

**OSC 12**  
Ohio Safety Congress & Expo

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**533 Conflict Resolution Skills: Addressing Intergenerational Relations in the Workplace**

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**Ohio** Bureau of Workers' Compensation

Conflict Resolution Skills: Addressing Intergenerational Relations in the Workplace

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2

Dealing with Controversy

**Objectives:**

At the completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Recognize the new paradigm of career development and its implications for the workplace in the digital era.
- Discuss the causes and value of controversy.
- List characteristics of conflict resolution styles.
- Identify power differentials and skills to resolve conflict.
- Gain more effective skills for listening and building rapport in conflict resolution.

3

The New Paradigm

- Most rapid transformative moment in Economic History (is the speed of change)
- The Third Wave: From
  - Industrialization to Digitalization
  - Urbanization to Globalization
  - Immigration to World Workers
- Consequences: From
  - Job to assignments (18 months)
  - Boundaryless Careers
  - Psychological Contract: Companies now look for work not workers

4

The Insecure Worker

- EMPLOYEES
  - Temporary
  - Contingent
  - Casual
  - Contract
  - Free-Lance
  - Part-time
  - External
  - Atypical
  - Self-employed

5

Phone Metaphor

Land Line Phone	Cell Phone
Traditional Career	Boundaryless Career
Linear progression of related jobs	Movement between unrelated assignments
With increased responsibility and prestige	Movement in different contexts
Career Ladder	Career Lego

6

## Gen Y-Z- Work Ethic

- Confident - Raised by parents believing in the importance of self-esteem, they consider themselves ready to overcome challenges and leap tall buildings. - can-do attitude -
- Hopeful. They're described as optimistic yet practical. They expect a workplace that is challenging, collaborative, creative, fun, and financially rewarding.
- Goal- and achievement-oriented. i.e. Skater Sara Hughes
- Civic-minded. They were taught to think in terms of the greater good. They have a high rate of volunteerism. Environmental Friendly
- Inclusive - They are used to being organized in teams-and to making certain no one is left behind.

## Gen Y- Z: What do They Expect from the Workforce?

- to work with positive people
- to be challenged and stimulated
- to be treated respectfully
- to learn new knowledge and skills
- to work in friendly environments
- to have flexible schedules
- to be paid well

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDQWz6eagA&feature=related>

## Gen Y-Z on the Job

- Strengths:
  - Collective action
  - Optimism
  - Tenacity
  - Heroic Spirit
  - Multitasking capabilities
  - Technological savvy
- Areas of Growth:
  - Need for supervision and structure
  - Inexperience, particularly with handling difficult people issues
  - Oral communication skills

## Managing Gen Y-Z

- Be the leader: This generation has grown up with structure and supervision, with parents who were role models.
- Challenge them: They want learning opportunities. They want to be assigned to projects they can learn from. They can multitask.
- Assign them to teams: They can work collaboratively working towards a common goal.
- Create social opportunities: They like being friends with coworkers.
- Have fun: A little humor, a bit of silliness, will make your work environment more attractive.
- Respect them: Treat their ideas respectfully, even though they haven't been around a long time.

## Managing Gen Y-Z

- Spend time orienting: what's good about work environment, what's not, your expectations and long-term goals.
- Learn about their personal goals: develop a strategy to interleaving these goals with job performance.
- Reward them - Consider evaluating them as a group for reaching a goal.
- Establish mentor programs. Consider matching young workers with your most seasoned people with whom they say they resonate.
- Set up a reverse mentoring program. Even though the younger cohort had just joined the firm, they tended to understand new technologies better
- Be flexible: A rigid schedule is a sure-fire way to lose your new employees.

## Supportive Behaviors & Communication Tips

- Use action words when challenging them.
- They will resent it if you talk down to them.
- They prefer email communication.
- Seek their feedback constantly and provide them with regular feedback.
- Use humor and create a fun learning environment. Don't take yourself too seriously.
- Encourage them to take risks and explore new ways of learning.

## Dealing with Controversy

**Definitions**

*Conflict/Controversy*- when one or both parties are not able to secure what they need or want and are actively seeking their own goals.

*Assertiveness* - willingness to state own wishes or concerns

*Cooperation* – willingness to work together with others to achieve a common goal

13

## Dealing with Controversy

**Writing Exercise**

- Brainstorm about times that you have experienced controversy between you and other people/generation
- Write down the nature of the conflict, and the parties involved
- Use this example as we continue in the talk to identify the causes of the conflict, your conflict resolution style, and some skills that could be beneficial to try in a situation like this one

14

## Dealing with Controversy

**Personal Check-In: Response to Controversy**

Techniques Used to Handle Conflict	Often	Occasionally	Rarely
Avoid the person or subject			
Change the subject			
Try to understand the other person's point of view			
Get another person to decide who is right			
Play the martyr			
Give in			
Apologize			
Try to identify specifically what you agree or disagree on			
Whine or complain to get your way			
Pretend to agree			
Admit that you are wrong, even if you do not believe you are			
Fight it out			
Turn the conflict into a joke			
Work toward a mutual solution			

15

## Dealing with Controversy

**Assumptions about Conflict**

**What can we assume about groups or conflict?**

- Conflicts and disagreements will develop.
- Some conflicts can be minimized.
- There are some unavoidable conflicts that should not be suppressed or smoothed over.
- Resolution of conflict does not have to result in a win-lose situation.

16

## Dealing with Controversy

**The Value of Conflict**

Conflict is **Positive** (disagreement on new ideas or creative solutions) when it:

- Causes people to listen to and consider different ideas.
- Enables people to increase their alternatives and potential paths.
- Results in increased participation and more ownership of and commitment to the decisions and goals of the group or person. Increases individual involvement.
- Opens up issues of importance, resulting in issue clarification.
- Helps build cohesiveness as people learn more about each other.
- Causes reassessment by allowing for examination of procedures or actions.

17

## Dealing with Controversy

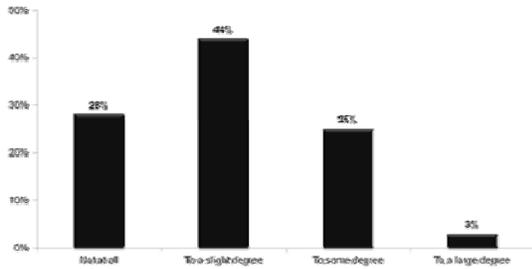
**The Value of Conflict**

Conflict is **destructive** (bullying, gossip, harassment, discrimination) when:

- People can get hurt and become defensive, which in turn may lead to a tense, rather than supportive, environment
- Diverts energy from more important issues and tasks.
- Deepens differences in values.
- Polarizes groups so that cooperation is reduced.
- Destroys the morale of people or reinforces poor self-concepts.
- Controversy is uncomfortable.

18

To what extent is intergenerational conflict an issue in your workplace?



Note: n = 432

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19

## Dealing with Controversy

### Recognizing Controversy - Causes of Conflict

- **Misunderstanding**
  - When individuals do not hear what is being said.
- **Personality clashes**
  - When individuals do not value “people just like me”.
- **Competition for resources**
  - When employees believe they are better off competing for resources rather than cooperating.
- **Authority issues**
  - When employees lack confidence in their leaders or perceive overuse of authority.

20

## Dealing with Controversy

### Recognizing Controversy - Causes of Conflict

- **Lack of cooperation**
  - When one person does not share information with the whole group.
- **Differences over methods or style**
  - When agreement does not exist on standard ways of completing a task.
- **Low performance**
  - When individuals are not working to their potential.
- **Value or Goal differences**
  - When individuals value different outcomes or objectives.

21

## Dealing with Controversy

### Resolving Controversy - Conflict Resolution Styles

	High Cooperation	Medium Cooperation	Low Cooperation
High Assertiveness	Collaboration		Compete
Medium Assertiveness		Compromise	
Low Assertiveness	Accommodation		Avoid

22

## Dealing with Controversy

### Resolving Controversy - Conflict Resolution Styles

- **Avoid (low assertiveness/low cooperation)** – When one has no willingness to cooperate and is not willing to state own wishes or concerns
- **Accommodate (low assertiveness/high cooperation)** - When one is very willing to cooperate or to get along with others but is not willing to state his own wishes or concerns, he may accommodate the wishes of others.
- **Compete (high assertiveness/low cooperation)** - When one has little or no willingness to cooperate and a very strong desire to state his own wishes or needs, his conflict response style will be competitive.
- **Compromise (medium assertiveness/medium cooperation)** - When one has some willingness to be cooperative and some willingness to state his own needs or wishes, then he may compromise – give a little to get a little of what he wants.
- **Collaborate (high assertiveness/high cooperation)** - When one has a strong motivation to cooperate and to state his own needs or wishes, then a desire for mutual benefit allows for a collaborative response.

23

## Dealing with Controversy

### Steps for Positive Resolution – Conditions for Positive Resolution

When the following conditions are in place, the likelihood of a positive resolution increases:

- Commitment to find a resolution that is mutually beneficial.
- Trust.
- Frame of mind that there is more than one way to look at the issues.
- Belief that a solution exists.
- Commitment to stay in the communication process.

24

## Dealing with Controversy

### Steps for Positive Resolution – Create an Environment of Respect

- **Create an environment that is conducive to successful conflict resolution.**
  - Quiet, private settings work the best. Agree prior to sitting down together that the purpose of the meeting is to resolve the conflict. When you make this agreement, all parties arrive prepared.
- **Determine what outcomes you'd like to see as a result of the discussion.**
  - A better working relationship? A better solution to the problem? Increased alternatives for successful projects? A broadened understanding of each person's needs and wants? Thoughtful solutions and outcomes are infinite if you are creative.
- **Begin by allowing each party to express their point of view.**
  - The purpose of the exchange is to make sure both parties clearly understand the viewpoint of the other. This is not the time to discuss; it is the time to ask questions, clarify points for better understanding and truly hear the other's viewpoint.

25

## Dealing with Controversy

### Steps for Positive Resolution – Create an Environment of Respect

- **Agree on the difference in the points of view.**
  - You must agree on the problem together to begin to search for a solution. Try to focus on the issues, not the personalities of the participants. Don't "you"
- **Explore and discuss potential solutions and alternatives.**
  - Try to focus on **both** your individual needs and wants and those of the other party. After all, if one party "wins," that means the other party "loses."
- **Agree on a plan that meets the needs of all parties and the organization.**
  - Agree on follow up steps, as necessary, to make the plan work. Agree on what each person will do to solve the conflict. Set clear goals and measurement of success.
- **Do what you agreed to do.**

26

## Dealing with Controversy

### Resolving Controversy – Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

- **Relax**  
Your body language says a lot about your demeanor. Relax your shoulders, breathe normally, relax your face and speak in a calm tone.
- **State the facts**  
Diplomatic communication is based on factual information, not hearsay or emotions.
- **Be assertive**  
When explaining something to someone, give concrete reasons, not reasons based on emotions. State your explanations in a respectful way.

27

## Dealing with Controversy

### – Resolving Controversy – Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

**Actively Listen (Summarize & Clarify, then Respond)**  
Part of diplomacy is listening to every side of the story and acknowledging that you understand. Do this by repeating what you think was said. Maintain eye contact

**Use "I" Statements and Objective Language**  
Using phrases like "you never" or "you always" feels like an attack to the other person. Try using indirect language like "I think" or "It looks like" instead.

Offer your best guess as to what the other person is feeling, and ask for feedback. "It sounds like you're angry right now, and I'm sorry about that." This demonstrates a willingness to understand without blame or defensiveness.

Set up your script: "When this happened... I had this reaction... What I would like is..."

28

## Dealing with Controversy

### Resolving Controversy – Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

**Allow Everyone to Finish**  
Never interrupt someone when they are speaking. Remember, part of being diplomatic is not being driven by emotions and aggression; likewise, don't let anyone interrupt you either. Politely ask to let you finish.

**Don't take it personally**  
Many things are said when people are frustrated or emotional. These things are said out of anger and likely not meant to hurt you..

**Practice!**  
Being consistently diplomatic takes practice. If you feel that you cannot possibly remain diplomatic in any circumstance, remove yourself from the situation and come back to it at a later time.

29

## Dealing with Controversy

### Conflict with Supervisors: Power Differentials – When the playing field is not level

- **Identify the Sources of Power**
  - **Position power** the power that comes from the position or title within the company
  - **Coercive power** supported by contracts or statute, that compels the employee to behave in certain ways and do certain tasks associated with the job.
  - **Expertise power** The power accumulated from developing great technical knowledge regarding a particular role or set of challenges
  - **Normative power** The power coming from familiarity with cultural norms. Those who know "the lay of the land" in a given group, and how to get things done
  - **Referent power** The power that one accrues from earning respect from others, generally associated with integrity and competence.

30

## Dealing with Controversy

### Conflict with Supervisors: Strategies for Success

- **Weigh your reasons and objectives against the good of the organization.** Before you "go to the mat" on an issue, be sure you are motivated by what you believe to be the larger interest and not just your own narrowly defined agenda.
- **Document everything.** This is especially important if your boss is prone to taking credit for your work. Copy others on your email correspondence whenever possible. Keep a daily list of tasks you are working on and provide a weekly written update to your boss. When assigned larger projects ask your boss to put the project scope in writing so later they can't say you didn't fulfill their expectations. Document your own activities so that you can remind them of your own achievements at performance review time.
- **Meet the boss.** Set up a meeting with your boss and confidently address your issue. **Use your I Statements and objective language.** Remember: You are responsible only for the effort and not the outcome.

31

## Dealing with Controversy

### Conflict with Supervisors: Strategies for Success

- **Be tactful.** Show respect for the boss's position and responsibilities. Whatever the outcome of your differences with him/her, he/she is still your boss.
- **Minimize contact with your boss.** Whenever possible use email instead of the phone or meeting face to face. This can help you document conversations as well.
- **Involve your Human Resources department.** Ideally your HR team is impartial and obligated to keep your conversations confidential. They can coach you and help your boss become a better manager.
- **Other Neutral Third Parties.** Mediator, union leader, boss's boss, other trusted coworkers. If your HR Dept doesn't come through for you, then seek out other sources of support.
- **Move to another department.** When quitting isn't an option you can always attempt to move to a different area.

32

## Dealing with Controversy

### Questions for Discussion: Healthy Conflict Resolution

- How comfortable are you with conflict? Do you believe that conflict can ever be positive? Why?
- What are the most common causes for conflict, in your opinion?
- What Conflict resolution style do you use the most? Does it work? How do you know? Give an example of a time when you used this style, and tell about the outcome.
- If you were to choose a different conflict resolution style, which one would you choose? Why?
- What new verbal/nonverbal communication strategies did you learn about today? How will you use them in the future?

33

## Dealing with Controversy

### Questions for Discussion: Recognizing Healthy Conflict Resolution in the Workplace

- Does your corporate culture promote the notion that differences in ideas and beliefs are welcome and expected, that healthy debate is the expectation, and that all opinions are equal? How do you know?
- Does your organization/workplace recognize, reward, and thank people who are willing to take a stand and support their position? How do you know?
- Does your organization provide opportunities for interpersonal relationships, problem solving, conflict resolution, and particularly, non-defensive communication? How do you know?
- How can you help your organization promote healthy communication?

34

## Dealing with Controversy

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35

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