# Conflict management Strategies

SAME, SAME, BUT DIFFERENT.

## CAROL BOWSER

President of Conflict Management Strategies, Inc. is an expert in workplace conflict – what creates it and how to resolve it. While she HATES arguments, she loves maintaining sanity and increasing production by jumping into conflict to fully resolve it. She received her law degree from Seattle University School of Law and her Mediation Training through Pierce County Center for Dispute Resolution. She is a speaker, trainer, and consultant for employers on how to avoid workplace conflict.

## CONTACT

| | |
|---|---|
| WEB | managingconflict.com |
| EMAIL | CB@managingconflict.com |
| TWITTER | CarolNBowser |
| FACEBOOK | Conflict Management Strategies |
| LINKEDIN | Carol Bowser |

## SAME, SAME, BUT DIFFERENT
### HOW TO SPOT AND ADDRESS CONFLICT ON VIRTUAL AND REMOTE TEAMS

2020 has been quite a year. Many workplaces have pivoted to teams working from home or redesigning how work is done. It can all feel new and overwhelming.

The good news is there are elements that remain the same whether teams are co-located, virtual, or a combination of both. There are also differences that those who lead teams should be aware of and address.

### SAME-SAME

Some things just don't change about the workplace. There are guiding principles which hold true no matter what.

### DIFFERENT

Remote teams or those working in a new virtual environment have different characteristics and challenges. These include:

### SAME-SAME OR DIFFERENT FOR YOU?

When there is tension, conflict, frustration or dissatisfaction at work, it is important to pause and take a look. If you think of "dis-ease" as a lack of ease (people, process, culture), you can evaluate where the concern are coming from.

1. Is it the same challenges that existed prior to moving to a more virtual space?

2. Is it different? How?

## SOURCES OF CONFLICT, TENSION, AND BAD JUJU.

A common theme in conflict or tension is that there is something at stake that someone cares about. If they didn't care, there would be no issue. Conflict occurs when people feel that a core value they have might be threatened or diminished. For those who take pride in themselves and pride in their work, our self-image can be called into question causing frustration and irritation. In times of economic turmoil, people might be afraid for their jobs. In times of extended trauma, people just get emotionally worn out.

Keeping an eye out for changes is important. What changes are you seeing in your workgroups?

## EYES UP. EARS UP.

Some people trust you and are direct. Those folks will tell you about concerns before those concerns rise to a critical level. Those are not most people.

As a result, you should take an "Eyes Up. Ears Up." Approach.

- Take note of 2-3 critical items which you can keep on the lookout for.

- Now take note of 2-3 critical things that you will listen for.

## DIFFERENT

Virtual teams have characteristics different from in-person teams. The primary element is that virtual communication empowers people to be harsh. People (due to a variety of reasons) may change how they interact. Someone who was once perceived as very patient may seem impatient even rude in a virtual environment.

Conflict can become more contagious on virtual teams. Sometimes the technology and the decreased contact strains working relationships.

## HOW TO RESPOND?

It depends. Truly. There isn't a one size fits all. There are, however, some go-to questions for you to consider before choosing a path.

1. Is this a "technology issue?"

2. Is this a core concern/self-image/feeling impeded issue?

3. Is this a burn out issue (not feeling successful at work which is an impeded issue)?

4. Is this a communication issue (we relied on in-person stuff)

5. Is this a process issue (we relied on in-person stuff)

6. Is this a manager issue (your most reliable tools aren't working in the new environment?)

Once you have a foot hold on WHAT the concern is about, frame the conversation in terms of:

- Goals

- Roles

- Guidelines

- Ground rules

- Expectations

Next use simple questions. It doesn't need to be complicated. Keep it simple. Good questions help people to articulate what is important to them. Good questions help you determine the nature and extent of the issue.

Listen and work with them to define the problem(s).

Then, you get to decide what role you get to play.

Last, ask the "what is your ask." Most people will not have one. Give them some time and circle back.

## ACTION. ACTION. WE WANT ACTION!

Given what you have heard today, what is one learning you see yourself implementing?