How to Handle Conflict: Crash Course Business - Soft Skills #13

Crash Course: Business - Soft Skills
https://youtube.com/watch?v=gOHoSuDEO4M
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/gOHoSuDEO4M

Reality shows make a living off of conflict.

Sometime we love to get cozy on a couch, grab some snacks, and watch groups of people with ridiculous hair extensions throw drinks in each others' faces. But we can't live our lives by picking a fight every single time we get irritated.

Especially at work. Handling conflict takes finesse and thought. And most confrontation comes down to having a calm yet difficult conversation.

So today, we're going to talk about some tactics to manage conflict, help you give effective feedback, and show you how to apologize in a way that counts. I'm Evelyn from the Internets. And this is Crash Course Business: Soft Skills [Intro Music Plays] Whether you're in a group of 12 twenty-somethings locked in a house together, or just officemates working on a team project, you're bound to have conflict.

Or at least one person you don't like working with. It's just human nature. People have different working styles, communication styles, and generally like different things.

And conflict can pop up over anything, like miscommunications, different leadership styles, or unfairness. But guess what? We're adults.

And this isn't Jerry Springer. So we need to find ways to get along, or it's going to affect our professional reputations. The only person we ever fully understand is ourself.

We're all influenced by social perception. People see things differently, and we make assumptions based on our own experiences. So to really understand someone else's perspective and get to the heart of an issue, we have to sit down and listen to what they have to say.

There are 5 general strategies to approach conflict. Many people favor 1 or 2, but like they say in finance, you need to "diversify your portfolio." Conflicts are complicated and some resolution styles work best in different situations. Each strategy has a different level of assertiveness, which is directly asking for what we want, and cooperativeness, which is our willingness to work with others.

Sometimes you can solve conflicts by simply dividing something up, like a distributive negotiation or splitting a check. In that case, compromising may be the best bet, which is bargaining for a solution that satisfies everyone. Although you might end up satisfying nobody instead.

Compromise is an easy default, especially since no one walks away feeling cheated. But if the conflict is more complicated than that, like solving a dispute between departments, think back to negotiations. It may be worth trying collaboration, which is searching for a creative solution that meets everyone's needs.

Collaboration can be tricky. To do it, you need to build up a baseline level of trust, so you can assert yourself but people know you're looking out for them too. It always takes time and effort to find creative solutions.

But sometimes, things need to be done, like, now. If you're dealing with getting a product printed before deadline, it may be worth giving an authoritative command, or using your authority to force someone into giving you what you need. There are downsides to a lot of assertiveness without much cooperation, though.

Maybe you've worked retail and dealt with someone who demands to speak to your manager because you can't fill their unreasonable request. No, I cannot check in the back for you, Karen. So using a conflict management style with a bit more finesse will protect your reputation in the long term.

In some cases, you may want to accommodate, which is basically agreeing to a solution to make others happy -- like meeting over your lunch break when you wanted personal time. Accommodation can help smooth over tricky situations, but too much could mean you miss out on opportunities. Or it could give you a reputation as a doormat.

And you deserve to embrace your worth and assert what you want! But if a conflict really isn't your problem, it may be best to avoid getting involved and choose avoidance. Avoidance isn't super realistic in the long-term, though.

You can't sashay away from every workplace conflict just because you're afraid or uncomfortable. Now, harassment is a separate, very complicated issue that could have its own video series. If you're dealing with an abusive situation or inappropriate behavior like catcalling -- or worse -- then we recommend going to a trusted third party.

That could be your boss, a therapist, or a human resources rep you trust. Systems for dealing with harassment are far from perfect, and some companies have arbitrators that are more concerned with policy than people. So everyone's story is different, and unfortunately, there isn't usually an easy answer.

Even in smaller-scale situations, though, you could bring in a third party to help resolve conflict. Like, there's the HR department, a mediator, or an ombudsperson, which is an investigator who specializes in mistreatment and conflict resolution. Let's go to the Thought Bubble.

You've been working at a consulting firm for a couple of months. It's basically your dream job. The pay is fantastic, the companies are interesting, and you're on a great team… mostly.

There's creative tension between you and one of your teammates -- you never really clicked. You can deal with the cold shoulder and some disagreement on project execution. It's been manageable because your back-and-forth usually creates new ideas.

But recently, they've been rude towards you during client presentations, which is unprofessional. It's not a drastic issue that affects the whole team, so you decide to talk to them after work. And together, you collaborate to come up with a plan to communicate more directly with each other.

Especially before big presentations. So that situation is back on track, but there's another problem. Your office is dog-friendly.

And your cubicle-mate's dog is mostly fine... except he regularly pees on the corner of your desk. You've brought it up with your coworker, who has promised to take him out more frequently, but it hasn't really happened. And you're sick of smelling dog pee.

So you decide to go the office HR rep and talk with them. By the end of the week, a memo is emailed out issuing a "dog code of conduct" for the office, along with a formal complaint system. Because of this third-party intervention, your coworker starts to train their dog more and take him out for a long walk on lunch breaks.

And soon, you've got your space back. Thanks, Thought Bubble! Third parties can help give negative feedback in an objective way, especially if the conflict could get heated.

But negative feedback is common in the office for simple things too,

like presentation skills or communication. We all have skills we need to practice and habits we need to change. And like good judges on talent competitions, when we're delivering negative feedback, there's a basic structure we can use to make sure it hits home.

First, point out the specific behavior that could be improved by providing examples. Next, discuss its impact. For feedback to be valuable, we need to explain why there's a problem and why this thing matters.

Just saying we dislike something could be a personal preference, and isn't helpful. Then, we need to be explicit about what needs to change. We can't expect people to read our minds or just know how to fix something.

So, for example, someone on your team might be missing deadlines. You could point out a couple times that happened, explain that the late work is throwing off the team, and tell them to prepare their work at least a day before it's due. When you're sharing negative feedback, recognize that not everyone gives and receives it in the same way.

Just look at Gordon Ramsay compared to the judges on Great British Bake Off. Feedback styles even vary by culture. In America, we tend to give negative feedback with the Oreo method -- sandwiching it between two things that the person is doing well.

So, you might say, "Your project ideas were very creative, but your presentation style was too casual and didn't match the professionalism of your deliverables. Your enthusiasm was good though, and you should use that energy with future clients too!" But not everyone wants a sugar-filled Oreo. Some cultures tend to give blunter negative feedback, like, "Your presentation style was too casual.

Please work on your tone during delivery." And other cultures are more indirect, like an office-wide announcement that "professionalism is important when presenting to clients." The goal of negative feedback should always be to help someone improve, not tear them down. So be aware of who you're speaking to, and how they perceive conflict. To soften the blow, you can frame negative feedback as an opportunity for improvement.

And if you're on the receiving end, try not to take negative feedback personally. Rejection stings and no one likes to hear what they're doing wrong. But it's a way to learn from our mistakes.

No one would be able to improve their smize without feedback from Tyra. So we should thank the people who give us feedback for their time, explain how we're going to follow-up, and then actually change our behavior. Actions speak louder than words.

And if we're receiving negative feedback because we messed up, we may want to apologize too. Maybe you accidentally ate your coworkers yogurt from the fridge, you were late to an important meeting, or you let someone down. We were all rooting for you, Tiffany!

Apologies can go a long way. They may not change the outcome, but they can make people feel better -- as long as they're sincere. We've all gotten a superficial "So sorry!" at some point.

It's frustrating, right? In general, it helps to really listen to others and avoid getting defensive if we're approached about a possible mistake. Messing up can be embarrassing, and knowing what situations warrant apologies is not always straightforward.

And it's not easy to offer up a sincere apology. But there are three simple steps that can make your apology count. First, admit that you were wrong and say that you're sorry.

No one likes to be wrong, but it's not a sign of weakness. It happens to all of us. And apologies are a way to diffuse drama and show someone you're sincere about working with them.

Big grudges are just exhausting in real life. Keep it simple with something like, "I'm sorry I did that." Or, "I know what I did was wrong." And avoid the non-apology. "I'm sorry you feel that way" doesn't cut it, because you're not owning up to your actions. It sounds like you don't agree that you did something wrong.

I'm also sorry I feel this way. But what are you going to do about it, Brad? Next, show them you understand that what you said or did hurt them.

Don't keep justifying yourself with, "I didn't mean to…", "I had a good reason to…" or "I was just trying to…" Not everything is about you. Then, tell them what you're going to do differently so it doesn't happen again. And make an effort to actually do better.

Apologies can change depending on who you're apologizing to. If you hit a stranger's car, you'd want to focus on restoring the balance by paying for damages. If you let down your boss, though, you'd focus more on your working relationship and next steps.

And just to be clear, you don't need to apologize for everything. Think critically about it. Did you speak up inappropriately, or are you just apologizing for speaking up at all?

Are you apologizing for apologizing too much? It takes time and effort to master apologies, feedback, and conflict. So, if you're still figuring things out, don't worry.

We all are. Just remember to: 1. Use conflict resolution styles for different situations. 2. Think about who you're giving negative feedback to and how to deliver it, because communication styles vary. 3. Apologize sincerely, and don't make it about you. We've talked about teamwork.

But what happens when you're in charge? Next time, we'll get into what leadership is beyond the buzzwords, and how to master it. Thanks for watching Crash Course Business.

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