DAY 4: EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

WELCOME!
Today’s Agenda

- What is employee relations?
- Set yourself up for success
- Conflict mediation
- Skill practice
What is “Employee Relations?”
Employee Relations

Managing expectations

Relationships

Application of policy

Laws

Perceptions

Conflicts
Common ER areas

- Mistrust of management
- Feeling that they can’t raise concerns
- Feeling that concerns that are raised aren’t heard or aren’t addressed
- Lack of clearly defined rules
- Lack of consistency
- Desire for increased job security
What should our goal be?

De-escalate and address the situation at the lowest level possible
Ways leaders make it worse

- Poor communications
- The alignment or the amount of resources is insufficient
- "Personal chemistry," including conflicting values or actions
- Subjective participation
- Leadership problems
  - Passing the buck
“Managing the message”
Fighting allegations of “unfair”

- Defendable decisions
- Objective criteria
- Be able to articulate exceptions
- Gain support in advance
CONFLICT
What’s at stake?

- Your desired outcome
- The relationship afterwards
Stages

Differences ➔ Response ➔ Result

Healthy ➔ Solution

Unhealthy ➔ Dispute
The Leader’s role

- Know your people
- Watch for incendiary behaviors and conditions
- Proactive behaviors
Ways leaders make it worse

- Poor communications
- The alignment or the amount of resources is insufficient
- "Personal chemistry," including conflicting values or actions
- Subjective participation
- Leadership problems
  - Passing the buck
Signs of Escalating Conflict

- Poor communication
- Pointed disagreements
- Lack of openness
- Negative body language
- Dissatisfaction
- Increased stress
Proactive behaviors

- Engage in early stages
- Gain perspective
- Preemptively gain buy-in
- Coach
Roadblocks

- Don’t want to rock the boat
- No time
- Don’t know what to say
- Hope the problem goes away
- Fear of the other person’s response
Who’s Accountable?

Leader
- Be alert for signs.
- Uncover the cause.
- Prevent escalation.
- Facilitate resolution.
- Spark discovery.

Employee
- Take ownership of actions, behaviors.
- Develop ideas and solutions.
- Take action to resolve the conflict.
Approaches

Healthy

- Recognize and respond to others’ needs/wants
- Forgive and forget
- Seek compromise and avoid punishment
- Belief that the problem can be solved

Unhealthy

- Fear and avoidance
- Inability to respond to others’ needs/wants
- Withdrawal of love, shaming, isolation, etc.
- Expectation of bad outcomes
MOTIVATIONS & DRIVERS
Reasons for conflict

- Misunderstandings
- Personality clashes
- Competition for resources
- Authority issues
- Differences of opinion
- Low performance
- Values or goal differences
Who are you?

- Ostrich: I hide my head in the sand
- Dog: I chew up the furniture when no one is looking
- Hawk: I fly above and pick my targets
- Coyote: I use my brains to win
Strategies

- Avoidance
- Competition
- Accommodation
- Compromise
- Collaborating
Everyone responds differently
Coaching vs. mediation
Coach When...

- Someone asks for your help.
- You want to encourage someone to take the lead.
- You want to develop someone’s ability to resolve the conflict.
- People are capable of working it out.
- People are willing to take ownership.

Mediate When...

- People involved are at a stalemate.
- Coaching didn’t work, and the conflict is escalating.
- Productivity and morale are affected; people can’t work it out themselves.
- People refuse to work it out themselves.
- People won’t take ownership.
Mediation focuses on

- Guide both parties to resolution
- End results
  - Stakeholders
An Effective Mediator...

Makes it possible for people to talk about their differences in a nonthreatening, nonjudgmental setting.

Gets people to focus on the facts, listen objectively, and commit to resolving the conflict in everyone’s best interest.
Process for Mediation

1. Hear both sides
2. Coach both sides
3. Set ground rules
4. Allow parties to hash it out
5. When all else fails, set the course of action
Examples of Ground Rules

- Respect everyone’s feelings and ideas.
- Focus on facts.
- Call a break, if needed.
- Take responsibility for your actions.
- Admit mistakes.
- Don’t interrupt, don’t blame.
- Avoid “you” statements (sounds like blame).
- Restate the other person’s perspective until understood.
ANGER

The great remedy for anger is delay.
Anger

- Prompts our physiological defense response
- Engaging in meaningful dialogue just is not possible
- Our job is to provide a safe space and wait it out
When dealing with angry people

- Watch nonverbals-
- Stand at an angle instead of straight on
- Give space if possible
- Do not make direct eye contact
  - focus on the forehead or other area of the face
When dealing with angry people

- Maintain a lower energy level than the other person
- Ask open-ended questions
- Do not make commitments
- Watch for escape opportunities
Language

- Use of “I” vs. “You”
- “You always...” “You never...”
- Listening is the primary goal
- Do not interrupt