

# Cut the Conflict

With a management plan, you can successfully prevent conflict from hurting your operation.

by **Kerry Jones, Zoetis**

The people working on your operation are essential to your success. When conflict interferes with their performance, are you prepared to lead them through it?

Occasional conflicts are inevitable, but if squabbles are unresolved, they can cause severe and ongoing damage. If conflict escalates, it can drain morale, increase absences and spur turnover. Employees will make more costly mistakes, and you will spend more time managing problems. That's why it's important for managers to learn how to address and resolve issues whenever they start.

Developing a management plan will give you and your employees a process to address and resolve challenges. Before you can resolve conflict, you need to identify it.

**Identify the issue.** Why does conflict occur? It generally falls into two categories: interpersonal or work-related. Interpersonal conflict means a struggle between at least two employees, or a manager and an employee. Work-related conflict is when someone might not be meeting expectations. When either

arises, it's best to identify the reason so you can begin to address it.

► **Resolve the conflict.** As a manager, you are responsible for giving your employees guidance and training on eliminating conflicts. Conflict management is part of your job. Give your employees the tools they need to help prevent situations that pose a risk to your operation.

► **Address the issue.** When conflict occurs, it's essential to address it immediately. Conflict rarely resolves itself.

► **Encourage communication.** Be approachable and encourage communication. That means being a neutral party and assisting with conflict resolution or communicating a change in behavior. Speaking about the issue and having open communication is the best way to prevent conflicts from worsening.

► **Set goals.** Make achievable goals part of your plan. Communicate with employees so they know their role in reaching them. This creates more engaged employees who will help grow the operation.

► **Clarify expectations.** Even with a strong management plan, you're unlikely to get clear results without setting clear expectations. You need to communicate performance expectations so your business remains successful and profitable. You not only can improve employee performance and behavior but also help prevent certain conflicts from ever arising.

► **Learn from employees.** Train your employees on how to give and receive proper feedback. When receiving feedback, it's important to think of it as a gift to help you and the business improve. Emphasize the importance of openly providing it.

A sound strategy that removes conflict from your business not only benefits interactions among your employees but improves productivity at the operation. With the right leadership skills, conflict is something that you can learn to handle. If you ignore it, it will build into something that is too large to manage.

You can learn how to create a management plan during training at a PeopleFirst course near you. To find a course or for more information, visit [GrowPeopleFirst.com](http://GrowPeopleFirst.com) or contact your local Zoetis representative.

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**Editor's Note:** Kerry Jones is a consultant and coach for PeopleFirst from Zoetis.