4 MINUTE READ

Team Conflict: Why It's A Good Thing

PAUL GLOVER

Play nice. We're taught the importance of this concept from the time we first shared building blocks as toddlers to now, as adults in the workplace. Conflict is frowned upon, especially when we are supposed to work as a team.

That sentiment, however, is misguided, particularly when we talk about creating high performance work teams. Conflict is inevitable and actually can lead to phenomenal progress.

It's how you manage conflict that can make it the fuel that propels your team or the fire that destroys it.

In 1965, psychologist Bruce Tuckman proposed four stages for group or team development, and those stages hold true today.

- *Forming is when the group first comes together. At that point, most people want to make a good impression and either have few disagreements or are reluctant to show them.*

- *Storming occurs when the inevitable conflict begins to occur. As the group settles in, multiple people may vie for power, or one person may attempt to force his or her ideas on the group. Some members may opt out of participating if they are not satisfied with how the group is progressing.*

- *Norming happens when the group reaches a general agreement on what behavior and goals are acceptable. According to Tuckman, decisions are made at this stage through negotiating and building consensus.*

- *Performing occurs when all of the parts have finally come together, and the group works collaboratively to reach their goals.*

Most people would rather skip over the Storming stage because it is uncomfortable, but it is absolutely essential for teams to plow through this stage if they are ever going to get to the next
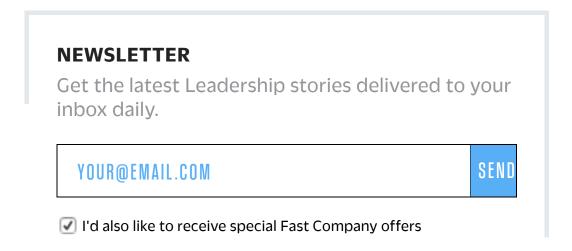
one.

Unfortunately, managers often feel that they have to be the ones to resolve conflict, but that ends up killing the team concept. Conflict is not bad. In fact, it can lead to creativity and innovation. If a team always agreed on everything, they'd be satisfied with the *first* answer to the problem instead of working, arguing and debating to figure out the *best* answer.

The way to keep conflict constructive (instead of destructive) is to make sure the team manages itself and manages the process. Team members must understand that although they do not have to like each other, they need to respect each other, work together and be professional.   In addition, team members need the skills to communicate and to manage conflict within the group—before they are even assembled into a team.

If we don't train them to do that for themselves and a manager steps in to resolve the conflict, the group doesn't have a chance to work its way from Storming to Norming. This hijacks the entire process, and the end goal may never be reached.

The concept of "team" is one in which everybody is contributing something of value, and to reach the last step of Performing, teams need to go through each of the previous steps—painful as they may be. However, the only way a team successfully gets through those steps and achieves unbridled creativity and collaboration is if the team members have been trained to handle

the issues that inevitably rise when you put diverse people together in a group.

TOP STORIES

Zainab Salbi And The Talk Show That's A Voice Of Change In The Middle East

The 2016 Most Creative People In Business

How "Hamilton" Creator Lin-Manuel Miranda Is Building A Brand For The Ages

5 Common Workplace Bullies (And How To Deal With Them)

05.16.16 | 5:46 PM

Twitter's appointment of Debra Lee is a step in the right dire...

05.16.16 | 5:09 PM

Scientific journals aren't meant to be "sources for the ...

05.16.16 | 4:34 PM
Twitter's board just became a bit more diverse

THE LATEST

Advertise | Privacy Policy | Terms | About Us