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How To Deal With Business Disputes

April 16, 2015, 9:42 am | Alan Manly
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Small business owners can be subject to a dispute at any time.

It could be a supplier relationship gone sour, dissatisfaction with a contractor or a disgruntled customer. Like every situation in business, disputes need careful management to ensure that they are resolved responsibly and within a reasonable time frame.

Here are my top five tips in dispute resolution:

Tip One - Acceptance

Accept that you are in a dispute. Try to limit the blame game and have all parties accept that they are in such a situation with the aim to resolve it quickly.

There are many hours wasted arguing as to why the dispute started. Accept the situation as it is and work to resolve it.

Tip Two – Plan desired outcomes

Plan a few options for resolution. The more thought that goes into the resolution options the more likely a satisfactory

resolution will come your way. Seek advice from associates and other industry contacts who can be objective about all the options.

Positive opportunities may present themselves.

Tip Three – Make an offer

Make an offer to settle the dispute. This is not the usual early response to a dispute but by making the first offer you have taken control of events.

This course of action will ensure the other party focuses on finding a resolution rather than fuelling their side of the dispute.



Tip Four – Cost the dispute

During dispute discussions, remember that all goods and services have a value. Goods can be replaced at a cost. Get a quote. People can be replaced for a recruitment fee and wages. Suppliers can be replaced. Ask for competitive and confidential quotes.

Know that you have the ability to move on once the dispute is resolved.

Tip Five – Stay calm

When discussing the dispute with either your supporters or the other party, always stay calm and portray professionalism. Remember that if you are the main participant in the dispute, others will follow your lead with their behaviour. The goal is not point-scoring but a positive resolution for all involved.

Navigating your way through a dispute takes time and effort for all involved. Keep communication open, remain calm and work toward a positive outcome. Every situation in business requires management, so the less energy wasted on disputes, the better.

*Alan Manly has extensive experience owning and managing SMEs, and found himself in a dispute of his own with a renowned fraudster. He tells his story in the book, *When There Are Too Many Lawyers There Is No Justice* (\$24.95), now available at good book stores, Amazon and [here](#).*

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