
Human Resource Management Methods: Case Study

Confronting Conflict

Today's society in general is very complex, and work environments in particular are very complex and consist of multiple types of relationships. People must be qualified and psychologically prepared on how to deal with others. Others who are from all different backgrounds and cultures. The time would come for disagreements and conflicts with others, which should not be a problem in itself if one knows how to handle it, defuse it, and control it. Each situation would require a different approach which will yield a different result. According to Lytle (2015), "one of the biggest drivers of conflict is when people misinterpret others' intentions" (p. 29).

I have chosen scenario # 1, in this scenario, an employee reported her young co-worker has been sexually abused by the manager in their three-person office. The reporting-employee is unable to tolerate such behavior any longer. She is very uncomfortable and not sure how to handle this situation, she asked for assistance. She provided the coworker's, Tammy, contact info and best time to call.

After completing the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II), my conflict management style scored high in "Compromising" followed by "Collaborating" style (Rahim, A. & Magner, N., 1995).

In her article "What's Your Conflict Management Style?" Dr. Barbara Benoliel states the difference between both styles:

Collaborating Style: A combination of being assertive and cooperative, those who collaborate attempt to work with others to identify a solution that fully satisfies everyone's concerns. In this style, which is the opposite of avoiding, both sides can get what they want and negative feelings are minimized. "Collaborating works best when the long-term relationship and outcome are important—for example, planning for integrating two departments into one, where you want the best of both in the newly formed department," Dr. Benoliel says.

Compromising Style: This style aims to find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties in the conflict while maintaining some assertiveness and cooperativeness. "This style is best to use when the outcome is not crucial and you are losing time; for example, when you want to just make a decision and move on to more important things and are willing to give a little to get the decision made," Dr. Benoliel says. "However," she adds, "be aware that no one is really satisfied."

Although I lean toward compromising, having both styles will contribute greatly in addressing this scenario of uncomfortable work environment with positive results.

As the employee-relations representative, it is very important that this situation is responded to with sensitivity and all employment laws are adhered to, as well as, any company policies when it pertains to sexual abuse/harassment. My initial response would be to apologize for this type of behavior that she had experienced. Reiterating the company policy on sexual

abuse/harassment and conducting a thorough investigation to ensure that going forward all employees feel comfortable in the workplace without being subject to intolerable behavior is the first step to a resolution. US EEOC states that, "hostile environment harassment captures those behaviors, such as sexual jokes, comments, and touching, that interfere with an individual's ability to do her/his job or that create an 'intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment". Also, based on federal and state- anti-harassment provisions, legal action could be filled against the office manager because his behavior violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

My duties are to offer a peaceful and productive work environment inside the company and with all parties involved. When a new employee is hired, it is a common practice in most companies is to have an orientation and an employee's handbook that sets and discuss all the rules involved in the work place. Accordingly, the employees are held responsible and accountable for their actions. Uplifting and the employee spirit and morale is an important element in the process of recovery. Based on my knowledge of employment law, conflict management, and investigation procedures, it is best to keep the case in low profile and discrete as not to impact and depress the psychological being of the person any further. Periodical meetings, emails, literature, and even event-gathering with food and beverage, discussing what happens in the news from business-ethics, all would help in developing a process and as reminders to safe guard the work environment. I always believe in prevention to minimize or avoid the damage of any undesired outcome. Stressing the Zero-tolerance policy in certain situations, and severe penalties will be awaiting the violators.

As a result of the complaint, a plan has been developed to investigate the initial complaint from the coworker, based on my knowledge of sexual abuse/harassment laws and training on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission laws. Before an official complaint is filed, a meeting will be set up to speak with the office manager who is being accused of misconduct. Protecting the coworker from retaliation is important especially because she puts her career and reputation on the line to report the incident. She is advised to report any retaliation or harassment immediately. Then I would ask her, in her own words, to explain her accounts of the instance and every instance that has occurred between her and the office manager that he has deemed as inappropriate behavior towards her. Conversations, phone calls, exchange of notes, and relevant details will be documented and filed.

The following step is to schedule a meeting with the office manager. During the meeting, the office manager will immediately be informed of the sexual abuse complaint against him, and if proven guilty, this unethical behavior will have severe consequences. Under this case investigation, both parties are assured fair and just treatment until a satisfactory result has been reached. Both, must provide a written statement of what has happened, then all witnesses and potential witnesses will be interviewed. Only relevant facts will be taken into account to prove or disprove the allegations. In order to make sure that is the case, open-ended questions will be asked to allow more explanation. All information noted will be evaluated thoroughly to make a fair decision. Having a meeting with other human resource generalists will help come up with a final, concise and informed resolution.

Before informing both parties with a decision, the organization's legal department will be contacted to ensure all laws have been followed and upheld in the investigation process and be signed off on by a lawyer representing the company's best interest. Based on all accounts given, the attorney's recommendations, and my investigation, someone will be disciplined or

receive new work assignments and departments. A follow-up will be done three months later to see how the new change is going even if the investigation found that the accusations were false.

Not addressing conflicts can cause long-term problems and be costly to an organization. Some forms of conflict are expected when dealing with people of different backgrounds. The key is to have some method in place to resolve disagreements quickly. Conflicts can sometimes force individuals to be better by taking a long, hard look at themselves and their behaviors. During conflicting issues, employees can easily lose focus and forget what the common goal is. There is no place for emotions in business. Ongoing disagreements that are not handled in a timely manner can result in a volcano of emotions erupting causing a small issue to be blown out of proportion. Avoidance can be a deadly sin. People have to leave their personal issues at the door. Once you clock in, it is all about the good of the organization. If at any time an issue cannot be resolved swiftly and quietly, then termination is warranted or moving employees in different departments. At the end of the day, employees should be willing to resolve their issues because they need their jobs if nothing else and managers should be willing to step in and help as a mediator to make sure the department continues to be productive, while following all legal guidelines set in place.

References

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