



Positive Principles Newsletter

By Guy Harris
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November 2008



Welcome new **Positive Principles** subscribers.

I have been busily working on several exciting projects. I'm still working with my friends at [Personality Insights](#) in Atlanta and [The Kevin Eikenberry Group](#) in Indianapolis. I am building a stronger web presence so that I can deliver a variety of web based training solutions to my clients. And, I am developing closer working relationships with new colleagues from Boston to Brisbane.

As I work with business leaders, training class participants, coaching clients, and my professional colleagues, I am more convinced than ever that learning to effectively address and resolve conflict lies at the heart of team success. This month, I am addressing specific steps that team leaders can take to help their teams in this area.

As we rapidly approach the Thanksgiving holiday here in the United States, I would like to thank you for subscribing to **Positive Principles**. I hope that this series of articles will help you and the people that work with you grow in the ability to address and resolve conflict.

Have a great day,
Guy Harris
The Recovering Engineer

Key Quotes:

"Leadership is a fine thing, but it has its penalties. And the greatest penalty is loneliness."
- Sir Ernest Shackleton

"What we think or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only thing of consequence is what we do."
- John Ruskin

This month's tip – **Four Things Leaders Can Do To Reduce Team Conflicts.**

Studies of workplace behaviors reveal some startling statistics with regard to the impact that conflict has on business performance. One study indicates that two out of three employee performance problems can be traced to unresolved interpersonal conflicts. Another study estimates that the average manager spends something like forty percent of their time addressing workplace conflicts.

These studies show that companies waste an amazing amount of time because of conflicts between employees. This wasted time translates to lost opportunity, lost productivity, and lost profits. By working to reduce workplace conflicts to the lowest possible level, business leaders can make immediate strides towards improving overall performance and results.

Here are four specific things that leaders can do to reduce team conflicts:

1. Remove resource constraints

In a quick web search using the term "conflict over resource constraints," I received nearly 300,000 results. As I looked at page after page, I saw everything from legal disputes over water rights to wars over contested mineral rights. On a global scale, people have always, and still do, argue and fight when they perceive resource limitations.

Is the same true on a smaller scale workplace scenario? I think it is. I have seen conflicts over staplers, copier use, computer access, and room temperature. While some of these issues seem minor, consider the implications. People arguing over access to a computer are not working. Two people engaged in a 15 minute discussion about getting the use of resources critical for their job performance just wasted 30 minutes between them. Multiply that waste over several weeks or months, and the impact on productivity and profits completely overwhelms the cost of a new computer.

When people sense that they do not have the right resources to do their job, they will either stop working or fight with each other. Both results hurt the business.

2. Teach and encourage better communication skills

Studies of family conflicts indicate that the inability to adequately express thoughts and feelings can lead to conflict escalation up to the point of violence in extreme cases. These studies show that poor communication skills can lead to intensifying conflicts in many situations.

Helping people to develop better communication skills can make your business more profitable as your employees learn to express their thoughts and feelings in ways that resolve conflicts rather than escalate them.

3. Teach conflict resolution skills

Few people naturally possess the disposition, attitudes, self-control, and skills that lead to effective conflict resolution. Most people need to learn new ways of communicating, thinking, and acting when confronted with a conflict situation. Business leaders who invest their time and effort to help their team members develop these skills can recover much of the lost time and productivity caused by unresolved conflicts.

4. Get rid of team members who refuse to cooperate

While I prefer to focus on removing the environmental causes of conflict and helping people develop the skills necessary to head it off or resolve it, I also recognize that sometimes people simply do not have the desire to develop these skills. In these cases, they become a burden to the team, and leaders must relieve their team's burdens in order for the team to move forward productively. As I learned in the Navy, getting rid of an anchor is often more effective than putting more power into the engine.

In these troubled economic times, I know of few businesses that can afford to allow the time wasted on conflict to continue unabated. To survive and thrive in today's high stress business environment, I encourage you to take the steps necessary to implement the . . .

Four Things Leaders Can Do To Reduce Team Conflicts.

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