No-Fault Formula®
for Conflict Resolution or Problem Solving

1. Set the OBJECTIVE

What do you want as a result of this conversation? What is not working between you and the other person, and how would like your relationship to be different? Be specific. Ask the other person what they would like. This step allows you to focus on what you and the other person have in common.

Example: “I’d like us both to walk away with a clear understanding of what happened, and commitments for what we are each willing to do to solve the problem.” Other examples: “To improve our relationship,” “Create better communication,” “Renew commitment to customer service.”

2. Clarify the DATA

What happened specifically? What was said? What did you see? Focus on the facts. Separate the data from any assumptions you may be making about the person or situation. Ask the other person about the facts as they know them. This step ensures that you have the same facts, and all the facts. This also gets you agreement about what reality is...what is true.

Example: “Your name was on the schedule to open up this morning. But when I arrived you weren’t here yet and a customer was already waiting.”

3. Clarify the IMPACT

Describe the impact the behavior or event had - on you and others. What is the impact on your feelings? How did/is the behavior impacting your relationship with the other person? What is the impact on customers, teamwork, finances, etc? This step allows you to create mutual empathy - and mutual understanding of how the situation/their behavior has and is impacting others. It helps everyone measure how important the situation is.

Example: “I was surprised when you weren’t here on time and irritated to find customers waiting. Customers depend on us to be open when we say we will be. When customers have to wait for us to open, we don’t look reliable and they may take their business elsewhere.”

4. Clarify the NEEDS

Describe what you need the other person to do in order to resolve the situation. What outcomes would you like to see occur that are different from the current results? What request do you have of the other person? Ask what they need from you/the situation? This step allows you to begin focusing your discussion on the future.

Example: “I need to be able to depend on you and know that you’ll be here on time. And I would request that if you know your schedule is going to cause you to be a few minutes late, at least 24 hours before you make arrangements with a co-worker or me for coverage.”

5. Commit to a PLAN

Make sure you the other person is willing to commit to doing what is needed to get the desired outcomes. If there is any waffling on the commitments, you’ll need to go back through the other 4 steps to make sure all has been explored.