CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN EXTREME ENVIRONMENTS

When everything else can be tense, energy consuming and potentially dangerous, the last thing you want to spend your time on is conflict management. Why? Because it removes focus from important tasks, and the circumstances simultaneously worsen for those involved when you can’t escape the situation.

In a confined and isolated environment, the situation could prove highly detrimental to the effectiveness of a team, potentially resulting in full-blown conflicts within the team if members choose sides. In principle, the same mechanisms are at stake in every work setting, but the difference in extreme environments is that people often cannot escape the situation and therefore are subject to what we call the ‘pressure cooker effect’. Small details may grow out of all proportion.

In dealing with a conflict situation, the best solution may simply be to try to avoid it. However, when people are together in isolated, confined or even hostile environments over an intensive and extended period, eventually conflicts will occur. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to be able to manage conflicts as smoothly as possible when they happen, in order to focus on what is important: getting the job done.

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