

# How to resolve disputes between leaders

The size and complexity of organizations sometimes positions leaders at competing objectives and unclear accountabilities. When trying to resolve issues that span across functions, roles and seniority here are a few simple steps to help bring a quick resolution.

## OUR SIX TIPS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT AMONGST LEADERS

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### 1. Remember they are people

Identify who has the authority to resolve cross functional issues between leaders. If no clear owner exists, one needs to be created to oversee the process and provide guidance. Having a clear escalation process ensures everyone is on an equal playing field, and that issues are dealt with quickly and effectively.

### 2. Define the cause of the issue in simple terms

To help bring clarity to what you are trying to resolve, take a look at the key points of the discussion and classify them into symptoms and causes. Trace the causes until you can find the root of the issue and then work to define this as simply as possible. Most disputes spin out of control because they focus on the symptoms, rather than spending time properly articulating the problem that needs to be solved.



### 3. Look for solutions not problems

This seems too easy to make this list, but disputes can easily get caught up on focusing solely on the challenges being faced, instead of how to overcome them. It's important to be mindful of when the conversation stops being productive, and to suggest that instead of detailing all of the frustrations being felt, to look for possible solutions that can be put forward for approval.

### 4. Keep a strong perspective

Issues need to be kept in perspective with the organization's strategic objectives. A common filter and consistent prioritization help all leaders understand what is important and where we need to focus our efforts. All decisions are a balance of trade-offs we have to make in order to meet our objectives, it's important to distinguish the important from merely being uncomfortable with the way things are done.

### 5. Know when a decision needs to be made

Gathering the appropriate data before making a decision is important to making the right choice. However, there is a benefit to moving quickly to resolve an issue and being firm on the path forward. Time and effort do not always lead to better resolutions, sometimes a situation just needs to be resolved and the consequences dealt with in order to move on. Before you make the decision, be sure that stakeholders understand what choices have been made, and the need for them to support them moving forward.

### 6. Identify trends in behaviour

Some leaders are consistently combative, and it requires a different approach to reach a resolution. In certain cases, leaders who don't value different perspectives and constantly cause disruption to the organization need to be documented. Showing a leader their history of decisions can be a sobering tactic, especially when escalation happens frequently and the strategic intent isn't aligned to the corporate values.

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