

UNIT 7 ➤ Managing conflict

Lesson 7.1 Workplace clashes

VIDEO A  **7.1.1** Watch the video again from 2:47 and complete the extracts. Write three or four words in each gap.


- James:** I felt like I wasn't ¹ _____ my job, even though I had proven time and time again that I was able to do my job and I was able to write an email or do simple, basic things. So it did ² _____.
- Luvena:** Because you never know where you're going to sit, you don't get the opportunity very often to sit with your team members. I think this is actually something that ³ _____ because you don't feel as ⁴ _____ your team.
- Narrator:** Luvena's team ⁵ _____ management and there are now designated team areas in the office.
- Rowena:** If there is ⁶ _____, for example an office move or people are moving into kind of a hot-desking arrangement, then as HR, we'd advise that we consult with them before that happens, just so we can ⁷ _____ everybody's opinion and make sure that everybody's happy.
- Rowena:** When ⁸ _____ in a workplace, if it's ⁹ _____, it can escalate and actually become a bigger issue. If an employee ¹⁰ _____, then I'd advise that they speak to their line manager, or they can come to HR.

Vocabulary B Think of a word that fits in the gap in both sentences. Sometimes you will need to change the form of the word between sentences to make the sentences grammatically correct.

- 1 **a** Conflict _____ is a way for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them. The disagreement may be personal, financial, political or emotional.
b People who participate in a negotiation will have a stake in finding a _____. They will want to find a good compromise.
- 2 **a** I've raised the _____ of hot-desking with HR. It's causing a lot of friction in my department.
b I suggest you take up this _____ with your line manager. I'm afraid I can't help you.
- 3 **a** If you don't see eye to eye with someone, it's best to listen to the other person's point of view before the situation gets worse or _____ into a full-blown conflict.
b The dispute over working conditions is _____ because talks between management and trade unions have broken down.
- 4 **a** Staff _____ is down in the sales force, so HR have decided to organise a team-building course.
b Encouragement and well-deserved praise is always good for _____.
- 5 **a** Pinning the _____ on your manager isn't going to help the situation. When do you think the problem between you first arose?
b I wish he would stop _____ everyone on the team and take some responsibility for his own mistakes!
- 6 **a** If it isn't handled effectively, conflict can be very damaging. It can quickly turn into personal dislike or a personality _____, teamwork breaks down, negativity prevails and people disengage from their work.
b A culture _____ is a type of conflict that occurs when different groups have different cultural values and beliefs.
- 7 **a** Investors are worried that the CEO's _____ style will upset both clients and staff and cause shares to fall.
b When disputes arise, it is best to avoid _____ behaviour such as shouting, getting angry, blaming or finger-pointing, in order to resolve the disagreement.
- 8 **a** I'm sorry, but we can't make exceptions for you so you'll just have to toe the _____ and get on with it.
b The moment she crossed the _____ was when she started shouting irrationally at everyone in the meeting – that was way out of _____.

UNIT 7 ➤ Managing conflict

Lesson 7.2 The road to reconciliation

Listening A  7.02 Complete the sentences with the correct option (a, b or c). Then listen to the meeting again to check your answers.

- 1 **Ruth:** ... it has come to our notice there have been ____ between managers and certain members of staff.
 - a several major incidents
 - b a few minor conflicts
 - c some serious misunderstandings
- 2 **Ruth:** Later, I'll outline some steps for making sure conflicts don't ____ or escalate.
 - a get out of hand
 - b start finger pointing
 - c exacerbate tensions
- 3 **Ruth:** It's often said that too much micromanaging may lead to ____ .
 - a poor performance
 - b lack of trust
 - c conflict resolution
- 4 **Ruth:** ... we're going to meet with the employee in question tomorrow, when we hope ____ together.
 - a we can reach a compromise
 - b to meet her targets
 - c to resolve those issues
- 5 **Ruth:** But that's part of the job of being a good leader, don't you think? ____ micromanaging is always effective.
 - a I definitely don't agree that
 - b I was wondering, actually, whether
 - c Actually, I don't know whether
- 6 **Will:** ... my previous boss and me, we used to joke around all the time. Don't ____ . We always ____ , and he was great at delegating tasks, and everyone respected him.
 - a get me wrong / got the work done
 - b get the work done / worked seriously
 - c get off to a good start / did the work
- 7 **Will:** But with that second manager, ... I just wanted him to stop ____ , you know?
 - a pulling his weight
 - b breathing down my neck
 - c blaming me for everything
- 8 **Ruth:** ... some managers seem to be ____ , and others are more ____ .
 - a good at getting on with staff / hands free
 - b more serious / sociable
 - c better at delegating / hands-on
- 9 **Carla:** If something is bothering them, they might tell you, instead of ____ .
 - a acting like a robot
 - b going to the water fountain
 - c keeping it to themselves
- 10 **Ruth:** Spend five minutes at the water fountain chatting to one of your team. It might prevent ____ later.
 - a tensions from escalating
 - b conflict and reconciliation
 - c going to mediation

UNIT 7 ➤ Managing conflict**Lesson 7.2 The road to reconciliation**

Grammar B Add words and phrases from page 71 of the coursebook to make these sentences seem less certain and more tentative.

- 1 I think he should be better at managing his time.

- 2 Zoe is demanding and likes to check my work.

- 3 Ignoring the issue will only make matters worse.

- 4 Pascal is serious – he hardly ever chats with colleagues at the water fountain.

- 5 If you talk to him, I'm sure you'll get to the root of the problem.

- 6 I'm certain this new strategy will exacerbate tensions.

- 7 We can mediate as long as the other party are willing to listen.

- 8 We definitely need to build up trust in this organisation.

- 9 Listening carefully will prevent a conflict from getting out of hand.

- 10 Be positive, keep the conversation polite and avoid blaming the other person.

- 11 You can reach an agreement if you find some common ground.

- 12 Ask your team members to make an effort to understand one another's motivations.

UNIT 7 ➤ Managing conflict**Lesson 7.3 Communication skills: Giving support and guidance****Useful language** **A** Complete the sentences with the words and phrases in the box.

daunting get a word in edgeways gripe have a lot on my plate
hindsight niggle outraged sour upfront word

- 1 I'll be _____ about this. I really don't think your business plan will work.
- 2 You'll need to _____ that email to your customer a little more politely.
- 3 The interview process is often _____ for job candidates.
- 4 The staff's main _____ is the quality of the canteen food.
- 5 He's so talkative. When he's at meetings, it's hard to _____.
- 6 I'm feeling quite stressed; I _____ at the moment.
- 7 It used to _____ her when people left the paper tray in the photocopier empty.
- 8 The customers were _____ by the unexpected price increase.
- 9 With _____, we really should have seen this problem coming.
- 10 Our relationship with the supplier will _____ if we continue to be inflexible about the contract.

UNIT 7 > Managing conflict

Lesson 7.4 Business skills: Mediating conflict

Useful language **A** Match the extracts from a meeting (a–j) with correct part of the mediation model (steps 1–10) on page 75 of the coursebook.

- a Please allow others to speak without interrupting. ____
- b How about if you copy me into your future emails, just to allow another pair of eyes to look at your communication style? ____
- c How can we move forward? ____
- d What I want to do today is support you two to understand each other and agree a way forward. ____
- e I think our underlying motivations are actually very similar – to support the customer. ____
- f What would be your answer to that point? ____
- g So, we'll try that solution for the time being and then we can review in a month or so. ____
- h So, is the key problem for you around communication style? ____
- i I think we need to be careful not to jump to conclusions. ____
- j What's your take on the situation? ____

B Look at the audioscripts for Tracks 7.04, 7.05 and 7.06 on pages 154 and 155. Find the missing words in the idioms (1–8). Then match the idioms with the definitions (a–h).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 to bury the _____ | a to agree |
| 2 to be _____ loggerheads | b a situation when people refuse to compromise and hope that success will come by continuing to defend and argue their own position |
| 3 to be a sore _____ | c to do something which makes matters worse than they originally were |
| 4 to clear the _____ | d to disagree strongly about something |
| 5 to be a battle of _____ | e an issue about which someone feels particularly irritated, frustrated or upset |
| 6 to see eye to _____ | f to have an open discussion to help resolve a tense situation |
| 7 to get off on the wrong _____ | g to decide to forget a conflict and become friends |
| 8 to add insult to _____ | h to begin a relationship with another person in a bad way |

C Complete the sentences with the correct form of the idioms in Exercise B.

- 1 The people in the US and France have been _____ for some time. Nobody can agree where to invest next: New York or Paris.
- 2 Shall we go to lunch to _____? I think there are one or two frustrations we need to talk about.
- 3 Pam and Fernando really don't _____ on the new designs. I'm not really sure how to bring them together.
- 4 Neither of them wants to compromise at the moment. It's a real _____ and I don't know who will win.
- 5 Look, we've been fighting about this for a long time. Let's _____ and start again from the beginning.
- 6 Not only does she send me rude emails, but to _____, she accuses me of being the rude one and copies in my boss!
- 7 Don't talk to me about John's promotion. That's a real _____ at the moment, because I wanted that job.
- 8 I think we _____. Shall we have lunch today and think about how to work more effectively as a team?

UNIT 7 ➤ Managing conflict**Lesson 7.5 Writing: Report on workplace conflict**

- Useful language** **A** Write **F** next to the more formal sentence (typical of a business report), and **I** next to the more informal sentence (typical of speech) in each pair of sentences.
- 1 **a** It appears that the launch date will have to be postponed due to some technical issues in the production department.
b The launch date is going to be later than planned because they're having production problems.
 - 2 **a** We're going to need another supplier for our raw materials – the one we use now just can't give us the volumes we need.
b Unfortunately, we will need to look for an alternative source of raw materials because our current supplier is having difficulties delivering the quantities we require.
 - 3 **a** They only told us about the price rise last week and it's going to change all the figures in the budget forecast.
b We were only informed about the price rise last week and it will have a significant effect on our budget forecast.
 - 4 **a** There are a couple of urgent matters that we will need to discuss at the forthcoming meeting.
b There are two important things we have to talk about at the next meeting.
 - 5 **a** I wonder if it wouldn't be better to reorganise the sales areas at VP level on the basis of product categories rather than geographical areas?
b You know what would be better? To have the different VPs for sales organised by product category, not by area.
 - 6 **a** If we can cut some staff because of the merger, the board will be happy.
b If it were possible to make some reductions in staff numbers as a result of the merger, that would certainly please the board.
 - 7 **a** Sales in the third quarter were a little disappointing, the overall drop being around 4 percent compared to the same period last year.
b Sales weren't so good in Q3. Down 4 percent on last year.
 - 8 **a** My recommendation is that we appoint Mr Collins to the position of Finance Director, given the reasons I have outlined above.
b I think we should give Mr Collins the Finance job, considering all the reasons I've just given.