



Community development team members help organizations, businesses master conflict management

Situation:

Conflict can be incredibly destructive for organizations and businesses. Conflict can potentially cost time, money, and goodwill. Managed incorrectly, real and legitimate differences between people can spiral out of control resulting in a breakdown of cooperation and threatening relationships.

People are better equipped to effectively manage conflict if they have a better understanding of conflict, its roots, and ways to address and prevent conflict.

In most cases, successful and effective conflict management leads to positive outcomes. Taking a positive view of conflict allows people to work together toward mutually

beneficial and creative solutions, to make decisions collaboratively, and to bring about change.

Starting in fall 2010, Community Development Education (CDE) initiative team members began identifying the key knowledge and skills needed to effectively manage conflict. Learning objectives were developed and used to form the basis of a series of workshops across Wyoming during May 2011. Common learning objectives ensured workshops in Gillette, Cody, Cheyenne, Rock Springs, Casper, and Marbleton were consistent and valuable learning opportunities.

Participants learned to understand the meaning of conflict and conflict resolution. They also learned to identify the stages and styles of conflict, the stages of the conflict

resolution process, and practice ways to adapt the conflict resolution process to various types of conflicts. They also identified and practiced ways to adapt parts of the conflict resolution process as a conflict prevention tool.

Impacts:

Evaluations were distributed and collected at each workshop asking consistent questions developed by the CDE team. Fifty participants provided feedback on knowledge and skills gained.

Results indicate most participants acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to positively manage conflict.

- 86 percent agreed that, at the end of the workshop, they could list up to three conflict resolution strategies.
- 94 percent agreed they could successfully compare/contrast interests and positions.

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- 88 percent agreed they learned how to use strategies to prevent conflict.
- 88 percent agreed participation in the workshop will help them be more effective in their work/personal lives.
- 90 percent found the workshop was a valuable or very valuable experience.

One participant noted on the evaluation that, “Conflict is neither good nor bad. It simply is. How we react to conflict is what makes it good or bad.” Others indicated they planned to “Try to get past position to interest,” “Identify and separate interests/positions before attempting to resolve conflict,” and “Be more open.”