

Dealing with Workplace Conflict

by [Steve Tobak](#)

Why can't we all just get along? Because it doesn't work that way. There are lots of reasons why folks don't get along. There are cultural differences, gender differences, style differences, all kinds of differences. And that's just the beginning.

In the workplace, it gets even worse. There are bullies, jerks who want to stab you in the back, and folks you just plain don't like. My personal favorite are people who are [passive aggressive](#)--they openly agree to something and then do the opposite.

Employees compete for promotions, raises, and recognition. There are conflicts between employees and their bosses, bosses and their bosses, among executive staffs, boards of directors, divisions and programs for funding...it goes on and on.

In fact, the workplace is a veritable petri dish for conflict. It makes you wonder how anything gets done at all.

In any case, here are five techniques that will help you get along in the workplace. Sure, I've had conflict resolution training, but more important is decades of experience in dealing with every kind of conflict you can think of, and some you couldn't even imagine.

1. Keep management and human resources out of it. In my experience, no good has ever come of bringing conflicts to management or HR. All that does is brand both parties as troublemakers. Figure out how to resolve it yourselves, live with it, or get out. Those are your viable options.

2. Focus on the issues, not the person. You can waste your entire career whining about "he does this" and "she does that." Forget it. Everyone's different. Focus on the real issues--technology, products, customers--you know, what the company's paying you to do.

3. Embrace conflict. Conflict isn't necessarily a bad thing. If it's open and direct, it helps in dealing with issues and building consensus. Intel's famous for having a culture that embraces conflict. It's called "[constructive confrontation](#)," and it's helped Intel to become the world's most powerful chip company.

4. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Remember, your tormentor is human, too. Offline, try to understand what motivates him, why he might feel the way he does. Then during a one-on-one (face-to-face meeting), literally ask for his perspective and try to articulate it back to him. If he does the reverse, you'll be seeing eye-to-eye in no time.

5. Try being open and honest. Sometimes we're guilty of all the things we complain about in others. Try being honest about your own issues and faults. It's often the case that you're doing more to inflame the situation than you realize. Be open and honest with the other person, too. Tell her how you feel, what's bothering you, and ask for the same in return.

Bottom line Learn these five lessons, and you'll be surprised at the results. You'll be happier and your career will benefit, as well. These techniques do take commitment and practice, though, so keep it up and be patient.

Your Reaction: This article is good, but it is not perfect. On the lines below, please list other tips that you can suggest for dealing with workplace conflict.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____
