



UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT AND RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

It is essential for an organisation to have appropriate complaints handling processes and for managers and staff to be highly skilled in dealing with conflict. There are a number of elements to this:

1. Complaints Policy and Procedures

Employment policies and procedures help people understand what is appropriate behaviour in the workplace and how to make and respond to a complaint. This reduces the likelihood of bullying, harassment and discrimination in the workplace, and enables a fair, robust and consistent process to be followed if a complaint is made.

Writing or reviewing an organisation's complaints policy and procedure can involve:

- Meeting with human resources and management to understand the types of complaints made and how they are currently handled
- Providing advice on the legislative requirements for handling complaints
- Tailoring a best practice complaints policy, taking into account the size, culture and practicalities of the organisation
- Communication and training for staff to understand bullying, harassment and the complaints policy

2. Conflict Resolution Skills

Within organisations, leaders can display high levels of technical skill, but a low understanding of people management, and how to address concerns of staff. Left unaddressed, staff complaints can build over time, leading to lower productivity, higher turnover and absenteeism, and potential bullying or harassment.

Conflict resolution skills can be taught, either one-on-one or in group sessions.

This includes a focus on:

- Managing emotions
- Listening and communication
- Deferral of conversations
- Flexible thinking practices
- Defusion techniques
- Negotiation skills