

HR-06
Conflict Resolution Policy
Human Resources
Creation Date: September 30, 2008
ELT Approval Date: September 30, 2008
Last Review Date: August 1, 2014
Page 1 of 4

ORGANIZATIONAL SCOPE:

The Conflict Resolution policy shall apply to all employees.

PURPOSE:

To ensure that all staff become knowledgeable and skilled at conflict resolution. To develop and apply a consistent transparent conflict resolution process for disputes and to support resolution at the level where they occur. To also ensure that there is a commitment by managers – a commitment codified in this policy – to deal with escalated conflict directly with their counterparts.

POLICY:

Conflict usually occurs when there is a state of opposition between two or more people resulting from divergent or incompatible needs, ideas or interests. It expresses itself in a variety of ways, the most common being a dispute.

Conflict or disputes, are a very real part of organizational life and the interactions between people. In order to help create a healthy workplace environment, conflict needs to be managed well. Conflict, when managed well, can be the catalyst to innovation and other creative solutions.

A predetermined “conflict resolution procedure” for resolving conflict through discussion and consensus building, will generate a culture that encourages the airing of these disputes while maintaining the positives of a kind and caring culture.

The conflict resolution procedure applies when conflict is present between staff, working groups, teams, departments or programs. Where necessary or requested, the Human Resources department will endeavour to assist staff in the process in bringing about a resolution of the dispute.

This “conflict resolution procedure” is an all-purpose strategy that encourages all participants in a conflict situation to express their needs and to search for alternatives that meet those needs.

PROCEDURE:

This conflict resolution process is presented in four phases beginning with a brief summary or overview of the process followed by detailed steps supporting each phase.

HR-06
Conflict Resolution Policy
Human Resources
Creation Date: September 30, 2008
ELT Approval Date: September 30, 2008
Last Review Date: August 1, 2014
Page 2 of 4

Summary of Conflict Resolution Process

- Reframe the conflict by thinking of it as a productive rather than destructive. Remember, conflict is inevitable and manageable.
- Separate the people from the problem. The focus of the conflict should be the issue regardless of who has raised it. By depersonalizing the conflict the opportunity to create a solution that all will find acceptable is increased dramatically.
- Reflect on the situation. Address observable facts and objective criteria and issues relevant to the conflict, and your feelings.
- Arrange a meeting to discuss the situation.
- Set up a fair and orderly discussion of the issues. Invite the other person to describe what he/she views the issues to be and what those issues mean to him/her. Once he/she is finished, give your perspective of the issues and what they mean to you. Give each other uninterrupted time to talk and listen. Give and request feedback.
- Brainstorm resolutions to your disputes. Discuss what each of these options mean to both of you. After thinking of several different options, evaluate them and explore viable ones. Agree to a plan.
- Agree upon a time and ways to evaluate success. Also remember to recognize positive changes and build upon your successes.

Phase I

Resolving a Dispute (See Appendix A – Working Through a Conflict Situation)

1. Person A completes the sequence of four statements (as follows) from his/her point of view. Person A should be very specific and focus on behaviors. Remember, the goal is mutual resolution, not winning.
 - a. Description of the *current* situation ("The conflict I'm having with you is..." "The problem as I see it is...").
 - b. Description of *current* feelings or emotions ("The way I feel about this situation is..." "I feel...when we...because...").
 - c. Description of the *ideal* situation ("What I'd like to see is..." "What I'd like the outcome to be is...").

HR-06
Conflict Resolution Policy
Human Resources
Creation Date: September 30, 2008
ELT Approval Date: September 30, 2008
Last Review Date: August 1, 2014
Page 3 of 4

- d. Description of *self-intention* ("What I'm willing to do to create what I want is..." "I'm willing to reach a settlement by...").
2. Person B then *paraphrases* what Person A has said without interruption. If the paraphrase is accepted as accurate by Person A, Person B goes through the same sequence of statements and Person A paraphrases them.
3. Person A then asks, "Can we discuss ways to resolve this issue?" If the answer is "no," Person A begins the sequence again. If the answer is "yes," both parties propose possible solutions.
4. Person A presents a variety of possible solutions, considering what Person B has said, ranking them 1, 2, 3... etc. Person B does the same. Person A selects one of B's solutions and Person B selects one of A's solutions as being the most *desirable*. Negotiate which solution will accomplish the greatest outcome for both. Agree to try a solution out on a temporary basis to assess its consequences. Then come back and make changes, as necessary. Any resolution must be tried willingly by both parties. A lack of commitment to do so may compromise the outcome and lower the trust level.

Phase II (Escalated Conflict) (If there is no resolution at Phase I)

Certain complex disputes will inevitably need to be decided by superiors. Consequently, managers must ensure that, upon escalation, conflict is resolved constructively and efficiently – and in ways that model desired behaviours.

1. If a manager is brought into a dispute by a staff member, she/he will first ascertain that the parties have attempted Phase I.
2. If Phase I has been engaged but without success, then both parties to the dispute will present jointly to their manager/s. This will reduce or eliminate the issues ordinarily associated with unilateral escalation. It will guarantee that the ultimate resolution will have been made with the benefit of an array of perspectives on the conflict, its causes, and the various ways it might be resolved.

Joint versus unilateral escalation helps create the kind of accountability that is necessary for successful conflict resolution.

Phase III (If there is no resolution at Phase II)

To encourage that every effort be made to resolve conflict at this stage where there already has been intervention by managers, mediation or a facilitated conversation is encouraged at this point. Each party would agree to have mediation. The parties involved in the conflict would contact Human Resources to identify a mediator within Human Resource who would work with the parties to resolve the conflict.



HR-06
Conflict Resolution Policy
Human Resources
Creation Date: September 30, 2008
ELT Approval Date: September 30, 2008
Last Review Date: August 1, 2014
Page 4 of 4

Phase IV (If there is no resolution at Phase III)

Notwithstanding all efforts to resolve conflict through mediation at Phase III, there will be times when resolution will not be met. In such a case the Vice President(s) may be requested to hear the issues (as in Phase II), and may either engage in the conflict resolution process or initiate third party facilitation.

Phase V (If there is no resolution at Phase IV)

As an absolute last step, if the Vice President(s) intervention does not succeed, then the matter is referred to the President & CEO for final and binding arbitration. At this level, the choices are that another qualified external facilitator be brought in to resolve the issue. The findings and recommendations would form the basis of a final decision by the President & CEO, or he/she may make a decision by choosing any one of the alternatives, or imposing one of his/her own.