OPEN TRAINING COLLEGE

Resolving Conflict

LEARNING TO MEDIATE & BE CREATIVE WORKS

A business culture characterised by ongoing conflict creates a damaging working environment and inevitably leads to inefficiency and poor performance. Or, at least that was the conclusion of a leading Irish company who identified it as a business challenge they needed to address.

The root cause of conflict were traced to three interconnected factors:

- At an organisational level roles were not adequately defined and and staff expectations were unrealistic
- This was re-enforced by a culture of vague and inefficient communications between department heads, and
- Staff had not had the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to address these problems in a proactive and consistent way

The Resolution

The college was asked to map out a way of dealing with these challenges. After a detailed consultation process it developed a solution that combined a need-specific, custom training programme with elements of mentoring and business-process consulting.

At the heart of the solution was a customised conflict management, mediation and creative problem programme for departmental management teams. This looked at conflict as an interpersonal, departmental and inter-departmental challenge and explored ways in which mediation could be used to address it. The use of creative problem solving as a conflict resolution tool was also explored.

Expert-led workshops were used to provide a real-world context for the training. These gave people the opportunity to:

- Tease out why and how various types of conflict were occurring within the organisation
- Collectively develop a shared understanding of each other's role, responsibilities and work pressures
- Set up better communication processes between business units
- Understand how dialogue, collaboration and communication work, in practical terms, as conflict resolution tools for individuals and the business

The Conclusion

The programme provided participants with the knowledge and skills required to proactively manage conflict within their organisation. The ability to mediate and treat conflict as a resolvable creative problem solving challenge has given them the confidence to manage difficult work related situations.

People now experience better working relations, improved communication processes and enjoy significantly lower levels of stress in the workplace. Organisationally, the business has become more efficient because of this.