utilizing the interest-based approach.

- The focus is on the real concerns and needs of each person.
- There is room for flexibility and creativity.
- There is an opportunity for brainstorming solutions.
- Less focus on positions and more focus on each person's interests.
- An opportunity to satisfy the interests of each person involved in the conflict.

Challenges

- There may be a few challenges to the interest-based approach.
- It relies on everyone being open to collaboration.
- All parties must openly communicate their interests.
- It takes time to uncover a person's interests.
- Dealing with interests may be more complex than dealing with positions.
- You have to learn how to uncover interests.

Identifying Interests with Probing Questions

How will you uncover "interests" when employees want to talk about their position on the topic? The answer is probing questions. Human Resources professionals always ask probing questions, especially when interviewing a job candidate or investigating a workplace incident. We can apply these skills to problem-solving and conflict resolution. There is room to utilize the empathy skills you read about in Chapter 2.

Probing Questions

- What do you hope to take away?
- Why do you need this to happen?
- Why do you want this?
- What are your concerns?
- Why is this important to you?
- How does this support your values?
- What are your fears?

Creating Options

One of your goals in the interest-based approach to conflict resolution is to involve both parties in the solution. Now that you have uncovered their interests, it is time to develop viable solutions. Brainstorming is a great place to start. While brainstorming ideas may seem easy, not everyone knows how to brainstorm. You may need to take the time to explain how a brainstorming session works.

The #1 rule of brainstorming is to allow all parties to share as many possible solutions as possible without anyone in the room dismissing or criticizing their ideas.

Photo by Lala Azizli, Unsplash License

If you allow the brainstorming session to become contentious, it may add to the original conflict. Always document the brainstorming session. The first solution you apply to the conflict may not work, and you will need to return to the brainstorming list to find another approach.

4.3 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

"I" Versus "You" Statements

As a Human Resources professional responsible for addressing conflict at work, it is helpful to understand the impact of "I" versus "You" statements.

The "I" Statement

What is an "I" statement? An "I" statement allows you to explain to the listener which of their behaviours concerns you, how their behaviour makes you feel and the consequence of their behaviour. In general, "I" statements are less aggressive as they do not put the listener on the defensive.

The "You" Statement

Freepick AI Image Generator. Prompt Below.

What is a "You" statement? It is accusatory, the equivalent of pointing a finger at someone with blame. A "You" statement quickly causes the listener to defend their behaviour as they are simultaneously accused and blamed.

The "Behaviour-Consequence-Feelings" Formula

Chapter 4 Exercises

The following video is on the behaviour-consequence-feeling approach to building an "I" statement.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=446#oembed-1

Video: "Initiating Conflict Resolution" by Wisc-Online [4:32] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Chapter 4 Exercise 3: Discussion

After watching the video, what does BCF stand for? What is the benefit of using the BCF approach when working with others to resolve conflict?

"I" versus "You" Examples

The best way to understand the difference between an "I" statement and a "You" statement is to review the following examples.

"You" Statement: You are always angry.

"I" Statement: When you yell at people, it makes me uneasy, and I can't focus on my work.

"You" Statement: You don't even attend the mandatory team meetings.

"I" Statement: I feel disrespected when you skip our team meeting, and I wonder if you are committed to the team project.

"You" Statement: You are late to work most days.

"I" Statement: When you arrive late to work, we can't start our morning meeting on time, which is unfair to the rest of the team.

"You" Statement: Once again, you have failed to submit your sales report this week

"I" Statement: When you don't submit your weekly sales report, I have to send you an e-mail requesting the document, and I don't have time for this additional administrative work.

"You" Statement: You continue to call in sick every Friday.

"I" Statement: When you call in sick every Friday, your co-workers must complete your work and are already busy doing their work.

"You" Statement: You criticize your co-workers whenever they present a new idea.

"I" Statement: Criticizing your co-workers when they present a new idea upsets them, and they stop offering new ideas at meetings.

Can you see how "You" statements might make an employee defensive? "You" statements may create a confrontation rather than generate a conversation. On the other hand, an "I" statement takes the pressure off the other person to defend themselves and allows them to understand how their behaviour impacts others.

Chapter 4 Exercise 4

Now it's your turn. Read the following "You" statements and turn them into "I" statements.

"You" Statement: You refuse to listen when others are speaking. Instead, you talk over other people.

"I" Statement:

"You" Statement: You will never be promoted when you can't get along with your co-workers.

"I" Statement:

"You" Statement: Your performance reviews are negative because you never completed your agreed-upon training sessions.

"I" Statement:

Assertive Communicators

Assertive communicators are direct, firm, honest, and transparent about their ideas and wants while not discounting the ideas of others. They typically express ideas thoughtfully and politely while respecting the values and opinions of others. If there are disagreements regarding views, the assertive communicator will generally use "I feel" statements rather than accusatory or "you" statements to resolve the dispute. Assertive communication is respectful–you don't hurt others even when expressing negative emotions. When you communicate assertively, you express your needs, wants, thoughts, and feelings without guilt. When you communicate assertively, you take responsibility for your thoughts and feelings and confidently state your position. This is the most effective communication style as it does not create unnecessary conflict and allows for all ideas and views to be shared.

One of the best tools for ensuring assertive communication is to use "I" statements. "You" statements generally create defensiveness and emotional resistance and shut down communication. They can promote conflict. "I" statements, on the other hand, avoid destructive blaming, criticizing, ridiculing, and name-calling. The speaker makes a statement expressing their feelings. "I" statements can help prevent conflict.

Effective Communication

Table 4.3.1 Examples of assertive and aggressive or passive behaviours

Effective Communication – Assertive Behaviour	Ineffective Communication – Aggressive or Passive Behaviour
• I have completed my assigned tasks.	• You didn't do your work.
• I feel angry when you interrupt me because it makes me feel what I have to say isn't important.	• Would you just listen to me and stop interrupting? • Whatever – it's not like you'd listen to what I was saying anyway.
• I need more clarification to complete the task.	• You are not being fair. You didn't give me the information I needed to complete the job.

Remember that you can only accurately speak about your intentions. In addition to offering accurate

information, using "I" statements allows the other person to be receptive rather than defensive. Effective communication needs a sender of precise information and a willing, open receiver.

The Art of the "I" Statement

At first, it may seem challenging to formulate an "I" statement. It takes a bit more time to develop an "I" statement. We have to think about the exact behaviour that is causing the issue. Then, we need to verbalize the consequences this behaviour has on others, and finally, we have to reflect on how this behaviour makes us feel. As a Human Resources professional, you want to think about your opening statement before meeting with employees involved in workplace conflict to ensure your "I" statement accurately describes the undesired behaviour, consequences and feelings.

"I" statements

- allow for reflection
- take practice
- allow for the expression of feelings
- avoid the placement of blame

The good news is that, like most things in life, practice makes perfect. It also helps to start our sentences with the word "when" instead of the word "you." This prevents us from quickly losing control of our statements and placing blame on others. It is okay to express feelings, even at work. It has an impact when a co-worker finds out they are causing others to feel disrespected or unappreciated.

Assertive Communicators from "Learning Task 4: Describe Assertive Communication" from Trades Access Common Core Competency B-3: Use Interpersonal Communication Skills – 2nd Edition by Camosun College is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Image Prompt

A photo depicting a male Latino person conversing with a female Middle-Eastern person. The Latino man is using his finger to point at his torso. They are standing in a modern kitchen, surrounded by fruits and plants.

4.4 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

It is time to practice our new "I" statement skills. Let's utilize script writing and role-playing to resolve a workplace conflict at Runners Relay.

The Scenario: A Focus on "I" Statements

The Company:

The Company: Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Helga Dietz(She/Her): Day Shift Supervisor

Sam Sellers(He/Him): Production Associate on Day Shift.

The Scenario:

Helga is thinking of quitting her job at Runners Relay. In the past year, she has been dealing with one of the employees on the day shift, Sam Sellers, and she is tired of his antics. Disciplinary action hasn't worked. Recently, Sam started leaving his workstation whenever he felt like it, which has caused significant production delays as he isn't meeting his daily target numbers. Helga has addressed this issue with Sam several times but doesn't feel things will turn around.

Sam's co-workers are tired of his behaviour and have started calling him out when he leaves his workstation. Sam has started yelling at his co-workers and telling them to mind their business. What began as a performance issue has turned into a workplace conflict.

Employee Observations:

"Sam is a big problem on the day shift. We keep missing our production numbers and, therefore, our yearly bonuses."

"I don't know who Sam thinks he is. Shutting down his production station whenever it is good for him is selfish. I think he is sneaking outside to smoke; that's what I believe."

The First Conversation:

Helga decides to meet with Sam one more time. This time, she will tell him what she thinks of his work ethic and ensure he hears precisely what she thinks. If this meeting doesn't work, Helga will start sending out her resume.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:* https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=452#h5p-20

Helga: Sam, you must stop by my office at the end of your shift today.

Sam: I don't have to talk at the end of my shift.

Helga: You don't have a choice. I will see you at 3:00 pm.

Sam: Fine.

Helga: (in the 3:00 pm meeting) Have a seat, Sam.

Sam: What is so important that we can't talk tomorrow?

Helga: You are the reason; Sam: you and your performance.

Sam: Me?

Helga: Yes. You shut down your production station whenever it suits you, making us all look bad.

Sam: What? I work as hard as anyone on the day shift. What are you talking about?

Helga: You can't possibly be serious. Whenever you want to sneak outside for a smoke break, you shut down your machine and go outside. Everyone is talking about it.

Sam: You can't talk to me that way. I don't even smoke. Who is saying things about me behind my back?

Helga: Listen, you need to stop messing around and take your work seriously, or I am going to take this to the Human Resources department.

Sam: That is a threat, and I don't appreciate threats. You are the worst supervisor ever! I will ask to be switched to the afternoon shift to escape you.

Helga: That's good. We won't have to deal with you on the day shift anymore. See you later!

The Exercise:

Identify – Any concerns with the way Helga spoke with Sam? Did Helga utilize impactful "I" statements that would cause Sam to lower his defences?

Discuss – Helga's approach highlights how Helga could improve her conversation with Sam by utilizing helpful "I" statements.

Create – A list of "I" statements that would assist Helga when she meets with Sam.

Next Steps

You will assume the role of Anna, the Human Resources professional at Runners Relay. You have learned about Helga's recent conversation with Sam. You will meet with Helga and coach her on properly addressing this workplace issue, emphasizing "I" statements.

Coaching Notes:

When meeting with Helga, you will remind her of the following:

- You aim to have a calm conversation and understand what is happening with Sam.
- "You" statements cause the other party to go on the defensive.
- When you utilize "I" statements, the other party doesn't feel like they are under attack.
- Explaining to Sam how his behaviour is impacting you and the entire team is important.
- Finding out why Sam leaves his workstation so often will assist you in resolving this workplace conflict.
- Don't be in a rush to appoint blame.

The Recommended Conversation:

Following her coaching session with Anna, Helga decides to meet with Sam again to address his behaviour in the workplace.

> 📊 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:* https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=452#h5p-21

Helga: Sam, would you stop by to see me before you leave work today?

✓ **Sam:** Sure, I will stop by your office.

Helga: (as Sam enters her office). Please take a seat, Sam.

Sam: I was surprised you wanted to speak with me. What's this about?

Helga: Sam, when you leave your workstation, our production numbers drop, and I feel responsible for the failure to meet our customer orders.

Sam: I had no idea I was impacting our customer orders this way.

Helga: I have also noticed that stepping away from work negatively impacts the rest of the day shift team, and I am responsible for their morale as well.

Sam: Wow. I didn't mean to impact the team. I've developed anxiety attacks, and I need to step away from my work area from time to time to get fresh air, or I will pass out. I should have told you about it, but I was too embarrassed. My co-workers have started yelling at me every time I walk about from my station, and I began yelling at them to mind their business. I guess I've made things even worse.

Helga: I am here to support you, and I can assure you that this information about your anxiety attacks will be kept confidential. How can I help you?

Sam: When the production numbers are high, I worry that I won't be able to keep up. This causes anxiety attacks and makes things even worse. I could use help from one of the other associates on the day shift when our customer orders are high, just until I get this anxiety issue under control with the help of my doctor. I'm sorry I've impacted our customers, co-workers and you this way. It was never my intention.

Helga: I will monitor the day shift orders, and when they are higher than usual, I will assign a second associate to your workstation to avoid falling behind. Does that work for you?

Sam: I can't tell you what that means. Yes, it will absolutely help, and thank you for taking the time to talk to me. I haven't been sleeping or eating well lately, which has caused me to treat my co-workers poorly.

Helga: Thank you for your honesty. I've been worried about you because this behaviour isn't like you. We will work together on this going forward. Are you agreeing?

Sam: Agreed. I will see you tomorrow, Helga. Thank you!

Helga: You are welcome, see you in the morning.

The Exercise:

Discuss – Has Helga utilized "I" statements to de-escalate the tension with Sam? Overall, has your coaching session with Helga worked? Explain.

4.5 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You have learned the importance of utilizing "I" statements when solving problems and resolving conflicts at work. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read – the following case study. Create a script that demonstrates your ability to resolve a workplace conflict with an emphasis on "I" statements.

The Company:

 Ruby River Inc.

The People:

Olag Uri (He/Him): Human Resources Manager

Crystal Stevens (She/Her): Finance Manager

Remi Moore (They/Them): Finance Specialist

The Scenario:

Ruby River Inc. manufactures scuba gear and recently acquired Swift River Ltd. Crystal has been overseeing the acquisition from a financial perspective. Crystal has been working long hours and expects her finance specialist, Remi, to do the same. Instead, Remi has been taking more time off than ever. Crystal can't figure out why Remi would do this during one of the busiest times of the year.

Unfortunately, Remi's lackadaisical approach to work has caused friction at work. Crystal can't stand to talk to Remi unless it is necessary. Remi, in turn, has started to avoid Crystal unless they need her signature. This workplace conflict is impacting the rest of the finance department. No one wants to knock on Crystal's door as she will likely question their work ethic and productivity.

Employee Observations and Customer Observations:

"I try to avoid Crystal. I eat lunch after she leaves the lunchroom. She is in a bad mood and keeps assigning me more work every time I see her."

"Remi seems unplugged from the team. They take half vacation days every week and miss important team meetings. How will we acquire a new company with Remi on our team?"

The Conversation:

You are playing the role of Olag, the Human Resources Manager at Ruby River. You have met with Crystal to coach her on the value of "I" statements when resolving a workplace conflict. Crystal is well-equipped to meet with Remi, share her concerns without placing blame, and resolve this conflict in the finance department. Go ahead and write your script. Crystal will lead this conversation by calling Remi into her office to address her concerns and find out what is going on with Remi. Your script should be at least one minute long when you read it out loud.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=456#h5p-5

The Exercise:

Discuss – How can using "I" statements keep the conversation with Remi on track and avoid assignment blame?

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Interest-based conflict resolution focuses on an individual's interests rather than their position.
- Human Resources professionals can utilize an interest-based conflict resolution approach to uncover the underlying concerns of both sides and find a solution that addresses both parties.
- It is crucial to ask probing questions to uncover an individual's interests as they may not volunteer their concerns.
- Use "I" statements to avoid blaming others.
- Using "I" statements helps focus attention on the speaker's thoughts and helps them express how the conflict is impacting them.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 4, reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Identify effective techniques to formulate interest-based approaches in conflict resolution.
2. List the benefits of an interest-based approach to conflict resolution
3. Apply "I" statements to a workplace conflict scenario

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 4 Exercises 1 & 2
- Chapter 4 Exercises 3 & 4

CHAPTER 5: HR'S PROACTIVE APPROACH

Chapter Overview

5.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

★ Learning Outcomes

- Examine proactive techniques to prevent negative workplace conflict.
- List the benefits of a proactive approach to conflict.
- Apply positive influencing skills to a workplace conflict scenario.

5.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

📄 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=496#oembed-1*

Video: "Tallys Moreth Navigating HR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [4:42] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Tallys Moreth, HR Assistant Manager
Company	Toyota Boshoku America
How Does Conflict Occur?	Conflict occurs because of poor management communication, personality differences, lack of resources, unclear job responsibilities, and harassment and discrimination.
HR Skills Needed	Communication skills, active listening skills, employment law, and organizational development experience.

5.2 THE LESSON: A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO CONFLICT

In Chapter 4, we read about an interest-based approach to conflict resolution. Chapter 5 will focus on a proactive approach to conflict for the Human Resources professional. A proactive approach is about creating or controlling a situation by causing something to happen rather than responding to it after it has happened.

Minimizing Unhealthy Conflict

Chapter 1 discusses the characteristics of unhealthy versus healthy conflict at work. While it is impossible to avoid conflict, Human Resources professionals want to minimize unhealthy conflict in the workplace.

PROACTIVE

Definition: (adj.) Creating or controlling a situation by causing something to happen rather than responding to it after it has happened.

"Proactive" by Davin Chiupka, CC BY-NC-SA

How do we minimize unhealthy conflict at work? While there is no one solution, we can implement some of these "best practices" in business.

Figure 5.2.1 "A proactive approach to conflict management" by Shauna Roch, CC BY-NC-SA

Training

Ensure you have a well-defined training program covering legal requirements and company policies.

Example: Provide all new hires and existing employees with a yearly training session on your organization's Code of Conduct.

Set Clear Expectations

Whether it is a meeting, a project or a business trip, ensure all employees know what is expected of them in each situation.

Example: Post a list of agreed-upon "Meeting Rules" to reinforce the expectations of individuals participating in a meeting.

Open Communication

Have your Supervisors, Managers, and other people leaders host meetings with their teams and send electronic updates on the business and departmental goals.

Example: Host daily meetings and quarterly town hall meetings to share safety statistics and gather input.

Policies and Procedures

Review your organization's policies and procedures to ensure they are current based on legislation and your company's needs.

Example: Place a physical copy of your organization's policies and procedures in an easily accessible area and provide 24/7 online access to the policies.

Progressive Disciplinary Program

Create, publish and train every employee on your organization's progressive disciplinary program and follow it as required.

Example: Once a workplace conflict investigation is complete, provide employees with disciplinary letters if there has been a policy or procedure infraction.

Lead by Example

The leadership team must set a great example for everyone in the organization. Encourage your leaders to "lead by example."

Example: Have your executive and management team share examples of challenging workplace situations with their direct reports and include the methods they utilized to resolve the conflict successfully.

Team Building Activities

You do not have to spend a lot of money to bring employees together and allow them to get to know one another.

Example: Host a multicultural potluck and encourage your employees to bring a dish representing their cultural background.

Provide Timely Feedback

Don't become an organization that "saves up" negative feedback and presents it once a year during performance reviews.

Example: If a Manager learns that an employee is frustrated by a recent change to a project timeline, speak to that employee immediately to answer their questions before the frustration grows into a bigger issue.

Positive Workplace Culture

Consider establishing a formal mentorship program to connect new hires with senior staff and help them learn about your organization's culture.

PREVENT UNHEALTHY WORKPLACE CONFLICT
Be Proactive

CREATE CLEAR WORKPLACE POLICIES
Ensure you publish policies and procedures that reinforce the desired behaviour such as a Code of Conduct.

TRAIN EMPLOYEES ON PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR
Reach out to train all new and existing employees on your Code of Conduct. Ensure you reach everyone including sales people that travel and employees that are working from home.

HOLD EMPLOYEES TO ACCOUNT
It is important that employees know that unhealthy workplace conflict will be addressed up to and including disciplinary action.

REINFORCE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR
When you observe positive behaviour at work, don't miss the opportunity to acknowledge it.

CREATE A POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

Figure 5.2.2 "Prevent Unhealthy Workplace Conflict" by Connie Palmer, CC BY-NC-SA Image description

Example: When new employees start working at your organization, have a senior staff member meet below. with them regularly to ensure they learn the company's practices and language.

Clear Definition of Roles

Yearly, review your organization's job descriptions to ensure they are up-to-date and accurate.

Example: Establish a team in each department to review the accuracy of each job description and bring forward recommended changes.

Image Description

Prevent Unhealthy Workplace Conflict is the title, followed by the subtitle "Be Proactive." The content is organized into four sections with icons and text.

1. Create Clear Workplace Policies: Ensure you publish policies and procedures that reinforce the desired behavior, such as a Code of Conduct.
2. Train Employees on Professional Behaviour: Reach out to train all new and existing employees on your Code of Conduct. Ensure you reach everyone, including salespeople who travel and employees who work from home.
3. Hold Employees to Account: It is important that employees know that unhealthy workplace conflict will be addressed up to and including disciplinary action.
4. Reinforce Positive Behaviour: When you observe positive behaviour at work, don't miss the opportunity to acknowledge it."

At the bottom, the text reads: "CREATE A POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE" on a dark blue background.

Chapter 5 Exercise 1

Earlier in this textbook, we looked at the most common workplace factors that may lead to workplace conflict.

For each of the workplace factors listed below, consider the 10 "best practices" explained above and note which of these practices might best address each of these factors. You are encouraged to list more than one best practice. Provide your reasoning for each choice.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=498#h5p-7

Text Description

This activity contains a set of questions, which are described below.

Activity Instruction: Earlier in this textbook, we looked at the most common workplace factors that may lead to workplace conflict. For each of the workplace factors listed below, consider the 10 "best practices" explained above and note which of these practices might best address each of these factors. You are encouraged to list more than one best practice. Provide your reasoning for each choice.

- Workplace Factor: Co-worker disagreements such as how to complete a project.
- Workplace Factor: Lack of resources such as finances or time.
- Workplace Factor: Job insecurity, such as concern about a company closing or eliminating a job.
- Workplace Factor: Workplace conduct includes harassment, teasing, and bullying.
- Workplace Factor: Work overload, such as an unrealistic amount of work.
- Workplace Factor: Unfair practices such as treatment, favouritism, and pay.
- Workplace Factor: Lack of career opportunities such as promotions, training, and mentoring.

5.3 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

Influence

As a Human Resources professional responsible for helping others solve problems and resolve conflict, it is helpful to understand your ability to influence others or influence outcomes. What does it mean to influence a person or a situation? Influence is the ability to share helpful suggestions that will assist the other person in resolving their conflict.

Power and Influence

For some, influence is seen as power over others. As Human Resources professionals, we are not looking to exert control over others. Instead, we are looking to make suggestions and recommendations to help others solve their problems or workplace conflicts. Let's look at the dimensions of power and how individuals exert control over others.

Steven Lukes (2005) developed a framework that identified three dimensions of power:

Photo by Tom Wilson, Unsplash License

- The first two dimensions consider power as it pertains to conflicting interests between parties.
- The third dimension explores how those with power can avoid clashes of interests by shaping others'

wants and desires.

Later, other scholars identified a fourth dimension that saw power as a web of relations that provides the scaffolding of societies.

The One-Dimensional View of Power

Under the first dimension, power is the ability to get someone to do what you want. Here, power is active in direct, observable conflicts. Our focus is on the behaviours people deploy in decision-making when different parties' interests are in opposition.

The Two-Dimensional View of Power

Whereas power's first dimension considers the ability of one party to secure the compliance of another when interests conflict, the second dimension considers how those with power suppress conflict.

That is, a group has power if it can limit the scope of what is debated, thereby confining decision-making to issues they deem safe. Parties may achieve this through various means.

- Coercion: You secure the compliance of others through threats of deprivation. For example, an employer may say, "Do this, or I will fire you."
- Influence: You secure the compliance of others without resorting to threats. Instead, you convince others to comply through various means (e.g., making a persuasive argument).
- Authority: Others comply with you because they recognize your authority (e.g., an employee reorganizes the paint station at the direction of their Supervisor).
- Force: You secure the compliance of others by stripping them of the choice of non-compliance ((e.g., the day shift employees have to work every Saturday this month due to mandatory overtime announced by their Operations Manager).
- Manipulation: You secure others' compliance without their awareness (e.g., an employer withholds their plans to downsize the business in 8 months in order to keep the business running as usual for the next 8 months).

With both the first and second dimensions of power, conflicts of interest exist between parties. The first dimension resolves those differences through open conflict, the second by suppressing one side's ability or willingness to engage in a public battle. The third dimension considers the ability of those with power to avoid the need for conflict altogether.

The Three-Dimensional View of Power

The third dimension of power considers the ability to avoid conflict. Those with power can shape people's perceptions of their situation and influence how they think and understand the world. Through such means, those with power can shape others' preferences to the point they comply because they cannot imagine an alternative. They see compliance as natural.

For example, a business may promote the idea that a sign of good character is a willingness to work hard. Going above and beyond the call of duty is a virtue. The business rewards people who possess that virtue with promotions and career advancement.

Over time, a worker immersed in this environment may come to believe that hard work is a virtue. When the company asks that worker to work unpaid overtime on the weekend, the person may choose to do so willingly. They sacrifice their time for the company's good not out of coercion but because they believe doing so is virtuous. The company has shaped the worker's beliefs and preferences to the point the worker adopts the company's interests.

As Human Resources professionals, we want to focus on genuine influence, including making a persuasive argument and offering helpful suggestions. Influence should not include threats, manipulation, dictating, or telling others what to do.

How to Positively Influence Others

As discussed, we want to ensure we are not "telling" other people what to do. The following steps will help you to influence others positively.

Step 1

Take the time to listen to what the other person is saying. You should practice your active listening skills and repeat to the person your version of what you heard to ensure you received the entire message.

Step 2

Once you have clarified the message, ask the other person for permission to make a suggestion. This might sound like, "Is it okay if I share an idea with you that I have found helpful in these situations?" The other person will undoubtedly say "yes," as they are open to receiving help.

Step 3

Now that you have attained permission share a suggestion to help the other person resolve their issue or address their conflict. It is helpful to start with a statement like "I have found in situations like these..." to show an understanding of the issue. It is beneficial to end with a question like "Do you think this might be helpful in your situation?"

An example. In situations like this, it is helpful to schedule regular meetings to ensure you stay connected with your team members. Is this something you might be able to do?

Step 4

Allow the other person to ask questions to clarify your suggestion and to make it their own. For example, they might not be able to schedule regular meetings due to their travel schedule, but they could send a group email to their team every week and ask for individual updates from each team member.

Step 5

Once the other person has modified the suggestion to suit their situation, encourage them by saying, "I think that sounds like a good plan. I will follow up with you in a week to see how things are going."

Chapter 5 Exercise 2

Let's take this opportunity to practice making suggestions using the "influencing steps" above. For this assignment, we assume each individual below has given you permission to share your suggestion. You are taking on the role of Human Resources Manager and coaching the other person.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=502#h5p-9

Text Description

This activity contains a set of questions, which are described below.

Activity Instruction: Using The "Influencing Steps." Let's take this opportunity to practice making suggestions using the "influencing steps" above. For this assignment, we assume each individual below has given you permission to share your suggestion. You are taking on the role of Human Resources Manager and coaching the other person.

Provide your *influential suggestion statement* for the following:

- Current situation: The afternoon Shift Supervisor at your organization is involved in a verbal altercation with the day Shift Supervisor. They constantly argue over resources, believing the other has more staff than needed on their shift.
- Current situation: The Marketing Manager at your organization is experiencing a problem with their team members. It appears that every day, their team members show up late to work but do not stay late to make up for their missed work or time.
- Current situation: The weekend Shift Supervisor has an issue with one of the maintenance mechanics. The employee is often found sleeping instead of working as few managers are around on the weekend.
- Current situation: The Office Manager at your organization is struggling with one of their employees. Their administrative assistant spends the majority of their time talking rather

than working. Their daily reports aren't completed on time, and no office supplies have been ordered.

Power and influence section from "Dimensions of Power" from Developing Organizational and Managerial Wisdom – 2nd Edition by Brad C. Anderson is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

5.4 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

It is time to practice our new influencing skills. Let's utilize script writing and role-playing to resolve a workplace conflict at Runners Relay.

The Scenario: A Focus on Influence

The Company:

Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Leonard Swartz (He/Him): Operations Manager

Alejandro Rodrigez (He/Him): Afternoon Shift Supervisor

The Scenario:

Leonard has noticed Alejandro failing to communicate important information to his afternoon shift team members. Leonard expects Alejandro to share safety information, production numbers and quality statistics daily. When Leonard talks to the afternoon shift team members, he can tell they don't know their numbers or goals.

Leonard has also noticed that Alejandro constantly has heated discussions with the afternoon shift employees when they don't reach their daily production numbers, experience another safety incident, or fail an internal quality audit.

The heated discussions impact morale, and Leonard has noticed that several afternoon shift workers call in sick regularly. This conflict can't continue.

Employee Observations:

"We don't need to be treated this way by our supervisor. I thought he was here to guide us, not blame us."

"I don't think anyone in the company cares about the employees on the afternoon shift. If you don't work on the day shift, you are forgotten. I used to love working here."

The First Conversation:

Leonard has just finished a meeting with Alejandro to discuss the new running shoe they will be producing in the next quarter. Leonard wanted to speak with Anna in HR before the meeting, but she has been in meetings whenever he stops by her office. Leonard decides to talk to Alejandro as there is no time like the present.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=505#h5p-22*

Leonard: Before you return to the production area, Alejandro, I want to discuss the afternoon shift.

Alejandro: The afternoon shift? We are doing great on the afternoon shift.

Leonard: From what I see and hear, I would disagree. I overhear heated discussions with your staff, and these conflicts impact everyone. Haven't you noticed that your afternoon shift employees call in sick more often?

Alejandro: It's that time of year when people struggle with the colds and the flu.

Leonard: I don't think everyone has a cold, Alejandro. In addition, I read your safety statistics, and you have a serious safety issue. What's your plan to reduce the number of back injuries on the afternoon shift?

Alejandro: You don't need to worry about the back injuries. I told the staff to slow down and watch what they were doing. They need to be more careful.

Leonard: And you think that will be enough to prevent more injuries?

Alejandro: Yes, I am confident.

Leonard: Well, that doesn't solve the quality issues your team is experiencing. What's your plans for that?
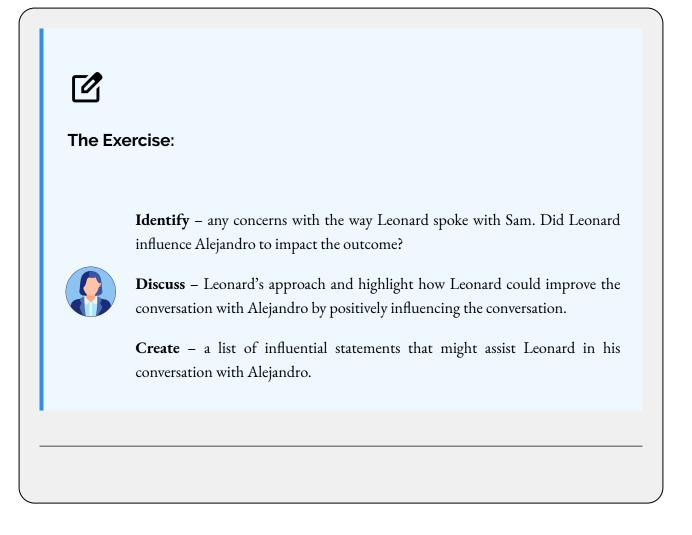
Alejandro: Once again, I'm on top of quality. I have asked the quality department to post our quality statistics on the bulletin board so everyone can read the results. The production associates need to know their quality numbers to improve.

Leonard: I don't see how reading a report will solve that issue, but if you say so, that doesn't address your failure to reach production numbers on every shift. We can't fill the customer orders, and I am starting to receive calls from angry customers. What's your plan?

Alejandro: I told the afternoon shift I would cancel pizza Fridays until they turned their production numbers around. They love food, so that should solve that problem.

Leonard: Well, I hope these initiatives work. If I don't see significant results in the next two weeks, I may have to find someone else to lead the afternoon shift. And I don't want to hear any more heated discussions with your team members!

Alejandro: Don't worry, boss, I won't disappoint you.

The Exercise:

Identify – any concerns with the way Leonard spoke with Sam. Did Leonard influence Alejandro to impact the outcome?

Discuss – Leonard's approach and highlight how Leonard could improve the conversation with Alejandro by positively influencing the conversation.

Create – a list of influential statements that might assist Leonard in his conversation with Alejandro.

Next Steps

You will assume the role of Anna, the Human Resources professional at Runners Relay. You have been extremely busy implementing a new attendance policy, and you haven't had a chance to connect with Leonard. You have heard that Leonard met with Alejandro before you had an opportunity to coach him on the importance of using influence to attain the results Leonard is looking for.

Coaching Notes:

During your meeting with Leonard, you will remind him of the following:

- Your goal is to positively influence Alejandro to attain the results you are looking for.
- Be sure to ask Alejandro if you can offer help based on your experience.
- It is essential to make helpful suggestions.
- For each suggestion, share your reasoning and past successes using the new approach.
- Be sure to highlight how these suggestions might make Alejandro's job easier.
- Allow Alejandro to adapt the suggestion in a manner that will work for him and his team.
- Ensure you have a verbal agreement before you end the meeting.
- Follow up with Alejandro in one week to review and, if needed, modify the plan.
- Be sure to thank Alejandro and the afternoon team as they meet their safety, production and quality goals.

The Recommended Conversation:

Following his coaching session with Anna, Leonard meets with Alejandro again to address his behaviour and production issues.

> 📰 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:* https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=505#h5p-23

Alejandro: You wanted to see me, Leonard? I just read your e-mail.

Leonard: Yes, thank you for stopping by. I e-mailed you to catch up with you to talk about the afternoon shift.

Alejandro: Okay, is there something specific you wanted to talk about?

Leonard: Well, I want to start with the heated conversations you have been having with your team members.

Alejandro: Oh, I didn't realize you had overheard that.

Leonard: Yes, I was surprised, as you have always been a great people leader. Alejandro, what is going on?

Alejandro: I don't know. We just can't seem to get ourselves organized on the afternoon shift. We are making silly mistakes, and it feels like we are falling apart. I get so angry that I start yelling at people. I wouldn't say I like it.

Leonard: Alejandro, I can see that you are struggling with your interactions with your

staff and production numbers. Can I offer suggestions based on some ideas that have worked well for me?

Alejandro: I can't tell you how much I would appreciate that, Leonard. I am struggling.

Leonard: Let's start with your interactions with your team members. I have found that when I need to speak with an employee about a complex topic or an issue at work, it is best to have the conversation privately. Have you thought about moving your conversations to your office?

Alejandro: Hmm. That makes sense, so everyone isn't overhearing our conversations. Maybe if I sat down with my employees instead of standing in the production area, we could talk rather than yell at one another.

Leonard: I think that would be a great idea. Now, what about your quality statistics? Why are you failing your internal quality audits?

Alejandro: Honestly, I don't think our team members understand the quality policy and the metrics against which we are measured.

Leonard: I was in a similar situation at my last company. The production team members didn't understand the quality metrics. Have you considered inviting a member of the quality department to work on the afternoon shift for one week to retrain your team, measure quality metrics, and provide real-time feedback?

Alejandro: I didn't even know that was an option. I thought the quality team only worked on the day shift. That would be amazing, as I don't really have the time to retrain everyone. If we could receive real-time feedback, we could troubleshoot our quality issues on the spot.

Leonard: That is a great plan. You can oversee the corrections needed to get back on track. I am still concerned about the number of back issues on the afternoon shift.

Alejandro: I think everyone is trying so hard to fix our production issues they are rushing to fill the orders and ignoring safe work practices.

Leonard: It's common for employees to skip safety to save time. One time, I had a joint health and safety committee member review the workplace and make recommendations to address an issue with cuts to the hands. Is this something that might work for your afternoon shift, along with the concerns about ongoing back injuries?

Alejandro: I feel that our worktables are too low, and our boxes are too heavy for one person to lift. If I have a member of the safety committee come out for a safety review, perhaps they could do an ergonomic assessment and recommend some changes to our workspace and our processes.

Leonard: I like the idea of an ergonomic assessment. Lastly, how can we get our production numbers back on track to fill every customer order?
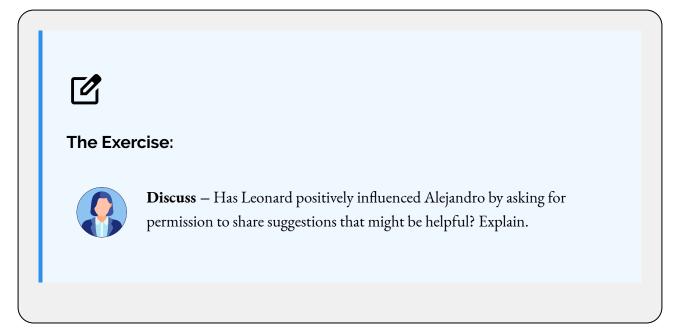
Alejandro: I think we need to hire one more production associate on the afternoon shift to keep up.

Leonard: I have been faced with similar staffing challenges in the past. Have you considered talking to Anna in the HR department to work together on a plan to address absenteeism while bringing in a temporary employee? At the same time, does your team catch up with the backorders?

Alejandro: A temporary hire would allow us to complete outstanding training and fill our backorders. However, if we can address our absenteeism issues, we won't need temporary staffing for long.

Leonard: It sounds like you have a great plan to address the concerns on the afternoon shift. Please let me know if I can help you with implementation. I will catch up with you at the end of the week to review your progress. Does that sound fair?

Alejandro: More than fair. Thanks for talking this through with me, Leonard. There is hope for the afternoon shift to get on track.

The Exercise:

Discuss – Has Leonard positively influenced Alejandro by asking for permission to share suggestions that might be helpful? Explain.

5.5 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You have learned the benefit of using influence to help co-workers solve workplace conflicts and problems. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read — the following case study. Create a script demonstrating your ability to resolve a workplace conflict by positively influencing the outcome.

The Company:

⊙   Albums by Allan Ltd.

The People:

Riley Atom (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Allan Reese (He/Him): Owner

The Scenario:

Allan owns Albums by Allan Ltd., a medium-sized recording studio. Over the past year, Riley (the Human Resources Manager) has received several resignation letters from the recording technicians at Albums by Allan. Riley always conducts an exit interview with each employee before they leave the company to determine what caused them to look elsewhere for work.

Riley has been surprised to learn that Allan hasn't provided his employees with immediate feedback when there is an issue with their performance. Instead, Allan conducts a performance review yearly and saves all of his input for twelve months. The employees are shocked to learn they have performance issues in the first place, and then they know their performance issues were identified up to twelve months ago. The recording technicians are frustrated and furious.

In addition, the recording technicians share that customers are calling them to ask what's up with Allan these days. Customers are apparently calling Allan, leaving voice messages, and never receiving a callback. Some customers have started sending Allan email requests to call them back, but Allan never reaches out to them. The customers have shared that they are considering moving their business to another recording studio if Allan can't act like a businessperson and return their calls.

Employee Observations and Customer Observations:

"I will move my business to another recording company if Allan can't take the time to return my call. I have some urgent business to discuss with him."

"Working for Allan is beyond frustrating. He has a problem with my work but didn't tell me about it for a year. Then, he sprung everything on me during my performance review. This was all news to me. I'm out of here!"

The Conversation:

You are playing the role of Riley, HR Manager at Albums by Allan. You need to sit down with Allan and use your influencing skills to assist Allan with promptly providing timely feedback to his employees and returning customer calls. Your script should be a minute long when you read it out loud. Good luck, you can do it!

> 📧 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=510#h5p-6*

✏️

The Exercise:

Discuss – Did you find it easy to influence Allan by asking for permission to share some helpful suggestions and then asking Allan how he might use them to improve communication with his employees and customers? Explain.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- It is essential to provide employees with a workplace that values differences in opinion but does not encourage negative conflict.
- Providing employees with clear policies, procedures and expectations helps minimize workplace conflict.
- Following through on unwanted behaviour, up to and including disciplinary action, reinforces that negative workplace conflict won't be tolerated.
- Influencing others does not have to involve power-based behaviour.
- Positive influence includes suggestions that are meant to assist the other person to solve their problem or resolve their conflict.
- Influence consists of asking permission from the other person to share your thoughts and ideas.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 5, take some time to reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Can you identify some of the proactive techniques to prevent negative workplace conflict?
2. Can you explain the benefits of a proactive approach to conflict?
3. In this module, have you applied positive influencing skills to a workplace conflict scenario?

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 5 Exercise 1
- Chapter 5 Exercise 2

CHAPTER 6: STRENGTHS FOR EFFECTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Chapter Overview

6.0 Learning Outcomes

6.1 Fanshawe HR Graduate on Conflict at Work

6.2 The Lesson: Strengths for Effective Conflict Resolution

6.3 Spotlight on Human Resources Skills

6.4 Case Study: Runners Relay Ltd.

6.5 Apply Your Knowledge

6.6 Chapter Summary

6.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

⭐ Learning Outcomes

- Explain the strengths necessary to address problem-solving and conflicts in the workplace.
- List the costs and risks to a business when workplace issues are not addressed on time.
- Demonstrate your timely problem-solving and conflict-resolution approach by applying this skill to a business scenario.

6.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

📄 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=615#oembed-1*

Video: "Jacob NavigatingHR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [4:48] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Jacob, HR Professional
How Does Conflict Occur?	Lack of communication and trust.
HR Skills Needed	Active listening skills and the ability to work with others. Solutions-focused mindset.
Key Takeaway	Communication helps to minimize the negative impact of workplace conflicts, and HR is all about solving problems. It's what we as HR professionals do best and the most important tool that I feel is

6.2 THE LESSON: STRENGTHS FOR EFFECTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In Chapter 5, we read about the benefits of a proactive approach to minimizing negative conflict at work. In Chapter 6, we will focus on the strengths that allow Human Resources professionals to solve problems and assist others in resolving workplace conflicts.

The Human Resources "Professional"

Image by PIRO4D, Pixabay License

In Human Resources, you are often called a "professional." You may be introduced to others as a Human Resources Professional. If you practice in Ontario, Canada, you might become a member of the Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA). You may attain your Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation.

What does it mean to be "professional"? According to Dale Atkins, being professional consists of four key elements. Watch the video and then discuss the four common key elements among professionals.

> 🖳 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=895#oembed-1*

Video: "Being A Professional: Dale Atkins at TEDxYouth@EHS" by TEDxYouth [11:15] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Chapter 6 Exercise 1

Discuss the four elements of professionalism. How would these four elements apply to problem-solving and conflict resolution in the workplace? Explain.

As Dale Atkins explains, the four elements that define a professional are knowing, doing, helping and learning. Let's explore each of these elements from a Human Resources perspective.

Knowing

You acquire knowledge, a lot of knowledge. You are often referred to as a subject matter expert (SME). While you will gather knowledge over time, it will also come from practice. Knowing is more than an awareness of a topic; it is understanding it. You can share this knowledge and experience with others and can use it to describe situations and solve challenges.

Example: In conflict resolution, a Human Resources professional knows and understands the Thomas-Kilmann approaches to conflict resolution.

Doing

Now that you have this knowledge and understanding of a topic, the next step is to apply it. In this phase, we take action and often lead by example. This application of our specialized knowledge helps the organization move forward by resolving complex problems and conflicts that can paralyze a company.

Example: In conflict resolution, a Human Resources professional learns the details of the problem and applies one of the Thomas-Kilmann solutions to resolve the issue promptly.

Helping

In this process of doing, you are helping others. You make a difference in this stage by improving the situation and solving problems. You not only help people, but you also help the organization.

Example: In conflict resolution, a Human Resources professional helps individuals by assessing their needs and applying a solution that minimizes or resolves the conflict.

Learning

This is where you commit to being a life-long learner. Your knowledge and skills may not help solve tomorrow's problems. The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) is a great example. Human Resources professionals must learn AI and understand how it can be used.

Example: In conflict resolution, a Human Resources professional takes courses and reads books to ensure they stay up-to-date.

Trust

As the Human Resources professional in your organization, employees and leaders will come to you for coaching and guidance on problem-solving and conflict resolution. Partially, this is based on your reputation as a subject matter expert. Partially, this is because of a foundation of trust and credibility that you have built over time.

Trust has surfaced as a significant predictor of job satisfaction, job performance, and organizational commitment (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Flaherty & Pappas, 2000). At an organizational level, trust is positively related to revenue and profit (Davis et al., 2000). Looking at a younger age group, interpersonal trust has been found to significantly influence prosocial behaviour among college students (Guo, 2017). Prosocial behaviour is actions that intend to help another person or group, such as volunteering or helping (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). This means that college students with more harmonious and trusting interpersonal relationships are more likely to engage in behaviour such as assisting someone who needs help, sharing their knowledge/resources, or working with others to achieve a shared goal. While trust is widely regarded as a critical component of healthy interpersonal relationships, the concept of "trust" can be difficult to define and describe.

Interpersonal trust "encompasses one's willingness to accept vulnerability based on the expectation regarding the behaviour of another party that will produce some positive outcome in the future" (Krueger & Meyer-Lindenberg, 2019, p. 92). In simpler language, trust is "choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person's actions" (Feltman, 2011, p. 7). For example, trusting that another member in a group project will fulfill their portion of the assignment by the deadline.

Distrust, on the other hand, is defined as the belief that "what is important to me is not safe with this person in this situation (or any situation)" (Feltman, 2011, p. 8). When we're with someone we trust, we feel safe and able to be open. On the contrary, when we're with someone we have not built trust with, we might need to protect ourselves.

The emotions connected to trust are care, open-handedness, and curiosity, while the feelings related to distrust are resignation, bitterness, and fear. When experiencing trust, we are prone to cooperation and collaboration, open communication, supporting others, thinking critically about our behaviours, and expecting the best from people and situations. When experiencing distrust, we are likely to be defensive, blame and shame others, judge ourselves and others, withhold information, and expect the worst from people and situations.

Building Trust

Feltman (2011) shares a model in which the choice to trust comprises four distinct aspects of how a person might act (see Figure 6.2.1). The four aspects are as follows:

- *Sincerity*—the assessment that a person is honest, they are true to their word and their word is true, and their opinions are valid and supported by evidence (e.g., a manager outlines the three largest obstacles facing a group and shares a two-part strategy grounded in research for overcoming them).
- *Reliability*—the assessment of how well a person keeps commitments (e.g., a friend says they'll reach out to you in a week to schedule a time to get together, and they do).
- *Competence*—the assessment that a person has the required skills, knowledge, and resources to do what they are supposed to do (e.g., a social media chairperson for a campus organization knows how to build a social media plan).
- *Care*—the assessment of how much a person is concerned with the interests of others as opposed to being exclusively motivated by self-interest (e.g., a friend tells you about the opportunity to apply for a competitive scholarship for which they are also applying).
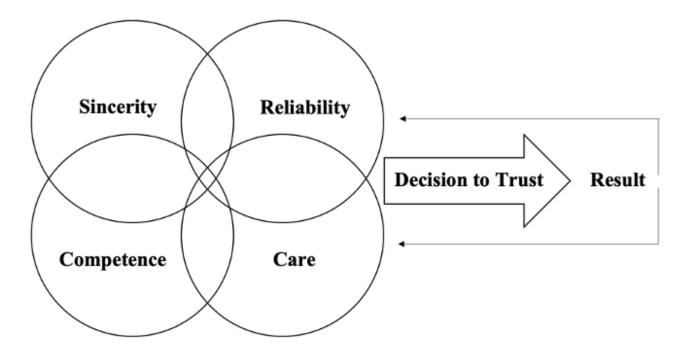
Figure 6.2.1 "Model of Trust" Adapted from Feltman (2011)

Image Description

A Venn diagram with four overlapping circles labelled Sincerity, Reliability, Competence, and Care. These qualities are interconnected and collectively lead to the "Decision to Trust." An arrow extends from this decision to the final outcome, which is labelled Result. The diagram implies that trust is built through a combination of these four elements, leading to a positive result once the decision to trust is made.

Building Trust in Teams

Thoughts on building trust at work typically center on the manager-employee relationship. Still, it is also important to consider fostering trust among team members, as trust is the foundation for all relationships within a project. Without a minimum level of trust, communication breaks down, and the project suffers.

A recent survey published in the Harvard Business Review by Ron Friedman (2024) identified the following five key behaviours of high-performing teams:

1. High-Performing Teams Don't Leave Collaboration to Chance. They discuss how they will work together first.
2. High-Performing Teams Keep Colleagues in the Loop. A culture of inclusion is created.
3. High-Performing Teams Share Credit. Share recognition for the success of the project.

4. High-Performing Teams Believe Disagreements Make Them Better.
5. High-Performing Teams Proactively Address Tension.

Trust develops naturally through behaviours shared by all team members, enabling everyone to bring their best to the team.

Strengths You Can Rely On

The Human Resources professional's tool chest contains several strengths. These strengths include helping employees and people leaders with problems and workplace conflict resolution.

Tact

The Human Resources professional should know what to say to maintain the relationship and keep the conversation alive.

Example: "I know the past week has been difficult for you. I don't want to minimize the impact on you and your family."

Diplomacy

The Human Resources professional should be sensitive to the perspective of the person you are interacting with to ensure an effective outcome.

Example: "I understand how important this is to you based on your cultural background. We will find a solution that satisfies your beliefs and needs."

Confidentiality

Human Resources professionals should protect sensitive information to build trust with everyone involved.

Example: "I appreciate your honesty, and I assure you this information will remain confidential."

Flexibility

The Human Resources professional should recognize the need to be flexible and change as the situation changes.

Example: "Based on this latest update, let's revisit our notes from our earlier brainstorming session and agree on a new path forward."

Ethical

Human Resources professionals should conduct themselves in a moral and legally compliant manner.

Example: "I want to ensure we do the right thing based on our company policies and the legislation regarding harassment in the workplace."

Impartiality

The Human Resources professional should focus on the people and the facts. There is no room to insert your thoughts and opinions; you should avoid personal bias.

Example: "Now that we have heard everyone's needs in this matter, what do you think we should do moving forward?"

6.3 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

A Timely Approach

As a Human Resources professional responsible for helping others solve problems and resolve conflicts, acting promptly is essential. Once you learn of a negative workplace conflict, time is of the essence. Let's learn about the positive impact of a timely solution to a conflict scenario. It is essential to consider what might happen if we fail to address problems and conflicts.

Image by Adrien Robert, Unsplash License

Escalation

What might start as a minor conflict between two employees can quickly grow, and suddenly, six employees are involved. Human Resources professionals must deal with a known problem or conflict promptly to avoid a small problem becoming a big problem.

Recollection

As a Human Resources professional, you will conduct numerous employee meetings to gather information about a specific incident's facts and details. If you allow time to pass, individuals may forget important details. You want to gather information from the parties involved and potential witnesses promptly to protect the integrity of the case.

Productivity

Individuals involved in a workplace conflict spend a lot of time thinking about and talking about it, often decreasing their own productivity. In addition, other employees who learn about the conflict spend time discussing the situation, which also impacts their productivity. The sooner you can address the conflict, the greater the chance of minimizing the loss of productivity.

Costs

Conflict comes with a cost, including counselling services and legal fees. In addition, it can be challenging to quantify the loss of productivity. Direct costs, such as lawyer fees, and indirect costs, such as morale, can increase quickly. Addressing conflict quickly can reduce these organizational costs.

Risk

Organizations are risk-averse. They want to hire subject matter experts in quality, finance and human resources to mitigate their risk exposure. As a

Figure 6.3.1 "Reasons to Address Conflict in a Timely Manner" by Connie Palmer, CC BY-NC-SA

Human Resources professional, you should solve problems and resolve workplace conflict as quickly as possible to avoid exposure to a potential lawsuit.

Image Description

The image is an infographic titled "5 Reasons to Address Conflict in a Timely Manner." It uses a bright blue background with white text and includes colourful icons related to each reason.

The infographic is divided into five sections:

1. Escalation: Depicted with an explosion icon. This section explains that addressing conflict promptly helps prevent it from becoming more significant.
2. Recollection: Illustrated with a brain icon. It mentions that if too much time passes, those involved in the conflict may forget important details, making resolution more difficult.
3. Productivity: Accompanied by a graph icon showing a downward trend. It suggests that unresolved workplace conflict leads to employees spending time discussing the issue instead of working, reducing overall productivity.
4. Cost: This section is displayed with a calculator and pencil icon. It highlights how failing to address conflicts in time can lead to both direct costs, like lost productivity, and indirect costs, such as decreased morale.
5. Risk: Represented by a warning sign icon. It points out the dangers of ignoring conflict, including the potential for legal issues if the dispute escalates into violence.

Chapter 6, Exercise 2

SCENARIO

John's Grocery Emporium is the largest grocery store in the area. Lately, six meat department employees have been skipping the end-of-day cleaning procedures so they can get out of work early. They skip cleaning the meat-slicing equipment, mopping the floors, and filling out the end-of-day checklist.

LIST

Review the five areas of concern for promptly failing to address a workplace problem. Based on the situation at John's Grocery Emporium, list three areas of concern if Human Resources and the management team do not immediately address the failure to follow the end-of-day cleaning procedures.

6.4 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

Now that we understand the importance of responding to conflict in the workplace on time let's use script writing and role-playing to resolve a workplace conflict at Runners Relay.

The Scenario: A Focus on Influence

The Company:

Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Andres Casso (He/Him): Office Manager

Harmon Patel (He/Him): Health and Safety Representative

The Scenario:

As the Office Manager, Andres is ultimately responsible for his team's training. Six months ago, Andres ran a training report and realized that some office staff were behind in mandatory harassment in workplace safety training. Andres was going to say something to Harmon, the Health and Safety Representative, but things have been so busy at work. Approximately six months ago, Andres was asked to take on the responsibility of handling a customer event at the Runners Relay.

Rumour has it that Andres has been talking behind Harmon's back, telling others he can't rely on Harmon. Harmon is tired of the rumours and the stress. Four months ago, Harmon e-mailed Andres asking permission to outsource three of the upcoming training sessions as it is hard for one person to keep up with training. Harmon is still waiting to hear back from Andres.

Tension is high right now. On top of everything, the Ministry of Labour has received an anonymous complaint about the lack of safety training at the Runners Relay, and there is a possibility of legal ramifications from the government.

Andres is so angry he decides he can't wait any longer. Andres decides to talk to Harmon today without checking with Anna in Human Resources.

Employee Observations:

"The argument in the office today was heated. I felt very uncomfortable listening to Harmon and Andres yelling at one another."

"I don't know what is going on around here anymore. I haven't received any safety training in the past year. Even I know that I am supposed to receive training on harassment in the workplace."

The First Conversation:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=622#h5p-25

Andres: Harmon, we need to talk in my office.

Harmon: Let's go, I'm ready!

Andres: I don't even know where to begin.

Harmon: Why don't you begin with what you have been saying behind my back?

Andres: We're here to talk about your training sessions or lack thereof. I ran a report and discovered that the office staff hadn't been trained on harassment in the workplace.

Harmon: What? I am pretty sure they are up-to-date with all of their training. Did you run this report today?

Andres: No, it was six months ago?

Harmon: You ran a report six months ago, and are you coming to see me about it today? What's up with that?

Andres: I've been busy.

Harmon: Have you been busy? I sent you an email four months ago asking to outsource three training sessions, and you haven't even acknowledged my message, let alone responded to me. I'm not impressed.

Andres: You're not impressed? The Ministry of Labour received an anonymous complaint about the lack of training around here. We might be in a lot of trouble legally.

Harmon: Well, this isn't going to fall on me. You've known about a training issue for six months, said nothing, and sat on a request for help with training for four months. Why can't you address issues as they arise? This is ridiculous!

The Exercise:

Identify – any concerns regarding the way in which Andres handled his training concerns at Runners Relay.

Write – down at least two suggestions that would help Andres address issues promptly.

Next Steps

You will assume the role of Anna, the Human Resources professional at Runners Relay. Anna has heard about the unproductive meeting between Andres and Harmon. Anna will meet with Andres today to discuss the importance of timeliness when addressing problems at work.

Coaching Notes:

During your meeting with Andres, you are going to remind him of the following:

- Failing to deal with problems or conflicts promptly could result in the matter becoming bigger.

- Your organization could face increased legal risk if your management team doesn't deal with issues as they arise.

- Failing to address problems and conflicts quickly can negatively impact productivity as others spend time discussing the issues instead of working.

- When workplace issues aren't addressed promptly, individuals forget details, impacting their ability to solve the problem or conduct an investigation.

- Significant costs are associated with problems and conflicts that aren't addressed quickly.

The Recommended Conversation:

Following his coaching session with Anna, Andres will meet with Harmon to address the training issues at Runners Relay.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=622#h5p-24

Andres: Harmon, can we sit down and talk about the safety training program?

Harmon: I ran an updated training report and needed to talk to you.

Andres: Okay, what did you find in your report?

Harmon: The manufacturing team is completely up-to-date with their training, but some office staff didn't receive the harassment in the workplace training I delivered in the second quarter of the year.

Andres: I have to take some responsibility for that, Harmon. I ran a training report six months ago and realized there were individuals in the office who didn't receive the training. I was so busy planning the customer event that I didn't talk to you about it. I apologize.

Harmon: Wow, I didn't realize the office staff had not received the training. I've been having a hard time keeping up with training lately, so I sent you an email four months ago asking for help.

Andres: I have no excuse. I read your email, and I didn't even respond to you. I just received a notice that the Ministry of Labour has received an anonymous complaint about

the lack of safety training, and they are going to visit here on Monday to review our records.

Harmon: Oh boy, we are in serious trouble.

Andres: Let's hope they will give us a week to complete the missed training. In the meantime, we will need to devise a plan to address your concerns and review training regularly.

Harmon: I agree; I feel like I'm on an island.

Andres: Every Friday morning, please stop by my office at 9 am, and we will review the training records. In the meantime, please develop a detailed proposal for a third-party training consultant.

Harmon: Thanks, Andres. I will see you on Friday morning.

The Exercise:

Discuss – In this second discussion, has Andres acknowledged his failure to address issues as they arise? Does Andres's plan for moving forward address these concerns? Explain.

6.5 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You have learned the benefit of addressing issues promptly. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read – the following Case Study and create a script that demonstrates your ability to resolve a workplace issue in a timely manner.

The Company:

 Financial Security Toronto Ltd.

The People:

Regis Toms (He/Him): Human Resources Manager

Taylor Cruz (They/Them): Chief Financial Officer

The Scenario:

The team at Financial Security Toronto is growing so fast that they can't hire staff fast enough to keep up with customer demand. The company plans to expand and open an office in Vancouver.

Taylor, the CFO, is on a business trip to Vancouver to meet with potential customers and won't be back in the office for one week.

Regis, the HR Manager, has learned that Taylor plans to interview two financial advisors in Vancouver and hire them immediately without consulting Regis. In addition, Taylor is sending expense reports to payroll for reimbursement but failing to attach receipts. This is highly unusual behaviour for a CFO who should know better.

Employee Observations and Customer Observations:

"I can't believe we are expanding to Vancouver. Taylor doesn't even have a business plan for the new Vancouver office."

"Normally, we form a team to interview potential new hires. Taylor is out west interviewing anyone and everyone."

The Conversation:

This conversation is between Regis and Taylor. You are playing the role of Regis and leading the discussion with Taylor. Don't forget to focus on a timely solution to the business problems presented in this case. Your script should be at least one minute long when you read it out loud.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=624#h5p-10

The Exercise:

Discuss – Did you reach Taylor in Vancouver or wait for Taylor to return to Toronto to discuss your concerns? Explain your approach.

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Focusing on strengths such as tact, diplomacy, and confidentiality will assist a Human Resources professional when dealing with workplace conflict.
- You don't want to allow a workplace issue to grow into an even bigger problem.
- If you need to conduct a workplace investigation, you want to do so as soon as possible to ensure everyone, including witnesses, can recall the details of the matter.
- Consider the loss of productivity as employees spend time talking about workplace conflicts.
- There is an indirect cost to workplace conflict, such as the morale of your employees.
- Direct costs to the business may include productivity and turnover.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 6 reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Can you list the strengths necessary to address problem-solving and conflicts in the workplace?
2. Can you explain the costs and risks to a business when workplace issues are not addressed in a timely manner?
3. By applying this skill to a business scenario, can you demonstrate your timely problem-solving and conflict-resolution approach?

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 6 Exercise 1

CHAPTER 7: GENERATIONAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Chapter Overview

7.0 Learning Outcomes

7.1 Fanshawe HR Graduate on Conflict at Work

7.2 The Lesson: Generational and Cultural Dimensions

7.3 Spotlight on Human Resources Skills

7.4 Case Study: Runners Relay Ltd.

7.5 Apply Your Knowledge

7.6 Chapter Summary

7.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

★ Learning Outcomes

- Explain how generational and cultural differences influence workplace dynamics.
- Define impartiality and its place in conflict resolution for the HR professional.
- Demonstrate impartiality in conflict resolution by applying this skill to a workplace scenario.

7.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=765#oembed-1

Video: "Manya Sharma NavigatingHR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [4:32] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Manya Sharma, HR Generalist
Company	Public Service Organization
How Does Conflict Occur?	Conflict can occur due to poor communication, management styles, differences in work styles, change in the workplace (if not managed properly), unclear job responsibilities, personal stress, and resource constraints.
HR Skills Needed	Active listening builds trust, empathy, and communication through paraphrasing. Problem-solving skills are also valuable.
The Goal of Conflict Resolution	It helps to understand the issues that cause conflict. Acting as a neutral mediator helps bring both parties together to find a mutually beneficial solution.

7.2 THE LESSON: GENERATIONAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

In Chapter 6, we studied the strengths needed for a Human Resources professional to solve problems effectively and resolve conflict at work. In Chapter 7, we will focus on the impact of generational and cultural dimensions in the workplace.

Generational Dimensions

Most workplaces consist of employees from more than one generation. As a Human Resources professional, you will notice that a workplace conflict will arise between employees of differing generations from time to time. Is the difference in their age the reason for this workplace conflict? Sometimes, the answer to this question is yes. Not every generation sees things the same way. Some employees in your workplace didn't grow up with technology. These same individuals might be working on a project with individuals who have used technology their entire lives. As you read about the five generations outlined below, reflect on how each generation might approach meetings, project work, communication, and technology.

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Think about your most recent family gathering. Were your grandparents there? Maybe your parents, nieces, or uncles? What did conversations around the dinner table sound like? Sometimes, family reunions are accompanied by a lot of drama and differing opinions. While some differences may be caused by opposing beliefs, other differences may be something a little less obvious. Generational differences can include lifestyle differences, motivational differences, etc. Although you may view these differences as quirky things your Aunt Aesha or Grandma Bimala say or do, there may actually be reasons they act a certain way. Understanding generational differences may help to shed some light on why your family acts the way they do. More importantly, learning about generational differences may provide helpful insight into how your coworkers

operate. This can be extremely beneficial in creating healthy working relationships and developing a stronger team.

There are three generations who are primarily active in today's workforce: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y—with Generation Z just beginning to enter the workforce. Let's break down each one and examine some similarities and differences! Keep in mind that these are generalizations, and there are exceptions for each generation.

- *Baby Boomers:* born between 1946 and 1964. Baby Boomers have been working the longest and have extensive knowledge and experience. They want and oftentimes expect others to value their input and opinions. Baby Boomers believe that hard work equates to long hours and that integrity in the workforce should be a top priority. They are known to "live to work" and place extreme value on career advancement and promotion. They enjoy working in a team environment and are said to have created a meeting culture.

- *Generation X:* born between 1965 and 1981. Generation X has been through a roller-coaster of economic events. Downturns and upswings have impacted their career choices, career successes, and career futures. Unlike the Baby Boomers, Generation X has a more "work to live" mentality and values their life outside of the workplace. While they have a good work ethic, their work-life balance is of the highest importance to them.

- *Generation Y:* born between 1982 and 1997. Generation Y, also known as Millennials, are the youngest members of the current workforce. Generation Y typically grew up with two working parents and a to-do list constantly on display throughout their childhood. Because of this, Generation Y has the ability to multitask and also values work-life balance. However, differently from Generation X, Generation Y believes they need to accomplish things on their to-do list in order to enjoy their free time. Therefore, Generation Y tends to be very goal-oriented and efficient.

- *Generation Z:* born between 1997 and 2009. Generation Z has never known a world before technology. They have grown up in an "always on" world where technology is readily available and used on a regular basis. Technology has been utilized as a babysitter by many parents of this generation, and it is also present in the classroom. This constant access to technology makes Generation Z extremely tech savvy but has also changed behaviour and lifestyle. Whether or not these behavioural and lifestyle changes will carry on into their adulthood is yet to be determined. Generation Z is starting to enter the workforce, with the oldest members turning 23 years old in 2020.

- *Generation Alpha:* born between 2010 and 2024. In the article " 'Bye-bye baby' (boomers) and hello Generation Alpha" by Gearalt Fahy (2024), Generation Alpha is described as independent, tech-savvy individuals who are willing to work remotely, partially because of their educational experience during the pandemic. Generation Alpha has global awareness and is a climate advocate. Regarding workplace expectations, Generation Alpha is passionate about representation and inclusivity, as they appreciate and accept differing perspectives. Finally, Generation Alpha value a business that demonstrates sincerity

as they value authenticity (Fahy, 2024).

- **Generation Beta:** born between 2025 and 2039. According to the article "What to Expect from Generation Beta: Personalities Built for a Changing World" by Celina Lozano (2025), Generation Beta is likely to demonstrate empathy when they are solving problems as the world they live in emphasizes the importance of social responsibility and mental health. Generation Beta will most likely be hyper-adaptive as they are growing up in a world that is ever-changing due to AI. Generation Beta is likely to demonstrate a deep level of curiosity and ask the question "why" as they are used to having answers available to them due to their use of technology (Lozano, 2025).

It is important to note that date ranges associated with the various "Generations" may vary depending on which resource you are accessing.

Chapter 7 Exercise 1

Identify the number of generations in your place of work or in your classroom. Do these generations interact with one another? Do you see any difference in the way these generations utilize technology? Explain.

Cultural Dimensions

Similar to our earlier look at generations dimensions, Human Resources professionals need to be aware of the ways in which cultural dimensions influence an employee's approach to work and their interactions with one another. As you read about the dimensions of culture, pay particular attention to the varying ways individuals view time, space, goals and achievements.

Culture affects the workplace because it affects what we do and how we behave. Cultural variations influence our values, which in turn affect attitudes and, ultimately, behaviours. For instance, a culture that is characterized by hard work would exhibit a value or ethic of hard work. This work ethic would be reflected in positive attitudes toward work and the workplace; people would feel that hard work is satisfying and beneficial—they might feel

"Cultural currents" by John B Fotografía, Public Domain

committed to their employer, and they might feel shame if they do not work long hours. This, in turn, would lead to actual high levels of work. This behaviour, then, would serve to reinforce the culture and its value, and so on.

Dimensions of Culture

There are several ways to distinguish different cultures from one another. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) have identified six dimensions that are helpful in understanding such differences. These are as follows:

1. How people view humanity. Are people basically good, or are they evil? Can most people be trusted or not? Are most people honest? What is the true nature of humankind?
2. How people see nature. What is the proper relationship between people and the environment? Should people be in harmony with nature, or should they attempt to control or harness nature?
3. How people approach interpersonal relationships. Should one stress individualism or membership in a group? Is the person more or less important than the group? What is the "pecking order" in a society? Is it based on seniority or on wealth and power?
4. How people view activity and achievement. Which is a more worthy goal: activity (getting somewhere) or simply being (staying where one is)?
5. How people view time. Should one focus on the past, the present, or the future? Some cultures are said

to be living in the past, whereas others are looking to the future.

6. How people view space. How should physical space be used in our lives? Should we live communally or separately? Should important people be physically separated from others? Should important meetings be held privately or in public?

Chapter 7 Exercise 2

To minimize workplace conflict, discuss how a Human Resources professional might help individuals of differing cultural backgrounds to better understand one another and to help employees respect and value the differences each culture brings to the workplace.

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"2.7 Cultural Differences" from Organizational Behavior by OpenStax – Rice University is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

7.3 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

An Impartial Approach

As a Human Resources professional, remaining impartial is essential in problem-solving and conflict management. When employees share their concerns and describe their conflicts, it is only human to form your own opinions. While a Human Resources professional is a coach, you are not a parent or a good friend, so it is inappropriate to share your thoughts on the matter. You are to remain impartial. So, how do we ensure impartiality? Let's examine how you can focus on the topic, stay objective, and ensure impartiality.

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What Does it Mean to be Impartial?

To be impartial in a workplace conflict, you will guide the employees involved toward resolution without imparting your opinions and biases. As a Human Resources professional, you want to avoid assumptions about people, stereotypes and making judgments. It is essential to ensure that you do not have a personal or professional stake in the situation's outcome.

Avoid Assigning Blame or Taking Sides

Employees will share their side of the story in a workplace conflict. This is your opportunity to ask probing questions to help uncover what is at the heart of the matter.

An example of a probing question might be, "I understand you don't want to work with Manuel on this project. Can you tell me what made you feel this way?"

Conscious and Unconscious Bias

Everyone has bias. In Human Resources, it is important to acknowledge your conscious bias and try to uncover your unconscious bias. Whether you are interviewing job candidates, problem-solving, or resolving a workplace conflict, your bias may impact your approach and the outcome of the situation. Let's learn more about conscious and unconscious bias.

Conscious Bias

Conscious bias means we are aware of our own bias. For example, you might be a volunteer at the local food bank, and you learn that a job candidate also does volunteer work. You are aware of your bias for individuals who do volunteer work, so you have to focus closely on the candidates' experience and education.

Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias means we act without awareness of our prejudice. For example, you are interviewing for three new positions in the warehouse department. When the interviews are complete, and your new hires start work in the warehouse, one of your co-workers says, "Wow, everyone speaks Spanish." For the first time, you realize you may have an unconscious bias toward Spanish-speaking people as this is your heritage.

Avoid Assumptions

It is easy to approach a problem or conflict with assumptions. As a Human Resources professional, you will get to know your co-workers, including their personalities, work ethic, preferences, and habits. You might assume that because you have worked with someone for a long time, you understand how they think. When we assume we know the reason for a conflict because we know the individuals involved, we fail to ask probing questions and uncover the real reason for the disagreement.

An example: Two employees are involved in a workplace conflict, Elise and Ricardo. Elise is Ricardo's supervisor. You have met with Ricardo on two earlier occasions regarding their attendance issues. When

you hear about the latest conflict between Ricardo and Elise, you automatically assume the conflict is about Ricardo's ongoing attendance issues. Upon further investigation, you find Ricardo has been going through a divorce and is struggling at work. You realize your assumption was wrong.

Focus on the Facts

As you guide employees through a problem or workplace conflict, it is important to focus on the people and their emotions. An employee may be extremely angry, and their voice is raised. Often the loudest person in the room gets the most attention. As a Human Resources professional, you need to remind yourself to focus on the facts. It is easy to be distracted by the loudest person in the room, but you need to uncover the root cause of the conflict and address the facts.

Create a Consistent Approach

You are going to deal with workplace conflict regularly. As we mentioned in Chapter 1, it comes with the territory when you work in Human Resources. Establishing a consistent approach to conflict resolution helps you to remain objective. This might involve creating a standardized form for interviewing the parties involved in a workplace conflict. This document is similar to a safety investigation form and allows you to record the date, time, employee names, witness names, and the details of the disagreement. A standardized set of questions will keep you on track and signal to your employees that you are always consistent in your approach to conflict resolution.

Don't be the Judge, be the Coach

You will be the final decision-maker on several topics while working in human resources. What goes into a new workplace policy, what is the content of your new employee orientation program, and which employee assistance provider should you hire?

When it comes to problem-solving and workplace conflict, you should see yourself as a facilitator or coach who provides the parties with the opportunity to resolve their own conflict. You will demonstrate empathy and ask probing questions that uncover the real issue from each person's perspective. At times, you will help translate or clarify what each person is saying so the other person can understand it. Being a coach is the best way to introduce conflict-resolution skills to employees.

Helpful Phrases

They say practice makes perfect. It becomes easier over time when you practice having a neutral mindset as

you listen to employees describe a workplace conflict. Rather than saying, "You are right" or "You are wrong", create a list of phrases that allow you to maintain your neutral stance.

Examples of Helpful Phrases

- It sounds like you want to...
- From your perspective, ...
- If I understand you correctly, ...
- Let me know what you want to see happen next.
- Can you explain why you feel this way?

7.4 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

Now that we understand the importance of being impartial when resolving workplace conflicts, let's utilize script writing and role-playing to resolve a workplace conflict at Runners Relay.

The Scenario: A Focus on Impartiality

The Company:

Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Helga Dietz (She/Her): Day Shift Supervisor

Leonard Swartz (He/Him): Operations Manager

The Scenario:

Production levels at Runners Relay continue to grow. Helga, the day shift supervisor, has interviewed four candidates and approved hiring two new production associates on the day shift.
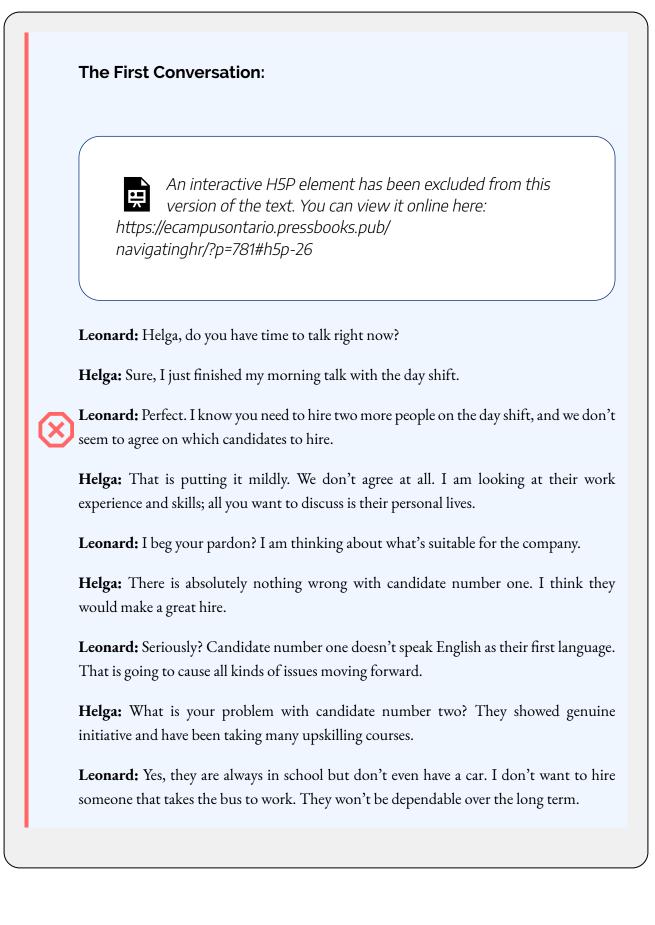
Helga has been interviewing with Leonard Swartz, the Operations Manager at Runners Relay. It has been four weeks since Leonard and Helga completed the job interviews. Helga and Leonard are fighting over which candidates to hire. They were overheard yelling at one another in Leonard's office. This conflict is impacting the entire team on the day shift.

For the first job candidate, English is not their first language. The second job candidate told Leonard and Helga they didn't have a car, so they would take the bus to work. The third job candidate revealed they are single parents with three small children. The fourth candidate is twice as old as the other job candidates. Leonard has an issue with all four candidates and disagrees with Helga's assessment of the candidates. Today, Leonard will sit down with Helga and explain his concerns to her one last time as she isn't getting the picture.

Employee Observations:

"We need help on the day shift, but this will likely take months as Leonard and Helga never agree on anything."

"I wish Leonard would keep his thoughts to himself. I don't think he should be speaking so harshly about the job candidates. It isn't very comfortable. He is supposed to be our leader."

The First Conversation:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=781#h5p-26

Leonard: Helga, do you have time to talk right now?

Helga: Sure, I just finished my morning talk with the day shift.

Leonard: Perfect. I know you need to hire two more people on the day shift, and we don't seem to agree on which candidates to hire.

Helga: That is putting it mildly. We don't agree at all. I am looking at their work experience and skills; all you want to discuss is their personal lives.

Leonard: I beg your pardon? I am thinking about what's suitable for the company.

Helga: There is absolutely nothing wrong with candidate number one. I think they would make a great hire.

Leonard: Seriously? Candidate number one doesn't speak English as their first language. That is going to cause all kinds of issues moving forward.

Helga: What is your problem with candidate number two? They showed genuine initiative and have been taking many upskilling courses.

Leonard: Yes, they are always in school but don't even have a car. I don't want to hire someone that takes the bus to work. They won't be dependable over the long term.

Helga: You are impossible. What about candidate number three? They seem driven and passionate about working here.

Leonard: Of course, they are passionate about working here. They have three kids, and they are single parents. They need our benefit plan for their kids. They will always miss work for doctor's and dentist's appointments.

Helga: That is ridiculous. What is your issue with candidate number four?

Leonard: You have to be kidding. They are at least twice the age of the other candidates. They won't be able to keep up with the pace of the day shift.

Helga: I can't believe this. You are so old-fashioned in your thinking. We are never going to find someone that you like.

Leonard: Well, it's better to be honest now than hire the wrong person and have to deal with their issues.

Helga: That's it. I am going back to work. Let me know when you find someone that you approve of.

The Exercise:

Identify – any concerns about how Leonard handled his hiring concerns at Runners Relay.

Write – down at least two suggestions to help Leonard decide on the best candidates for the job.

Next Steps

- You will assume the role of Anna, the Human Resources professional at Runners Relay. Anna has heard about Helga's disagreement with Leonard. This morning, Anna will meet with Leonard to discuss the importance of impartiality when addressing conflicts at work.

Coaching Notes:

During your meeting with Leonard, you are going to remind him of the following:

- Demonstrating impartiality at work is extremely important to make decisions that are based on facts.
- It is essential to be aware of your personal bias and ensure it doesn't cloud your judgement.
- Your colleagues aren't interested in your personal opinion.
- Treating others fairly and impartially is part of being a business professional.
- Impartiality will allow you to demonstrate empathy and understanding.
- If you are willing to say negative things about others, colleagues will question what you say about them behind their back.
- Building a culture of trust relies on people leaders who professionally conduct themselves.

The Recommended Conversation:

Following his coaching session with Anna, Leonard will meet with Helga to resolve their disagreement and focus on hiring the right people for the day shift at Runners Relay.

📇 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=781#h5p-27

Leonard: Helga, I wonder if you'd be free to sit down and discuss the recent interviews for the day shift.

Helga: I have pretty much given up on that topic. We keep going around in circles.

Leonard: I realize that I have been close-minded, and I need to start listening to you. Can we review the candidates again?

Helga: This is the last time. Otherwise, find someone else to interview with, Leonard.

Leonard: Okay, tell me about your thoughts on candidate number one.

Helga: Candidate number one has relevant job experience in manufacturing, and they are a trained quality auditor. I know you were concerned about their language.

Leonard: I realize I had no issue understanding them during the interview, and they had no problem understanding us. We really could use a quality auditor on the day shift. I will put candidate number one in the "yes" column.

Helga: That's amazing. I couldn't agree more.

Leonard: Okay, what about candidate number two?

Helga: Candidate number two has been upskilling by taking online courses. They don't have much experience in manufacturing, but they have initiative. They mentioned they take the bus to work as they don't have a car. You seemed concerned about hiring a person without a car.

Leonard: That was unfair. Just because a person takes the bus doesn't mean they can't be a great employee. I shouldn't have said that. I was impressed by their upskilling.

Helga: Okay, let's put candidate number two on the "maybe" list.

Leonard: What are your thoughts on candidate number three?

Helga: Candidate number three seemed to have done their company research and wanted to work for Runners Relay. They told us they are single parents, and that seemed to concern you.
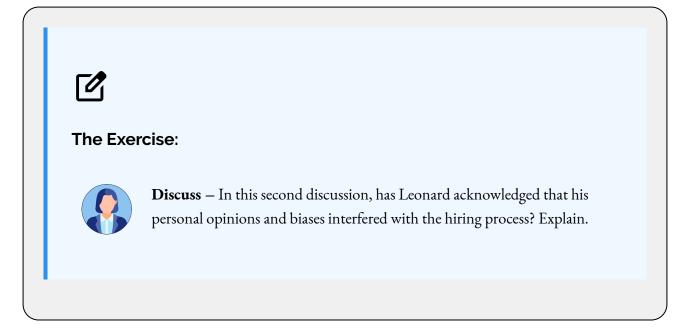
Leonard: That was unfair of me to assume a single parent wouldn't do a great job. I was impressed with their answers to our questions; they seem to understand the demands of a manufacturing facility. Do we place them on the "maybe" list?

Helga: Absolutely. Finally, candidate number four. I was very impressed with their work experience. They held roles in warehousing and manufacturing. I realize they weren't as young as the other candidates, but I could see them being promoted to a lead-hand role someday.

Leonard: I need to apologize for my comments on age. They were by far the most knowledgeable about the needs of a fast-paced production line. They would fit in with our culture and possibly train new hires. I think they move to the "yes" list.

Helga: I can't believe it! Candidates number one and number four are on the "yes" list. We can ask Anna in Human Resources to contact them and present our offer letter.

Leonard: Thanks for your input, Helga. You were right all along. I need to focus on the skills and abilities of job candidates going forward.

The Exercise:

Discuss – In this second discussion, has Leonard acknowledged that his personal opinions and biases interfered with the hiring process? Explain.

7.5 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You have learned the importance of impartiality in your role. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read – the following case study. Create a script demonstrating your ability to resolve a workplace issue by demonstrating impartiality.

The Company:

The Company: Designs by Juan

The People:

Juan Paulo (They/Them) Owner/Designer

Missy Thompson (She/Her) Seamstress

The Scenario:

Juan designs formal wear and relies heavily on the talent of their seamstress, Missy. Missy has been leaving early every day to pick up her children from daycare. Juan doesn't understand why Missy can't have someone else pick up her children daily. In the mornings, Missy is often 20 minutes late for work as she has to drop her partner off at work. Juan can't understand why this couple doesn't buy a second vehicle to avoid this issue. During the day, Juan often catches Missy on her cell phone, talking or texting her partner. Juan wishes everyone would wait until lunchtime to check their cell phone messages.

Not much work is being done, and Juan is beyond upset by all of this nonsense. It is always Missy's children, her partner or the cell phone. Juan is tired of babysitting Missy and can't stand all of the interruptions during the workday.

Juan needs to meet with Missy and resolve the late arrivals to work, the constant phone interruptions throughout the day, and the leaving early concern. The focus needs to be on the job.

Employee Observations and Customer Observations:

"I called to see if my dress was ready, and Juan told me they would need another week. I need that dress for this weekend! This is the last time I order a dress from Juan."

"I was going to have Juan design an outfit for my wedding anniversary, but I hear they never deliver on time."

The Conversation:

This conversation is between Juan and Missy. You are playing the role of Juan and leading the conversation with Missy. Don't forget to focus on impartiality in your discussion with Missy despite your feelings about her constant family issues and disruptions. Your script should be at least one minute long when you read it out loud.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:* https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=801#h5p-11

The Exercise:

Discuss — Were you able to address Missy's performance issues without mentioning your personal thoughts on Missy's family? What did you focus on to ensure your personal bias didn't come into play during your discussion with Missy?

7.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Generational awareness allows an HR professional to understand each generation's expectations and frustrations as they interact with others in the workplace.
- Generational awareness allows HR professionals to be proactive and design project work, teams, policies and communication with each generation in mind.
- Cultural awareness highlights the various ways individuals of different cultural backgrounds approach work.
- Cultural awareness uncovers the many ways in which individuals view time, space and achievement at work.
- Impartiality is a skill that allows the HR professional to demonstrate fairness.
- HR professionals who practice impartiality build trust, encouraging employees to feel safe.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 7, reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Can you explain how differing generations and cultures influence workplace dynamics?
2. Are you able to define impartiality and its place in conflict resolution for the HR professional?
3. Can you demonstrate impartiality in conflict resolution by applying this skill to a workplace scenario?

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 7 Exercises 1 & 2

CHAPTER 8: HR'S ROLE IN PROBLEM SOLVING

Chapter Overview

8.0 Learning Outcomes

8.1 Fanshawe HR Graduate on Conflict at Work

8.2 The Lesson: Problem-Solving Strategies

8.3 Spotlight on Human Resources Skills

8.4 Case Study: Runners Relay Ltd.

8.5 Apply Your Knowledge

8.6 Chapter Summary

8.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

⭐ Learning Outcomes

- Identify problem-solving strategies used to assess perceived grievances and resolve problems quickly.
- Describe the benefits of curiosity and open-ended questions in problem-solving and conflict resolution.
- Apply curiosity and open-ended questions to a workplace scenario.

8.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

📰 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=850#oembed-1*

Video: "Hala Nayel NavigatingHR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [4:50] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Hala Nayel, HR Coordinator
Company	McCormick Care Group
How Does Conflict Occur?	A disagreement can occur between a manager and an employee or a disagreement between the employees themselves. It can be linked to personal issues. It can be someone is overwhelmed by the workload and does not know how to verbalize their concerns, so it shows up as a conflict.
HR Skills Needed	Active listening helps build trust. Mediation to encourage communication and problem-solving. Paraphrasing is an important skill to ensure you understand their issues correctly. It is also important to stay calm.

8.2 THE LESSON: PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGIES

In Chapter 7, we studied the importance of generational and cultural dimensions and their influence on workplace conflict. In Chapter 8, we will focus on the role of a Human Resources professional in problem-solving.

While we have discussed several workplace conflicts in this textbook, it is equally important to focus on problems that employees and people leaders will bring forward. These individuals typically bring these problems to you as you are known as a talented brainstormer of solutions and a problem solver. Let's look at the types of issues a Human Resources professional might be asked to help with that are not based on conflict.

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Common Workplace Problems

Earlier in this textbook, we discussed the most common types of workplace conflicts that Human Resources professionals deal with. Equally, there are numerous conflict-free problems that people leaders and employees need help with. Let's explore ten of the most common workplace problems.

Resources

Whether it be a request for additional staffing or more money for a project, people leaders often discuss the challenges they face in running their department.

Example: A manager states they cannot run a weekend shift because they don't have enough volunteers. You assist by brainstorming ways to entice employees to sign up for weekend work, such as providing a catered lunch.

Communication

You may have employees who work in the office, on the road, or from home. Finding effective ways to communicate promptly with every employee can strain some organizations.

Example: A Manager states they are hosting a town hall meeting next month and want to ensure every employee can access it. You assist by brainstorming ways to include everyone, such as providing an online Zoom link for offsite employees and recording the meeting for those who may not attend that day.

Training

Organizations must deliver extensive ongoing training on new hire orientations, safety, company policies, and legislative compliance.

Example: A Manager states they struggle to keep up with training costs as they send all their staff to a third-party training centre. You assist by brainstorming ways to decrease training costs, such as having members of the supervisory team become certified in training so they can provide internal training sessions.

Performance Issues

It is common for people leaders to identify performance problems and seek your assistance with correcting poor behaviour.

Example: A manager states they have spoken with one of their employees on three occasions about meeting team deadlines. These conversations have been documented, but their performance has not improved. You assist by brainstorming ways to get this employee back on track, such as providing them with a written Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

Flexible Work Schedules

Employees need as much flexibility as possible to care for themselves, their children, and their aging relatives while doing their jobs. Some need earlier or later start times, and some need four-day work weeks. Does your organization provide a flexible work schedule?

Example: An employee comes to you and shares that they are having a hard time getting their children to daycare before the start of the workday ever since their partner became permanently injured in a workplace accident. You assist by brainstorming ways to accommodate their request, such as starting their office job one hour later and staying one hour later at the end of their workday to make up the time.

Recognition

There are so many ways for organizations and people leaders to provide meaningful employee recognition. Some companies focus on celebrations when employees meet an important goal or timeline. Other organizations focus on providing employees with company shirts, jackets, and water bottles. The question remains: What is most meaningful to your team?

Example: A manager asks you for your assistance. They are making preparations for the annual meeting in six months and want to give everyone a gift to thank them for their hard work over the past 12 months. They are considering a catered meal, a trip to a baseball game, or organizing a summer picnic. You assist by brainstorming ways to gather input, such as sending out a short employee survey asking which of the three options the employees most prefer.

Work-Life Balance

The topic of workload and work-life balance is familiar in many organizations. Recently, Human Resources professionals have seen legislation that forces employers to write and communicate their work-life balance policy. This policy ensures employees aren't connected to their jobs after hours or while on vacation.

Example: An employee comes to you and shares that every time they have a sick day or a vacation day, their manager sends them e-mails, text messages, and calls their cell phone to discuss so-called urgent matters at work. You assist by brainstorming ways to end this unwanted communication on their personal time, such as appointing another person from their department to take calls and answer communication in their absence.

Turnover

It is difficult to measure the cost of an employee's departure. Your organization has invested time, money, and great effort in training new and existing employees in their roles. Some of your employees are so well trained that they are specialists or subject matter experts. Losing these individuals is a significant loss to your organization and morale.

Example: A manager in the Sales department asks for your help after losing three of their top salespeople to the competition in the past six months. You assist by brainstorming ways to determine why employees in the Sales department are quitting to work for your main competitor. These solutions might include anonymous surveys of the existing sales team and a review of your wages, commission structure, and company perks.

Engagement

How do you know when there is a lack of engagement among your employees? What kinds of things are people talking about, and what are they doing (or not doing)? Often, employees who lose interest in the company they work for stop participating in company events and seldom sign up to help with upcoming fundraisers or team sports.
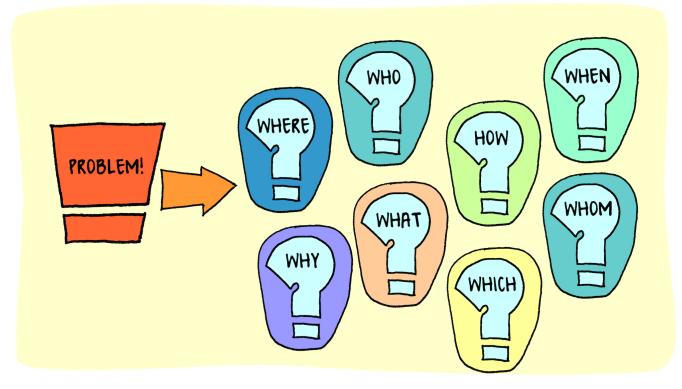
Example: A manager comes to you for help. They have noticed that few employees attend the monthly staff meetings, opting to read the minutes after the meeting. In the past, everyone showed up for these meetings. You assist by brainstorming ideas to increase engagement and participation in the monthly staff meetings, such as asking departments to co-host and present highlights from their team on a rotating basis.

Growth Opportunities

When employees can't visualize their career path in their organization, it can lead to boredom, lack of motivation, and possibly a job search for their next role. Does your organization provide employees with training, upskilling, and mentorship opportunities to ensure each employee is constantly growing their knowledge and skills?

Example: A manager is concerned their employees have become stagnant in their current roles. You assist by brainstorming ideas and suggest the manager implement a job shadowing and rotation schedule to allow employees to gain new skills and expand their knowledge of the process.

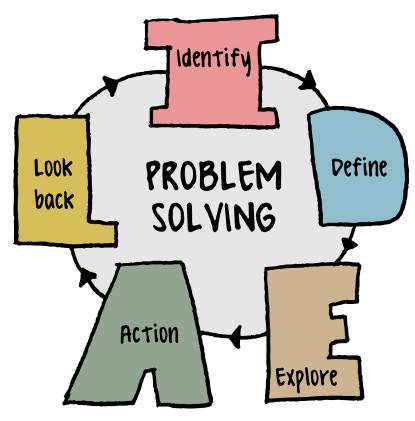# What is Problem Solving and Why is it Important?

"Problem" by CC/MIT, CC BY 4.0

The ability to solve problems is a basic life skill essential to our day-to-day lives at home, school, and work. We solve problems every day without really thinking about how we solve them. For example, it's raining, and you must go to the store. What do you do? There are lots of possible solutions. Take your umbrella and walk. You can drive or take the bus if you don't want to get wet. You might decide to call a friend for a ride, or you might choose to go to the store another day. There is no right way to solve this problem; different people will solve it differently.

Problem-solving is identifying a problem, developing possible solutions, and taking the appropriate action.

Why is problem-solving important? Good problem-solving skills empower you in your personal life and are critical in your professional life. In the current fast-changing global economy, employers often identify everyday problem-solving as crucial to the success of their organizations. For employees, problem-solving can be used to develop practical and creative solutions and to show independence and initiative to employers.

What Does Problem-Solving Look Like?

"Problem Solving" by CC/MIT, CC BY 4.0

The ability to solve problems is a skill, and just like any other skill, the more you practice, the better you get. So, how exactly do you practice problem-solving? Learning about different problem-solving strategies and when to use them will give you a good start. Problem-solving is a process. Most strategies provide steps that help

you identify the problem and choose the best solution. There are two basic types of strategy: algorithmic and heuristic.

Algorithmic strategies are traditional step-by-step guides to solving problems. They are great for solving math problems (in algebra: multiply and divide, then add or subtract) or for helping us remember the correct order of things (a mnemonic such as "Spring Forward, Fall Back" to remember which way the clock changes for daylight saving time, or "Righty Tighty, Lefty Loosey" to remember what direction to turn bolts and screws). Algorithms are best when there is a single path to the correct solution.

But what do you do when there is no single solution to your problem? Heuristic methods are general guides used to identify possible solutions. A popular one that is easy to remember is IDEAL (Bransford & Stein, 1993) :

- **I**dentify the problem
- **D**efine the context of the problem
- **E**xplore possible strategies
- **A**ct on the best solution
- **L**ook back and learn

IDEAL is just one problem-solving strategy. Building a toolbox of problem-solving strategies will improve your problem-solving skills. With practice, you will be able to recognize and use multiple methods to solve complex problems.

Developing Problem-Solving Processes

Problem-solving is a process that uses steps to solve problems. But what does that mean? Let's break it down and start building our toolbox of problem-solving strategies.

What is the first step in solving any problem? The first step is to recognize that there is a problem and identify the root cause of the problem. Similar problems can arise from different events, and the real issue may not always be apparent. Finding out what started it all is essential to solving the problem. This is called identifying the root cause.

Example: You and your classmates have worked long hours on a project in the school's workshop. The next afternoon, you try to use your student ID card to access the workshop but discover that your magnetic strip has been demagnetized. Since the card was a couple of years old, you chalk it up to wear and tear and get a new ID card. Later that week, you learn several classmates had the same problem! After a little investigation, you discover that a strong magnet was stored underneath a workbench in the workshop. The magnet was the root cause of the demagnetized student ID cards.

The best way to identify the root cause of the problem is to ask questions and gather information. If you have a vague problem, investigating facts is more productive than guessing a solution. Ask yourself questions about the issue. What do you know about the situation? What do you not know? When was the last time it worked correctly? What has changed since then? Can you diagram the process into separate steps? Where in the process is the problem occurring? Be curious, ask questions, gather facts, and make logical deductions rather than assumptions.

When issues and problems arise, they must be addressed efficiently and timely. Communication is an essential tool because it can prevent problems from recurring, avoid injury to personnel, reduce rework and scrap, reduce cost, and save money. Although each path in this exercise ended with a description of a problem-solving tool for your toolbox, the first step is always to identify the problem and define the context in which it happened.

Several strategies can be used to identify the root cause of a problem. Root cause analysis (RCA) is a method of problem-solving that helps people answer why the problem occurred. RCA uses a specific set of steps, with associated tools like the "5 Why Analysis" or the "Cause and Effect Diagram," to identify the origin of the problem so that you can:

- Determine what happened.
- Determine why it happened.
- Fix the problem so it won't happen again.

Once the underlying cause is identified and the scope of the issue defined, the next step is to explore possible strategies to fix the problem.

If you are unsure how to fix the problem, it is okay to ask for help. Problem-solving is a process and a skill that is learned with practice. Remembering that everyone makes mistakes and no one knows everything is essential.

Life is about learning. It is okay to ask for help when you don't have the answer. When you collaborate to solve problems, you improve workplace communication and accelerate finding solutions as similar problems arise.

One helpful tool for generating possible solutions is brainstorming. Brainstorming is a technique designed to create many ideas for solving a problem. It was first popularized in 1953 by Alex Faickney Osborn in the book Applied Imagination. The goal is to develop as many ideas as possible in a fixed amount of time. Although brainstorming is best done in a group, it can also be done individually.

Communication of problems and issues (especially safety) is essential in any workplace. This is especially crucial in manufacturing, where people constantly work with heavy, costly, and sometimes dangerous equipment. When issues and problems arise, they must be addressed efficiently and timely. Effective communication is essential because it can prevent problems from recurring, avoid injury to personnel, reduce rework and scrap, and ultimately reduce cost and save money.

One strategy for improving communication is the huddle. Like football players on the field, a huddle is a short meeting with everyone standing in a circle. A daily team huddle is a great way to ensure that team members are aware of changes to the schedule, that any problems or safety issues are identified, and that team members are aware of how their work impacts one another. When done right, huddles create collaboration, communication, and accountability for results. Impromptu huddles can gather information on a specific issue and get each team member's input.

📝 Chapter 8 Exercise 1

You are the Human Resources professional at a medium-sized greenhouse facility. Carlos, the greenhouse Manager, has asked to meet with you to discuss a problem they have identified with the new employee orientation sessions. As the greenhouse is understaffed, Carlos has learned that new hires are being asked to start work in the greenhouse on day one instead of attending the two-day new employee training session. Carlos is worried about the safety of the new hires as they aren't receiving the necessary training to work in the greenhouse. Can you help?

Using the I.D.E.A.L approach to problem-solving described in this chapter, brainstorm how Carlos can ensure all new staff attend the two-day new hire orientation sessions.

8.3 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

Curiosity – Asking Good Questions

"Listen with curiosity. Speak with honesty. Act with integrity. The greatest problem with communication is we don't listen to understand. We listen to the reply. When we listen with curiosity, we don't listen with the intent to reply. We listen for what's behind the words."

~Roy T. Bennett

Curiosity: We are always intentional about how curiosity and inquiry support connection, growth, learning and engagement.

This curiosity isn't fueled by personal gain but by a genuine interest in connection. We encourage curiosity while respecting the boundaries and protecting the privacy of the people we support.

We are continually curious but not invasive while challenging assumptions and narratives. We ask powerful questions and offer generosity of assumption to those who think differently than we do. We know that listening and asking questions are more important than providing answers.

Fostering a sense of curiosity within relationships supports connection. Curiosity is a powerful force in

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our well-being, playing an important role in connection and communication.

Some benefits of cultivating curiosity:

- Curiosity calms the nervous system.
- Curiosity supports us to seek out new possibilities, which makes way for HOPE.
- Curiosity is the antidote to a fixed mindset. It supports us in thinking differently and more mindfully while shifting our perspectives.
- Curiosity supports us to challenge our assumptions and biases.
- Curiosity encourages us to get to know other people better.

Learning to ask powerful questions is essential to peer support work. When we ask good questions, we are helping someone to tap into their inner wisdom and reflect in a new way. When we ask questions rather than give advice, we acknowledge that we don't have the answers.

When we talk about curiosity, we want to ensure that we are clear on the purpose of our questions. If we are asking something to satisfy a self-focused curiosity or our own desire for information, it's best to refrain from asking those types of questions. To assess whether or not a question is good for you to ask, we need to consider:

- Who is benefiting from this question?
- Does this question support the person engaging in self-reflection?

- Does this question support a connection?

Traits of Powerful Questions

Once you read about the three traits of powerful questions, consider the ways in which you might utilize powerful questions in your personal and professional life.

1. Powerful Questions Are Always Open-Ended and Promote Reflection

An open-ended question can't be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."

Think of how you might start an open-ended question. Strong questions often start with WHAT, as they are neutral and encourage people to self-reflect. That's not a hard and fast rule, though. A good question can start with HAVE/HAS, HOW, IF, or CAN.

It's important not to ask a question to which you are looking for a specific answer because it's not open-ended.

Questions that promote reflection create opportunities for people to tap into their knowledge and insight. We can ask past-focused questions to help discover or uncover and then future-forward questions to invite dreaming and planning.

If someone tells you they are feeling anxious today, asking a powerful question can help them figure out more specifically how they feel and what potentially made them feel that way.

However, it's important to note here that a WHY question is often best avoided in a peer situation. A WHY question is different, as it tends to ask people to analyze their situation. "Why did you do that?" Or "Why are you always so hard on yourself?" "Why" questions slip into more of a counselling type of situation, and we want to avoid that.

2. Powerful Questions Are Fueled by Curiosity and Aren't Focused on an Agenda

Sometimes, when we ask a question with a hidden agenda, trying to elicit a specific response, it can feel really uncomfortable for the person we are asking. They can often sense that we are trying to guide the conversation rather than approach it with genuine curiosity.

When having a heart-to-heart, asking a question like "Have you ever thought about going for counselling?" is not open-ended. In a way, we just offer some underhanded advice disguised by a question. A better, more

powerful question might be, "What have you done in the past that has helped you?" Some respond well to "What's worked in the past, and what didn't?"

3. Powerful Questions Stimulate Reflection

When given the gift of space to reflect on a situation, people are likelier to find the answer within themselves.

Be ok with silence. Don't feel like you have to fill up the space with talking. The space of silence can be a powerful opportunity for reflection–for both the person you are talking to and also you!

What can you do to get more comfortable with silence?

The Art of the Open-Ended Question

Whether you are conducting a job interview, an investigation, solving a workplace problem or helping to resolve a conflict at work, Human Resources professionals should rely on open-ended questions to elicit a helpful response.

Let's examine a few "closed-ended" questions and turn them into "open-ended" questions.

Closed question: Did you take the money from the lockbox?

Employee response: No

Reflection: You have the employee's answer to the question, but you still don't know what they know about the situation or who removed the money from the lockbox.

Newly created open-ended question: Someone removed $100 from the lockbox. Who was in the office when you arrived at work yesterday?

Closed question: Do you know who was responsible for leaving the door unlocked to the safety supplies?

Employee response: No

Reflection: While you have the employee's response to your question, you don't know who left the door open.

This is a newly created open-ended question: The door to the safety supplies was unlocked. Where did you leave the key when you unlocked the supply cabinet yesterday?

Closed question: Do you like the new signage in the showroom?

Employee response: Yes.

Reflection: You have the employee's response to your question, but you don't know how they feel about the new signage.

Newly created open-ended question: How do you feel about the new signage in the showroom?

Chapter 8 Exercise 2

It is time to practice your skills. Below, you will find three workplace scenarios. You are responsible for filling in the "Newly created open-ended question" in the three scenarios.

Closed question: I understand you are responsible for the upcoming company dinner. Do you know the final headcount for dinner?

Employee response: No

Reflection: You have the employee's response, but you still need to figure out what they know about the headcount for the upcoming dinner.

Newly created open-ended question:

Closed question: I understand there was a misunderstanding with a customer yesterday. Do you want to tell me what happened?

Employee response: No

Reflection: You have the employee's response, but you have no idea what happened yesterday.

Newly created open-ended question:

Closed question: I am working on a marketing campaign for our new cell phone design, and I need some information from your design team. Can I stop by later today and interview a few of your designers?

Employee response: No

Reflection: You have their response, but you still need to gain access to their design team for your marketing campaign.

Newly created open-ended question:

Helpful Open-Ended Questions

It is extremely difficult to answer "yes" or "no" to a question that begins with the word "why", such as "why did you skip the morning meeting?" It is best to avoid questions that begin with the word "did," such as "Did you attend the staff meeting last week?" as the other person can answer yes or no. These questions won't give you the necessary information to solve problems or resolve conflicts.

Here is a list of helpful open-ended questions and statements that will assist you when solving problems or resolving workplace conflicts. Pay particular attention to the first word in each question.

- Describe what you witnessed on the way to work.
- Would you share your understanding of what happened in the staff meeting?
- What did your co-worker do after the presentation?
- When did you notice the folder was missing?
- Who did you work with on this project?
- Where did you go after the safety training session?
- How would you describe a typical day in your role?

Unexpected Insights

One benefit of asking open-ended questions is the unexpected responses you might elicit. Returning to our earlier conversation about bias, you might think you know the answer to the questions you pose. People often

surprise us and share facts or details we never expected to hear. These nuances may lead your conversation or investigation in an entirely different direction and lead to a solution or resolution.

8.4 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

Now that we understand the importance of curiosity and open-ended questions when resolving workplace conflicts, let's utilize script writing and role-playing to resolve a workplace conflict at Runners Relay.

The Scenario: A Focus on Curiosity and Open-Ended Questions

The Company:

Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Sunni Li (He/Him): IT Technician

Chantal Russo (She/Her): Marketing Coordinator

The Scenario:

There seems to be a problem with the upcoming product launch at Runners Relay. Sunni in the IT department is supposed to work closely with Chantal in the Marketing department to ensure the IT department fully supports the launch.

Although Sunni continues to reach out to Chantal to offer his support, his efforts seem to go unnoticed. Sunni has sent two emails to Chantal, tried setting up a Zoom session, and left a handwritten note at her workstation with no response. Sunni is confused. He isn't sure if Chantal is too busy or if she is upset with Sunni.

This communication problem might jeopardize the success of the upcoming product launch at Runners Relay. Sunni needs your help as this problem will grow out of control, and if this product launch fails, the entire company will be embarrassed. Sunni would like you to meet with Chantal as soon as possible to determine what is happening.

Employee Observations:

"It seems like the marketing and IT departments don't talk, and we are just weeks away from the new product launch."

"I can't figure out what is going on with Chantal. People keep asking me where she is, and I don't know what to say anymore."

The First Conversation:

You are playing the role of Anna. You will sit down with Chantal and figure out what is going on between Chantal and Sunni.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=856#h5p-28*

Anna: Chantal, I am glad I caught you in the office this morning. Can we talk?

Chantal: No, I'm running late.

Anna: Oh, it's really important. I'll try to keep the conversation short. Please take a seat.

Chantal: Fine.

Anna: Is there anything I should know about, Chantal?

Chantal: Nope. Everything is good.

Anna: Do you want to talk about the upcoming new product launch?

Chantal: No, we have that under control

Anna: Are the other departments supporting your marketing efforts?

Chantal: Yes, no complaints here.

Anna: What about the folks in IT? Are they helping as needed?

Chantal: They have made it clear they are available to help.

Anna: Chantal, you don't want to talk to me about the upcoming product launch. This isn't like you. Is everything okay?

Chantal: Yep, I'm okay. Thanks for asking. Is there anything else, as I'm quite busy and now late for my next meeting?

Anna: I guess that is it. Please let me know if you need any help with the upcoming launch.

Chantal: You bet. See you around!

The Exercise:

Identify – any concerns about how Anna handled her conversation with Chantal today?

Write – down and discuss at least two suggestions that would help Anna gain insight into what is going on with Chantal and the new product launch.

Next Steps

- Based on everything you have read about the importance of curiosity and asking open-ended questions, please meet with Chantal again. Let's see what you have learned about the benefits of curiosity and asking open-ended questions. Don't forget to review your coaching notes.

Coaching Notes:

Be sure to review your notes on curiosity and the importance of asking open-ended questions, which include:

- Curiosity demonstrates a genuine interest in the other person.
- Maintaining a curious mindset allows you to focus on significant questions and stay away from assumptions.
- Asking open-ended questions will allow the other person to share whatever they feel, think or know without limitations.
- Open-ended questions may elicit unexpected responses that lead you in a new direction.
- Ask questions that begin with "how" or "why" to ensure the other person can't respond with a "yes" or "no" answer.

The Recommended Conversation:

You will meet with Chantal a second time with a focus on curiosity and asking open-ended questions to determine what is going on with the upcoming product launch and Chantal's interaction with the IT department.

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> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=856#h5p-29*

Anna: I am glad I ran into you today. I need to catch up with you about the new product launch. Would you like a coffee or a glass of water, Chantal?

Chantal: A coffee would be great; I need more caffeine.

Anna: Okay, here you go—one cup of coffee. Let's sit down. I'm sure you could use a break.

Chantal: You have no idea; I could definitely use a break.

Anna: So, tell me about the launch of the new product. I am curious to know all about it.

Chantal: I don't know where to start. This is probably our company's biggest product launch, and I am definitely feeling the pressure.

Anna: How are you keeping up with the multiple deadlines?

Chantal: I am super organized, and everything is on my calendar, so I don't miss any deadlines.

Anna: It sounds like your calendar is everything to you. I was wondering what it's like to be responsible for the marketing campaign for such an important project.

Chantal: It is a tremendous honour that management thinks I am the best person for the job. But with that comes some pressure and a bit of anxiety.

Anna: From everything I have heard about the product launch, you are doing great. How are the other departments supporting you and your marketing team?

Chantal: Everyone is most helpful. I know they are all there for me.

Anna: How have Sunni and the IT team been able to support you so far?

Chantal: Well, I have received a lot of communication from Sunni, but I just haven't had time to talk with him. I'm afraid my communication skills have been suffering. I don't have time to email people and attend meetings. I have to focus on the product launch.
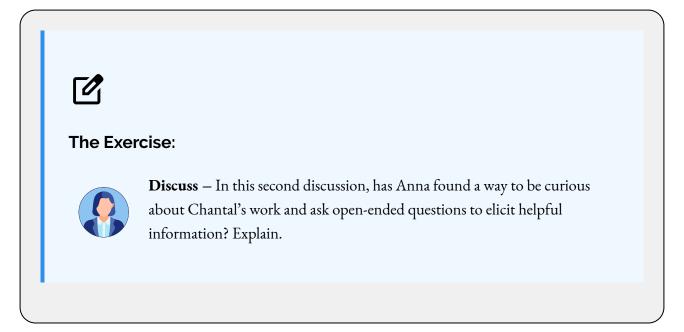
Anna: It sounds like you might need our Administrative Assistant, Penn Livington, to manage your calendar. With your permission, Penn can reply to emails and meeting requests and save you a lot of time. How would you feel about some administrative assistance until this new product launch is complete?

Chantal: I would welcome the help. I am sure many people in this company are wondering why I don't get back to them. Once this project is complete, I will have to apologize to a lot of my co-workers.

Anna: There is no need for apologies, Chantal. I will meet with Penn today to outline the support they can provide you with, and I will ask Penn to stop by and see you first thing in the morning to understand your expectations around emails and meetings. How else can we support you?

Chantal: I will start by asking Penn to connect with Sunni, as I haven't responded to his numerous offers of support. Thanks, Anna. I really appreciate this help.

Anna: You are most welcome, Chantal.

The Exercise:

Discuss — In this second discussion, has Anna found a way to be curious about Chantal's work and ask open-ended questions to elicit helpful information? Explain.

8.5 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You have learned the benefit of addressing problems with curiosity and open-ended questions. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read – the following case study. Create a script demonstrating your ability to resolve a workplace issue with authentic curiosity and open-ended questions.

The Company:

🏛 The Great Tent Event Ltd.

The People:

Demetrius Atlas (They/Them) HR Manager

Kai Haunani (He/Him) Event Manager

The Scenario:

Kai is the Event Manager at The Great Tent Event and has asked to stop by and talk to you about the setup teams. In your role as HR Manager, Kai sees you as a masterful problem solver, as you have helped him many times. Kai explains that four "setup teams" are responsible for setting up tents at customer events.

In the past, Kai has rotated through the four setup teams and assigned each team to the next paid job. No team has been skipped over. Lately, the teams have been coming to Kai and asking to switch teams as they are tired of the people they are working with. Some feel their team is lazy; some say their squad is reckless with safety.

Kai likes things the way they are. The teams have been this way for three years, making their jobs easy. Kai doesn't want to make any changes, but he has heard rumours that at least two setup team members have been talking to the local competitor about quitting and joining their company. Kai doesn't want to start hiring as finding good people takes a long time.

Kai is wondering if you can help with this problem. He is quite concerned about his setup teams and turnover and hopes you can help.

Employee Observations and Customer Observations:

"I am so tired of working with the same group of people. My setup team is made up of lazy individuals who want a paycheck but don't want to do the work."

"I am stuck with people that don't even care about safety. They don't even care if there are hydro wires above the tent. Someone is going to be electrocuted."

The Conversation:

This conversation is between you and Kai. You are playing the role of Demetrius, the HR Manager at The Great Tent Event. You are leading the discussion with Kai. Don't forget to focus on being curious and asking open-ended questions. Your script should be at least one minute long when you read it out loud.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=860#h5p-14

The Exercise:

Discuss – Were you able to assist Kai with his setup team dilemma? Was it easy to demonstrate your curiosity and gather important information by asking open-ended questions? Explain.

8.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Human Resources professionals are often called upon for their problem-solving skills.
- People leaders are seeking quick solutions to everyday problems in the workplace.
- When solving a problem, it is essential to brainstorm as many solutions as possible.
- Remaining curious allows a Human Resources professional to gather helpful information to assist in finding a solution.
- Whether interviewing a job candidate or solving a workplace problem, asking open-ended questions will keep the conversation going.
- One benefit of asking open-ended questions is the unexpected responses you may receive.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 8, reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Can you identify the problem-solving strategies that will help a Human Resources professional assess perceived grievances and resolve problems quickly?
2. Can you describe the benefits of curiosity and open-ended questions in problem-solving and conflict resolution?
3. Can you apply curiosity and open-ended questions to a workplace scenario?

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 8 Exercise 1
- Chapter 8 Exercise 2

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT

Chapter Overview

9.0 Learning Outcomes

9.1 Fanshawe HR Graduate on Conflict at Work

9.2 The Lesson: Communication Essentials

9.3 Spotlight on Human Resources Skills

9.4 Case Study: Runners Relay Ltd.

9.5 Apply Your Knowledge

9.6 Chapter Summary

9.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

⊛ Learning Outcomes

- Identify forms of verbal and non-verbal communication used in conflict resolution.
- Examine emotional intelligence and the importance of remaining calm in conflict.
- Practice remaining calm in a difficult workplace scenario.

9.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

📺 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=914#oembed-1*

Video: "ElisangelaGomes NavigatingHR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [4:22] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Elisangela Gomes, HR Professional
How Does Conflict Occur?	It is caused by a lack of communication, a language barrier, stress and workload, and a lack of cooperation.
HR Skills Needed	Active listening, unbiased and impartial, brainstorming solutions, emotional intelligence, and communication skills.

9.2 THE LESSON: COMMUNICATION ESSENTIALS

Verbal Communication Strategies

In Chapter 8, we studied strategies to solve problems at work. Whether you are involved in problem-solving or conflict resolution, practical communication skills are essential. Chapter 9, we are going to study the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies for Human Resources professionals involved in a workplace conflict.

Verbal communication helps us meet various needs through our ability to express ourselves. Regarding instrumental needs, we use verbal communication to ask questions that provide specific information. We also use

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verbal communication to describe things, people, and ideas. Verbal communication helps us inform, persuade, and entertain others, which, as we will learn later, are the three general purposes of public speaking. It is also through our verbal expressions that our relationships are formed. At its essence, language is expressive. Verbal expressions help us communicate our observations, thoughts, feelings, and needs (McKay et al., 1995).

Expressing Observations

When we express observations, we report on the sensory information we are taking in or have taken. Observation and description occur in the first step of the perception-checking process. When trying to make sense of an experience, expressing observations in a descriptive rather than evaluative way can lessen defensiveness, facilitating competent communication.

Expressing Thoughts

When we express thoughts, we draw conclusions based on what we have experienced. The perception process is similar to the interpretation step. We take various observations and evaluate and interpret them to assign meaning (a conclusion). Whereas our observations are based on sensory information (what we saw, what we

read, what we heard), thoughts are connected to our beliefs (what we think is true/false), attitudes (what we like and dislike), and values (what we think is right/wrong or good/bad). Jury members are expected to express thoughts based on reported observations to help conclude someone's guilt or innocence. A juror might think: "The neighbour who saw the car leaving the night of the crime seemed credible. And the defendant seemed to have a shady past—I think he's trying to hide something." Sometimes, people intentionally or unintentionally express thoughts as if they were feelings. For example, when people say, "I feel like you're too strict with your attendance policy," they aren't expressing a sense; they are expressing a judgment about the other person (a thought).

Expressing Feelings

When we express feelings, we communicate our emotions. Expressing feelings is a difficult part of verbal communication because there are many social norms about how, why, when, where, and to whom we express our emotions. Norms for emotional expression also vary based on nationality and other cultural identities and characteristics such as age and gender. In terms of age, young children are typically freer to express positive and negative emotions in public. Gendered elements intersect with age as boys grow older and are socialized into a norm of emotional restraint. Although individual men vary in the degree to which they are emotionally expressive, there is still a prevailing social norm that encourages and even expects women to be more emotionally expressive than men.

Expressing feelings can be uncomfortable for those listening. Some people are generally not good at or comfortable with receiving and processing other people's feelings. Even those with good empathetic listening skills can be positively or negatively affected by others' emotions. Expressions of anger can be especially difficult to manage because they represent a threat to the face and self-esteem of others. Even though expressing feelings is more complicated than other forms of expression, emotion sharing is an important part of how we create social bonds and empathize with others, and it can be improved.

In order to verbally express our emotions, it is important that we develop an emotional vocabulary. The more specific we can be when we are verbally communicating our emotions, the less ambiguous our emotions will be for the person decoding our message. As we expand our emotional vocabulary, we are able to convey the intensity of the emotion we're feeling, whether it is mild, moderate, or intense. For example, happy is mild, delighted is moderate, ecstatic is intense, ignored is mild, rejected is moderate, and abandoned is intense (Hargie, 2011).

Expressing Needs

When we express needs, we are communicating in an instrumental way to help us get things done. Since we almost always know our needs more than others do, it's important for us to be able to convey those needs to

others. Expressing needs can help us get a project done at work or help us navigate the changes of a long-term romantic partnership. Not expressing needs can lead to feelings of abandonment, frustration, or resentment. For example, if one romantic partner expresses the following thought, "I think we're moving too quickly in our relationship," but doesn't also express a need, the other person in the relationship doesn't have a guide for what to do in response to the expressed thought. Stating, "I need to spend some time with my hometown friends this weekend. Would you mind if I went home by myself?" would likely make the expression more effective. Be cautious of letting evaluations or judgments sneak into your expressions of need. Saying, "I need you to stop suffocating me!" really expresses a thought-feeling mixture more than a need.

Table 9.2.1 Four Types of Verbal Expressions

Type	Description	Example
Observation	Report of sensory experiences or memories	"Pauline asked me to bring this file to you."
Thought	Conclusion about or judgment of experiences and observations	"Students today have much less respect for authority."
Feeling	Communicating emotions	"I feel at peace when we're together."
Need	Stating wants or requesting help or support	"I'm saving money for summer vacation. Is it OK if we skip our regular night out this week?"

(McKay et al., 1995).

Language Is Relational

We communicate verbally to initiate, maintain, and terminate our interpersonal relationships. The first few exchanges with a potential romantic partner or friend help us size the other person up and figure out if we want to pursue a relationship or not. We then use verbal communication to remind others how we feel about them and to check in with them—engaging in relationship maintenance through language use. When negative feelings arrive and persist, or for many other reasons, we often use verbal communication to end a relationship.

Language Can Bring Us Together

Interpersonally, verbal communication is key to bringing people together and maintaining relationships. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, our use of words like I, you, we, our, and us affect our relationships. "We language" includes the words we, our, and us and can be used to promote a feeling of inclusiveness. "I language" can be useful when expressing thoughts, needs, and feelings because it leads us to "own" our expressions and avoid the tendency to mistakenly attribute the cause of our thoughts, needs, and feelings to

others. Communicating emotions using "I language" may also facilitate emotion sharing by not making our conversational partner feel at fault or defensive. For example, instead of saying, "You're making me crazy!" you could say, "I'm starting to feel really anxious because we can't make a decision about this." Conversely, "you language" can lead people to become defensive and feel attacked, which could be divisive and result in feelings of interpersonal separation.

Aside from the specific words that we use, the frequency of communication impacts relationships. Of course, the content of what is said is important, but research shows that romantic partners who communicate frequently with each other and with mutual friends and family members experience less stress and uncertainty in their relationship and are more likely to stay together (McCornack, 2007). When frequent communication is combined with supportive messages, which are messages communicated in an open, honest, and nonconfrontational way, people are sure to come together.

At the interpersonal level, unsupportive messages can make others respond defensively, which can lead to feelings of separation and actual separation or dissolution of a relationship. It's impossible to be supportive in our communication all the time, but consistently unsupportive messages can hurt others' self-esteem, escalate conflict, and lead to defensiveness. People who regularly use unsupportive messages may create a toxic win/lose climate in a relationship. Six verbal tactics that can lead to feelings of defensiveness and separation are global labels, sarcasm, dragging up the past, negative comparisons, judgmental "you" messages, and threats (McKay et al., 1995).

Common Types of Unsupportive Messages

1. *Global labels.* "You're a liar." Labelling someone irresponsible, untrustworthy, selfish, or lazy calls his or her whole identity as a person into question. Such sweeping judgments and generalizations are sure to only escalate a negative situation.
2. *Sarcasm.* "No, you didn't miss anything in class on Wednesday. We just sat here and looked at each other." Even though sarcasm is often disguised as humour, it usually represents passive-aggressive behaviour through which a person indirectly communicates negative feelings.
3. *Dragging up the past.* "I should have known not to trust you when you never paid me back that $100 I let you borrow." Bringing up negative past experiences is a tactic used by people when they don't want to discuss a current situation. Sometimes, people build up negative feelings that are suddenly let out by a seemingly small thing at the moment.
4. *Negative comparisons.* "Jade graduated from college without any credit card debt. I guess you're just not as responsible as her." Holding a person up to the supposed standards or characteristics of another person can lead to feelings of inferiority and resentment. Parents and teachers may unfairly compare children to their siblings.
5. *Judgmental "you" messages.* "You're never going to be able to hold down a job." Accusatory messages are

usually generalized overstatements about another person that goes beyond labelling but still do not describe specific behaviour in a productive way.

6. *Threats.* "If you don't stop texting back and forth with your ex, both of you are going to regret it." Threatening someone with violence or some other negative consequence usually signals the end of productive communication. Aside from the potential legal consequences, threats usually overcompensate for a person's insecurity.

What is Non-Verbal Communication?

Every day, we express ourselves through non-verbal communication. We might be bored, agitated, or surprised. We do not need words to express these feelings. We can express ourselves using hand gestures or by making faces. Let's listen to this TedTalk by Joe Navarro titled "The Power of Nonverbal Communication," in which Joe explains the nuances of non-verbal communication.

📑 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=916#oembed-1*

Video: "The Power of Nonverbal Communication | Joe Navarro | TEDxManchester" by TEDx Talks [12:56] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Just as verbal language is broken up into various categories, there are also different types of nonverbal communication. As we learn about each type of nonverbal signal, keep in mind that nonverbals often work in concert with each other, combining to repeat, modify, or contradict the verbal message being sent.

Three Types of Gestures

There are three main types of gestures: adaptors, emblems, and illustrators (Andersen, 1999).

1. *Adaptors* are touching behaviours and movements that indicate internal states typically related to arousal or anxiety. Adaptors can be targeted toward the self, objects, or others. In regular social situations, adaptors result from uneasiness, anxiety, or a general sense that we are not in control of our surroundings. Many of us subconsciously click pens, shake our legs, or engage in other adaptors during classes, meetings, or while waiting as a way to do something with our excess energy. Public speaking students who watch video recordings of their speeches notice nonverbal adaptors that they didn't know they used. In public speaking situations, people most commonly use self- or object-focused adaptors.

Common self-touching behaviours like scratching, twirling hair, or fidgeting with fingers or hands are considered self-adaptors. Some self-adaptors manifest internally as coughs or throat-clearing sounds.

2. *Emblems* are gestures that have a specific agreed-on meaning. These are still different from the signs used by hearing-impaired people or others who communicate using American Sign Language (ASL). Even though they have a generally agreed-on meaning, they are not part of a formal sign system like ASL that is explicitly taught to a group of people. A hitchhiker's raised thumb, the "OK" sign with thumb and index finger connected in a circle with the other three fingers sticking up, and the raised middle finger are all examples of emblems that have an agreed-on meaning or meanings with a culture. Emblems can be still or in motion; for example, circling the index finger around at the side of your head says, "He or she is crazy," or rolling your hands over and over in front of you says, "Move on."

3. *Illustrators* are the most common type of gesture and are used to illustrate the verbal message they accompany. For example, you might use hand gestures to indicate the size or shape of an object. Unlike emblems, illustrators do not typically have meaning on their own and are used more subconsciously than emblems. These largely involuntary and seemingly natural gestures flow from us as we speak but vary in terms of intensity and frequency based on context. Although we are never explicitly taught how to use illustrative gestures, we do it automatically. Think about how you still gesture when having an animated conversation on the phone even though the other person can't see you.

Head Movements and Posture

Head movements and posture are grouped because they are often used to acknowledge others and communicate interest or attentiveness. Regarding head movements, a head nod is a universal sign of acknowledgement in cultures where the formal bow is no longer used as a greeting. In these cases, the head nod essentially serves as an abbreviated bow. An innate and universal head movement is the headshake back and forth to signal "no." This nonverbal signal begins at birth, even before a baby has the ability to know that it has a corresponding meaning. Babies shake their heads from side to side to reject their mother's breast and later shake their heads to reject attempts to spoon-feed (Pease & Pease, 2004).

Eye Contact

We also communicate through eye behaviours, primarily eye contact. The face and eyes are the main points of focus during communication, and along with our ears, our eyes take in most of the communicative information around us. The proverb "The eyes are the window to the soul" is accurate in terms of where people typically think others are "located," which is right behind the eyes (Andersen, 1999).

Eye contact serves several communicative functions ranging from regulating interaction to monitoring interaction to conveying information to establishing interpersonal connections. In terms of regulating communication, we use eye contact to signal to others that we are ready to speak, or we use it to cue others

to speak. I'm sure we've all been in that awkward situation where a teacher asks a question, no one else offers a response, and he or she looks directly at us as if to say, "What do you think?" In that case, the teacher's eye contact is used to cue us to respond. During an interaction, eye contact also changes as we shift from speaker to listener. Toward the end of our speaking turn, we make more direct eye contact with our listener to indicate that we are finishing up. While listening, we tend to make more sustained eye contact, not glancing away as regularly as we do while speaking (Martin & Nakayama, 2010).

Aside from regulating conversations, eye contact is also used to monitor interaction by taking in feedback and other nonverbal cues and to send information. Our eyes bring in the visual information we need to interpret people's movements, gestures, and eye contact. A speaker can use his or her eye contact to determine if an audience is engaged, confused, or bored and then adapt his or her message accordingly. Our eyes also send information to others. People know not to interrupt when we are in deep thought because we naturally look away from others when we are processing information. Making eye contact with others also communicates that we are paying attention and are interested in what another person is saying.

This list reviews the specific functions of eye contact:

- Regulate interaction and provide turn-taking signals
- Monitor communication by receiving nonverbal communication from others
- Signal cognitive activity (we look away when processing information)
- Express engagement (we show people we are listening with our eyes)
- Convey intimidation
- Express flirtation
- Establish rapport or connection

Facial Expressions

Our faces are the most expressive part of our bodies. Think of how photos are often intended to capture a particular expression "in a flash" to preserve for later viewing. Even though a photo is a snapshot in time, we can still interpret much meaning from a human face caught in a moment of expression, and basic facial expressions are recognizable by humans all over the world. Much research has supported the universality of a core group of facial expressions: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and disgust. The first four are especially identifiable across cultures (Andersen, 1999). However, the triggers for these expressions and the cultural and social norms that influence their displays are still culturally diverse. If you've spent much time with babies, you know that they're capable of expressing all these emotions.

Smiles are powerful communicative signals and, as you'll recall, are a key immediacy behaviour. Although facial expressions are typically viewed as innate and several are universally recognizable, they are not always connected

to an emotional or internal biological stimulus; they can actually serve a more social purpose. For example, most of the smiles we produce are primarily made for others and are not just an involuntary reflection of an internal emotional state (Andersen, 1999).

◎ Examples of Non-Verbal Communication

Rolling your eyes. It is generally understood that when individuals roll their eyes, they are reacting negatively to what they have just heard. They are basically saying, "Are you kidding me?" meaning they can't believe what someone said. It is a signal they disagree with the conversation.

Standing or sitting with your arms crossed. For some people, crossing their arms is a comfortable position and may suggest they are in deep thought. For others, crossing your arms in front of you suggests you are upset or in disagreement with the conversation. It is known as closed body language.

Hands on your hips. Just like crossing your arms, for some people, it is comfortable to stand with your hands on your hips while you are talking or listening. For others, standing with your hands on your hips may be intimidating to others. It might remind us of a parent who is upset with our behaviour.

Looking away. People often look away when they are thinking or processing information. For others in the room, looking away may be perceived as boredom with the conversation.

Hands clenched. When an individual has their hands clenched, it might signal they are upset or frustrated with the situation. For others, clenching their hands might suggest they are feeling nervous or anxious.

Chapter 9 Exercise 1

Discuss how your manager, parents, and co-workers express themselves through non-verbal communication. What impact does this have on your conversation with these individuals? Which forms of non-verbal communication do you use most often?

9.3 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

Emotional Intelligence

As a Human Resources professional, it is important to understand emotional intelligence or EI. Watch Travis Bradberry's TED Talk, "The Power of Emotional Intelligence." Travis will then walk us through a lesson on the meaning of EI and how it differs from IQ.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=926#oembed-1

Video: "How To Manipulate Emotions | Timon Krause | TEDxFryslân" by TEDx Talks [18:27] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Emotional intelligence (or emotional quotient or EQ) is the ability to understand, use, and manage your emotions positively to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict. Regarding happiness and success, emotional intelligence matters as much as intellectual ability. Emotional intelligence helps you build stronger relationships, succeed at school and work, and achieve your career and personal goals. It can also help you connect with your feelings, turn intention into action, and make informed decisions about what matters most.

Four attributes commonly define emotional intelligence:

- Self-management – You can control impulsive feelings and behaviours, manage your emotions healthily, take the initiative, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Self-awareness: You recognize your emotions and how they affect your thoughts and behaviour. You know your strengths and weaknesses and are self-confident.
- Social awareness – You have empathy. You can understand other people's emotions, needs, and concerns, pick up on emotional cues, feel comfortable socially, and recognize the power dynamics in a group or organization.
- Relationship management – You can develop and maintain good relationships, communicate clearly, inspire and influence others, work well in a team, and manage conflict.

Why is Emotional Intelligence so Important?

As we know, it's not the most intelligent people who are successful or fulfilled. You probably know academically brilliant people yet are socially inept and unsuccessful at work or in their relationships. Intellectual ability or intelligence quotient (IQ) isn't enough to succeed. Yes, your IQ can help you get into college, but your EQ will help you manage the stress and emotions when facing your final exams. EQ and IQ exist in tandem and are most effective when they build off one another.

Emotional Intelligence Affects:

Emotional Intelligence affects your performance at school or work. High emotional intelligence can help you navigate the social complexities of the workplace, lead and motivate others, and excel in your career. When gauging important job candidates, many companies now rate emotional intelligence as important as technical ability and employ EQ testing before hiring.

Emotional Intelligence affects your physical health. If you're unable to manage your emotions, you are probably not managing your stress, either. This can lead to serious health problems. Uncontrolled stress raises blood pressure, suppresses the immune system, increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes, contributes to infertility, and speeds up the aging process. The first step to improving emotional intelligence is to learn how to manage stress.

Emotional Intelligence affects your mental health. Uncontrolled emotions and stress can also impact your mental health, making you vulnerable to anxiety and depression. You'll struggle to form strong relationships if you cannot understand, get comfortable with, or manage your emotions. This, in turn, can leave you feeling lonely and isolated and further exacerbate any mental health problems.

Emotional Intelligence affects your relationships. By understanding your emotions and how to control them, you can better express how you feel and understand how others are feeling. This allows you to communicate more effectively and forge stronger relationships at work and in your personal life.

Emotional Intelligence affects your social intelligence. Being in tune with your emotions serves a social purpose, connecting you to others and the world around you. Social intelligence enables you to recognize friend from foe, measure another person's interest in you, reduce stress, balance your nervous system through social communication, and feel loved and happy.

Building Emotional Intelligence: 4 Key Skills to Increasing Your EQ

The skills that make up emotional intelligence can be learned at any time. However, it's important to remember that there is a difference between simply learning about EQ and applying that knowledge to your life. Just because you know you should do something doesn't mean you will—especially when you become overwhelmed by stress, which can override your best intentions. To permanently change behaviour in ways that stand up under pressure, you must learn how to overcome stress at the moment and in your relationships and remain emotionally aware.

The critical skills for building your EQ and improving your ability to manage emotions and connect with others are:

1. Self-management
2. Self-awareness
3. Social awareness
4. Relationship management

Emotional Intelligence Skills and Competencies

Competency	Skill Area	Description
Personal	Self-awareness	Knowing one's self
	Self-regulation	Managing one's self
	Motivation	Sentiments and passions that facilitate the attainment of goals
Social	Empathy	Understanding of others and compassion toward them
	Social skills	Expertise in inspiring others to be in agreement

Chapter 9 Exercise 2: Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessments

Complete the Emotional Intelligence self-assessment test.

Review your EI score and reflect on your findings.

9.4 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

Now that we understand the importance of remaining calm when resolving a workplace conflict let's utilize script writing and role-playing to resolve a workplace conflict at Runners Relay.

The Scenario: A Calm Approach

The Company:

Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Roman Stanski (They/Them): Sales Associate

Penn Livington (They/Them): Administrative Assistant

The Scenario:

The Sales department at Runners Relay is having trouble keeping up with the demand for the newest running shoes. Roman Stanski, Sales Associate, is relying on Penn Livington, Administrative Assistant, to process their orders in the system, as Roman needs to focus on sales and doesn't have time for administrative work.

Penn has assisted Roman with their sales orders for the past two months. Penn was provided very little training on order entry, but they are doing their best. Roman expects Penn to keep up with the daily sales orders and ensure they are entered into the system each day before Penn leaves work. Penn often leaves a few sales orders on their desk before heading home, knowing they can enter the orders into the system first thing in the morning.

Roman walked by Penn's desk at the end of the day and noticed Penn had gone home but a small pile of sales orders remain on their desk. Roman couldn't believe Penn would go home knowing some sales orders were not entered into the system. Roman must meet with Penn in the morning to deal with this issue.

Employee Observations:

"I know Penn hates entering sales orders, as they told me they are bored with the whole process."

"I don't want to be around when Roman realizes that Penn isn't entering the sales orders each day before heading home; Roman is going to be furious."

The First Conversation:

Roman didn't sleep well last night, just thinking about the mess at work. When Roman woke up, they were so angry they drove to work early to confront Penn as soon as they walked through the front door.

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
> https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=928#h5p-30

Roman: (looking at their watch) Good morning, Penn. I see that you finally made it to work.

Penn: Roman, what are you doing here so early? You usually don't come into the office until the late afternoon.

Roman: I had to make an exception today to speak to you. I am so upset right now I don't know where to begin.

Penn: Well, this isn't how I thought my morning was going to start. You appear to be angry. Are you angry at me?

Roman: I am so frustrated right now. Yesterday afternoon, I walked by your desk and noticed you left a pile of sales orders on it. Since when do we leave sales orders to process the next day?

Penn: You are the one that trained me, if you want to call it training. You never mentioned that I had to enter every sales order on the same day. Am I supposed to guess what you are thinking?

Roman: (Pacing the room) This is classic. I am to blame for this mess. I can't believe you.

Penn: Roman, you don't look so good. Maybe you should sit down and calm down.

Roman: (Yelling loudly) I don't want to sit down. I want to discuss the sales orders.

Penn: Roman, this is hardly a discussion. I am not happy with you and how you are speaking with me right now. I am here to support your work, and you are yelling at me. You are my trainer. Try looking in the mirror if you want to know who to blame for all of this. I'm done here, and I am going to speak with Anna in HR about all of this. I am not going to be treated this way.

Roman: (Yelling at Penn as they walk away down the hall) You go ahead and speak with Anna after you enter the sales orders from yesterday, and never leave work without entering the sales orders from that day!

The Exercise:

Identify – any concerns with the way Roman handled their conversation with Penn. Did Roman display emotional intelligence and lead the conversation calmly? Explain.

Next Steps

- Penn stopped by to speak with Anna, the HR Manager at Runners Relay. Penn was highly offended by Roman's reaction today. Penn asked Anna if she would assign the sales orders to someone else, as Penn doesn't want to work with Roman.

Coaching Notes:

Anna calls Roman into her office when Penn returns to their desk. Anna reviews the topic of emotional intelligence with Roman and the importance of approaching conversations like this in a calm manner. Anna's conversation with Roman includes:

- Emotional Intelligence (EI) helps you to understand your own emotions before starting a conversation.
- If you are frustrated, agitated or angry, it is best to have the conversation later when you have time to calm down.
- Never start a conversation when you are upset, as it will only make the situation worse.
- Taking the time to calm yourself down is encouraged.
- Presenting a calm demeanour in conversation allows the other person to share their thoughts and feelings without fear of being yelled at or challenged.
- Even if the other person in the conversation displays anger or frustration, focus on remaining calm.
- It is helpful to focus on the facts rather than on the person.

The Recommended Conversation:

Roman will meet with Penn to review the processing of sales orders. You are going into this meeting self-aware and focused on remaining calm throughout the conversation with Penn.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=928#h5p-31

Roman: Hi, Penn; I owe you an apology for my conduct in our first conversation. Would you be willing to sit down with me to discuss the sales order entry process?

Penn: If you plan on yelling at me again, you can forget it.

Roman: No, there won't be any yelling. I want to discuss this professionally and calmly.

Penn: Okay, but I am walking out the door if you get angry.

Roman: That is more than fair. I was surprised when you said that to me, and then I started to think about our training sessions. I handed you a pile of sales orders and told you where to enter them into the system. That is hardly a training session.

Penn: This whole thing is your fault. I don't even know about the "same-day processing" rule until today.

Roman: That is on me. I should have provided you with written instructions in addition to training sessions. I sincerely apologize. Would you consider supporting me by entering the sales orders if I provide you with the proper training starting tomorrow?

Penn: Exactly. I wasn't provided with any computer training. I don't even know if I was entering the orders correctly.

Roman: Absolutely. I will prepare the training documents today and see you tomorrow morning.

Penn: I will help you if you promise to train me properly.

Roman: Thanks for supporting me, Penn. I appreciate your help.

The Exercise:

Discuss – In this second discussion, has Roman found a way to check his emotional intelligence and calmly go into the conversation with Penn? Explain.

9.5 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You have learned the benefit of addressing conflict calmly and being in touch with your emotional intelligence. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read – the following case study. Create a script that demonstrates your ability to resolve a workplace issue with a calm approach.

The Company:

Training for Tomorrow, Inc.

The People:

Ayanna Zola (She/Her) Human Resources Manager

Marco Giovanni (He/Him) Training Consultant

The Scenario:

Training for Tomorrow has been in business for five years and specializes in new employee orientation programs, focusing on safety and legal compliance. Ayanna Zola is the Human Resources Manager at Training for Tomorrow.

Yesterday, Ayanna received a call from an angry customer. The customer stated that Marco Giovanni, one of the training consultants, didn't show up yesterday for the scheduled training session at the customer's facility in Toronto. The customer wants to cancel their contract with Training for Tomorrow and be reimbursed for the costs associated with the lost training day, including food, travel expenses for their offsite workers, and rental fees for the media equipment.

This is the first time you have heard of Marco's absence yesterday. You ran into Marco in the cafeteria this morning, and he didn't mention that he missed a training session. How can Ayanna's day get any worse? She just terminated an employee for ongoing attendance issues, and she needs to hire three new trainers in the next week to keep up with their growing business. Ayanna isn't feeling well, is exhausted from her workload, and has no patience to deal with this customer complaint.

Employee Observations and Customer Observations:

"We will never work with Training for Tomorrow again. They are completely unreliable."

"Marco didn't even show up for our training session yesterday. We had offsite employees travel to attend the new employee training session, and then we had to cancel it. Unbelievable."

The Conversation:

This conversation is between you and Marco. You are playing the role of Ayanna, the HR Manager at Training for Tomorrow, Inc. You are leading the conversation with Marco. Don't forget to check your emotional intelligence before going into this conversation, and be sure to remain calm during your discussion regardless what Marco says to you.

Your script should be at least one minute long when you read it out loud.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=930#h5p-15*

The Exercise:

Discuss — Were you able to remain calm during your conversation with Marco? How did you stay calm when pressured to hire more staff, deal with the upset customer, and now deal with Marco's performance? Explain.

9.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Verbal communication is one way of expressing your observations, thoughts, feelings and needs.
- Ensure you are providing supportive messages rather than unsupportive messages.
- Non-verbal communication can be helpful if it includes direct eye contact, indicating you are listening to the speaker.
- Non-verbal communication can be challenging if it includes sitting with your arms crossed in front of you, which can be seen as closed body language.
- Emotional Intelligence, or EI allows you to determine if you are too upset to enter into a conversation.
- Presenting a calm approach in a difficult conversation makes the other person feel safe.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 9, reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Can you identify forms of verbal and non-verbal communication used in conflict resolution?
2. Do you understand the meaning of emotional intelligence and the importance of remaining calm in conflict?
3. Have you practiced remaining calm in a challenging workplace scenario?

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 9 Exercise 1
- Chapter 9 Exercise 2

CHAPTER 10: THE ROLE OF INVESTIGATIONS IN WORKPLACE CONFLICT

Chapter Overview

10.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

★ Learning Outcomes

- Identify the role of investigations in workplace conflict resolution.
- Discuss the role of empowerment when assisting employees in resolving their workplace conflicts.
- Apply employee empowerment to a workplace scenario.

10.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

📄 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=1062#oembed-1*

Video: "AngelaJones NavigatingHR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [5:00] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Angela Jones, Human Resources Manager
Company	Municipality of Middlesex Centre
How Does Conflict Occur?	Three main sources of workplace conflict are communication and communication channels, personality differences, and role ambiguity or workload imbalance.
HR Skills Needed	Active listening, empathy, problem-solving and mediation.
The Goal of Conflict Resolution	HR professionals need to get to the root cause of the problem in order to find a solution. Don't focus on symptoms but on the cause.

10.2 THE LESSON: THE ROLE OF INVESTIGATIONS IN A WORKPLACE CONFLICT

In Chapter 9, we studied verbal and non-verbal communication skills that support conflict resolution in the workplace. In Chapter 10, we are going to look at the importance of investigations and documentation for a Human Resources professional when handling specific workplace conflicts.

The Duty to Investigate

As a Human Resources professional, you need to understand when you are required to conduct a formal workplace investigation. Employees will bring forward

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concerns, disagreements and complaints on varying topics. Whether a formal investigation is required or not, it is important to take each concern seriously, document the concern, address the matter in a timely fashion, and maintain confidentiality.

Formal Investigations

The Occupational Health and Safety Act requires an employer to conduct a formal workplace investigation when there is a complaint or incident that involves workplace harassment, such as bullying, intimidation, harassment or sexual harassment. The Occupational Health and Safety Act requires an employer to publish a policy and procedure that addresses workplace harassment and includes a description of the steps that will be taken to address a harassment complaint.

In addition to the requirements outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, employers may have a policy that outlines instances that require a formal investigation, such as any instance involving company finances. Let's look at the steps in a formal workplace investigation.

Training

While this textbook will provide you with a high-level overview of the steps in the investigation process, for the purpose of conducting internal workplace investigations, ensure your organization has at least one individual who is formally trained to conduct workplace investigations and maintain proof of this training on file. In addition, employers should seek legal advice when handling workplace investigations to ensure legal compliance. Two examples of formal workplace investigation training programs include HRPA's Workplace Investigations Training and Certificate Program and the Osgoode Advanced Certificate in Workplace Investigations.

Here are the links to both training programs:

- Osgoode Advanced Certificate in Workplace Investigations
- Workplace Investigations Training and Certificate Program

Preparing for a Workplace Investigation

It is best to establish a plan before starting a workplace investigation. The plan should include a review of the resources needed to complete the investigation. If the investigation will require travel to more than one location, you may need to ask for additional support. There is no way of knowing what kind of investigation it will be. In some cases, the investigation may be lengthy and complicated, resulting in a formal report that will be read by upper management, provided to a government agency such as the Ministry of Labour, or submitted for review in a court case. On the other hand, a workplace investigation may be brief and straightforward, resulting in a review of procedural compliance.

Objectives of the Investigation

There are several objectives when conducting a workplace investigation:

- Determine what happened with respect to an incident.
- Determine who was involved in the incident.
- Determine the events surrounding the incident.
- Determine if there is evidence to support a claim of workplace misconduct.
- Determine if there was a violation of company policy and procedures, a breach of compliance or a

violation of the law.

- Complete a thorough investigation that can withstand scrutiny.

Evidence

Gathering good evidence is the purpose of any investigation. It is the quality of evidence collected in an investigation that allows an investigator to make a prudent and wise conclusion. There are many different types of evidence that an investigator can collect, and it is important that an investigator be able to separate key pieces of evidence from extraneous evidence.

What is Evidence?

Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines evidence as "anything that helps to prove that something is or is not true."

When we hear the term evidence, we tend to think of what we have seen on television and in movies—physical evidence picked up by hands in latex gloves and placed in clear plastic bags. This is not necessarily the case in a workplace investigation; the most pertinent evidence will most often be the oral evidence given by the involved parties or witnesses. Sometimes, there will be documentary evidence such as records, files, and documents, and occasionally, physical evidence like video recordings.

Evidence may take various forms:

1. Testimony from interviews
2. Documents- files, records, documents, emails
3. Physical evidence, e.g. social media post screenshots, ruined products, video recording

Notifications

Parties involved in the investigation should be notified that an investigation will occur. The first step is to ensure that all the people who will be questioned as part of the investigation have been identified. Additional participants may be identified as the investigation unfolds, and the investigator will go through the same notification process.

Parties to the Investigation

Complainant. The person(s) who has/have made a complaint or has/have accused someone of a wrongdoing. In some cases, this will be the organization itself.

A complainant may be another employee, which is common with harassment, discrimination, and bullying complaints. The complainant may also be the organization in cases of misconduct, which will be represented

by the supervisor or manager. Managers and supervisors may not view themselves as "complainants" as they will simply consider themselves a managers informing human resources of suspected wrongdoing. For the purposes of this text, the organization representative – whether it be a supervisor, manager, or human resources – will be viewed as either the complainant or witness in the investigative process.

Respondent: The person(s) who have had a complaint(s) made against them.

Occasionally, there is more than one respondent in a complaint. If the issues are related, the investigator may conduct one investigation, but where the issues are different, there may need to be separate investigations for each unique issue.

Witness: "Someone who sees, knows or vouches for something."

An investigator may have a list of witnesses provided to them based upon the complaint. If the complaint is an individual(s) they may provide a list of witnesses in the original complaint. If the complainant is the organization itself, there may already be a list of witnesses that a supervisor or manager identifies. In the event that the organization is the complainant, the supervisor or manager may also be a witness to the issue.

Witnesses may have seen firsthand or overheard the incident, or they may have responsibility for something that is relevant to a complaint (for instance, in the case of suspected fraudulent expense claims, the person responsible for processing those claims may be a helpful witness).

Confidentiality

Maintaining the confidentiality of workplace investigations is imperative for the Human Resources profession. An interviewee will question why they must maintain confidentiality about the process when the investigator will share the investigation results with management. The investigator's role is to collect, synthesize and communicate the evidence and findings to the employer. Information received by the investigator is not held to the same standard of confidentiality as the interviewee since it is accepted that what is shared with the investigator will be passed on to management. However, the content of the interviews must be limited to those who need to know to deal with the issue. The information collected by the investigator must not be broadly shared in the organization. In addition, unless required by organizational policy and/or law, the investigator will not provide their investigative notes of the interview to others, only the final report.

The Interview Process

Once notifications have been sent out and the investigator has prepared their opening statement and questions, the interview process can begin. It may be a formal investigative interview that requires extensive preparation, or it may be a more informal interview which can be conducted shortly after an incident.

The Interview

Ideally, investigative interviews should be conducted face-to-face. This allows the investigator to meet the person and develop some rapport. It also enables the investigator to watch for visual clues during the interview that might indicate that the person is uncomfortable or does not understand a question or other body language and facial signals that can help conduct the interview.

If face-to-face interviews are not possible, then conducting them over video chat may be considered. Conducting a video interview using tools such as Skype, Teams, or Google Meet is a good alternative to face-to-face interviews.

Telephone interviews may be conducted if face-to-face or video chat is not possible, remembering that the participant may have support people accompany them to the interview. The arrangements must allow for their attendance. The interviewer will not benefit from observing the person's body language or facial expressions in a telephone interview.

The investigator should ask if any accommodation needs are required before the interview. These could include an interpreter or using a meeting room that is accessible for those with mobility challenges.

Interview Steps

Below are the standard steps in an interview. This is simply a suggested template; the investigator may want to adapt and alter the steps to suit the situation. Ideally, the investigation will begin with interviewing the complainant, after which the investigator may be required to gather additional evidence or information. The next individual to be interviewed is normally the respondent, and lastly, witnesses.

1. Standard Opening
2. Housekeeping Questions
3. Investigative Questions
4. Interview Closing
5. Review Interview Notes
6. Interviewee signs off on Notes

The Standard Opening. The investigator will deliver a standard opening for the various parties to the investigation, whether the complainant, respondent, or witness. The opening will review the following:

- Introduction of parties
- Rapport building
- Purpose

- Establishing ground rules
- Confidentiality
- Retaliation

Housekeeping Questions are designed to help the interviewee feel more comfortable and get talking. They are easily answered and do not require much effort. Housekeeping questions may include confirming the participant's name, job title, and length of time working for the employer.

Investigative Questions. These questions are open-ended and designed to get to the issues. They will focus on what the person saw, heard, or experienced firsthand. If the interviewee has previously provided a written statement, the investigator may ask for them to "re-tell" what happened and note if there are any variances from the original written statement. It is important for the interviewer to let the person talk and practice good active listening skills (nodding the head, smiling, etc.).

Interview Closing. The investigator should close off by asking the interviewee if they have anything else they would like to share, or if they have any questions. They may be surprised by what an interviewee will share; it could be something the interviewer completely overlooked. The investigator can then thank the individual for their time and advise them that should additional information be needed they will be contacted for an additional interview or conversation. The interviewee should be provided contact information for the investigator should they want to add anything to the information provided in the interview. The investigator will then advise the interviewee that they will be required to review the notes that the investigator has taken and sign off on their content.

Review the Interview Notes. At the end of an interview, the interview notes, whether typed or handwritten, should be shared with the interviewee. The person should be given the opportunity to read over the notes and make any corrections or edits that they feel are required before they sign off that the notes are an accurate description of their responses. The interviewer needs to advise the interviewee that any edits or changes may be noted by the investigator. This protects the original text from variation. If the person reads their statements and then regrets making the statement and wants to change it after the fact, the interviewer can allow them to change the statement but note the original text and what the person changed.

Interviewee Signs Off on the Notes. The investigator should include the following statement at the bottom of the notes: "The above X-page statement is given freely and is a true and accurate account of the events regarding the incident I observed. I have read the statement fully prior to signing."

Depending upon the organization's policies and procedures, the investigator may be required to provide a copy of the statement to the interviewee or the union if applicable. Depending upon the organization most investigators will also be required to sign the statement.

More on Interview Notes

An investigator should take notes during the interview; however, it is really up to them how they choose to take notes. Some investigators will use a notepad with removable pages, while others will prefer a bound notebook to reduce the possibility of pages being removed. Some investigators prefer to use a laptop to type their notes during the interview. This is ideal for those who can type quickly and accurately.

Whichever method of note-taking is used, the investigator needs to capture what the person said, not what the investigator thought that the person said. Notes should be written so the average person can understand what occurred in the investigation. The investigator should try to avoid using their own form of shorthand, using abbreviations or other time-saving shortcuts. It is important that the investigator does not exaggerate or interpret any statements; they are writing out exactly what the interviewee said. It is vital that the investigator NOT put their own impressions, opinions or comments into the notes. The investigator should not have comments in the margin that state their opinion, such as "this person is obviously lying" or "cannot trust what this person says."

An investigator may make "memos to file," which are personal notes about what an interviewee changed. The memo to file does not get signed by the interviewee but is a personal note by the investigator; it may be written in the first or third person.

Reporting

Depending upon the nature of the investigation, there may be different reporting requirements at its conclusion. In less formal investigations, the conclusion of the investigation may be a meeting with human resources, the manager and the investigator to discuss the findings. Findings are the conclusions the investigator has made after looking into the incident; they are the outcome of the investigation. Findings in a less formal investigation may be captured in an email to management or noted in an investigation or employee file. It is recommended that some written records of the findings be made.

There may be more rigorous reporting requirements in a more formal investigation. This may include a requirement for a formal report to be prepared at the end of the investigation that will be shared with management, human resources, and the union (if applicable). The investigative report will provide a summary of the investigation, an account of how the investigation was conducted, evidence provided, and findings.

Investigative Reports

If we recall the objectives of the investigation:

- Determine what happened with respect to an incident.

- Determine who was involved in the incident.
- Determine the events surrounding the incident.
- Determine if there is evidence to support a claim of misconduct.
- Determine if there was a violation of company policy and procedures, a breach of compliance or a violation of the law.
- Complete a thorough and complete investigation that can withstand scrutiny.

The investigator aims to answer all of these questions: the who, what, where, when, how and possibly why questions. The investigative report captures this information and puts it into a concise format for the employer to review the investigation results. Depending upon the nature of the investigation, the report may be a simple one-page email, the notes taken at a meeting, or a comprehensive report. For this text, we will look at a more thorough report that the investigator can edit or reduce for the specific type of investigation conducted.

10.3 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

Empowerment

Empowerment is the process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d).

The Art of Empowerment

For Human Resources professionals, it is helpful to utilize empowerment skills to help employees gain confidence in addressing workplace disagreements. Let's discover the meaning of empowerment and the techniques to empower our employees.

Is it essential to provide employees with the skills to discuss workplace disagreements before they escalate into a workplace conflict? At times, employees will face challenging situations and benefit from having the confidence to address these challenges and disputes as

"Empower" by Nick Youngson, CC BY-SA 3.0

they arise. The goal is to provide employees with the skills to navigate workplace challenges today and going forward.

What May Lead to a Workplace Disagreement?

Communication Style: Some employees expect a face-to-face meeting with other employees and are annoyed when they receive an email instead.

Personalities: Everyone approaches work differently. Some individuals are very loud and may work beside quiet individuals. A very quiet employee may be annoyed by a loud, outspoken individual.

Work Style: Some employees like brainstorming ideas and developing a plan, while others dive directly into their work without a plan. Employees who like to plan their work may have difficulty working on a team project with a non-planner.

The Importance of Self-Awareness

Self-Awareness

Conscious knowledge of one's own character, thoughts, emotions, etc.

To empower an employee, it is essential to emphasize self-awareness. The Oxford English Dictionary describes self-awareness as a "Conscious knowledge of one's character, thoughts, emotions, etc." Helping an employee become aware of their own thoughts and emotions and understand they are working with other employees who have their own thoughts and emotions is a good place to begin. We seldom reflect on the real reason; an email versus a face-to-face conversation upsets us.

Empowerment at Work

Empowerment is the act of releasing control to another person or group of people to make decisions and choose the outcome. Empowerment is a give-and-take situation. One person or group of people relinquishes control over the situation, while the other person or group of people gains the power and authority to control the situation. Empowerment provides a person with a sense of control over their fate.

In the business world, empowerment is a staple required for good management practices. Empowerment enables the employee to gain control over their destiny, resulting in better performance and productivity. Empowerment provides employees with job enrichment and learning opportunities that can benefit not only the manager but also the organization as a whole.

To strengthen our understanding of empowerment in the business context, let us take a closer look at the concept of empowerment within organizations.

Organizations and Empowerment

In organizations, most people think of empowerment as the act of a manager or person of authority granting power to another person. However, this description is only one part of empowerment. Empowerment requires a manager to release control while a person seizes the opportunity and takes control of the situation. Empowerment requires a person to take the initiative and have the desire to step in and make decisions in the best interest of the organization. Both parties have to actively participate in the releasing and gaining of power in order for empowerment to be successful. Empowerment often begins with a person being proactive but also requires the manager to support employee empowerment.

⊚ Examples

In order to solidify your understanding of empowerment in an organization, let us review some concrete examples of employee empowerment.

- John works for a medium-sized accounting company. His current job function is a junior level accountant, but he desires to work his way up to be a senior-level accountant. Instead of John waiting for his manager to approach him about his future career path, John feels empowered to initiate a conversation regarding his future career goals with his manager. John presents a career plan and asks for his manager's help in outlining what skills and experience he needs in order to be a senior-level accountant. John sets a timeline for his goal and asks his manager to include this in his employee development plan.
- Working for a large IT company, Sophia is responsible for leading a team of Web developers. She often has to hire new developers as new projects arise. Instead of taking on the sole responsibility for soliciting and interviewing new candidates, Sophia asks for volunteers from her team to share this hiring responsibility. Two members of her team volunteer to be a part of the hiring team. These two candidates are empowered by this opportunity, welcoming the increased responsibility to determine the newest member of the team.
- Kelly works as a teller at a local bank. She is responsible for handling daily customer transactions, including bank deposits, check cashing, and cashier checks for personal accounts. One day, a commercial teller decides to leave the bank in order to pursue another job opportunity. This act opens up a commercial teller position at the bank. Kelly takes advantage of the opportunity and tells her boss that she can juggle both her job and the commercial teller job until someone is hired for the position. Kelly's empowerment enables her to learn a new position, demonstrate her willingness to help the team and be flexible.

Empowerment is a sought-after management practice. Empowerment enables a person to think, act, behave, and make decisions in independent ways. In the modern business world, employees wanting to have control over their lives and have a say in day-to-day decisions require empowerment. Employees no longer want to sit back and wait for their manager to tell them what to do; they want to be a part of determining their own fate as well as the company's fate.

Next, we will explore ways an organization's culture influences employee empowerment.

Organization's Culture and Employee Empowerment

An organization's culture can significantly influence employee empowerment. If the culture is rigid, structured, and risk-adverse, an employee may feel discouraged to take control or initiate decision-making. Managers may be unwilling to let go of control, presenting a threat to employees who want to take on risks and challenges. In this type of stifling culture, employees learn to give up and let go of their desire to be empowered, or they opt to leave the company in pursuit of an empowering culture.

Many people think of traits such as openness, adventurousness, flexibility, and acceptance to describe an organization's culture that supports empowered employees. Under these conditions, employees feel energized and encouraged to act in empowered ways. The employees trust that the organization is going to support their underlying desire to control their fate and contribute to the organization's success. It is up to the organization to remove barriers that prohibit employees from stepping out and taking charge.

Many times, a manager's role changes in an employee-empowered organization. In this type of environment, people no longer view managers as the primary decision-makers or ones with sole discretionary power. Managers take on the roles of coaches, mentors, facilitators, catalysts, and advisors. Managers in an empowered culture may lose their identity as authority and power figures, but they may also gain their identity in shaping and developing people around them. As managers transition into these new roles, an organization's culture changes to permit employees to act in empowered ways.

Finally, we are going to investigate the importance of employee empowerment in organizations.

Importance of Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment gives people a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in determining their work destiny. As employees feel more satisfied, they become more efficient and effective at their jobs. These feelings fuel the organization's ability to increase performance and productivity, resulting in increased profitability. Employee empowerment positively influences the very thing most businesses are trying to improve: their bottom line.

In addition, empowerment builds strong leaders. Employees permitted to take on decision-making and problem-solving responsibilities are able to advance their leadership skills. For example, employees volunteering to lead special workgroups are able to practice problem-solving and decision-making, which expands their leadership capabilities. Empowerment provides employees with the freedom to grow and develop as facilitators, coaches, mentors, advisors, trainers, and, eventually, leaders.

The significance of empowerment cannot be overlooked by organizations in today's world. Every business strives to become more creative, efficient, productive, and profitable. Every business needs leaders. Empowering employees enables organizations to accomplish these goals and achieve long-term success.

Summary:

- By definition, empowerment is giving another person or group of people the power to decide and choose the outcome.
- Empowerment is not reactive but proactive, allowing a person to take charge of decision-making and problem-solving.
- Empowerment is a sought-after management practice because employees in the modern business world want to control their lives and have a say in day-to-day decisions.
- An organization's culture can significantly influence employee empowerment.
- Employees may feel discouraged from stepping up and taking control if an organization's culture is too rigid, structured, and risk-averse.
- A culture should be open, adventurous, flexible, and accepting to encourage employees to act empowered.
- Managers lose their traditional authority identities in a culture where employees are empowered and become coaches, mentors, facilitators, catalysts, and advisors.
- Employee empowerment positively influences an organization's performance, productivity, and profitability by making employees happier.
- Empowerment builds strong leaders by enabling employees to improve their decision-making and problem-solving skills.

10.4 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

Now that we understand the importance of using empowerment to resolve workplace conflict, let's use script writing and role-playing to resolve a workplace conflict at Runners Relay.

The Scenario: An Empowered Approach

The Company:

Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Svetlana Antonov (She/Her): Production Associate Day Shift

Mikael Carlson (They/Them): Production Associate Day Shift

The Scenario:

Svetlana works on the day shift at Runners Relay and enjoys working with her co-workers. Lately, however, one of her co-workers, Mikael, has started annoying Svetlana. Mikael has started returning from their morning and afternoon breaks and cleaning their work area.

While everyone is responsible for keeping their area clean, most employees do their housekeeping at the end of the shift. Mikael is constantly in the way, and Svetlana can't get her work done, so Mikael tries to sweep the floor under her.

Svetlana decides to speak with Anna in Human Resources as she wants Anna to talk to Mikael about the constant housekeeping. Enough is enough.

Employee Observations:

"I can tell that Svetlana is tired of Mikael. Every time I see her, she is cursing Mikael's name."

"Mikael is acting like they are the only people who work in the production area. Sweeping while others are trying to do their work is annoying, to say the least."

The First Conversation:

Svetlana notices Mikael coming back from break time and decides now is the time to let them know how she is feeling.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=984#h5p-32*

Svetlana: (yelling out loud) Hey Mikael, where is your broom?

Mikael: Excuse me. What are you going on about?

Svetlana: You know exactly what I am talking about, Mikael. You return to our workstation every day after your break and start sweeping and cleaning.

Mikael: What are you, my boss? Mind your own business, Svetlana.

Svetlana: If I were your boss, you would clean your work area like the rest of us at the end of our shift.

Mikael: Why do you care if I clean as I work?

Svetlana: You are in my way. You are in everyone's way. There is a reason we do housekeeping at the end of the shift, Mikael. No one is working in the area, so we can clean without interrupting people while they are working. Did you ever think of that?

Mikael: As long as the cleaning gets done, it doesn't matter when we clean.

Svetlana: I don't know why I bother talking to you. Never mind.

The Exercise:

Identify – any concerns with the way Svetlana handled her conversation with Mikael. As they are equals, both working on the day shift as Production Associates, is there anything wrong with what Svetlana said to Mikael? Could Svetlana have handled this differently? Explain.

Next Steps

Svetlana stops by to meet with Anna in Human Resources. Svetlana asks Anna to meet with Mikael and tell them that they have to clean the work area at the end of the shift like everyone else. While Anna realizes this is a critical topic to Svetlana, this is an excellent opportunity to empower Svetlana to resolve this work style disagreement with Mikael. Anna will do her due diligence and inform the day shift supervisor of the scenario, make notes on this matter to add to their employee files, and set a date to follow up with Svetlana to ensure the matter has been resolved. Anna decides to sit with Svetlana and empower her to settle her disagreement with Mikael.

Coaching Notes:

Anna explained to Svetlana that she could address her disagreement with Mikael regarding their work style. Anna assured Svetlana that she would inform their supervisor of the scenario. Still, she wants Svetlana to meet with Mikael and address this concern to build her skills and abilities when working with co-workers. Anna reviews the following coaching notes with Svetlana before asking her to meet with Mikael to discuss their housekeeping routine.

- Be self-aware and acknowledge your own emotions on this topic.
- Consider the reason Mikael might be cleaning throughout the shift rather than at the end of the shift.
- Understand that while this is a work style disagreement today, it could evolve into a workplace conflict if it isn't addressed quickly.
- Reinforce that Svetlana has the communication skills to speak with Mikael calmly and share with Mikael the reason this constant cleaning is upsetting her.
- Encourage Svetlana to ask Mikael questions such as "Why do you clean the work area after every break?" to understand the other person's reasoning.
- While housekeeping is a critical practice, there isn't a policy or a procedure that outlines when employees must clean.
- Help Svetlana understand the importance of establishing an agreed-upon cleaning schedule with Mikael.
- Encourage Svetlana to report back to Anna to advise if the agreed-upon work style solution is working for everyone.

The Recommended Conversation:

Having met with Anna for a coaching session and feeling empowered to solve her disagreement about Mikael's work style over the cleaning schedule, Svetlana decided to meet with Mikael and address the issue. Let's see if Svetlana feels empowered to solve this workplace disagreement independently.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=984#h5p-33*

Svetlana: (at the end of the shift) Mikael, could I speak with you before you leave for home?

Mikael: Sure, should we talk here?

Svetlana: No, let's find a quiet place in the front office.

Mikael: We can use the training room. Will that work?

Svetlana: Sure.

Mikael: Okay, let's see if the training room is free. (Svetlana and Mikael walk to the office).

Svetlana: This is perfect; there is no one here. Let's sit down and chat.

Mikael: Sounds good; what do you want to talk about?

Svetlana: Mikael, I want to discuss our cleaning schedule with you.

Mikael: Okay, what about it?

Svetlana: Well, when the rest of the team on the day shift goes on break, we all come back to work and start making running shoes. When you return from break, you start sweeping under our feet, and we can't finish our work.

Mikael: I didn't realize I was bothering the team. I like the work area to be clean at all times. I can't focus or work when things are messy.

Svetlana: It happens every day, and we can't stand it. We want to help you clean, but it needs to be done at the end of the shift, not during the change. We all have work to do.

Mikael: I can't wait until the end of the day. What if I return to the workstation before everyone else arrives and quickly sweep the area so I can work and not bother anyone else?

Svetlana: That would work just fine. If I arrive back at the workstation a few minutes early, I will help you sweep now that I understand how important it is to you.

Mikael: I really appreciate that, Svetlana. Thanks for the talk!

The Exercise:

Discuss — In this second discussion, did Svetlana feel empowered to resolve this workplace disagreement with Mikael? Explain.

10.5 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

As a Human Resources professional, you have learned the benefit of empowering your employees to solve their workplace disagreements. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read – the following Case Study and create a script utilizing empowerment to resolve this workplace disagreement.

The Company:

Sleep Time Pillows

At Sleep Time Pillows, a manufacturer of quality pillows, the staff believe in providing exceptional customer service and fulfilling their customer orders on time.

The People:

Monika Finn (She/Her) – Day Shift Production Associate
Charles Bram (He/Him) – Day Shift Production Associate

The Scenario:

Every day at 7:00 AM, there is a team meeting to discuss Sleep Time Pillows. This morning's meeting will review the daily production numbers and customer orders. Monika and Charles work the day shift and attend the 7:00 AM meeting.

While Charles attends the meeting, Monika notices that Charles stands at the back of the meeting room to hide the fact he is texting on his cell phone during the entire meeting. During the work day, Monika noticed that Charles wasn't focused on fulfilling the priority customer orders.

Yesterday, the day shift team could not complete two priority customer orders. As a result, everyone on the day shift is required to work mandatory overtime this weekend, and everyone on the day shift is furious about the scheduled overtime.

The Conversation:

This conversation is between Monika and Charles. With empowerment in mind, write a script demonstrating Monika's ability to have a discussion with Charles and address his lack of concentration in the morning meetings without involving their supervisor or human resources.

Your script should be at least one minute long when you read it out loud.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=986#h5p-16

The Exercise:

Discuss – Was Monika able to demonstrate empowerment by discussing her concerns with Charles to resolve his lack of focus and turn things around so the day shift team never misses a priority customer order again? Explain.

10.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- It is crucial to ensure that one person in your organization is formally trained in conducting workplace investigations.
- As a Human Resources professional, it is essential to seek legal advice when addressing workplace conflicts to ensure legal compliance.
- The Occupational Health and Safety Act mandates that an organization conduct a formal workplace investigation in matters surrounding harassment.
- It is essential to empower employees so they are comfortable addressing disagreements at work.
- Common disagreements at work involve differing work styles, communication styles and personalities.
- Empowerment involves self-awareness of your approach to work based on your thoughts and emotions.
- Employees who feel empowered are more able to resolve disagreements that could lead to workplace conflicts if left unchecked.

◯ Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 10, take some time to reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

1. Can you identify the role of investigations in workplace conflict resolution?
2. Are you able to discuss the role of empowerment when assisting employees resolve their own workplace conflicts?
3. Can you apply employee empowerment to a workplace scenario?

CHAPTER 11: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Chapter Overview

11.0 Learning Outcomes

11.1 Fanshawe HR Graduate on Conflict at Work

11.2 The Lesson: Navigating the Difficult Conversation

11.3 Spotlight on Human Resources Skills

11.4 Case Study: Runners Relay Ltd.

11.5 Apply Your Knowledge

11.6 Chapter Summary

11.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

⊛ **Learning Objectives**

- Identify best practices in planned and unplanned difficult conversations.
- Explain the meaning and importance of psychological safety at work.
- Apply psychological safety practices to a workplace scenario.

11.1 FANSHAWE HR GRADUATE ON CONFLICT AT WORK

Graduate Perspective

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Video: "CaitlinHumeston NavigatingHR" by Fanshawe OER Design Studio [4:30] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Name	Caitlin Humeston, HR Coordinator
Company	Recycling Company
How Does Conflict Occur?	Conflict occurs because of poor communication, role ambiguity, lack of transparency, and unfair treatment.
HR Skills Needed	Active listening, asking questions and taking notes. Good communication skills and knowing when to use different communication methods is also important. Empathy and mediation are skills that are necessary for HR professionals.
The Goal of Conflict Resolution	The goal is to mitigate misunderstandings, role ambiguity, and perceived unfairness in the workplace.

11.2 THE LESSON: NAVIGATING THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

In Chapter 10, we discussed the importance of investigations, documentation, and confidentiality in the context of workplace conflict. In Chapter 11, we will examine best practices for planned and unplanned difficult conversations and ways to support psychological safety at work.

The Difficult Conversation

Workplace conflicts are often based on a difference of opinion, approach, or work ethic. Misunderstandings may arise from communication methods such as email. Some employees don't like working with other employees based on their personality types. These are all examples of conflicts that require a conversation, clarification, and agreement on how two parties can move forward without conflict.

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However, there are workplace conflicts that are much more serious in nature and require formal workplace investigations, as outlined in Chapter 10. These conversations might be deemed difficult as there is an expectation that they won't go well. Examples of difficult conversations involve topics such as theft, discrimination, ethics, and harassment.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Get comfortable being uncomfortable?" In Human Resources, uncomfortable situations happen somewhat frequently. We cannot avoid these moments, so it is best to become comfortable dealing with heavy topics and awkward conversations.

There are two kinds of difficult conversations. The first is the planned conversation, in which the Human Resources professional has time to prepare for the upcoming talk. The second is the unplanned conversation, in which the Human Resources professional finds themselves involved in a problematic or heated conversation without warning. Let's take a look at the nuances of both the planned and the unplanned difficult conversation.

The Planned Difficult Conversation

Let's review a few of the most important steps when preparing for and conducting a planned difficult conversation.

- *Act Quickly:* If we recognize that a workplace issue will require a difficult conversation, we should move forward quickly to ensure the matter does not escalate.
- *Be Prepared:* As this is a planned conversation, take the time to prepare by researching the matter and documenting your main talking points. This is not a script; it is a list of key points you want to include in your conversation.
- *The Location and the Time*: What is the best time to meet with the employee(s)? You need to consider their hours of work and ensure you are both free to talk without disruption. What is the best location for your conversation? The location needs to be a work area with a door you can close for confidentiality.
- *Include a Witness*: Whether for safety reasons or to have someone take notes, asking someone to sit in with you during a difficult conversation makes good sense. However, you need to ensure you select the right person. We cannot ask just anyone to join our meeting. It needs to be someone who is held to the same degree of confidentiality, such as a fellow Human Resources professional or the employee's immediate supervisor.
- *Focus on an Understanding*: Rather than expecting the employee you are speaking with to "agree" with you, set your sights on an understanding instead. The individual you are speaking with may not agree with your conversation, but they must "understand" what you are saying and the expectations you have set in place.
- *Documentation and Confidentiality*: You must ensure your conversation is well documented. These notes will be added to the employee's file and, depending on the nature of the issue, could be used in a court of law. Limit discussions regarding the matter to those bound by confidentiality, such as fellow Human Resources personnel or the employee's immediate supervisor.
- *Follow-up Discussion*: Ensure you follow up with each employee to determine if they are following the guidance and expectations you agreed upon in the original meeting.

The Unplanned Difficult Conversation

Human Resources professionals do not always have time to plan and prepare for difficult conversations. Workplace conflicts can arise quickly, and you may encounter an impromptu, challenging conversation. Let's look at how the "steps" differ between a planned and an unplanned difficult conversation.

- *Act Quickly*: When faced with an impromptu, difficult conversation, the element of time is removed. The conversation is imminent, and this is where experience comes in handy. Even though you didn't
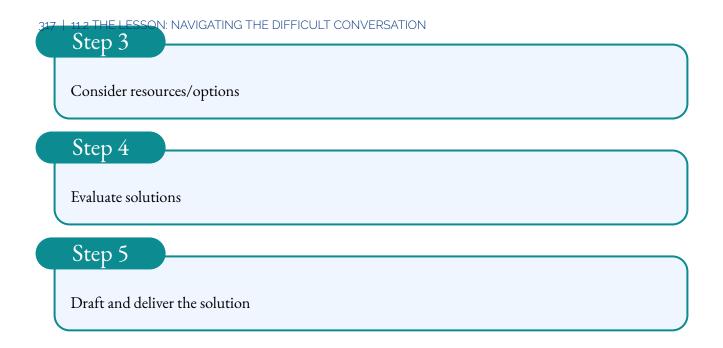
have time to prepare, it is essential to address the issue quickly to ensure the matter does not escalate.

- *Be Prepared.* Just as the element of time has been removed, your ability to research the matter and prepare talking points no longer exists. Perhaps the best way to think about these moments is to embrace the phrase "get comfortable being uncomfortable" and recognize that these impromptu moments will happen.

- *The Location and the Time.* While you may not have time to preplan the meeting place and time, it is still important to quickly move this impromptu meeting to a safe and confidential area. If a conversation starts in a hallway or a training room, take the time to move the conversation to an appropriate location.

- *Include a Witness.* Although you didn't have the option to invite a colleague bound by confidentiality to join you for the difficult conversation, you may need to take a moment to locate the appropriate person to join the talk for safety reasons or to witness the conversation.

- *Focus on an Understanding.* Similar to the planned difficult conversation, there is a chance the employee you are speaking with may not "agree" with your direction, guidance, or expectations. Regardless, it is best to focus on understanding the meeting outcome rather than on an agreement.

- *Documentation and Confidentiality.* There is no difference between the planned and the unplanned difficult conversation regarding documentation and confidentiality. You must ensure the conversation is well documented and the meeting content remains confidential.

- *Follow-up Discussion.* Following up on any difficult conversation, planned or unplanned, is essential. This is an opportunity to answer questions, check on an individual's well-being, and ensure the meeting outcome is followed.

The "FACED" Approach to Difficult Conversations

When preparing for a difficult conversation, it can be helpful to implement the FACED approach. This approach to general problem-solving can be applied to the preparation stage for a difficult conversation.

Step 1

Find the problem

Step 2

Ask, "What is at stake?"

Step 3

Consider resources/options

Step 4

Evaluate solutions

Step 5

Draft and deliver the solution

Step 1: Find the Problem

Not everyone sees problems the same way. According to Booth et al. (2016), a problem can be any situation with an unacceptable cost. Using this understanding, a problem consists of two parts: (1.) a condition that creates an undesirable situation and (2.) the unacceptable cost created by that situation. Since no two people see a problem in the same way, it is essential to take a moment to describe the problem, even if it seems evident to you.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- "What do I know?"
- "What do I not know?"
- "What do I need to know?"

Keep in mind that other people might see the situation differently. Co-workers, clients, or patients might see different intolerable costs. They might also be aware of the various conditions that create the problem. Remember that when communicating about problems, another person's definition of "successful resolution" might look or feel different than your own.

Step 2. Ask "What Is At Stake?"

Once you have a sense of what the problem is, ask why it matters. If you're disinterested in a situation, consider the consequences for yourself or others. This can quickly spark your motivation. If you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious, this step can help you realize that the situation isn't as catastrophic as you instinctively imagined.

Effective communication can prevent, reduce, or resolve many undesirable costs. That's the point of this course.

Miscommunication matters because it so often leads to uncomfortable consequences. Could a misunderstanding cause you to lose time? Money? A relationship? A job opportunity or business contract? Is someone's health at risk? Could a problem be prevented or contained if you clarified communication earlier rather than later? Miscommunications create costs that justify problem-solving action.

If you're not sure what is at stake, try asking these questions to fill out your understanding:

- Are there potential costs? Is something at risk here?
- Are there potential benefits? Does someone stand to gain something?
- Do I need to do some thinking or research to understand better who else is affected?

Remember, it's not all about you! Be empathetic to other people who could be involved. In the case of communication challenges, keep your audience at the forefront of your thinking. Ask yourself what's at stake for the person who will hear or read your message. Use that insight to help you shape the communication solution.

Step 3. Consider Resources/Options

Instead of acting on your first idea, ask yourself, "What could we do?" With this thinking, you're considering as many options as possible. Notice that this is different from asking, "What should we do?"

Silence your critical instincts and open your mind to multiple possibilities. As Gino (2018) writes in the Harvard Business Review, asking "What could we do?" leads to the most innovative outcomes.

If you're unsure how to get started, try relating new information to what you already know. Ask yourself:

- Have I seen this or done this before?
  - Have I seen or done something similar if I have not seen this situation?
  - If I have not seen it, what skills have I used in other situations that might apply here?
- Can I find an example or template to guide me?
  - Do I have a script or a strategy that I can follow?
  - Are any reliable examples available online?
- Do I need peer or expert help?
  - Is there an expert, supervisor, or peer who can advise me?
- Do I need to solve a smaller puzzle piece before finding a more extensive solution?
  - Should I be looking for a series of steps to solve this?

- Does sequence matter? Do I need to resolve one issue before I move on to the next?

When you compare a new situation to something you've done before, please don't assume you found the secret shortcut because it feels familiar. Be warned! Sometimes, we repeat our actions because we're comfortable with our habits, not because they yield the best results. Even if a tactic has worked in the past, think it through carefully (the next step) before applying it in a new situation.

Step 4. Evaluate the Solutions

Once you have found answers to the question "What could we do?" in Step 3, now is the time to ask, "What should we do?" Apply meaningful, relevant criteria to eliminate any undesirable or impractical options. This will help you make a thoughtful decision about the best way forward. Consider:

- Timing:
  - How time-sensitive is the problem? Are there due dates to consider?
  - How long do the different solutions take to implement?
- Level of Difficulty:
  - Is one solution easier to design or implement than another?
  - Do I have experience in handling this one way compared to others?
- Cost:
  - Is one solution cheaper than another?
  - If one solution is more expensive, is it worth it?
- Impact on Others:
  - Would one approach please or upset my audience, stakeholders, or partners more than another?
  - Is there a way of implementing this that others would enjoy or benefit from more than others?

Note: People often blend Step 3 and Step 4 in ordinary conversation. They often ask, "What could we do?" and answer, "What should we do?" in the same breath. The risk of blurring together Step 3 and Step 4 is that you might dismiss innovative possibilities too quickly or block yourself or others from thinking of them in the first place. Is that a risk you want to take when the stakes matter?

Step 5. Draft & Deliver the Solution

Whatever the problem is, the solution will always involve clear communication. For example, you might have to propose a plan to a supervisor, client, or other stakeholder or justify a decision afterward. You might have to inform someone of harrowing news, or you might have to persuade them that your approach is the best one. Your communication won't always be a formal written text, but you should always draft a rough plan and, if appropriate, deliver a polished solution.

11.3 SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS

Psychological Safety

Amy Edmondson, a professor at Harvard Business School, introduced the term psychological safety, defining it as a shared belief among team members that it is safe to take interpersonal risks (Hastwell, 2023).

Thinking About Safe Work Environments

In a genuinely inclusive and psychologically safe workplace, inclusivity and communication are integral to the organizational culture. At its essence, inclusivity aims to create an environment where every employee feels a sense of belonging and value. Central to this is open and transparent communication, empowering individuals to express their thoughts freely. Active listening ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more informed decision-making.

The richness of diverse perspectives is acknowledged as a catalyst for innovation and adaptability to a changing business landscape. Inclusive behaviour is the outward expression of this culture, emphasizing respect for colleagues regardless of their background and addressing biases. Cultural competence, understanding, and appreciation of different cultures are crucial, as is avoiding cultural insensitivity.

"Psychological safety" by Shauna Roch, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

An inclusive workplace promotes constructive conflict resolution, avoids harmful behaviour, and fosters mutual understanding. Support and allyship for colleagues facing challenges are encouraged, with leadership playing a pivotal role in modelling inclusive behaviour and setting expectations. Together, these elements create a sense of belonging and Psychological Safety, enabling full engagement in work. Organizations must invest in training, awareness, and leadership commitment to embed inclusive communication and behaviour into their core culture, emphasizing actions as much as words for a truly equitable workplace.

Thinking About Trust

Psychological Safety is a foundational concept transforming workplace environments into spaces where individuals feel encouraged and empowered to express themselves authentically. It is a catalyst for trust, collaboration, and innovation, significantly influencing both individual well-being and the broader success of organizations.

For members of marginalized groups, particularly those identifying as minorities, the stakes are higher, as research indicates that they often bear a disproportionate emotional and cognitive burden. Trust becomes a critical factor, evaluated not only in peer interactions but also in the intentions and actions of management. In diverse workplaces, the historical interactions between cultural groups further shape the nuanced experiences

of Psychological Safety. Acknowledging and respecting cultural differences is paramount in fostering an environment where diverse perspectives can thrive.

The Dimensions of Cultural Safety

Psychological safety manifests in five critical areas in the workplace.

Management and Supervision

Psychological Safety is reflected in the approach of management or supervisors toward employees, encompassing the level of trust between employees and upper management. This involves management's trust in employees, active listening, the promotion of positive working relationships, and the support provided when employees face challenges.

Communication Between Employees

The second area is related to the quality and style of communication among employees. It involves ensuring clear communication of workplace regulations, making sure that most employees understand their roles and responsibilities, and establishing transparent procedures for communicating with upper management.

Authenticity in the Workplace

In the third area, the focus is on the level of authenticity employees feel they are allowed to have. This includes whether employees feel free to be themselves at work, experience comfort in the presence of colleagues, and work in an environment that values and respects individual differences.

Employee Discretion

The fourth area deals with the level of employee discretion, which reflects how free employees feel to make decisions. This involves the organization's attitude towards embracing reasonable risks, whether employees are comfortable taking risks and accepting their consequences, and the freedom for employees to work in ways that suit them.

Attitude and Positivity

Psychological Safety is evident in the positive affect and attitude that employees have towards their work and the organization. This encompasses how employees perceive themselves in their roles, their sense of

being valuable team members, their belief in doing a good job, and the acknowledgment of their efforts and contributions.

Let's watch this Harvard Business Review video hosted by Amy Gallo on psychological safety.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=1096#oembed-1

Video: "What Is Psychological Safety?" by Harvard Business Review [7:30] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. *Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Chapter 11 Exercise 1

As a Human Resources professional, how will you ensure your employees experience a culture of psychological safety?

"Recognizing a Safe Work Environment," "Thinking About Psychological and Cultural Safety," and "Different Elements of Psychological Safety" from Psychological Safety and Cultural Safety in the Workplace by Saba Ghadiri and Catherine T. Kwantes is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

11.4 CASE STUDY: RUNNERS RELAY LTD.

Now that we understand the importance of providing psychological safety to employees in conflict, let's utilize script writing and role-playing to resolve a workplace conflict at Runners Relay.

The Scenario: A Psychological Safety Approach

The Company:

Runners Relay Ltd.

The People:

Anna Suarez (She/Her): Human Resources Manager

Jamal Greene (He/Him): Production Associate Afternoon Shift

Steven Thomas (He/Him): Production Associate Afternoon Shift

Alejandro Rodriguez (He/Him): Afternoon Shift Supervisor

The Scenario:

Jamal and Steven work on the afternoon shift at Runners Relay. They often sit together on their lunch break and talk about their love of sports. Recently, while eating their lunch, their conversation turned to the missing tools at their workstations. When Jamal and Steven arrive at work, screwdrivers and mallets are missing from their workstations. They use these tools to make minor adjustments to the equipment in their area.

During their afternoon shift, Jamal and Steven sign out replacement tools for their workstations. When they leave work every evening, their workstations are fully equipped, yet when they return the next day, they are missing tools. This is becoming frustrating.

Jamal and Steven suspect one of the day shift employees, Svetlana, might be responsible for the missing tools. Every day, Svetlana is the last person to leave the area at the end of the day shift, and

she carries a massive knapsack with her. Jamal and Steven discuss this concern with their afternoon shift supervisor, Alejandro.

Employee Observations:

"It seems odd that Svetlana always has enough money to take such elaborate holidays every summer. Where is she getting the money from?"

"What does Svetlana carry in her knapsack anyway? She can barely lift it. It's like she is carrying a load of bricks."

The First Conversation:

Jamal and Steven noticed that Alejandro was working in his office, so this might be the best time to talk to him about the missing tools.

> 🖼 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=1099#h5p-34*

Jamal: (knocking on Alejandro's door) Would you have a moment to speak with Steven and me?

Alejandro: Sure, come on in and take a seat.

Steven: Thanks, Alejandro. We wanted to discuss the missing tools in our work area.

Alejandro: Missing tools? What are the missing tools?

Jamal: At the beginning of every shift, Steven and I notice tools like the mallet and screwdrivers are missing. We replenish the tools during our shift, and the next day, they are missing.

Alejandro: This is ridiculous. At tomorrow's shift meeting, I want the two of you to bring this up in front of the day shift and afternoon shift employees, and I will watch their faces to see how they react.

Steven: What? No way, we aren't bringing this up. We have come to you confidentially. You are the supervisor.

Alejandro: There is no better way to solve this mystery than for the two of you to share this information in front of the entire team. Who do you think is taking to tools?

Jamal: Well, Steven and I have noticed that Svetlana hangs around at the end of the day shift, and she always takes a knapsack, so we wondered if she might be the one taking the tools.

Alejandro: Interesting. Svetlana is in the front office right now, completing her WHMIS training. Just give her one moment.

Alejandro: (announcing over the loudspeaker) "Svetlana to the supervisor's office. Svetlana to the supervisor's office."

Steven: What are you doing? We don't want to meet with Svetlana. We brought this to you. We hope you can investigate this and keep our names out of it. Don't mention our names!

Jamal: Ya, we thought this would be confidential. You are calling us out in front of everyone. We will never bring a concern to you again. This is unbelievable.

Steven: Come on, Jamal. We need to get out of here before Svetlana arrives.

Jamal and Steven quickly leave Alejandro's office and head to the cafeteria until all this is over.

✏️

The Exercise:

Identify – any concerns about how Alejandro handled their conversation with Jamal and Steven. Did Alejandro provide Jamal and Steven with a feeling of psychological safety? Explain.

Next Steps

Jamal and Steven meet with Anna in the Human Resources department as they feel very nervous. They tell Anna about the missing tools, their suspicion of Svetlana, and the horrible meeting they had with Alejandro. They let Anna know that they are pretty sure Alejandro is going to tell Svetlana they think she is stealing tools, but there hasn't even been an investigation yet.

Jamal and Steven are distraught and don't want to bring this issue up in the next shift meeting. They are both fearful of the repercussions of their meeting with Alejandro. Anna lets Jamal and Steven know there will be no repercussions. She will speak to Alejandro immediately, and she may have questions for both of them as they launch an investigation into the missing tools. Jamal and Steven agreed they would be happy to make an official statement in the inquiry.

Anna heads to Alejandro's office immediately to speak with him before Svetlana finishes her training.

Coaching Notes:

Anna explains to Alejandro that part of his job is to ensure the psychological safety of his team members. Alejandro realizes he didn't do an excellent job in his conversation with Jamal and Steven. Anna reviews the following psychological safety information with Alejandro and asks him to meet with Jamal and Steven to rectify the current situation.

- Psychological safety is a basic need every organization needs to provide to all employees.
- To ensure psychological safety, people leaders need to ensure employees feel safe coming forward to speak with the direct managers.
- To feel safe, employees need to trust their leaders will keep information confidential unless they have to make a statement in a formal workplace investigation.
- Confidentiality is paramount, meaning information isn't shared with anyone who isn't directly involved. For example, information may need to be shared with Human Resources but not with co-workers.
- There cannot be a fear of embarrassment or a breach of confidentiality.
- Employees can't worry about repercussions as a result of making their comments.
- When employees feel a sense of psychological safety, they are more likely to report workplace incidents or concerns.
- When an organization has a culture of psychological safety, employees bring forward ideas, concerns and complaints, knowing it is safe to do so.

The Recommended Conversation:

Having met with Anna for a coaching session and understanding the importance of providing his team with psychological safety, Alejandro immediately meets with Jamal and Steven. Let's see if Alejandro fully understands psychological safety in his meeting with Jamal and Steven.

> 📊 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/ navigatinghr/?p=1099#h5p-35*

Alejandro: Jamal, would you and Steven please come to my office?

Jamal: Okay, let me find Steven, and we will stop by.

Alejandro: Perfect. Thanks, Jamal.

Steven: (knocks on Alejandro's office door) Did you want to see us?

Alejandro: Yes, here is a chair for both of you. Take a seat.

Jamal: Are we in trouble for the conversation we had with you earlier?

Alejandro: Uh no, not at all. That is why I want to meet with both of you right now. You came to me in privacy, and I didn't handle the situation very well.

Steven: I couldn't believe you paged Svetlana and asked her to join us in your office. I wanted to crawl under the desk. I was so embarrassed.

Alejandro: Anna intervened, so I haven't spoken with Svetlana yet.

Jamal: Thank goodness. I didn't want to talk to Svetlana. Steven and I wanted you to

look into the missing tools. We also didn't want to speak in front of everyone at the staff meeting.

Alejandro: No, I won't ask you to speak to Svetlana or in front of the other team members. I will work with Anna to investigate these missing tools, as this amounts to a large financial loss.

Steven: I am glad to hear you are investigating the missing tools. I don't want anyone to think Jamal or I have anything to do with it, and I don't want to get into trouble and lose my job.

Alejandro: Neither of you is in trouble for sharing this information. In fact, we encourage our employees to express concerns, and I want to assure you that I will keep this confidential, with the exception of Anna in Human Resources.

Jamal: Thank you for protecting us, Alejandro. We appreciate it!

The Exercise:

Discuss – In this second discussion, did Alejandro provide Jamal and Steven with a feeling of psychological safety? If so, what did Alejandro do to ensure their safety? Explain.

11.5 APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

As a Human Resources professional, you have learned the benefit of providing psychological safety to your employees. Now, it is your turn to practice this skill.

Read – the following case study. Create a script that demonstrates your ability to provide employees with psychological safety.

The Company:

🚲 The Metal Manufacturing Corporation

The People:

Rosa Francesco (She/Her) Human Resources Manager

Luigi Giovanni (They/Them) Inventory Analyst

Valentina Giulia (She/Her) Inventory Coordinator

The Scenario:

The Metal Manufacturing Corporation produces frames for high-end bicycles. Every November, Valentina coordinates the annual inventory count. This is a two-day event, and every manufacturing team member is trained to complete an accurate inventory count. Valentina works closely with Luigi to ensure the inventory count is completed on time and every product is counted twice to ensure accuracy.

While Luigi was checking the completed inventory count sheets, they noticed a significant number of missing frames. Luigi is confused and wonders how they could be missing 20 bicycle frames. Luigi decides to look into this matter and counts the frames. They came up with the same result: there are 20 missing frames.

Luigi alerts Valentina of the missing frames, and she is extremely concerned. Valentina knows the organization has a number of procedures in place to ensure each frame is tracked to prevent loss. In order for 20 frames to go missing, there has to be at least one or more employees involved in a plan to divert company procedures. Luigi recalls seeing one of the forklift drivers moving frames into a quality quarantine area used to store frames with a potential quality issue. Luigi wonders if those were the missing bicycle frames.

Luigi and Valentina are nervous about bringing this forward as they realize one of their co-workers is going to be in big trouble, maybe even terminated. They realize they have no choice but to speak with Rosa in the Human Resources department. Luigi and Valentina hope they don't get in trouble, and they don't want anyone to know they brought this forward to management.

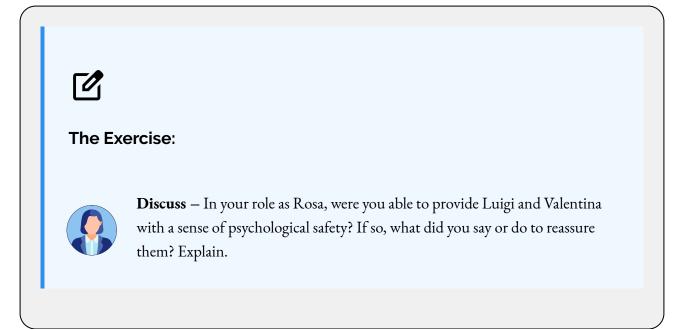**Employee Observations and Customer Observations:**

"Every time I take part in our yearly inventory count, it seems like bicycle frames are missing. What is going on around here?"

"When they delivered our bicycle order last week, it was short 20 bicycle frames. When I asked the company what happened to my order, they said they had an internal issue and would deliver the 20 outstanding frames as soon as possible. I might have to consider switching my business if The Metal Manufacturing Corporation can't fill my orders on time."

The Conversation:

This conversation is between Rosa (the Human Resources Manager), Luigi and Valentina. You are playing the role of Rosa. Your job is to provide Luigi and Valentina with psychological safety as they describe their discovery of the missing bicycle frames.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:* https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=1101#h5p-17

The Exercise:

Discuss – In your role as Rosa, were you able to provide Luigi and Valentina with a sense of psychological safety? If so, what did you say or do to reassure them? Explain.

11.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

💼 Key Takeaways

- Difficult conversations may be unplanned or planned.
- A planned difficult conversation provides the Human Resources professional with time to gather information and prepare talking points.
- An unplanned, difficult conversation relies on the skills of the Human Resources professional to react professionally and guide the conversation without any notice.
- It is essential to select the best time and place to have a difficult conversation and invite a witness, such as the employee's direct manager.
- Topics that require a difficult conversation often include theft, discrimination, ethics, and harassment.
- Psychological safety is a basic need every organization needs to provide to all employees.
- To ensure psychological safety, leaders must ensure employees feel safe coming forward to speak with their direct managers.
- Employees must trust their leaders will keep the information confidential in order to feel safe.
- Confidentiality is paramount, meaning information isn't shared with anyone who isn't directly involved. For example, information may need to be shared with Human Resources but not with co-workers.

Check Your Knowledge

Now that you have completed Chapter 11, reflect on what you have learned and see if you can complete these tasks.

- Can you identify best practices in planned and unplanned difficult conversations?
- Can you explain the meaning and importance of psychological safety at work?
- Have you applied a psychological safety approach to a workplace scenario?

Chapter Exercises

- Chapter 11 Exercise 1

CHAPTER 12: HOTEL-DIEU GRACE HOSPITAL CASE STUDY

Chapter Overview

- Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital Case Study

HOTEL-DIEU GRACE HOSPITAL CASE STUDY

The Importance of Formal Workplace Investigations

Throughout this textbook, we have practiced our problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills based on fictitious case studies, exercises, script writing and role-playing. With all this practice in hand, it is time to apply our problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills to real-life cases. We have discussed the need to address workplace incidents promptly to ensure such incidents do not escalate further. From time to time, Human Resources professionals will face workplace incidents that involve threats, intimidation, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or violence. Such incidents can escalate into a workplace injury or death. The Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital case study is being examined to understand and reflect on the important role a Human Resources professional has in conducting and acting on formal workplace investigations.

Content Warning: The following case study includes details of a tragic workplace incident that resulted in a fatality. This case study includes information and details that are difficult to read. Reader discretion is advised.

The Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital Case Study

In November of 2005, Registered Nurse Lori Dupont was killed at work by her former partner and colleague at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor, Ontario. This tragic workplace death has been thoroughly investigated and studied and highlights many missed opportunities for intervention. As a Human Resources professional, it is important to recognize our role in workplace harassment, which can quickly turn into workplace violence.

Case Summary

Lori Dupont was a Registered Nurse and member of the Ontario Nurses' Association working in the recovery room at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor, Ontario. On November 12, 2005, she was murdered by her former partner and colleague, Dr. Marc Daniel. Daniel, an anaesthesiologist at the same Hospital, who died several days later from a self-inflicted drug overdose.

Dupont had taken steps to end her relationship with Daniel in February 2005, after he attempted to commit suicide as a controlling gesture over her. In April 2005, she applied for a peace bond to limit their contact and his access to her. Daniel, however, continued to pursue Dupont at the workplace both before and after his return to work in late May 2005. In spite of ongoing indications of harassment and stalking of Dupont by Daniel, known to a variety of individuals in their workplace Daniel was allowed to continue working in the same areas as Dupont. The first time Daniel and Dupont were scheduled to work on a weekend together with very few other staff in the area, Daniel stabbed Dupont to death in front of one of her colleagues. Dr. Peter Jaffe, an expert in domestic and workplace violence, retrospectively identified 16 risk factors in the relationship between Dupont and Daniel as well as numerous missed opportunities for intervention.

Step One

Read the article outlining the workplace death of Registered Nurse Lori Dupont with a focus on the opportunities to intervene in potential and actual workplace harassment.

Step Two

Watch the following YouTube video titled The Tragedy of Lori Dupont: Ten Years Later and listen to the workplace incidents leading up to this workplace tragedy.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/navigatinghr/?p=1168#oembed-1

Step Three

Research Bill 168, Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act (Violence and Harassment in the Workplace) 2009, is needed to understand the employer's responsibilities regarding workplace policies, procedures, training, and formal investigations surrounding violence and harassment in the workplace.

Step Four

Explain how a Human Resources professional could address a workplace incident like the one at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital, focusing on avoiding and eliminating the threat of harassment, violence, injury or death.

Step Five

Reflect on this case study and share the learning lessons and how they have impacted you.

Bill 10, Lori Dupont Act (Domestic Violence Protection), 2007

Bill 168, Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act (Violence and Harassment in the Workplace) 2009

CBC News: Hospital settles with slain nurse's family

Case summary from "Coroner's Inquest Makes Recommendations on Workplace Violence Arising out of the Murder of Nurse Lori Dupont" by Janina Fogels and Elizabeth McIntyre, used under Fair Dealing for Educational Purposes (Canada).

CHAPTER 13: WAL-MART CANADA CORP CASE STUDY

Chapter Overview

- Wal-Mart Canada Corp Case Study

WAL-MART CANADA CORP CASE STUDY

The Importance of Formal Workplace Investigations

In Chapter 12, we learned of the important role a Human Resources professional plays in ensuring the safety of their employees. In Chapter 13, we are going to look at the constructive dismissal case of Meredith Boucher, an employee of Wal-Mart Canada.

The Wal-Mart Canada Corp Case Study

Meredith Boucher worked as the Assistant Manager at the Windsor, Ontario Wal-Mart store. In 2009, Meredith was asked to falsify a temperature log and refused to do so. Following her refusal, Meredith was humiliated and demeaned by the Store Manager. Meredith reported the verbal abuse, and following an internal investigation, Meredith was advised her complaints were unsubstantiated. Following another incident of humiliation in front of co-workers, Meredith quit her job and sued both her manager and Wal-Mart Canada for constructive dismissal and damages.

We are reviewing the Wal-Mart Canada Corp Case Study to understand the importance of formal investigations and action plans to ensure employees do not experience harassment, verbal abuse and mental suffering in the workplace.

Case Summary

Meredith Boucher began working for Wal-Mart in 1999. She was well-regarded and received a number of promotions over the years. In 2008, she was made a Lead Assistant Manager in a Windsor, Ontario, store. Initially, her relationship with the Store Manager, Jason Pinnock, was positive and her performance appraisals were glowing. Then, in May 2009, Pinnock asked Boucher to falsify a log recording temperature in meat and dairy coolers. Boucher refused. Pinnock, who was worried the incomplete logs would negatively affect the store's ratings in an upcoming inspection, subjected Boucher to a disciplinary meeting.

Concerned about this unfair reprisal, Boucher approached a superior to express her concerns. When Pinnock learned of the complaint, "he subjected her to an unrelenting and increasing torrent of abuse. He regularly used profane language when he spoke to her. He belittled her. He demeaned her in front of other employees. He even called in other employees so he had an audience when he berated her and showed his disdain for her" (Boucher v. Wal-Mart Canada Corp., 2014, para. 24). Boucher complained of Pinnock's escalating harassment to senior management. Their investigation found her complaint was "unsubstantiated" and they threatened her with discipline for making the complaint.

Pinnock's behaviour and Wal-Mart's lack of response negatively affected Boucher's health. "She said that she was stressed out. She could not eat or sleep. She had abdominal pain, constipation and bloating. She lost weight and began vomiting blood. Co-workers testified that Boucher went from a fun-loving, lively, positive leader to a defeated and broken person" (Boucher v. Wal-Mart Canada Corp., 2014, para. 37). On November 18, 2009, Pinnock once again berated Boucher over ten skids of product that were not unloaded. He "grabbed Boucher by the elbow in front of a group of co-workers. He told her to prove to him that she could count to ten"(Boucher v. Wal-Mart Canada Corp., 2014, para. 34). Boucher was so humiliated that she ran out of the store. She never returned to work. Boucher sued for unfair dismissal. At appeal, she was awarded $300,000 in damages against Wal-Mart and $110,000 against Pinnock. After her departure from the store, Boucher's health gradually improved.

Step One

Read the article outlining the constructive dismissal case of Meredith Boucher with a focus on the opportunities to intervene in potential and actual workplace harassment.

Step Two

Explain the ways in which a Human Resources professional could address a workplace incident like the one at Wal-Mart Canada to avoid and eliminate the threat of workplace harassment.

Step Three

Reflect on this case study and share the learning lessons and the way in which they have impacted you.

The Price of Workplace Bullying: Boucher v. Wal-Mart Canada Corp., 2014 ONCA 419 (CanLII)Time To Take Workplace Harassment and Abuse Seriously

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CHAPTER 14: OC TRANSPO CASE STUDY

Chapter Overview

- OC Transpo Case Study

OC TRANSPO CASE STUDY

The Importance of Formal Workplace Investigations

In Chapter 14, we will continue to review the need to address workplace incidents in a timely manner to ensure such incidents do not escalate further. From time-to-time, Human Resources professionals will face workplace incidents that involve threats, intimidation, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or violence. Such incidents can escalate into a workplace injury or death.

The OC Transpo case study is being examined to understand and reflect on the important role a Human Resources professional has in conducting and acting on formal workplace investigations.

Content Warning: The following case study includes details of a tragic workplace incident that resulted in multiple fatalities. This case study includes information and details that are difficult to read. Reader discretion is advised.

The OC Transpo Case Study

In 1999, Pierre Lebrun entered the OC Transpo, his former place of employment, and killed 4 of his co-workers. It is alleged that Pierre had been the victim of teasing by some of his co-workers based on his speech impediment. Pierre had been a 13-year employee at the OC Transpo organization before quitting his job and eventually returning to the organization with a weapon.

As a Human Resources professional, it is important to recognize the role we play in workplace harassment that can quickly turn into workplace violence.

Case Summary

The following was cited from a City News article written by James Powell called *Remember This? The OC Transpo Massacr*e:

> It began on a normal, early spring, Tuesday afternoon.
>
> At about 2:30 p.m., Pierre Lebrun, a shy, 40-year-old man who had left OC Transpo's employ the previous January, pulled into the bus company's garage at 1500 St. Laurent Blvd. in the city's east end. He parked his 1997 Pontiac Sunfire a few yards away from a supervisor's office. After getting out of his car, he pulled out a high-powered, Remington, pump-action rifle capable of killing a moose from a mile away. Entering the building, Lebrun shouted out a line from the movie The Terminator "It's Judgement Day!"
>
> Lebrun quickly fired his first shot that reportedly hit a steel drum before going through a metal locker and lodging in a computer monitor. Fragments struck two men, Richard Guertin and Joe Casagrande, injuring them, fortunately not seriously. Both fled down a hall, shouting for someone to call 911. A message quickly went out over the PA system that there was a man in the garage with a loaded gun. The more than 150 occupants of the building tried to get out of the building or hid in lockers or under tables.
>
> Walking down a hallway, Lebrun claimed his first victim, shipper Brian Guay, 46, shooting him in the chest.
>
> Stepping over Guay's prostrate body, Lebrun continued into the interior of the garage where a group of people were taking a coffee break at the back of a bus. The workers watched in horror as Lebrun fired a third time, killing mechanic Harry Schoenmakers, 44, before entering the bus where the terrified workers were standing. With his gun across his shoulder, he swore at them and snarled, "You think it's funny now."
>
> Lebrun did not shoot but instead left the garage bay, set a small fire in a chemical room, and proceeded to a store room where four men were sitting. There, Lebrun claimed his third and fourth victims, Clare Davidson, 52, and David Lemay, 35.
>
> Leaving the store room, Lebrun walked upstairs to a loft that overlooked the engine room. A few seconds later, another shot rang out. Lebrun had killed himself. (Powell, 2019, paragraphs 4-10)

Step One

Read the article outlining a tragic workplace incident that resulted in multiple workplace fatalities based on the actions of former OC Transpo employee Pierre Lebrun.

Step Two

Explain the ways in which a Human Resources professional could address an ongoing workplace incident such as the incidents at OC Transpo with a focus on avoiding and eliminating the threat of harassment, bullying, teasing, and violence that may result in a workplace injury or death.

Step Two

Step Three: Reflect on this case study and share the learning lessons and the way in which it has impacted you.

HRReporter: The legal case against bullying in the workplace

City News: Remember This? The OC Transpo massacre

Case summary from "Remember This? The OC Transpo massacre" by James Powell, used under Fair Dealing for Educational Purposes (Canada).

VERSION HISTORY

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the edits involve a number of changes, the version number increases to the next full number.

The files posted alongside this book always reflect the most recent version.

Version	Date	Change	Affected Web Page
1.0	February 6, 2025	First Publication	N/A

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- Navigating HR – Chapter 1 (674 KB)
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