



How to Effectively Manage Conflict in Your Community

DEBRA WARREN ([HTTPS://HUB.ASSOCIAONLINE.COM/AUTHORS/DEBRA-WARREN](https://hub.associaonline.com/authors/debra-warren))

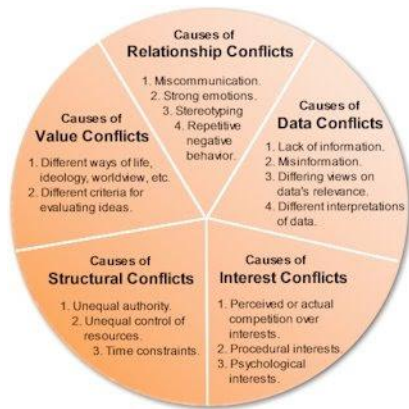


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As an elected leader of a homeowners' association (HOA), you have a duty to preserve and promote harmony in the community. Conflicts can and will arise, and it's up to board members to diffuse situations as much as possible and bring the community together instead of apart. Read on to learn about the sources of conflict, tips for having tough conversations, and more.

Understanding Sources of Conflict: Circle of Conflict

To successfully diffuse a conflict, you must have a solid understanding of the different types of conflict. In the *Circle of Conflict*, Christopher Moore identifies the five sources of conflict and their causes. This tool is crucial in helping people resolve struggles and view issues from multiple perspectives.



RELATIONSHIP CONFLICTS

Relationship conflicts are typically a result of miscommunication or strong emotions. When handling relationship conflicts, you need to overcommunicate what decision was made and *why* the decision was made. It's important to remain positive and do your best to show residents you're acting upon information, not emotions.

DATA CONFLICTS

Often, access to so much information can lead to issues in how people interpret that data. It's essential to recognize that everyone creates their own reality based on the specific data they consume. When data conflicts occur, make sure to use accurate information, share the data you're using, and explain your interpretation.

INTEREST CONFLICTS

Interest conflicts stem from different motivations. As a community leader, you have a fiduciary duty to act in the best interest of the association. Some residents may oppose a decision because it doesn't benefit them directly. In this case, you should be empathetic to their preferences, define the reasoning behind a decision, and detail how it improves the association as a whole.

STRUCTURAL CONFLICTS

Structural conflicts happen when there is unequal authority or control. Structural conflicts are frequent in HOAs, as HOAs don't operate as a democracy, but as a corporation—elected officials make decisions and have more control over resources. Teach people how the association operates and ensure residents feel like they have a voice, even if they don't have a vote.

VALUE CONFLICTS

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When issues arise due to different beliefs, ideologies, views, or political opinions, that's a value conflict. You can't change these, so you must leave specific values out of the situation and use facts to help people understand. Value conflicts are tough, but remember, everyone has their own level of sensibility and risk.

How to Approach Tough Conversations

While identifying the type and cause of conflict is helpful, how you manage and respond to an issue is important too. Keep the following tips in mind when having difficult conversations and navigating conflict in your community.

1. SHOW EMPATHY.

When talking to a resident, put yourself in their shoes. Take a step back from your own emotions and beliefs and try to see an issue from their perspective before acting.

2. ACTIVELY LISTEN.

When a resident is speaking, listen carefully, and never interrupt. Ask questions when appropriate, use similar wording when responding, and have a reasonable understanding of the issue before moving on.

3. REMAIN CALM.

Conflicts are hard, but focus on maintaining a good attitude and stay positive—it helps. Remaining calm and professional in all situations will establish trust between both parties and make finding a resolution much easier.

4. COMMUNICATE.

Conflict often stems from miscommunication. Always communicate resolutions and action items, and leave open lines of communication. Follow up and ensure the resident knows you're all on the same team.

Resolving Community Conflicts

Our ebook, **"The Pocket Guide for Resolving Community Conflicts"** (<https://hub.associaonline.com/ebooks/the-pocket-guide-for-resolving-community-conflicts>), is a quick reference to help your board choose the best course of action to take when community discord arises. Download your FREE copy now for conflict resolution best practices developed specifically for community associations. With the right resources and a level head, you can achieve resolutions with more success and less stress.

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The Pocket Guide for Resolving Community Conflicts

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About the Author

Debra A. Warren, PCAM®, CCAM®, CMCA®, is Vice President of Development for Associa. Since joining the Associa family in 2012, she has held positions on the operations team supervising branches on the West Coast and Canada, as well as contributing in the areas of client relations and community manager education. She currently oversees all employee enrichment and leadership development programs. Her career in community association management spans over 25 years, including 15 years of experience as a management firm principal and CEO. She is a nationally recognized expert in association management operations, specializing in education, communication, and customer service.



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Associa OnCall
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Community Archives
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First National Bank of Kemp
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HOA Collection Services (HCS)
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