

e-TEP LISTENING PART 4

SECTION 4

Over the years, attitudes towards workers have changed considerably. After all, there was a time when workers had no rights at all, and laboured in appalling conditions. Conditions have improved a lot, but conflict in the workplace is still common. And human resources managers nowadays need to be able to deal with it when necessary.

1. What historical condition did workers face in the past?

- A) Lack of recognition
- B) Poor working conditions
- C) Overbearing management

Answer: B) Poor working conditions

What is conflict in the workplace? Definitions vary, but I'm taking it to refer to a whole range of behaviours that the victim finds unacceptable, from minor, harmless arguments to at the opposite extreme - physical violence. Much of this is covered by the term bullying, by which I mean one or more people behaving abusively or aggressively against another who is in a weaker position. Although all behaviour like this is a form of conflict, not all conflict can be described in these terms.

explain /express/ voice*

2. What does the term "bullying" primarily involve in the context of workplace conflict?

- A) Minor arguments
- B) Abusive behavior
- C) Physical violence

Answer: B) Abusive behavior

As with all human behaviour, there are numerous reasons for it. But often it's caused by someone who feels the need to show their superiority over someone else, in order to feel that they aren't at the lowest level in a hierarchy or a group of people.

3. What motivates some individuals to exhibit behavior that demonstrates superiority?

display

- A) Seeking attention
- B) Establishing hierarchy
- C) Expressing dominance

Answer: B) Establishing hierarchy

4. What is a perceived reason behind individuals' need to display superiority in a group?

- A) Desire for attention
- B) Fear of inferiority
- C) Quest for dominance

Answer: B) Fear of inferiority

In some cases one person simply dislikes the other, on the basis that the personality of one is in some way incompatible with that of the other person. A general habit of optimism in one person could make them intolerant of a colleague who's constantly pessimistic - not that that justifies treating them badly, of course.

however if does not justify

5. What might cause one person to dislike another in a workplace environment?

- A) Professional differences
- B) Personality incompatibility
- C) Competitive attitudes

Answer: B) Personality incompatibility

such as when

Some conflicts arise when people are more interested in promoting themselves and their team than in the company as a whole. These conflicts are called 'structural, and could come about, for example, when a sales team believe they are the only people in the business who do any useful work, and look down on behind-the-scenes administrators.

6. What type of conflict arises when a team prioritizes its interests over the company's overall goals?

- A) Personal conflicts
- B) Structural conflicts
- C) Professional conflicts

Answer: B) Structural conflicts

Conflict obviously affects the individuals concerned - the situation is likely to be very stressful for victims, resulting in their absence from work, possibly for months. For the company, if no effort is made to deal with conflict, it can get spiral out of control, and even lead to the breakdown of the business.

7. Unresolved conflict can lead to ---- for a company

- A) customer loss
- B) business breakdown
- C) improved teamwork

Answer: B) Business breakdown

Some interesting work with chief executives - CEOs - has uncovered some of the reasons why they may treat colleagues badly. Many CEOs combine two opposing characteristics: confidence - that is, the belief that they're capable of great achievements - with a high level of anxiety, a fear of missing targets, whether set by themselves or by the directors of the company. This combination can make them respond badly to anyone who questions their decisions.

8. ---- might contribute to how some CEOs treat their colleagues.

- A) Confidence and arrogance
 - B) Confidence and anxiety
 - C) Arrogance and fear
- Answer: B) Confidence and anxiety

In a high pressure work environment, such characteristics become problematic. And it's particularly difficult to tackle the situation where colleagues, managers and board members are all trying to achieve their own visions. When they can't agree on strategic issues and on where they see the business going, there are real problems.

9. ---- creates challenges in a high-pressure work environment.

- A) Lack of teamwork
 - B) Excessive breaks
 - C) Low expectations
- Answer: A) Lack of teamwork

For managers at lower levels within the organisation, it might seem that an autocratic form of management - where the chief executive gives orders and everyone else has to obey - would see more conflict than others.

Interestingly, though, a company with a more democratic business model, can suffer more, when uncertainty about who to report to leads to conflicting demands.

10. What can contribute to conflict within a company, even in a more democratic business model?

- A) Autocratic management
- B) Uncertainty in reporting
- C) Strict hierarchy

Answer: B) Uncertainty in reporting

Now I'll say a little about dealing with the type of conflict that has harmful effects. Of course the ideal is to prevent it arising in the first place. A good manager, at any level, will make efforts to earn the respect of the people they work with, particularly those who report to them. That will involve politeness in all communications, and treating them as equals who happen to have a different role within the organisation.

11. ---- is an approach to preventing harmful conflict in the workplace.

- A) Establishing a better report system
- B) Asking every employee to behave politely
- C) Earning respect through equal treatment

Answer: C) Earning respect through equal treatment

Sometimes, of course, conflict does occur, and can get out of hand. In such cases the human resources department often gets involved. However, if one of the parties in a conflict sees human resources as simply a mouthpiece for the chief executive, then an external mediator might be able to help. By talking to both sides, and trying to find the truth of what's been happening, they can build a clear picture of the situation, and give feedback that both sides will accept, precisely because they're independent.

12. What role can an external mediator play in resolving conflicts in the workplace?

- A) Mediating between the CEO and employees
- B) Providing feedback independently to both parties
- C) Reporting directly to the human resources department

Answer: B) Providing feedback independently to both parties

if ... then
→ person
→ they