

# Why you should train your managers in conflict resolution and basic mediation skills

In all work places we can be guaranteed that we will come across conflict. An effective manager is one who possesses the ability to know how to skilfully manage conflict and bring about a positive outcome. Research has suggested that approximately 20% of a manager's time can be spent dealing with conflict. In the UK, Senior Executives and HR Professionals report spending up to 30% of their time in litigation activities involving issues such as harassment, bullying and wrongful dismissal (Buon, 2008).

Our perceptions of workplace conflict can greatly influence our ability to respond effectively. By reframing those perceptions and beginning to view conflict as a way of discovering and learning something about themselves, their co-workers and their organisations, Managers can then create a framework for responding to conflict that is empowering and transformative.

Whilst intuition and pragmatism are important aspects of responding to conflict it is not enough to rely on these things if we are going to be consistent and fair, prevent further harm being done and arrive at lasting solutions. Managers therefore need a framework within which they can discover what works well or them and how effective they can really be at resolving their own conflicts or intervening as a manager.

Practical conflict resolution techniques and basic mediation skills can equip your managers with the essential skills necessary for effectively managing conflict in the workplace. Basic mediation skills training does not teach Managers to be professional mediators, rather it provides a set of practical skills to use when intervening in conflict situations. This in turn can reduce the impact, length and impact of conflict situations and result in the effective management of the situation without the need for third party involvement from HR Professionals, Investigators or Tribunals.

A survey conducted by Price Waterhouse and Cornell's PERC Institute on Conflict Resolution of over 530 Fortune 1000 corporations stated that:

- 90% of respondents view conflict management as a critical cost-control technique
- 88% of respondents reported using mediation in the last three years

The emphasis on informal problem solving has been highlighted in the review of the UK Employment Act 2002 (Dispute Resolution) Regulations that came into force in 2004. Whilst these regulations were intended to encourage parties to resolve disputes as early as possible the headline finding of the recent review of these regulations by Michael Gibbons is that *'rather than facilitating early resolution of disputes the Regulations have exacerbated and accelerated disputes'* (Gibbons, 2007). A key recommendation was that all employer and employee organisations should be *'challenged to commit to implementing and promoting early dispute resolution'* (Gibbons, 2007).

Workplace mediation skills can be taught to existing managers to provide an informal route to the resolution of conflict resolution Providing cost-effective and informal problem solving at the first instance of the development of conflict, this in turn can result in improved workplace relations and better and more effective work communications.

# Our Two-Day Conflict Resolution & Mediation-4-Managers Training Workshop

## Workshop Aim

To provide participants with an introduction to workplace conflict resolution theory, methods and strategies and to develop basic skills in workplace mediation suitable for managers

## Workshop Objectives:

At the completion of this course participants should be able to:

- Understand the positive and negative aspects of workplace conflict
- Apply effective communication strategies to resolve workplace conflict situations
- Critically evaluate the role of power in workplace conflict
- Develop their active listening skills
- Apply reframing techniques so that conflict can be resolved
- Use basic mediation skills to resolve conflict in the workplace collaboratively
- Understand their own limits in the use of mediation as an intervention technique

## Seminar Outline

### Day One

- Conflict theory
- Resources for responding to conflict
- Perceptions of conflict
- Positive & Negative Conflict
- Analysing Your Conflict Handling Behaviour (styles)
- Resolving and Managing Conflict
- The Abilene Paradox & Groupthink
- Dealing with 'difficult' people

### Day Two

- Use of active listening & assertiveness
- Handling emotion and aggression
- Introducing basic and essential mediation skills for managers
- Workplace mediation skills for Managers and Supervisors
- Use of reframing techniques in mediation
- The limits of mediation

The materials in course are unique to Buon Consultancy and have been especially developed for this programme over the past 20 years. Additional materials have been provided by the Conflict Resolution Network (Australia); Mediation@MIT - Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Programme on Mediation and Negotiation at the Harvard Law School.

**Please note:** this course is not intended to train managers to be 'mediators', rather to give them the skills necessary to intervene early into conflict situations using a set of practical mediation skills and techniques. We have run this type of training for hundreds of managers over the past twenty years with great success. Formal mediation training involves a minimum of sixty hours of training and ongoing development.

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