

RESOLVING CONFLICTS EFFECTIVELY

The use of mediation as a confidential, informal conflict resolution method within the Exhibition industry presents both opportunities and areas for development. However, embracing mediation and implementing the process into the employee support system is at times not enough, leaving room for effective formal conflict resolution mechanisms.

Image Source: Magic Wand Media



Relationships within teams are complex, and wherever people interact, conflict is inevitable. These can arise in various forms, ranging from interpersonal disagreements and misunderstandings to conflicts related to workload, communication, or differing opinions.

Although conflicts can create tension, hinder productivity, and affect employee morale, one often states that 'it' will solve by itself and consequently step back. It is exactly at this moment where employees, trained and skilled in conflict management, have the best chance to engage and transform the situation into a constructive way forward.

The Exhibition industry is actively addressing workplace conflicts, exploring successful mechanisms and fostering cross-industry learning. However, the potential that lies in effective conflict management is yet to be discovered. In pursuit of answers, HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION has interviewed industry professionals across the globe and published the 2023 survey results in the handbook titled 'Bridging the Gap: Effective Conflict Resolution and Global Business Events'.

Readiness to Engage in Conflict

In the initial stages of workplace conflict management, the first ones aiming to diffuse the situation are typically the involved employees, team leaders, and HR professionals.

Our 2023 survey reveals that the majority of respondents in these positions (79%) have not received formal conflict management training, yet it is this very group that engages in workplace conflicts first.

The survey also highlights that all individuals who feel unready to engage in conflicts are eager to benefit from training opportunities to better address conflicts within their teams and companies. The opportunity and responsibility for organizations to invest in their employees' capabilities is evident.

Mediation to Address Workplace Conflicts

Where internal efforts to solve conflicts remain unsuccessful, mediation plays an important role. Mediation has proven to

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It provides a neutral and facilitated environment where conflicting parties can openly and confidentially express their concerns and with the help of the external mediator, work together to find mutually agreeable solutions.

By embracing mediation, companies can promote a collaborative and constructive approach to taking employees' disagreements seriously, leading to improved employee satisfaction, enhanced teamwork, reduced litigation risks, and a productive workforce.

When to Ask for Help

By offering external mediation support (engaging a professional mediator), organizations can empower employees in resolving complex or challenging situations. The involvement of an experienced mediator brings impartiality, expertise, and a fresh perspective to facilitate the confidential resolution process, fostering a positive work environment and maintaining healthy professional relationships.

My experience shows that mediation is particularly valuable in the following scenarios:

One such situation is when there's an impasse or deadlock, where parties struggle to reach a consensus. Here, a professional mediator plays a crucial role in facilitating negotiations.

Another important context for mediation is highly sensitive or emotional disputes, especially those involving deeply personal matters. An external mediator creates a neutral and confidential environment, enabling everyone to express their concerns and collaboratively work on a resolution without fear of bias or judgment.

Additionally, mediation is beneficial when there's a noticeable power imbalance among the involved employees. By involving a trained mediator, a fair and balanced process can be ensured, where all voices are not only heard but also genuinely considered.

View formal conflict management training as a valuable investment in employees' capabilities and overall workplace efficiency. Equipped with enhanced conflict management skills, employees can address conflicts constructively, benefiting both individuals and the organization.

The use of mediation as a confidential, informal conflict resolution method within the Exhibition industry presents both opportunities and areas for development. While some companies have already embraced mediation and implemented the process into their employee support system, there is still work to be done to ensure that organizations and employees fully benefit from the effective conflict resolution mechanisms.

Recommendations

Below are six actionable steps that emerge from a synthesis of the 2023 survey results, my experience within the exhibition industry, and my work as a mediator. These recommendations are crafted to equip individuals across the Exhibition industry with practical approaches, fostering a workplace that thrives despite conflicts.

Prioritize Resolution Processes: Make conflict resolution a central part of the workplace culture. Implement informal and transparent conflict resolution processes to proactively address conflicts, promoting a more positive and productive environment.

Address Conflict Avoidance: Encourage open communication. Create an atmosphere where employees feel comfortable raising concerns and seeking support to prevent issues from escalating.

Provide Clarity and Support: Ensure employees understand the company's conflict management approach and feel supported in navigating conflicts. Clear guidelines and a supportive environment are essential for effective conflict resolution.

Invest in Conflict Management Training: View formal conflict management training as a valuable investment in employees' capabilities and overall workplace efficiency. Equipped with enhanced conflict management skills, employees can address conflicts constructively, benefiting both individuals and the organization.

Leverage Mediation: Mediation is a powerful tool for conflict resolution. By expanding support systems and working with a professional mediator where needed, organizations can mitigate negative consequences of unresolved conflicts.

Modernize Workplace Culture: Understand that transparent conflict management is fundamental to modern workplaces that prioritize a people-centered culture. This approach not only improves employee satisfaction but also provides a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining top talent. **////**