



## Smart Strategies Solutions for Workplace Challenges

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**Dear Alan,**

I hope your new year is going well.

This month we look at workplace conflict and procrastination.  
(But not at procrastinating about resolving conflicts!)

Hope you enjoy!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Alan'.

Alan Krieger

*Feel free to forward this to friends and colleagues.*



**Alan Krieger  
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## Whose Role is It? Resolving Workplace Conflict

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**Time Management  
Tip**

I've had lots of questions in my training classes about handling situations when there is conflict in the workplace and the supervisor won't take action. I'd like to hear your thoughts - email me at [alan@krsol.com](mailto:alan@krsol.com).

My first response is that where you have conflict with a co-worker, try to resolve it directly. If you don't feel you have the skills to do this effectively, take a class. (I'll give the highlights of this process at the end of this article.) The only exception is where you feel unsafe - do not attempt conflict resolution with someone who may be dangerous, vindictive, or unethical/manipulative. In those cases, go to your supervisor, and if s/he does not take action, go to Human Resources.

In cases where you try to resolve the situation yourself, give it time and if after several attempts you are not successful, then go to your supervisor.

Let your supervisor know what the problem is - focus on the other person's behavior, not their attitudes, and the impact this behavior has on you and your work. Impact is important - supervisors are more likely to take action when there is a business impact.

### Procrastination

We usually procrastinate on tasks we find difficult or unpleasant. Here's what to do:

Quickly tell your supervisor of your attempts to resolve it yourself. Highlight what you think went well and where the process broke down.

Here's the key statement:

Tell your supervisor that you need their help **so you can do your job more effectively**. It's not your role to tell your supervisor how they should supervise the problem employee, but it is your role to ask for help so you can do your job more effectively.

There are several possible strategies. The obvious, but most difficult one is to have the supervisor "fix" the difficult person. Less obvious, but often successful and much easier, is to work with your supervisor to find ways to minimize the negative impact on you of the other person's difficult behavior. This could involve changing the physical layout, changing the work process, reassigning tasks, etc. Be open minded and be creative.

The key is for you to focus on what you need - which is to have a more productive, more pleasant work environment. It is NOT to have the difficult person be a nice person. This shift opens many possibilities and offers supervisors options that may get the job done more quickly.

Be assertive and continue to ask your supervisor for help in improving the work environment. Be open minded and see if there are ways you can change to make this happen. Let me know if you try this out.

As promised, here's a quick summary of the basic conflict resolution strategy for when you feel ready to try to resolve the conflict directly:

1. Take the time to fully listen, without sharing your views. (You might need to vent to someone first so you can get your frustrations off your chest so you can fully listen.)
2. Acknowledge what you heard - paraphrase back, without evaluation, what the other person said, whether you agree with it or not!
3. Ask if you can share your views - as you do so, emphasize areas you both agree with (e.g. you'd both like to have a workspace that is comfortable and effective for each of you) and describe how the other person's behaviors are causing you difficulty.
4. Ask the other person for suggestions on ways to resolve the situation - listen fully and try to build on their suggestions, not argue with them.

If you'd like to learn more about this, sign up for one of my classes on conflict resolution and/or dealing with difficult people. If you'd like to be on a list to be notified about these classes, send me an email. [alan@krsol.com](mailto:alan@krsol.com)

1. Identify those tasks (the ones languishing on your to do list)

2. Gather up in advance everything you need to do that task - paperwork information, tools/supplies, etc. (but don't do the task yet)

3. Find a time of day you can block out interruptions. I find first thing in the morning, after checking in, to be the best for me. Schedule it in and clear it with your boss.

4. Set aside enough time to complete the task or at least a significant component of the task.

5. Plan a reward for when you're finished - a coffee break, a visit with someone you like, the tasks you like most, etc.

6. Try it and let me know how it goes.

*If you have a favorite tip or a tough time management challenge, let me know and we can discuss it in a future issue.*

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*We offer training, leadership coaching, facilitation, team building and organizational consulting services.*

Visit our website  
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to find out more about our programs and services.

I'm assuming most of you are familiar with my TEAM styles model. If not, email me for the link for more information.

It's a critical skill so I'll remind you about it from time to time.

Here's a short story... which behavior is the helpful one?

Bob comes to work in the morning, passes Sally in the hall and gives a pleasant hello as he continues down the hall. Joe sees Sally in the hall and stops to ask her how she's doing, what's new with her son who she's been having trouble with and how things are going overall at work. Bob stops in to see Sally later in the day about a work question, gets his answer and leaves.

Most of you will have a strong preference for Bob or Joe's behavior and will think the other's behavior is problematic. Which one do you prefer and why?

I'll give my views in the next newsletter. Let me know what you think. [alan@krsol.com](mailto:alan@krsol.com)

## A Little Humor

As noted above, quiet listening is a key to conflict resolution. Here are two other benefits of quiet listening:

*You can observe a lot by just watching.* - Yogi Berra

*The early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.* ~Author Unknown

Sometimes it pays to stop and observe...

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