



Conflicts can be unavoidable, are you managing yours?

Conflict cannot always be avoided so it is important for small business owners to remember the following when a joint venture or customer or client relationship breaks down. Many conflicts simply cannot be averted. You might want something done immediately whilst your partner or service provider has a much longer period in mind. In this case, it is unlikely that either party will be satisfied with a compromise.

DE-PERSONALISE THE OFFENDING PARTY

We all know there are plenty of scam artists around but it is true to say that most of the time disagreements stem from genuine miscommunications or perhaps conflicting priorities.

OUR TIP:

There is a large difference between seeing things through different eyes and deliberately undermining a project, client, or event. Unless you have good reason to suspect otherwise, give your partner or client the benefit of the doubt.

USE THE COURTS AS A LAST RESORT

Conflicts can often be resolved amicably. Small businesses often lack the financial and human resources to litigate a particularly contentious matter.

OUR TIP:

Remember lawsuits are expensive and, when time, money, and frustration are factored in, few ever win. Solicitors' fees add up and, almost always, the outcome is anything but immediate. Months or years are not uncommon for many small suits. Why not consider alternative dispute resolution or arbitration for quick and relatively painless ways to move on.

UNDERSTAND WHERE YOU ARE IN THE PROCESS

Sometimes small business owners reach the point of no return with their partners or clients.

OUR TIP:

This could be tricky. Most conflicts arise somewhere in the middle of a project or engagement. It is time to work out the costs and benefits of making a change and go with your gut instinct.

WALK AWAY FROM A RELATIONSHIP IF IT JUST ISN'T WORKING

A partner can sometimes openly question the integrity of another in front of people. This is a typical move designed to deflect responsibility which can cause problems.

OUR TIP:

It is vital to draw boundaries and enforce them, even if that means walking away. When people show their true colours, ask yourself if it is really worth working with them in the present or indeed in future.

THE BLAME GAME

Many companies have a culture of widespread blaming. This problematic culture causes employees to play it safe rather than take risks and not try new ideas because of fear of blame.

THE COMMON GOOD

Businesses should replace blame with problem solving and focus on the future instead of what went wrong. Perhaps the toughest problems facing the workplace today are teamwork and getting people to sacrifice for the common good. People really need to believe that they will be rewarded in order to take risks. If not, then they will focus on themselves.

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