# EMPLOYEE RETENTION STRATEGIES – A TOOL TO RESOLVE EMPLOYMENT CONFICTS

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## Abstract

For sustainable growth, organizations have forgotten the essence of employment relationship and allowed the business to be driven by their dreamy thought of "PROFIT AT ANY COST" and due to this reason Conflict becomes a part of business in every organization. But when conflict arises, it lowered the employee's morale, increase absenteeism, decrease productivity, create differences in the organizations and sometimes it destroy the image of the organization or destroy the future of employer as well as employees. Colorado Faculty and Staff Assistance Program study revealed that "25% of manager's time spends in solving conflicting issues which affect the office workings negatively". So the challenge towards every human resource department is to prevent the workplace from destructive conflicts and if arises, then find measures to solve it strategically and tactfully so that the organizations resources are not wasted. In competitive world, satisfied and happy workforce is a necessity and a big challenge towards organizations due to scarcity. Strong employer-employee relations and good management can be the key to prevent organizations from conflicts and can be proved as a useful tool to compete successfully. This study is related to finding conflict management strategies using good employment relations.

**Keywords**: conflict, employment relations, strategies

## Introduction to the Study

An organization is a place where various personalities work in the same place and it is impossible for all the employees to get along all the time. As all employees have their own perspectives of the world, their own career goals, experiences and perceptions. So, sometimes we can find the presence of conflicts. Like: if some employees have their own strong beliefs and they are not willing to compromise, creates conflict. For example, if one individual strongly opposes workplace diversity, he may have trouble accepting other workers different from him. To avoid conflict with these workers, he must try to accept or initiate more tolerance of those with differing values. For a manager it is vital to learn different types of conflict resolution techniques and apply them tactfully when needed.

Successful organizations are increasingly those that have a constructive relationship with employees and a management approach that enables them to develop and draw on the full potential of their people.

Statistics shows that different countries like Canada and Germany are facing problem of shortage of workforce. In Canada, 50% of nurses employed in 2003 will retire within the next 15 years; Japan is accepting more foreign workers to help alleviate its labour shortage. In Germany, the lack of engineers has become so severe that some of its top firms are giving science kits to toddlers to pique their interest in science and technology. Richard said that "in 250 years if current trends continue, Canada will be vacant". This data reveals the importance of human resource and the need to retain and engage existing employees. And when there is conflicting environment in the organization, it becomes difficult or sometimes impossible to keep or retain good employees. In India, we have a plenty of talent but the need is to recognize the same and retain them. Happy and satisfied employees are the key to success of the organization.

## Objectives of the study

1. To analyze the main areas where organizational conflict arises.
2. To study the causes and effects of employment conflicts.
3. To study the role of good employees relations strategies in any organization.
4. To analyze the role of employees relation strategies in resolving conflicts.

## Research Methodology

In the study, secondary data is used which is collected from the websites and different survey results have been used. Descriptive research design is used.

## Review of Literature

Disagreement happens due to ideas and opinions about the running task is known as task conflict, some of researcher state that some levels of task conflicts can be beneficial for performance of groups (Jehn 1995, De Dreu 2006) most of the researchers told that task and relationship conflicts create difficulties in group performance and satisfaction of member pleasant work environment, positive work culture, harmony and mutual co-operation are the dream factors of every organization that they want to see in reality. It is generally believe that conflict can easily be handled if they are highlighted and managed on their early stages, otherwise these conflicts will lead to dilemmas and then disasters. So this situation requires that conflict resolution should be the part and parcel on any organization (Stephen&Joulia, 1995). According to Jehn (1995) the task conflicts are the main reasons of dissatisfaction in the employees and due to this task conflict the routine work assignments are strongly affected compare to no routine jobs According to Friedman, Tidd, Curral & Tsai (2000), the most common factor of conflict is the usage of avoiding approach among the employees as well as the management. Narasimha Rao V.L.'s study on "Determinants of Strike Activity in Major Industrial Units in Vishakapatnam", made an assessment of the strike activity among the employees in the selected units and identified the underlying causes thereof. Baldev R. Sharma's study entitled, "Not by Bread Alone - A study of Organisational Climate and Employer - Employee Relations in India", examined the determinants of employer - employee relations in 51 public sector and private sector industrial units in India.

## Employment conflicts and Employees Relations

Webster's dictionary **defines conflict** as a sharp disagreement or opposition of interests or ideas. In the workplace, conflict is to be expected, usually occurring when one party perceives that their interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party. No two people are exactly same. Therefore, personality clashes in the workplace are unavoidable. One employee may have

a reserved personality while another may be more outgoing and forward. Problems arise when the two do not understand or respect each others' inner nature. For instance, the more extrovert employee may feel affronted if the more introvert employee doesn't talk to him much. He may perceive it as unimportant, rather than it simply being the employee's personality. Furthermore, his approach to handling projects may be analytical while other's intuitive. When the two do not understand and respect each others' approach, conflict occurs. Conflict can produce either a **positive or negative results**. Manager can increase the chances of turning conflicts into a positive outcome by identifying the potential conflicts before it arises and knowing how he manages it effectively.

There are two types of conflict, *functional and dysfunctional*.

**Functional Conflicts** are constructive **(positive)** and support company's goals. It generally involves people who are interested in problem solving and willing to listen to each other. **Stimulating functional conflict** is a way to improve team's performance and generate new ideas. It involves the team to either defend or criticize ideas based on relevant facts rather than on the basis of personal preference or political interests. In **Devil's advocacy method** a team member is assigned a role of critic. This person should always question and critique any ideas that his team may have, usually resulting in critical thinking and reality testing. However, it is recommended that this role gets rotated amongst all team members to avoid any particular person from developing a strictly negative reputation. In **Dialectic Method** team members get involved in a structured debate of opposing views prior to making a decision. By hearing the pros and cons of all the different ideas, team can have greater success in making sound decisions.

**Dysfunctional Conflicts** on the other hand, consist of disputes and disagreements that can hinder company's performance. This generally involves people who are not willing to work together to solve the problem due to personal issues. When dysfunctional conflicts arise in the workplace, various methods like: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising can be used to resolve conflict.

There are numerous reasons which can lead to conflict at workplace. Some of them are unclear job boundaries, poor communication, different values, interdependent tasks, unreasonable rules, limited resources, misunderstandings or personality differences, different goals and rules, workload issues, performance issues, company polices related to hours of work, pay, leaves,

health and safety , professional and ethical issues, poorly managed discipline, dismissal and discrimination or harassment.

**Employees' relations is a tool to prevent conflicts-** Employee Relations maintains a neutral role in conflict management, representing interest in achieving an acceptable resolution for all parties. Employee relations are concerned with building stable and co-operative relationships with employees that minimize conflicts, achieving commitment through involvement and communication processes and developing mutuality. When employer-employees are not in a good relation with each other then it give rise to conflicts and proper employees relation strategies can help in preventing from the problem of conflicts. These strategies work as the conservatism policy in organizations because it helps in maintaining good environment and restricting others to create any conflict. These strategies are:

1. Creating a positive environment, where employees can understand each others' needs

2. Acknowledging good work timely and establishing good communication patterns

3. Setting clear standards, in all cases, employees should be treated with respect and consideration.

4. Ensure employees that you have enough time and are free from interruptions as you deal with the employee.

5. Deal with sensitive issues in a confidential manner – for example, by not conducting interviews in public or open-plan spaces.

6. Put aside emotion and encourage the employee to do the same. You should both concentrate on identifying and addressing the underlying reasons for the problem.

7. Changes in forms and contents of procedural agreements like-change in technology or product

8. Employee's involvement in decision making and increasing the extent of management control.

9. Improving the employee relations climate in order to produce harmonious and cooperative relationships.

10. Performance management by developing high performance work system.

11. Analyze the effect of SWOT of business strategies on people.

12. "Knock it off" sharp approach that reminds employees where they are and that their behavior will not be tolerated.

13. Organize birthday parties, Christmas parties, New Year parties etc.

## Conflict Resolution Process

If conflict arises due to any cause then various steps can be taken to resolve it. There are some precautionary measures in conflict resolution which are: clearly articulate the causes of the conflict – openly acknowledging there will be differing perceptions of the problem(s). 2. Make a clear statement of why you want the conflict resolved and reasons to work on conflict.3. Communication of how you want the conflict resolved. 4. Address the issues face-to-face (notes, email correspondence, memos are not a productive way to resolve differences). 5.Stick to the issues. It is important to address specific behaviors and situations if change is to take place. 6. Take time out if necessary. In the resolution of a conflict, our emotions may interfere with arriving at a productive resolution. If this transpires, take a time-out and resume resolving the conflict at another designated time.

**Formal Steps to resolve the conflicts are**

**Step 1-**Recognize the employment relationship problem.

**Step 2-** Fix the problem yourself means solve problem mutually by talking

**Step 3-** Mediating technique–mediator/labour inspector can be appointed to help sort things out.

**Step 4-**If problem remain unsolved after step 3, problem can be taken to the Employment Relations Authority or later to Employment court.

In more serious matters, you should consider raising or responding to the problem in writing. Or Have a third party present as a witness when a problem is discussed, as this can help to prevent misunderstandings. Encourage the employee to have a support person, union delegate or other representative present. This can also reduce emotion and misunderstandings.

## Conclusion

About 85 percent of workplace dismissals can be linked to conflicts between employees or employees, according to the Leadership-And-Motivation-Training website. Handling and resolving conflicts that arise in the workplace is one of the biggest challenges faced by

employers and employees. There are two responses to conflict: run away (avoidance) or 'battle it out'. By learning to constructively resolve conflict, we can turn a potentially destructive situation into an opportunity for creativity and enhanced performance. For all resolution techniques employees' relations work as a complementary method like: Integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, compromising, meditation, setting reasonable performance strategies, acting in good faith. 5 basic rules of employee's relations for conflict resolution are: **Shared goals**: 'understanding the business we are in', **Shared culture:** 'agreed values binding us together', **Shared learning:** 'continuously improving ourselves', **Shared effort:** 'one business driven by flexible teams', **Shared information**: 'effective communication throughout the enterprise'. Ultimately, employee relationship strategies help to build a sense of family. In families, people have conflict and disagreements but they learn how to work them out. They stay together through good times and bad and support each other's growth. By having an "all for one and one for all" mentality, if conflicts get resolved then results in positive outcome of conflicts rather than negative outcome.

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