

"The introduction of a 'reward scheme' didn't have the desired affect of improving performance – resentment arose because it wasn't felt to be fairly administered and co-operation deteriorated."

A positively motivated workforce that understands your business objectives and how to achieve them is the most important asset you can have. However, if there's conflict within the workforce, it can rapidly become divisive and counterproductive, harming your reputation and image in the marketplace.

You and your managers should try to minimise and resolve conflicts by understanding and addressing potential causes.

Causes of conflict within work communities include:

- poor communication and management
- badly organised work patterns
- focusing solely on getting the job completed and out of the door
- conflicting instructions and priorities
- lack of job descriptions
- not knowing where individuals and groups fit within the organisation.

Unrest generally manifests itself in gossiping, quarrelling, harassment, and sometimes graffiti, petty theft, vandalism and arson.

Tips

- Be aware of group dynamics, informal group leaders, peer pressure and interpersonal relationships.
- Be tactful. Find solutions, don't find fault and apportion blame. Remember to praise people when they get things right!
- Make sure that your payment and reward system is open and understandable.
- Make sure there's a good two-way flow of ideas, suggestions and information.
- Encourage open communication – use questionnaires and climate tools to assess morale, motivation and general wellbeing.
- Communication via consultation improves co-operation, which leads to better competency and control, resulting in commitment to achieve organisational goals.
- Consider introducing the 'Investors in People' standard.

Useful links

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development – Retention of staff
www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/recruitmen/retention/?area=hs

Investors in People
www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/Pages/Home.aspx