

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE BOARDROOM

Do business issues provide potential for conflict? Do you want happy and communicative members of the team? Or frustrated and bitter employees.

Ever had an argument with a director about business strategy? I hope so. Conflict at work doesn't have to have a negative conclusion. It can be motivating and productive and define the right direction after serious discussion - but it certainly needs to be managed well.

Great things can be achieved despite differing viewpoints. One demonstration of this are the great results of the Derby City Partnership. Public and private working towards the same common purpose of a great city to the benefit of all.

Derby is also rich in commercial dispute resolution expertise, providing a legal and financial safety net should commercial relationships falter. But before jumping off the high wire into the arms of our legal safety net, what we can do to have a more balanced position on the commercial tightrope?

- 1 Get an independent experienced facilitator involved
- 2 Find out what the root cause of the conflict is
- 3 Make sure you have profiled your team and that the strengths and weaknesses of the unit are understood.
- 4 Ensure you have a framework or process in place to deal with issues
- 5 Exorcise your demons with a facilitated discussion. Once the poison has been drawn, have a fun session with your team and move forward.

Let's face facts; if we all agreed about everything at work it would be very boring - it would also be a false environment where no-one would take any risks for fear of upsetting the status quo. This is the recipe for complacency and stagnation.

Conflict can be very healthy. What is most important is to allow constructive

debate and dialogue in an environment of trust where others' suggestions are welcomed and understood. Once you understand the reasons why people have a particular opinion, you can work towards a mutually acceptable way forward. Some things will be movable, some not.

Personalities will rub each other up the wrong way. Avoid the situations that do. Ranting in a boardroom meeting by one individual about his/her hobby horse topic may be more suitably re-scheduled for a meeting just devoted to that particular topic - which is holding up progress on all fronts.

There are new areas for conflict in the 21st Century too - dividing up the budgetary burden for new regulatory compliance and the influx of a newly international diverse workforce. Misunderstandings about culture can lead to mistrust and workplace tension if not sensitively addressed.

Don't be afraid to challenge the status quo, but be constructive!



Mark Wingfield is Director of MAX Teambuilding, which specialises in helping companies progress through positive conflict management. He has worked with organisations as diverse as Cannons Leisure Centres, Avid Technology and the Dorset Urban Heathland Trust. He is also a HeartMath trainer, helping people reach their Peak Performance. Contact Mark on: Tel: 01332 258 870 mobile: 0774 263 4581 www.mwsigma.com

GEM your No1 Google™

Choice for Inward Investment Support

“inward investment and relocation ...
East Midlands East Midlands East Midlands”

The GEM campaign is dedicated to make aware that the Great East Midlands is Great because for inward investment and relocation.

The East Midlands has it all ...

www.gemcampaign.org.uk

Contact: gem.partners@ntlbusiness.com

