

# MHR300 Chapter 10 Activity: Conflict Management & Negotiation Practice

*To Fire & Be Fired (For Instructor)*

Introduction: Explain the purpose and objectives of the activity, which are to practice terminating an employee, as well as being terminated, using conflict de-escalation and negotiation skills from Chapter 10. Review the key concepts and skills that the students will need, such as constructive conflict, process conflict, relationship conflict, conflicts of interest, values conflict, information conflict, structural conflict, vertical conflict, accommodating, collaborating, compromising, listening, questioning, communicating nonverbally, mediating, integrated negotiation, sources of leverage, BATNA, knowing when to walk away, focus on goal rather than emotion, mediation, and arbitration. Here are some resources to help you with this part: [Teaching Resources - SHRM](#), [We Need to Talk - SHRM](#), and [6 Favorite Business Simulations to Teach—and Why](#).

Instructions: Divide the students into pairs and assign each pair the role of either a manager or an employee. Explain that each pair will go through three different scenarios, where they will have to terminate or be terminated by their partner, using the skills and concepts they learned. Tell them that they will switch roles after each scenario, so that they can experience both perspectives. They will switch partners for each new scenario.

- 5 mins to plan each conversation using conflict de-escalation and negotiation skills
- 5 mins for each conversation
- 20 mins per scenario (5 min prep; 5 min convo x 2)
- 5 mins to reflect on their experience.

As students to submit reflections to canvas module 10 before midnight

Scenarios: Provide each pair with three different scenarios, each with a different context and reason for termination. Here are some resources to help you with this part: [13 Scenario-based Training & Learning Examples \(2023\)](#). Here are some possible scenarios:

**Scenario 1:** The manager has to terminate the employee due to poor performance and repeated violations of company policies. The employee is defensive and angry, and claims that they are being treated unfairly and discriminated against. The manager has to use conflict de-escalation and negotiation skills to handle the situation professionally and respectfully, while following the legal and ethical guidelines for termination.

**Scenario 2:** The employee has to resign from their job due to personal reasons, such as family issues, health problems, or relocation. The manager is surprised and disappointed, and tries to persuade the employee to stay or reconsider their decision. The employee has to use conflict de-escalation and negotiation skills to communicate their reasons and needs clearly and assertively, while maintaining a positive relationship with the manager and the company.

**Scenario 3:** The manager and the employee have a mutual agreement to end their employment relationship, due to a change in the company's strategy, structure, or culture. The manager and the employee have to use conflict de-escalation and negotiation skills to discuss the terms and conditions of the separation, such as severance pay, benefits, references, and future opportunities. They have to collaborate and compromise to reach a win-win outcome that satisfies both parties.

Debrief and Reflection: After each pair has completed the three scenarios, ask them to debrief and reflect on their experience, using the following questions:

- o How did you feel during the termination process? What emotions did you experience, and how did you manage them?
- o How did you communicate verbally and nonverbally? What skills and techniques did you use, and how effective were they?
- o How did you handle the conflict and the negotiation? What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?
- o What did you learn from the activity, both as a manager and as an employee? What are some of the best practices and tips for terminating or being terminated?

- o How can you apply what you learned to your future career or workplace situations?

## **MHR300 Session 9 Activity: Conflict Management & Negotiation Practice**

### *To Fire & Be Fired (For Students)*

#### **Scenario 1: You are the manager terminating an employee**

You are a manager at the corporate headquarters at PAWSH, a company that designs and sells luxury pet products. Today you are terminating a member of your venture team due to poor performance and repeated violations of policies. You hired this employee two years ago right out of college as a favor to your best friend, the parent of the non-performing employee. This employee has produced no viable products during the two years they have been employed, despite your regular coaching to help them understand the needs of your target audience and the policies the company must follow. Under pressure, the employee submitted a design recently that failed market testing because the policy non-compliant materials it was crafted from spontaneously burst into flames, singeing a customer's poodle fur. This was the last straw. You anticipate this overconfident employee will be defensive and angry, and claim that you are treating them unfairly, and discriminating against their race and gender because it is different from yours. Take five minutes and plan how you will use conflict de-escalation and negotiation skills to handle the situation professionally and respectfully, while following the legal and ethical guidelines for termination.

#### **Scenario 1: You are the employee being terminated**

You are an employee in a venture team at the corporate headquarters at PAWSH, a company that designs and sells luxury pet products. You were hired two years ago right out of college by your manager, who is one of your parents' lifelong and closest friends. You took the job as a favor to your parents, even though you feel you are very overqualified. Your parents' friend advised you to take the job, and that you could be promoted as soon as a higher-level position opened up. You have noticed that desirable positions have been filled quietly by others, and not offered to you. You are paid very well for an entry level position and have not been able to find a role elsewhere. You are very close to your team members and are happy with them, but have never really liked or trusted your manager – even when you were interacting with them socially with your parents. They are a different race and gender than you, and you've always felt they treated you differently as a result. You've taken your time and put a lot of thought and effort to submit edgy, creative designs with innovative raw materials to attract a new audience for the company's products. All of your designs have been rejected outright, or have not passed the verification (market testing) process. Your boss keeps telling you that you need to "follow the rules" and "use the approved raw materials", but they are the same as everyone else's and limit your creativity – the restrictions do not allow you to make the designs you know will get you promoted. You have been invited out of the blue to meet with your manager in five minutes. You wonder if your manager will be confronting you with termination, and you are angry and feel you are being treated unfairly, likely as a result of your race and gender. Take the next five minutes to plan how you will negotiate through the manager's bias to keep your job if they try to terminate you.

#### **Scenario 2: You are an employee who is resigning from a job**

You have worked as a top-rated senior designer for ten years at SewWhat, a company that designs and sells custom-made clothing. You have won "best designer" award as voted by your customers for eight of the ten years you've been working there, and you dearly love your job and colleagues, even though you feel you could be compensated more fairly. Sadly, your mother has just received a terminal cancer diagnosis, and you need to resign from your job to move to her far-away home to take care of and spend as much time as you can with her. You're worried your manager will be upset, disappointed and try to persuade you to stay. Take five minutes before you meet with your manager to plan how you will use conflict de-escalation and negotiation skills to communicate your needs clearly and assertively, while maintaining a positive relationship with the manager and the company so that you may return when the time is right.

#### **Scenario 2: You are a manager whose employee has resigned**

You are the executive director of award-winning product designs at SewWhat, a company that designs and sells custom-made clothing. Your high-performing and established team of top-rated designers ensures your team top

billing in the company, and a bonus tripling your salary each year that allows your four children to attend top universities they love. Without that bonus, your kids will need to drop out and you may even need to move to a less expensive home and sell your Beemer. Your best and longest employed senior designer has been looking stressed lately and has asked for a meeting with you. You're not sure why they want to meet with you, but you're worried they might resign because you've heard they have a family member in crisis. Without the leadership and designs of this employee, you're sure your team will drop from the rankings, and you'll lose your bonus and perquisites. You know this employee loves their job and their team, and you might be able to entice them with a raise. You've kept their pay a little low for a while now in case you needed leverage. You notice your emotions: you are growing very angry and disappointed the more you think about the possibility of this employee resigning. Take five minutes before you meet with your designer to plan how you will use negotiation skills to persuade this employee to stay so that you do not need to tell your kids you can't pay for their education, move to a crappy house and sell the car you love.

### **Scenario 3: You are the manager of an employee leaving the company**

You are a unit director at Actuarials Anonymous, a global insurance conglomerate with the slogan, "The only risk you'll take is trusting us." You are nine years into a ten-year project to bring the ten thousand employees of all 33 of your newly acquired affiliate companies onto the same connected underwriting, claims and administration system. You have over-hired high-performing resources to complete this expensive and top priority project on time, knowing that you would need to lay most of them off towards the end of the project. To make sure they stayed for as long as you needed them to, you promised the employees there would be plenty of work for them to continue their employment when the project ended. Now that the project is ending, you have to inform one of these employees their employment will end in six months due to "a change in strategy." You can offer them a small severance package, but only if they sign an agreement that they will work productively for the remaining time of their employment, be professional to management, preventing them from suing the company, and agree to a gag order preventing them from disclosing anything about how they have been treated to any third party. You know this hard-working and loyal employee will be surprised and upset as they learn you have (likely intentionally) deceived them and they will be losing their job. You will need to use conflict de-escalation and negotiation skills to sign the agreement and quietly comply.

### **Scenario 3: You are the employee leaving a company**

You are a highly-skilled project manager at Actuarials Anonymous (AA), a global insurance conglomerate with the slogan, "The only risk you'll take is trusting us." You are nine years into a ten-year project to bring the ten thousand employees of 33 newly acquired affiliate companies onto the same connected underwriting, claims and administration system. You have worked inhuman hours over the last nine years, and sacrificed family time and vacations to travel every week to a new AA location to help convert offices to the new software effectively. You were told when you were hired that your employment would continue after the project was completed, although you suspect this might not be true because it is unusual for employment to continue for project roles. You have trusted your manager at their word and performed loyally, giving your all and then some for the project to be completed effectively and on time to hopefully be promoted. Your colleagues have said they wonder how they are going to keep everyone on after the project is over and are beginning to worry. Many of them are looking for other jobs already, but you do not out of loyalty and trust for your manager who has treated you kindly and told you that you are a better performer than the rest with a bright future at the company. Your manager has called a meeting with you, and you hope it is to announce your promotion. In the back of your mind, you wonder if your colleagues were right and you might be getting terminated. Just in case, you take the next five minutes to plan for the conversation using your negotiation skills to advocate for keeping your job or exercising your rights should the news be unfavorable.

### **5 min Reflection Questions:**

1. How did you feel during the termination process? What emotions did you experience, and how did you manage them?
2. How did you communicate verbally and nonverbally? What skills and techniques did you use, and how effective were they?
3. How did you handle the conflict and the negotiation? What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?
4. What did you learn from the activity, both as a manager and as an employee? What are some of the best practices and tips for terminating or being terminated?
5. How can you apply what you learned to your future career or workplace situations?

Answer what you can in the time you have. Submit your five minute reflection in Canvas tonight before midnight.