

Quick Tips to Cool Hot Heads in the Office

But these tips can be applied to defuse disagreements pretty much anywhere

by Doc Elliot

► Face it, the times we are in are rife with conflict. If you work in an office — any office — you are well aware of office politics. People don't get along well; Human Resources always has a challenge up their sleeves and yadda yadda yadda. What happens when the headlines are bubbling over with tense internal conflict?

Serious social and political issues divide households and the workplace, and sensitively addressing these issues in today's climate requires sensitivity, skill and, often, professional intervention. Since we all stress so much upon the "win-win" situation in developing proactive strategies to improve interpersonal communication and lessen the propensity for personnel blow-ups at work, here is a roundup of the top five essential tips for quickly cooling heads in the face of escalating conflict at work.

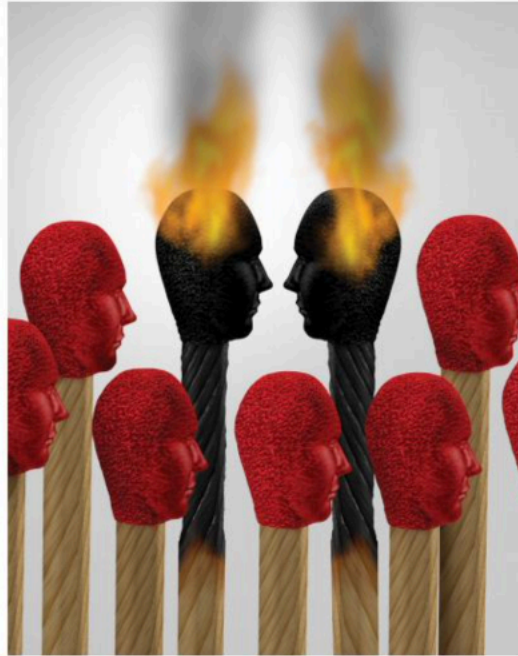
After all, we have to work at the same place, day in and day out. There's no point in keeping an argument alive if you have to see the same person the next day. Right?

Take it as an occupational hazard. However, as long as everyone is working under the same roof and toward a common goal of keeping the workplace peace, things should go smoothly. For this exercise, we referenced several common scenarios at the offices, but these tips can be applied to defuse disagreements pretty much anywhere — to easily resolve any conflict at the workplace, at home, or other social situation where unexpected tension flares up.

5. Assume the role of peacekeeper. Those in a position to resolve a conflict at the workplace should listen to both sides. Some employees play the victim card, but it's important to listen to everyone — and remain unbiased. Even if there's a personal preference for one employee over the other, it's important to remain neutral. Doing so will help in identifying the exact reasons that led to the inflamed situation in the first place.

4. Try to establish a communication bridge. It's important to get both parties to talk. We know that workplace conflicts often lead to terribly draining passive-aggressive cold wars that can deeply fracture workplace culture and lead to unhappy employees and unproductivity, which is why it's so important to identify, address and resolve even the smallest micro-aggressions when they happen. To do that, everyone has to get involved and opened up about the conflict. Of course, it will start with pointing fingers, but there will be a resolution when both employees or parties have conveyed their concerns and everyone feels equally listened to and heard.

3. There's always a common ground. People should consider: What's the point of arguing or having a conflict at the workplace when they know they will have to deal with the same person the next day? Look at the bigger picture and know that there is always a common ground. Find it.



2. There is no harm in compromising. Compromising takes a lot of courage. Often, people are not so submissive because of their alter ego. For the sake of common grounds and working together, however, it's more productive to give in a little. Those in a leadership position can set the example by taking the first step toward compromise, themselves, with grace and flexibility. It will inspire their colleagues to harness the same emotional mindset. As a result, the company will miraculously evolve into a group of people working together as a team.

1. The realization factor. In the end, the most important tip for de-escalating conflicts at work is the realization factor. After all, we are human beings; we are made of complex emotions that either balance or unbalance our work profile. This is exactly why different schools of management proposed the idea of having a Human Resources department at companies.

In the maelstrom of productivity, we often forget the very central role of a Human Resources manager is to *work with people*. The job of the Human Resources department is not just about monitoring employee performance, managing their pay scales and holidays. The most important aspect of human resources is to manage "humans" as a resource. We are all valuable, and we need help from time to time to hone our abilities to work in a company. The HR team is a company's varsity team, coaches and support staff. Business leaders should support their HR team and ensure they know the importance of their role. It's leadership's role to communicate the culture and expectations for the company from the top down, and HR has a unique responsibility and opportunity to help effectively cultivate whatever that value system is. ■



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47 MAY 2021

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