

PRACTICE: HOLD A SOSO CONVERSATION

For tackling a tension between two team members that is impacting the team

If one relationship in the team is not working well, it will more than likely impact the whole team. Team members need to take responsibility for ensuring they engage constructively with each of their teammates.

Sometimes this means two team members need to have a conversation to constructively confront the tension that exists:

We call this a “**SOSO**” conversation; “*Sort Our Sh*t Out.*”

1 Call it out: “I think it may be time for a SOSO conversation”

The calling out may come from any team member; either those experiencing tension with another, or other members of the team who are aware of the tension between other team members.

2 The SOSO Conversation

A ‘SOSO’ should be scheduled promptly (and this might mean that the team suggest the pair head out of the meeting to have this conversation straight away).

SOSO Conversation Suggestions

If the tension is palpable and the two parties are likely to spiral into deeper conflict, a third neutral party might assist. If this is the case, we suggest:

- 1 Each person share why it is important to resolve the issue (in a way that affirms the importance of the relationship to themselves, the team and the work). Each should do their best to remain calm!
- 2 **Person A** explains their perception of the issue and the impact they believe it is having while **person B** listens and asks questions to fully understand (*if one person is more ‘aggrieved’ they should usually go first.*) **Person B** should then accurately recount **person A’s** view of the situation – resisting the temptation to add any clarifications from their own perspective.
- 3 **Person B** explains their perception of the issue and the impact they believe it is having while **person A** listens and asks questions to fully understand. **Person A** should now should accurately recount **person B’s** view.

- 4 Each person should then suggest what they could do to resolve the issue (or improve it).
- 5 Each person outlines anything else they would want from the other in order to resolve the issue (or improve it).
- 6 Finally, both parties agree what they are prepared to commit to for the next two weeks, at which point they should meet again to review progress.

3 Follow up the SOSO conversation to check progress

Scheduling this second conversation should occur at the end of the SOSO and made as a firm commitment. The leader should follow up to make sure it happens as it would be common for team members to avoid this last step.

4 Report back to the team

Both team members should that they have made progress. The details of what is discussed in the conversation should be kept confidential to those two team members unless agreed otherwise.

