

BUSINESS ADVICE

Why and how conflict affects work

Corporate Advice



Caryn Walsh

Caryn Walsh is an International Business Consultant, Executive Coach, Keynote Speaker. She is in Fiji four times a year.

Misunderstanding others, not listening well, personal agendas and talking about other people negatively are listed as some of the main reasons relationships at work suffer and conflict walks in the Organisational door.

And when it does, productivity suffers. Unhappy people make unhappy workplaces which in turn, affect the bottom line.

Yet you’ve tried and tried to turn the problem around, sent them on training, spoken to the warring parties individually and yet nothing seems to help. Nothing.

Conflict at work increases when issues are not addressed, frustration grows over time, people start to pull away from each other, ultimately not uniting together to solve problems they face.

Factions then often occur and competition is declared between team members.

Worse still, is when Organisational leaders are the problem. When they talk about others and refuse to listen to those around them.

When this happens, a culture of fear and blame is created, which permeates throughout the entire Organisation.

The Impact of Workplace Bullying

The ‘silent’ epidemic in Organisations, impacts not only the vic-



tim, but also those around them and the overall productivity of the team or Organisation.

Workplace Bullying is defined as the ‘intentional, repeated behaviour directed at an employee or group to embarrass, humiliate or undermine.’

The costs of workplace bullying to Companies and national economies run into hundreds of millions of dollars per annum due to absenteeism, worker’s compensation, stress leave and reduced productivity.

What’s it costing your Organisation?

Workplace Conflict – a Leadership Issue

Employees are humans which means at times they annoy or irritate each other but if conflict is ongoing, it is a leadership issue.

Why? Because often leaders ignore the conflict, hope it will go

away, pray their people will ‘get over it’ and that things will get better in the future. And they may, for a while.

But simmering tempers and frustration don’t go away. They boil away under the surface, waiting for the right moment to explode.

And then the costs are high now only to the warring parties, but the whole team. And everybody runs for cover and it’s a million times worse when the warring parties are the leaders.

Learning Core Communication Skills

Core skills in effective Organisational communication include active listening, empathy (compassion), standing your ground calmly (assertive), willingness to solve the issue, looking for solutions to problems, being respectful and acting in an emotionally intelligent manner.

It also helps to have a keen sense of humour and not be over-sensitive.

According to Conflictintheworkplace.com:

When Organisations make it a priority to train employees in communication and listening skills, build trust by strengthening relationships and enhancing conflict resolution skills, less conflict occurs.

When employees feel that their concerns are heard by their leader, job satisfaction and productivity increases.

This goes straight to the Organisation’s bottom line.

From a leadership perspective, there needs to be a firm commitment to growing your people so that your Organisation can transform.

Conclusion

If workplace conflict is allowed

to fester over time, it will only get worse — affecting morale, customer service, increasing individual and team stress and ultimately, negatively impacting on the effectiveness of your organisation.

Modern day organisations need to focus on creating Organisations that have a ‘can do’ culture, where communication is expressed with clarity and empathy.

Also where employees want to come each day.

Jeff Kotter, author of Leading Change explains:

‘The best performing organisations I know that operate in highly competitive industries have executives who spend most of their time leading, not managing employees who are arguing and fighting.

Highly performing teams and Organisations deal with conflict quickly and well.’

ANNIVERSARY

Westpac celebrates 200 years

SHRATIKA NAIDU
LABASA

Westpac Banking Corporation Fiji general manager, Brett Hooker, said the company had survived its first 200 years because it had been guided by the same purpose.

This purpose is to provide stability, to support customers and communities and to help grow the economy.

During the bank’s 200 year anniversary celebration over a morning tea at the bank’s Labasa branch yesterday, Paul Jaduram and Kiran Reddy, who are prominent businessmen, applauded the bank’s commitment to its customers.

Mr Reddy, the director of Kinis Allied Industries, said he could still recall Westpac’s support when his company’s bulk store was destroyed in a fire in 2015.

“At that time the Westpac Labasa branch manager came while my bulk was on fire and immediately gave me a hug and assured me that they are there to assist me,” Mr Reddy said.

“At that moment the quick support I received was valuable to me.

“I had lot of problems with other banks but since I joined Westpac I am not facing any difficulty,” Mr Jaduram said.

“Thank you Westpac for your commitment and dedication.”

Mr Hooker said: “I truly believe that Westpac has survived and thrived because it has been guided by the same purpose over its first 200 years; that is to provide stability, to support customers and communities, and to help grow the economy.

“This has been possible because of the support of our valued customers, regulators, stakeholders and our very skilled, committed and dedicated staff.”

Westpac started operations in Fiji in 1901 under its then name Bank of New South Wales.

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From Left: Businessman Paul Jaduram, Westpac Banking Corporation Labasa branch relationship officer Navil Chandra, bank teller operator Jagish Gaundar, who is the longest serving staff, and Kinis Allied Industries director Kiran Reddy during the bank’s 200 years anniversary celebration in Labasa on Friday, April 7, 2017.

Photo: SHRATIKA NAIDU