

UNIT 8 — RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Reading: Dialog between a HR rep and two employees

John: Hi Tim, could I have a word with you?

HR rep: Of course John. What can I do for you?

John: Well, I have run into a bit of a problem. It's about Steven, you know my supervisor.

HR rep: Ok, what has he done?

John: It sounds a little silly but recently I have the feeling that he is treating me much worse than the other guys on my team. It started with small comments about my performance, but lately he has started demanding that I come in early and stay late. I wouldn't mind but it is only me. The other guys don't have to do it.

HR rep: Right, well that does sound a little unfair. Have you spoken to him about this?

John: Yes, I tried to suggest a compromise where we take it in turns to work late.

HR rep: And he didn't accept this?

John: No, he just laughed and walked away. Also some of his comments about my religion have been quite nasty.

HR rep: Oh, well that is serious our company code of conduct is very clear about that. It sounds like this conflict needs to be looked into. I will speak with him straightaway and try to find a way to settle it.

John: Thank you Tim. I hope that it helps.

-----Later that same day-----

HR rep: Steven, we have had a complaint about your behavior. Is there anything you think you should tell me?

Steven: It was John, wasn't it? I knew he would come running to you! That's it, I am going to suspend him!

HR rep: You can't do that and you know it. So what is the problem you are having with him?

Steven: I don't have a problem, he does. I made a couple of jokes and he took offense.

HR rep: Well perhaps you should be more tactful around him.

Steven: Why do I need to change? We can replace him easily.

HR rep: Steven, it is much better to keep existing staff rather than keep changing. I noticed that your department has a much higher than average staff turnover and now I hear that you are making jokes about people's religion. I think we may need to do something about your approach to your staff.

Steven: Like what?

HR rep: I would suggest a meeting between both parties with me adjudicating, the aim of which would be to solve this dispute in a way that satisfies both of you.

Steven: I don't really think that is necessary.

HR rep: It isn't actually your decision Steve. Our company policy is very clear on this. Either you show you are willing to work out a solution, or we would have to think about disciplinary action.

Steven: Oh come on. We both know that without me the department wouldn't function. I have worked here for almost 10 years and John has been here what, 3 months?

HR rep: That doesn't matter. The rules are there for a reason. I strongly advise you to consider my idea of a meeting as if you do not the only course of action is to terminate your employment with us.

Discussion Questions

How would you solve the dispute between Steven and John?

What are the advantages of having someone adjudicate at a meeting?

Have you ever had a problem getting on with anyone you work with? Why?