

Managing Workplace Conflict

Bank of America 

Bank of America Merrill Lynch U.S. Bank of America
America ynch Trust Merrill Lynch

Working to support our military veterans in cooperation with Accenture

Published May 19, 2014

Workplace conflict

Conflict is not uncommon in the workplace — just as in everyday life, people do not always agree with one another.

Unresolved conflict can result in:

- Diminished performance
- Reduced job satisfaction
- Poor relationships
- Increased stress
- Disengaged employees
- Poor customer service
- Accidents



Knowing how to recognize the signs of conflict and effectively address them will make the workplace a productive, happy place to spend your time.

Steps to resolve conflict

You can take the following steps to resolve conflict in the workplace:

1. Be respectful.

2. Practice active listening.

3. Look for solutions.

4. Be willing to compromise.

5. Ask for a neutral person to help.

6. Be willing to back down.



Steps to resolve conflict, continued

Step 1 — Be respectful.

- Remain calm and be polite.
- Find a private place to talk.
- Approach the conflict with a sincere desire to improve the situation.
- Leave negativity and complaining at the door.
- Do not attack the person/personality; remain focused on the issue.
- Do not play the blame game.

Step 2 — Practice active listening.

- Use open questions to ask for more information and clarify the issue.
- Repeat what you heard to ensure understanding (for example, say “What I heard you say was ...”).
- Take notes.



Steps to resolve conflict, continued

Step 3 — Look for solutions.

- State the problem clearly.
- Offer possible solutions.
- Consider the root causes to develop ways to improve the situation.
- Maintain a good attitude and inviting others to communicate openly.

Step 4 — Be willing to compromise.

- Try to negotiate.
- Be confident in your stance and knowing what you can and cannot compromise on.
- Remain flexible.
- Look for ways to agree on a solution that satisfies both parties — it is not about having a winner and a loser.



Steps to resolve conflict, continued

Step 5 — Ask for a neutral person to help.

- This should be done when:
 - You tried to negotiate.
 - You cannot come to agreement.
 - Both sides want a resolution.
 - Heightened emotions are in the way.



Step 6 — Be willing to back down.

- Consider the importance of the conflict — does it have a meaningful impact on you?
- Consider the consequences of continuing to argue.
- Keep your ego in check.

Final tips

Conflict is a natural byproduct of working with other people and must be handled in a professional manner. Remember the following tips when dealing with conflict:

- Just as in everyday life, you should expect to experience some degree of conflict within the workplace.
- While healthy conflict is expected, workplace violence is never acceptable. If you become aware of a potentially escalating conflict, report it to your supervisor immediately.
- Your ability to maturely and productively address conflict is an essential skill for progressing in today's workforce.
- Remember to follow the six steps to resolve conflict:
 1. Be respectful.
 2. Look for solutions.
 3. Practice active listening.
 4. Be willing to compromise.
 5. Ask for a neutral person to help.
 6. Be willing to back down.
- If handled appropriately, conflict can be a healthy way to address underlying issues and gain a common understanding to build on moving forward.



Bank of America



Bank of America Merrill Lynch U.S. Bank of America
America Lynch Trust Merrill Lynch