

# People Management

## How human connection can help mitigate conflict in an AI workplace

By Anna Shields, Consensio, 26 March 2026

Artificial intelligence is increasingly a part of everyday working life. A UK government survey found that 36 per cent of the public have used AI in their workplace in the past month and 21 per cent said it had increased their productivity.

But we're also seeing AI become more prevalent in other ways. Employees are turning to it to offer advice on workplace conflict, sometimes even using it to draft grievance letters. This is happening at a time of rising workplace conflict. In 2025, an Acas report revealed that more than two in five working-age adults experienced conflict in the past year, the highest level of individual conflict ever reported in the UK.

Even though many of these conflicts will be resolved informally, CIPD research shows that 56 per cent of employees experience stress, anxiety or depression as a result of tension with a colleague. This can lead to lower motivation, disengagement and a higher risk of attrition for the employees involved and their wider teams.

Unsurprisingly, there's an appetite for developing the skills needed to navigate conflict at work, and conflict mitigation is the second-fastest growing in-demand skill on LinkedIn.

### Resolving conflict in a human way

When tensions arise, it can be tempting to turn to technology for quick and simple answers. But conflict is fundamentally about relationships – this is why a human-centred approach remains essential in an AI-enabled workplace. Tools such as ChatGPT – while effective at spotting patterns, analysing data and even predicting workplace disputes – lack the human skill of finding nuance, which can mean they end up making conflict worse.

Humans also make mistakes in the realm of conflict management. We're also guilty of seeing situations as either good or bad and, when we approach disputes with this reductive mindset, we stop being curious about people's motivations. When we don't acknowledge the perspectives of others, this can lead to miscommunication, which is a common cause of conflict.

However, there are tools to help people become more self aware and effective in managing workplace conflict. These can involve asking questions that lead to deeper insights and understanding within a relational context. This is one of the many important ways in which humans differ from AI.

### **Asking the right questions**

Too often, when there are challenges within a relationship, the focus is on finding out facts, such as who said what, without seeing the underlying issues that are driving the tension. To shift to a more human mindset, we need to avoid casting people in roles and ask questions that dig a little deeper, such as: 'Why is my colleague acting this way?' or 'What part of the situation am I not seeing?'

Sharing a grievance with a computer screen may seem a safe option, but discussing the impact with a real-life colleague can be far more effective. When we really listen to people who are experiencing conflict, they feel heard. Being curious and asking questions will enable us to understand the situation better and tailor support to people's specific needs.

With this in mind, here are four prompts to use in conflict situations:

1. **How can I show more kindness?** Bearing in mind that conflict can stir deep emotions such as anger, fear and sadness, think about how you can show more empathy with your colleague and provide them with a psychologically safe space to air their feelings.
2. **How can I see more nuance?** Rather than assigning fixed roles to people in conflict or seeing conflict situations in terms of winners or losers, be curious about the multiple perspectives and motivations behind each person's behaviour.
3. **How has this made you feel?** One of the most powerful questions a workplace mediator or manager can ask is about the impact a situation is having on an individual. This will encourage the person to put their own experiences into words and pause to reflect on what happened. It also de-escalates strong emotions.
4. **What can we learn from this journey?** Ultimately, a human approach to conflict resolution avoids trying to 'fix' a situation. Instead, it is about being open to multiple possibilities rather than a singular outcome. It isn't always about finding an answer or being proved right – it's about learning from the experience.

Your response to these questions is equally important in supporting an effective resolution. It's crucial to find language that works for the individual you're trying to support, so adapt your communication so that it resonates with the individual.

While a generative AI tool might focus on providing answers, successful workplace relationships are based on connection and dialogue. So, while we continue to embrace the efficiencies and opportunities offered by AI, we must also invest in the human skills that help sustain the relationships that we have at work.