

Want a Healthy Team? Have More Conflict.

Hi,

Jim Coyle, my fellow EOS implementer from Kalamazoo sent this to me. “Going to the danger” is something we routinely do at EOS.

Gene



You need team conflict to have a healthy team. Yes, you read that right. (Actually, you need conflict for any relationship to be healthy.) As psychologist Michael Batshaw says, “Engaging in conflict isn’t going to end the relationship, it’s avoiding the conflict that might.”

Avoiding Team Conflict Prevents Harmony

Avoiding conflict rears its head in many ways in business. One of the more debilitating ones is what my friend and colleague, Mike Paton, calls the complaint department. You know the one person on your team that people go to, to complain about someone else or whine about the new initiative. This person is usually very caring and a great listener, but they’re actually doing harm to the team because the problem doesn’t get fixed by complaining. Complaining is just avoiding the issue and not giving the team the chance to grow through conflict.

I’ve noticed recently that there are more of these issues than I once thought. I had a recent example of this with one of my leadership teams. When we dug in, it was clear they’d been struggling with issues that had been festering for a while—and everyone was talking about it except for the two people who were in conflict. They were missing the key to team conflict: to fix the problem, you need to have all the parties involved in the room. Said another way, you aren’t going to fix the issue by talking about it with the people who aren’t the one pissing you off.

Conflict Creates a Healthy Team

Realizing that something was off with this team, I began to unearth what was going on. “I didn’t bring it up because she is always defensive,” Tom explained. Now we’re getting somewhere, I thought. We decided that that sounded like a different issue and one we could handle next.

“Yeah, okay,” Tom said. “I guess I really didn’t handle it that well. Sorry about that, Judy. I was just upset and took it out on you.”

I pointed out that this was a bigger issue with the team and the company as a whole. “I’ve heard multiple times this meeting about conversations where you have been allowing team members to talk about other team members. You’re letting people avoid the real issue.” The team agreed with a chorus of slow nods. When you catch people on your team avoiding conflict, simply say, “When are you going to tell them?” Make it clear that you won’t allow people not to deal with the issue.

The team agreed to make this change and to call each other out if they weren’t living up to their promise. If your company is like most organizations, this issue is most likely going on in your business too. Remember, conflict is a natural part of every relationship. A potential conflict is an opportunity for a team to grow and become healthier. So dive in, find your conflict, and get stronger as a team!

Next Steps

Ready to engage in healthy conflict, but not sure how to do it? EOS® may be the solution for your team. Schedule a free 90 Minute meeting with me to see how EOS can help your unique business. Just call or email.

Keep Moving!

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Qualified EOS Implementer



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