

# Navigating Workplace Conflict & Career Clarity

## Quick recap

The meeting began with technical difficulties and a discussion of training materials before transitioning into Andrew's detailed account of his experience developing e-learning software for insurance companies, including challenges with legal requirements and design decisions. The group explored strategies for dealing with workplace conflicts and undervalued expertise, with discussions centered on effective communication approaches and professional boundaries. The conversation concluded with career planning advice, focusing on Andrew's potential transition to freelance work or starting his own business while emphasizing the importance of maintaining passion and creativity in future endeavors.

## Summary

### Technical Setup and Exercise Discussion

Warren encountered technical difficulties with the meeting setup but eventually resolved the issue by changing the host and rejoining the call. Andrew and Minka discussed skipping the reading and jumping straight to an exercise on slide 9, which covers rewards and punishments. They agreed to help each other with any challenges they might be facing, with Andrew expressing a desire to benefit from Minka's perspective on his situation. Sarah-Jane joined the call later, apologizing for accidentally leaving it, and confirmed that she had sent the class notes.

### Interactive Complaints Training Design

Andrew shared his experience as an instructional designer creating e-learning software for insurance companies, focusing on a complaint management training. He described how he developed interactive activities to help employees recognize and handle complaints properly, which was initially met with resistance from the legal team, who wanted a simpler "check-the-box" solution. The training

included activities such as identifying complaints from a pool of comments and practicing proper complaint handling through scenarios, with the final activity being particularly well-received during testing.

### **Training Activity Design Dispute**

Andrew discussed a challenge involving a training activity about process mishandling, where testers found it useful for learning from mistakes but the lawyer found it too difficult for employees. Despite Andrew's concerns about the prescribed solution of presenting six events with five options, his boss overruled him and rejected his alternative suggestion of using both mishandled and perfect examples. When the activity was tested and received negative feedback, Andrew's boss initially blamed him before realizing the design was exactly as prescribed by the lawyers, leading to an apology and admission that Andrew should have pushed harder against the original design.

### **Design Decision vs. Political Pressure**

Andrew expressed frustration over a politically motivated decision by his boss, who preferred a design prescribed by non-designers due to concerns about her relationship with them and her reputation. He felt that a good design was killed, and the process was challenging due to a lack of direct communication with the lawyers and the need to build new systems repeatedly. Minka suggested that the boss might have been pushed into a corner by external pressures, leading her to react negatively, and proposed seeking additional support or proof for Andrew's design ideas.

### **Career Transition and Freelance Advice**

Andrew discussed his career uncertainty, considering whether to leave his current job and start his own business or stay and potentially do freelance work on the side. Minka and Sarah-Jane advised that going solo would give him more control over clients and projects, but suggested he wait before making any major decisions due to the current hot topic nature of his situation. Sarah-Jane recommended documenting all communications with his boss in writing to create

evidence of project issues and suggested referring back to the original project brief when dealing with conflicts, as this could be used to justify professional expertise and consulting-level input in future contracts.

### **Overcoming Expertise Undervaluation Challenges**

Sarah-Jane, Andrew, and Minka discussed the challenges of having expertise undervalued or ignored, particularly in training contexts where the focus is on ease of completion rather than effectiveness. Minka suggested that Andrew present his ideas directly to his boss and the lawyers, emphasizing the importance of clear communication and passion for the project. Sarah-Jane agreed, highlighting the difficulty of conveying personal passion and expertise to those who are not as invested in the project.

### **Confidence and Career Challenges**

Sarah-Jane suggested to Andrew that his issues with his boss might stem from a lack of confidence or difficulty asserting boundaries, rather than a problem with the job itself. Minka shared her experience working in tourism, where she earns significantly more than typical guides but is limited by the seasonal nature of the work and physical presence requirements.

### **Compassionate Leadership and Reflection**

Sarah-Jane shared her personal experience of learning to assert her authority as a boss and the importance of using compassionate communication techniques like "curious" instead of confrontational language. Andrew acknowledged that he has been perceived as confrontational in the past and expressed his frustration with a recent project failure, while also noting that he doesn't mind being shouted at by his boss but is concerned about the decision-making process. Sarah-Jane suggested that Andrew could create a reflective piece about his experience as a designer, focusing on what went wrong and what could be done differently in the future, without assigning blame.



## **Standing Up for Workplace Justice**

Sarah-Jane and Minka discussed Andrew's workplace situation, where he faced unjust treatment from his boss despite doing good work. Minka suggested that Andrew should stand up for himself, even if it meant potentially losing his job, as the worst-case scenario would be not having his contract renewed. Sarah-Jane acknowledged Andrew's difficult experience with unemployment and agreed that anger can be a healthy emotion when boundaries are crossed.

## **Client Design Disagreement Resolution**

Sarah-Jane and Andrew discussed a challenging work situation where a client was directing Andrew to implement designs against his professional judgment. Sarah-Jane advised Andrew to send an email to his boss clarifying the situation, emphasizing that while he had expressed concerns about the client's requested approach, he was still willing to proceed as instructed. Minka suggested focusing on the client's perspective and outcomes when communicating with them, rather than presenting from Andrew's point of view as a designer.

## **Enhancing Training and Communication Strategies**

The group discussed strategies for effective training and communication, with Minka advising Andrew to focus on the potential gains and losses from different actions from the client's perspective rather than emphasizing personal skills. Andrew shared his experience with training on conflicts of interest and fire safety, highlighting the importance of thorough training despite challenges in proving its value directly. Sarah-Jane emphasized the effectiveness of real-world examples and stories in training, which Andrew had used successfully but faced resistance in implementing. The discussion also touched on the irony of providing high-quality training to avoid legal issues while choosing cost-effective, lower-quality training options that could increase risks.

## **Overcoming Job Frustration Mindset**

Andrew discussed his challenges with his current job and freelance work, expressing frustration with being blamed for predictable failures and feeling worn down by repeated instances of political interference derailing his projects. Sarah-Jane and Minka encouraged him to take time to reflect on his options rather than making immediate decisions, emphasizing the importance of mindset and suggesting he work with someone like Sacha to address his tendency to accept situations passively. They reminded him that even if things don't go as planned, he can still learn and move forward, and that he should focus on running towards his new position with excitement, whether he decides to stay in his current role or pursue something different.

## **Exploring Andrew's Career Transitions**

Sarah-Jane, Andrew, and Minka discussed Andrew's career transition and potential new ventures. Andrew shared his experience writing four-fifths of a book on skills-focused training for coaches and considered developing interactive learning courses for entrepreneurs. The group encouraged Andrew to explore new opportunities beyond his current role, emphasizing his creativity and expertise. They advised him to take time for rest and fun to reignite his passion and creativity before making major career decisions.