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## PART ONE

# Conflict Management Knowledge and Skills

**B**efore you can begin to catalog, analyze, and address the sources of conflict in your organization, you need to gain a solid grounding in the theories and practice of conflict management and alternative dispute resolution.

Chapter One will help you become more aware of your own tendencies and habits in responding to conflict: Are you a conflict avoider, a scrappy conflict-a-holic,

or something in between? Once you become cognizant of your own patterns of response to conflict, you can improve those responses and choose among a menu of possible responses in order to solve problems more efficiently and humanely. You will learn that nearly every individual and every organization has a pattern of responses to conflict and by predicting and explaining those patterns you will be able to become proactive rather than merely reacting to conflicts that arise. You will learn how to communicate effectively with people who prefer to respond to conflict in ways that are very different from your own. You will learn their language of conflict so you can better understand one another and work together productively. Moreover, by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses in your current managerial skill set, you will be able to set goals for improvement and become the manager that other departments wish they had!

Once you gain a more complete understanding of your own management style, Chapter Two will examine the root causes of conflict, study the typical paths of conflict escalation, and introduce foundational theories of conflict prevention and resolution. An understanding of basic conflict theory will serve as the cornerstone for the practices introduced later in the book and will provide us a cognitive framework with which to understand and organize the material presented in subsequent chapters. The theories presented in Chapter Two will begin at the most basic level—explaining conflict using evolutionary, anthropologic, and biologic research. To be human is to experience conflict within ourselves, between individuals, and among groups. Chapter Two presents common explanations for conflicts at all levels, from the psychological processes that lead us to distrust those who are different from us all the way to explanations that draw on political science and economics to describe competition over scarce resources including power, wealth, and influence. Chapter Two will equip you with much of the terminology to understand why, how, and when conflict arises in organizations and between individuals.

Chapter Three is designed to sharpen a key skill needed by all managers: negotiation. Most managers negotiate every day—deadlines, salaries, and access to needed resources are commonly negotiated by managers. Beyond the workplace applications, good negotiation skills also serve us well in our civic and family lives. We need to negotiate not only to accomplish our individual goals but *how* we negotiate tells a lot about us as people. Chapter Three provides the knowledge and skills necessary to leave your negotiations with a sense of accomplishment

and enhanced relationships that will serve you and your organization well in all the negotiations yet to come.

There are many different processes commonly used to avoid litigation and solve problems with employees and customers. Chapter Four introduces each of the most common alternative dispute resolution processes, including mediation, facilitation, arbitration, and others. Knowledge of these processes will be helpful in subsequent chapters when readers will learn how to analyze their organizational environments and design dispute prevention and management systems to reduce costs and increase employee and customer satisfaction levels.

These four chapters lay the conceptual groundwork that will allow the reader to understand the subsequent sections on preventing and resolving internal conflicts (i.e., employment), preventing and resolving external conflicts (i.e., with customers and clients), and collaboration and conflict management between regulators and the regulated.