



Conflict Resolution Tips

How To Minimize Conflict in Teams

Agree to Agree

The first mistake teams make that causes numerous arguments as a project progresses is not coming to agreement about their basic objectives. At Cheetah Learning, we use a technique called Cheetah Project Management that has our teams develop a project agreement prior to initiating any project. We agree to agree on our project scope, how we're going to communicate with each other, how often we're going to hold meetings, the overall risk we'll collectively tolerate for our project, the constraints we all know are on the project, and the roles we'll each play on the project. Being agreeable (and likewise being disagreeable) is a choice. The project agreement template that we use makes it easier for all of us to be agreeable and to document what it is specifically that to which we are each agreeing. You can download this template at www.cheetahpm.com.

Cheetah Focus

What you focus on is what you get. To reduce conflict, you need to focus on what is working right with people with whom you work. You also need to focus on achieving the shared goals of the group. Distractions diffuse people's attention and create frustration and tension. At Cheetah Learning we focus on achieving meaningful goals in a short amount of time by keeping projects to three months in duration. This enables people to get along better by focusing on a goal larger than they themselves could achieve in three months and gives them less opportunities to get distracted.

Measure the Treasure

What gets measured gets done. Measurements focus your team's attention on what is truly important. Pick them carefully. Top performing teams measure results – not activity. Find out the top three results your external customers want and DELIVER. The Cheetah Project Management Project agreement has the project team AND the project sponsor (who many people mistake as a "customer") together document



the customer requirements, customer acceptance criteria and business case. The team is measured on achieving deliverables, NOT on completing tasks. Top performing teams deliver results, not excuses. If you measure tasks, that is what will get done; if you want results, measure results. We also use a web-based tool called PM Scorecards to measure our project performance and keep all of us focused on the end results of the project.

The Platinum Rule

The Golden Rule is to treat others the way you want to be treated. Go for the Platinum – treat others as they want to be treated. At Cheetah Learning, our top performing teams play by the adage, “who ever has the gold makes the rules.” Our customers have the gold and we find out how they want to be treated. Since there are no discontinuities in life – meaning if we want platinum results with our customers we also follow the platinum rule with each other.

Brain on the Wall

Do you know what is in your team members’ minds? Do you want to know? At Cheetah Learning, we find that we’re a lot smarter together than any of us is individually. So we do an activity called “put your brain on the wall.” We use this technique instead of conventional brainstorming. We’ve found using conventional brainstorming that people are so concerned about their contribution that they don’t adequately listen to their teammates, or that they may be hesitant to provide ideas they don’t think are good enough. With brain on the wall, each person contributes independently on post-its. They put their contribution on the wall. As a team, they organize their collective input. By organizing the input, they read what each team member has said. They get an idea of where they have consensus, and can build off of each other’s ideas.

Conflict is Cash

What happens when something you expected to happen, doesn’t happen? You get resentful. What happens when team members have unstated expectations that are not met – conflict. Differing expectations are the root cause of ALL conflict. Conflict is an opportunity to better understand expectations with team members and customers. At Cheetah Learning,



when conflict happens, we use it as an opportunity to better understand our expectations and those of our customers. People remember situations that were emotionally charged. When we have turned a negative situation into a positive one, we gain the trust and respect of the people who whom we were in conflict. We use conflict to get a deeper understanding of unique expectations that enable our top performing teams to deliver fantastic customer service. Conflict is unavoidable, so when it occurs, make it profitable.

Powerfully Positive

What does the statement "I'm just being honest" mean? Does it mean that I'm giving myself permission to say something hurtful? Does it mean in the past when I was being "nice" that I was dishonest? Think about it. When you communicate, consider the impact of your words. Practice open, honest, and POSITIVE communication. Remember using the word BUT, negates everything you said before you used the term BUT. At Cheetah Learning our top performing team members think before they speak. They take time to understand the other person and the impact of their words. Consider how you feel when someone addresses you with a negative issue. People judge themselves by their intentions and other's by their behavior. Find the positive intentions and you'll perceive their behavior positively.

Dare to be GREAT

We are all capable of greatness. We each have unique gifts and talents to bring to the table. Find out what you are good at and polish those skills to greatness. At Cheetah Learning we focus on being "best in class" in each of our individual areas, and best in class as an overall company. We leverage our innate "greatness" for competitive advantage. Focus on the individual and collective strengths of your team members and you will discover the true capabilities of your high-performing team.

Recognize the Rainbows

Whether or not it is raining, look for the rainbows. Diversity on a team can shake up the status quo and stimulate change. A rainbow of cultures, industries, and educational backgrounds is a pot of gold for new ideas. Like a parachute, your mind works best when it's open. Open



your mind while taking a new look at your team. Every team member brings unique perspectives and talents to the table. The more freely individual traits can be expressed, the more they're appreciated, the bigger and adaptable the overall team brain becomes. Mental cloning may work for farm animals, not for high performing teams. Keep your eyes peeled for rainbows and recognize the gold in diversity.

Fine Tune the Team

When you move from interactions riddled with conflict, you can move towards becoming a high performing team. A team working well together energizes everyone around them. They perform like a well-tuned, synchronized orchestra. Everyone is individually tuned and on task, and collectively the harmony resonates. High performing teams, like an orchestra, need practice and tuning. Be sure to take time to rejuvenate your team with practice and tuning. Take time to reassess your individual and collective team capabilities by participating in periodic team building activities. Our Conflict Resolution course was designed for this purpose.

**Improve your Team's Performance with our
Two Day Program on Conflict Resolution
Register Today**

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800-246-9106**