**7 Executive Coaching Strategies for Managing Conflict**

By diffusing or dealing with conflict among team members, you can significantly enhance workplace morale — and boost individual and team productivity. The following guidelines can help:

**Recognize the fine line between differences in opinion and conflict**— Some people like to challenge other people’s ideas. If confrontation makes you uncomfortable, explore the reasons. Then, try increasing your comfort level when two people express different ideas. Recognize that, if handled correctly, disagreements can bring progress and innovation to an organization.

**Encourage team members to solve conflict on their own** — It is the wise parent who knows that sometimes, interfering in a sibling squabble only makes matters worse. Likewise, as a leader, you run the risk of escalating a spirited disagreement by getting involved. Encourage squabbling team members to meet in a neutral location, like a conference room as opposed to one person’s office or cubicle, to try to work out their differences.

**Know when to intervene**— At the same time, sometimes co-workers are unable to settle conflicts on their own. Let them know that you are available as a sounding board, and that they are welcome to set up a meeting with you as mediator.

**Set ground rules**— You may need to create a set of guidelines for your own team if you overhear unkind remarks or witness any hint of workplace bullying. Examples included, “Be respectful and honest,” “Use ‘I’ statements,” “Be direct and succinct,” and “Be present — no sidebar conversations.”

**Remain neutral**— It might be tempting to take sides in a conflict between team members, but as a leader, you need to be Switzerland. Make sure you are giving team members equal time and opportunity to voice their opinions and feel heard. Notice if certain situations or responses push your own buttons, and try to keep personal biases out of the equation.

**Recognize incendiary conditions**— When people are stressed, overtired or anxious, their coping skills are often compromised.

**Be proactive** — If you notice tensions running high, encourage team members to take a break. A 15-minute respite in the cafeteria or a brisk walk around the block can do wonders to help calm a riled-up employee — before they say something they regret.