

Making Everything Easier!™

Conflict Resolution at Work

FOR
DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Discover positive means for resolving conflicts
- Manage your employees effectively
- Restore peace, maintain productivity, and boost morale
- Prevent conflicts from ever starting

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Certified Professional Mediator

**The Dispute Resolution Center
of Snohomish & Island Counties**



Conflict Resolution at Work For Dummies®

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Be Curious

Fear Rules the World

Look to the Future

***Conflict Resolution at
Work For Dummies®***
**by Vivian Scott & The
Dispute Resolution
Center of Snohomish &
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About the Author

Vivian Scott is a Professional Certified Mediator with a private practice in Snohomish, Washington. She has handled a variety of workplace cases, ranging from helping business partners end their relationship with dignity to creating a new working environment for a law firm. She has completed an extensive practicum and certification program with the Dispute Resolution Center of Snohomish & Island Counties, where she mediates on a regular basis helping parties resolve conflict in workplace, family, consumer, and landlord/tenant disputes. Scott is a member of the Washington Mediation Association and spends much of her time advocating for meaningful resolution.

Prior to retiring in 1999 from the competitive world of high-tech marketing, she realized that resolving conflict within the confines of office politics was paramount to

success. She used her discerning negotiation, mediation, and problem-solving skills to forge and cultivate relationships with Washington, D.C.-based small business associations and departments on behalf of her employer, earning a rare personal honor from the Small Business Administration for her commitment to the business community.

Scott received the Silver Screen Award from the U.S. International Film and Video Festival for outstanding creativity for her role as developer and Executive Producer of the America at Work video series, which aired on the USA Network. She holds a BA in Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences with an emphasis in American Studies from the University of Washington.

Scott lives with her partner of 11 years, Brent, and is the proud mom to a grown daughter, Vanessa, who will soon be a stellar attorney and mediator in her own right. Scott can be reached through her Web site at www.vivianscottmediation.com.

Dedication

To Vanessa and Brent, who always give me a soft place to land. Thank you for seeing my imperfections and loving me anyway.

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Kathy Rice, Executive Mediator and Program Manager, who has mediated more than 1,000 cases in her career. She has worked in the field of conflict resolution for over 16 years, designing, customizing, and providing successful conflict resolution trainings, mediations, and services.

The Dispute Resolution Center is an alternative justice center that provides a wide range of ADR services, including mediation, training, and a full array of workplace conflict resolution services. Its program Director, Matt Phillips, JD, has worked in the field of ADR for 10 years. The DRC is a program of the Volunteers of America Western Washington. Special thanks to Gloria Elledge, Kathleen Rostkoski, and Anahi Machiavelli for holding down the fort while the rest of us wrote.

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Introduction

*Quarrels would not last long if the fault
were only on one side.*

—François de La Rochefoucauld

Every day in offices, retail stores, factories, and any number of other workplaces, people are having conflicts with co-workers. Whether you work for a nonprofit organization, a small family business, a Fortune 100 company, or a fledgling upstart, if you work with at least one other person, it's safe to say that you have disagreements and face difficulties at times. It's normal, natural, and nothing to fear.

You can drive yourself bonkers trying to create a workplace that's completely void of conflict all the time. And why would you want to create such a work environment? Contrary to what you may believe, conflict isn't inherently all bad. When handled properly, conflict can actually create positive changes and new opportunities in your organization. Successfully making the shift in your perspective from seeing only the negative in disagreements to seeing the prospect for positive change is the first step to resolving difficulties.

But how do you go about finding positive outcomes in what on the surface looks like a negative situation? You have to become skilled at calming the infernos by helping employees through discussions that prove to them that they can solve their own issues without always having to have someone (you!) in the middle, acting as referee. Become a coach for your team — someone they can trust to bring the real and right issues to the table for effective problem solving.

When it comes to your own workplace conflicts, if you broaden your perspective to include the other person's point of view, you're sure to come out of the dispute with a better working relationship. Being at the center of controversy is never a good idea for anyone, so decide to use the uneasy situation as an opportunity to improve systems, relationships, and your credibility.

In this book, I tell you what the most common causes of workplace conflict are and how to address them by using a proven mediation method and philosophy. And remember: Every story always has more than one side.

About This Book

This book is a tool intended to help managers (or anyone who has a job) work through conflict with peers, subordinates, and even bosses. It's primarily aimed at those employees in organizations who find themselves negotiating difficulties without the benefit of having professional conflict resolution or mediation experience. The chapters are chock-full of facilitation techniques and tools that come from successful conflict resolution experts, delivered in a way that's easy to understand and ready for you to apply right away.

Many employees who've felt helpless as previously functioning working relationships went south will appreciate that the information in this book shows them they're not doomed to repeat the past but instead can create a new way of dealing with problems when they arise — and they *will* arise. I lay out, and describe the function of, internal and external resources for you to turn to as the situation warrants. The information I serve up

helps you build a customized plan for your unique situation.

In today's increasingly competitive job market, the insight I share with you about settling unsettling situations is invaluable. I share my personal experiences and the knowledge I've gained from mediating a variety of workplace, family, and consumer disputes, and I let you in on a few trade secrets.

I also enlist the expertise of some of the best mediators I know to show you exactly what to do to resolve conflict. Their collective proficiency in settling differences between 2 or 200 makes for an excellent chance of creating long-lasting and satisfying agreements.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help make this book easier to navigate, I include the following conventions:

I introduce new terms in *italics* and then define them.

I use **bold** text to highlight key words in bulleted lists.

What You're Not to Read

As an author, I'd be thrilled if you read every word I wrote. But from a practical standpoint, I know you're busy

— with your day-to-day tasks at work and the conflict you're undoubtedly trying to resolve. To make this book even easier to use, I'm going to let you in on a secret. When you see *sidebars* — text in gray-shaded boxes — feel free to skip them. These asides are often real-life examples or other tidbits I've picked up during my years as a mediator. The stories can drive home a point I make in the accompanying chapter or offer a new perspective on a situation, but you'll get the main point of any section or chapter even if you don't read them.

Foolish Assumptions

I'm assuming you have a job, paid or volunteer, and that you interact with people. I'm also assuming you have some sort of management responsibility — be it keeping the line moving at the manufacturing plant or trying to keep your reputation intact as the star manager in the strongest department of an international corporation. And I'm thinking you're currently experiencing some trouble. You may be sick and tired of a conflict between two of your employees, or you may be bickering with a colleague, or perhaps you're at a loss as to what to do about the problems between you and your boss. My final assumption? I'm guessing you want to do something about it.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into five parts.