

# Resolving Conflict in Fast-Paced Work Environments

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## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss how to adapt the conflict resolution process to fit workplaces with more fast-paced cultures. In particular, we'll focus on:

1. Work Pace and Speed Interest
2. Conflict Resolution in Mini-sessions
3. Exceptions to Adapting the Process

## 1. Work Pace and Speed Interest

All organizations or companies have a **work pace**, or the schedule and timing in which they expect work to be completed.

As you've probably noticed, more and more work environments are becoming fast-paced, and this in turn relates to speed interest. **Speed interest** is a term used to describe the common interest that people in an organization have in regards to maintaining a particular work pace.

If an organization has a fast work pace, the interest of the people in that organization is to maintain that speed so that tasks can be completed efficiently and on time.

Thus, when the conflict resolution process takes place within an organization, the time that process will take must be factored into the speed interest.



## TERMS TO KNOW

### Work Pace

In any given organization or workplace, the schedule or timing in which work is expected to be completed.

### Speed Interest

A shared interest among members of a workplace in maintaining work pace when the additional time consumption of a conflict resolution process is considered.

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## 2. Conflict Resolution in Mini-sessions

When an organization feels that the resolution process is too slow, and members are reluctant to take full days out of their schedule in order to participate, the intervener can create buy-in by suggesting that they break the process up into multiple sessions.

These are called mini-sessions, and you, as an intervener, aren't taking anything away from the process by dividing it into smaller sessions; rather, you are simply adapting the process to fit the speed interests of the organization.

These mini-sessions might be one hour, or two or three hours, depending on what fits the organization's schedule. As an example of how this might look, imagine you are breaking up the process into four mini-sessions.

### **First Session: Sharing Ground Rules and Perspectives**

In the first meeting, you would want to lay out the ground rules for the process, and allow each member of the group to share their perspective or story.

Assuming you've chosen mediation as your resolution method, the first meeting would be the time to set up the rules, and give the parties some uninterrupted time to share how they see the situation.

### **Second Session: Asking Clarifying Questions and Allowing a Mutual Exchange**

In the second meeting, you, as the intervener, would want to ask the parties some questions in order to clarify what was said.

You would also want to allow the parties to have a mutual exchange in which they can ask each other questions, and maybe do some more sharing of their own perspectives. You could help clarify the perspective of each side to ensure there's understanding.

### **Third Session: Creating a Problem Statement and Brainstorming Options**

By the third meeting, the parties should have begun to move away from positions in order to identify interests.

Once they have done this, you can help them put together a problem statement in the form of a question that the parties are inviting themselves to answer.

Once the problem statement is crafted, the parties can start brainstorming options for meeting their mutual interests. In other words, the parties are thinking of possible ways to answer the question asked in the problem statement.

### **Fourth Session: Evaluating Options and Writing the Final Agreement**

In the fourth and final session, the parties can then come back to evaluate the options that they brainstormed in the previous session, and then write the final agreement.

As you can see from this example, it is possible to break up the conflict resolution process without leaving anything out or shortchanging any step of the process.

However, there could be two or three days between sessions, or maybe even a week, and these parties will still be in conflict during that time.

Because of this, you want to introduce the additional aspect of a temporary agreement during the first session. You have to add this in because these parties are going to continue to work with one another while still in conflict.

This temporary agreement is sometimes called a Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU, and it lays out what both parties will need in order to work together in between sessions until the conflict has been resolved with a final agreement.



#### HINT

In a more complex conflict involving a number of different factors, you might want to write up a more formal Memorandum of Understanding so that the parties are clear on exactly how they will work together throughout the whole process.

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## 3. Exceptions to Adapting the Process

Adapting the conflict resolution process by breaking it into mini-sessions is an excellent way to make the process work in more fast-paced environments.

However, there are times when you, as the intervener, may need to ask for exceptions to the agreed-upon adaptation.

Even in a fast-paced environment, the managers, bosses, or whoever was aware of this conflict and called you in, will likely be willing to take the time to sit down and go through the conflict resolution process over one or two sessions if the conflict has escalated.

This is because if the conflict has reached a certain level of intensity, it may be negatively affecting the work pace or the efficiency of the organization.

In that case, the people involved may recognize that they have to stop and do a conflict resolution process straight through.



#### BIG IDEA

As the intervener, it's your job to work with the parties in order to create a process that works best for everyone. This may mean dividing up the process into multiple mini-sessions, or simply moving through it to reach a final agreement sooner if the conflict has escalated.



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that all organizations have their own **work pace and speed interest**, meaning the schedule and timing in which they expect work to be done, and their investment in maintaining that schedule, even during the conflict resolution process.

You now understand that in a fast-paced work environment, it's often helpful to administer the **conflict resolution process in mini-sessions**. This does not mean that you are cutting anything out of the process; you are simply dividing it up into a series of shorter meetings. However, there can be **exceptions to adapting the resolution process**. When a conflict has escalated to the point that it's affecting the work pace, even fast-paced organizations may recognize the need to take the time to go through the whole process at once in order to reach an agreement after one or two sessions. Good luck!



## TERMS TO KNOW

### **"Speed Interest"**

A shared interest among members of a workplace in maintaining work pace when the additional time consumption of a conflict resolution process is considered.

### **Work Pace**

In any given organization or workplace, the schedule or timing in which work is expected to be completed.