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Conflict Management

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Conflict Management

Sources of Conflict

Conflicts are easy to arise in workplaces due to interactions between different people and the extent to which the conflicts escalate depends on how they are managed. In the case study, the primary cause of conflict between Elaine and the customer is poor communication, as Elaine is fast in jumping to conclusions before allowing for good communication. Feedback, even with good intentions, can easily change into a conflict situation. Elaine was interested in knowing how the customer's phone stopped working so that she could help, but the best intentions turned into a conflict. Consequently, Elaine focused on the customer's behavior of rolling her eyes rather than her problem; the result was Elaine losing interest and jumping to conclusions rather than engaging the customer professionally. Notably, the customer's issues with her phone, which is overcharging and poor connection, may have escalated the conflict because she could not differentiate the mobile vendors and network providers' roles.

When Elaine goes to David's office, they engage in a conflict because of the task interdependence involved. Elaine's interactions with customers affect David's role as a manager because good interactions mean a good win for the team and bad interactions may mean embarrassment for both, even when David is not directly involved. For instance, in this case, David had to come out and help the customer as requested and deal with the consequences of Elaine's interactions for the sake of the company's reputation. Therefore, David had all the reasons to conflict with Elaine for putting the company on the spot.

Conflict Management

The approach of Elaine's conflict management with the customer was competitive. After establishing some watermarks on the phone, Elaine got convinced that the phone was thrown in the water and went ahead to tell the customer she could not replace the phone. Elaine was defending her position and was focused on herself being right regardless of how the customer felt. Elaine went to the extent of declaring that the customer was in the wrong place to win after learning that the customer had a network and overcharging problems. On the conflict with David, Elaine demonstrated an accommodative approach because she knew that the customer situation was a problem. Although she thought she had done well in her work, Elaine was aware that the customer interaction was unrealistic and therefore, she chose to listen to David regardless of how loud he was. On the other hand, David demonstrated a competitive approach as he took a stand that Elaine was wrong and she needed to change because compromising on such a situation would mean harm to the company.

Advice as a Leader

Customer relations are a susceptible professional area that requires an excellent understanding of conflict management to assist in handling different people. Firstly, Elaine needs to learn good communication skills that will help in being more inquisitive before jumping to conclusions and showing more empathy when dealing with customers to avoid dealing with the person rather than the problem. For instance, if they further questioned the customer, they would have established that they threw it in the water, but she was unaware of it. Secondly, I would also encourage Elaine to focus on compromising and problem-solving in such situations, as her work involves solving issues for customers and not escalating them. For instance, if Elaine established

that they threw the phone in water through respectful inquiries, the customer would understand why it is irreplaceable, but Elaine would offer repair options. Consequently, it would be easier to direct the customer to help solve her overcharge and poor connection problems. David also confirmed that Elaine had been rude in other customer interactions; hence, proper training would boost Elaine's customer relations skills.

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