



Harmony Rules

Why a proactive attitude works best to resolve conflicts before they reach the snapping point. By **BARTON Goldsmith**

Workplace conflicts are part of our place-of-work existence. In the workplace, it is not uncommon that someone says the wrong thing at the wrong time. Sometimes, it embarrasses us. When we try to cover up our embarrassment with righteous indignation, a real problem can begin.

Sometimes, when we have said the wrong thing and have hurt someone in our team, we really can believe that we were helpless to prevent it. We can also feel that we have been provoked, and our colleague's behaviour is to blame for causing us to say the wrong thing, or overreact, or just be downright rude.

Avoid the blame game

To understand this, there are two issues to consider.

- First, how could we have created a space for our tendency to blame? For example, did you get your initial training or experience from a company of blamers, or is blame prevalent in other areas of your life? If so, you may have been taught that this kind of projection is reasonable.

- Second, are you willing to assign the role of a victim to your team members [or, yourself]? You have the choice to cast away any thought of

blame and get to the real problem [which may actually be you]. That is, to let go of the roles we have become used to, or choose a new experience as the wisest choice to make, though it isn't easy.

Also, to avoid reinforcing false beliefs that someone other than yourself is responsible for the problem [or, for your behaviour], don't wait.

Apologise without grumbling

When you first realise that you have said the wrong thing, stop and apologise. Besides, waiting too long to remedy the situation can cause resentment to build in your company and that will affect the bottom line.

If your behaviour happens because you feel unappreciated, you need to appreciate yourself. If it's been a hard day, you need to learn to ask appropriate questions, not snarl, grumble and try to make your team member feel as bad as you do. This creates a win-lose scenario rather than a win-win situation.

If you feel your team member has done something that was incorrect, it is appropriate to take immediate action and respond. The correct method is to look at the person and say directly [and, kindly] what is on

your mind, or what problems you see occurring from their behaviours.

It can't be fixed if it isn't shared. Your team member, upon realising that the behaviour is inappropriate, should choose the necessary steps to rectify the situation. A little mentoring here may also be a good idea.

Although it is best, it isn't necessary to get an immediate response. Some people need a little time to process their feelings. An hour is the average time it takes for most people to calm down and realise what it is they need to do. If more time is necessary, or if days go by without the situation being rectified, it may be time to discuss the matter with a third party. Taking responsibility for mistaken words and doing what is necessary to correct the situation is a good sign.

There's also more to responsibility than what meets the eye and ear. Because, in addition to making you feel good about yourself and strengthening your character, it will also strengthen your business.

Stay Well

Barton Goldsmith, PhD, an award-winning and highly sought-after keynote speaker, business consultant and internationally syndicated author, has helped develop creative and balanced leadership in several *Fortune* 500 companies, educational institutions, and government organisations worldwide. He lives in California, US.