

Conflict Coaching Case Study: Maggie & John

Background

Maggie and John both work in the finance department of a large organisation. Maggie has been supervising John for the past two years. In the past few months, Maggie has noticed a significant drop in John's performance. She tried to speak with him about this during their supervision meeting, but John became defensive and hostile. Maggie is under pressure from senior management to address John's performance but she does not know how to speak with John about this in a constructive way. Their communication has broken down and she has reverted to sending him emails. The tension in their relationship is causing her significant stress and she has started to doubt her abilities as a manager. When HR suggest mediation to the parties, John declines. So, Maggie's line manger offers her conflict coaching with an independent, external coach. Maggie started her sessions a few weeks ago...

What happens during conflict coaching?

Conflict coaching is a one-on-one intervention which explores a specific conflict situation that the client wants to improve and/or resolve. The conflict coach works with the client to identify a goal(s) which will help them to resolve their issue(s). In Maggie's case, she wants to consider why she finds it difficult to speak with John about his performance. Though she is doubtful this can be achieved, Maggie's ultimate goal is to have a constructive conversation with John and thereby discuss how his performance can be improved.

The conflict coach works with Maggie to explore the situation with John from a number of different angles, including: what gets in the way of the conversation taking place; what message Maggie wants to give John in this conversation; and what will make the dialogue effective and constructive for both of them.

The conflict coach also helps Maggie to look at and explore her assumptions about John. For example, during the conflict coaching sessions, it becomes clear that she thinks he is lazy, cares little about his work and does not respect her as a manager.

How does conflict coaching help Maggie?

Typically, conflict coaching covers up to six sessions, either face-to-face or by telephone. Through Maggie's sessions, she learns to articulate her fears about her own qualities and skills as a manager and she gains insight into the assumptions she makes about John. She works through how she perceives their relationship and his motives.

After the sessions with the conflict coach, Maggie is able to have a conversation with John in which she is now open to hear his side of the story and to start to understand why his performance has dropped.

Together, Maggie and John are able to develop and agree a plan to monitor and improve performance. Maggie realises that if she had been able to have this conversation with John earlier, the situation could have been resolved many months ago.

With the insight gained from conflict coaching, Maggie is now equipped to have those difficult conversations with anyone with whom she finds herself needing to broach difficult issues and can do this much more quickly. She realises that her new ability to address issues has strengthened her relationships at work and allowed her to be a better and more confident manager.

How Consensio can help

Consensio offers a conflict coaching service to those who want to develop their skills, knowledge and competencies for managing areas of potential interpersonal conflict at work. Our conflict coaches work with clients in a structured way to support them in achieving their goals.

To learn more about conflict coaching, please contact Consensio:

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