

Confronting Turf Wars in Your Company

Dear Small Business Owner:

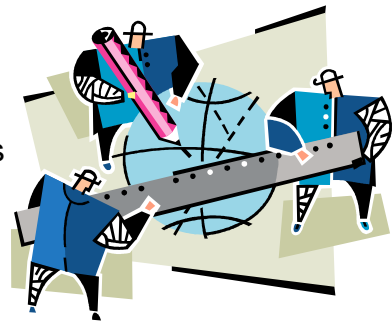
In a recent discussion with a colleague, he mentioned an internal company meeting he'd been in that turned into an organizational turf war. There were heated discussions over territory assignments and work distribution levels.

Does this ever happen in your company? With the current effort to do more with less, battles are common over who gets "more" of the "less." These kinds of fights can siphon off the valuable creative juices of a work group.

People spend much of their time protecting their turf. They are playing games focused on their ego's definition of what will be best for their personal survival. Often this is not in-line with the goals of the organization on which they depend and are trying to grow. Ironic!

In what areas are there typically turf battles?

1. **Information.** This can include financial statistics, resourcing methods, productivity or customer analysis. Intellectual capital, knowing how things work, is of primary value today in a very competitive market.
2. **Relationships.** People spend a lot of time developing and protecting who they know--their corporate contact lists, industry experts, prospects and clients.
3. **Authority.** We always want to know who has the power to make what decisions. What are the formal and informal lines of control in a company? Who owns what sales territories with the ability to sell what products?



How do we resolve these territorial battles? Since this is such an in-grained survival instinct, I don't think it can be totally eliminated. But it can be greatly reduced if dealt with directly. How?

1. **Don't pronounce mandates that "people just need to get along and work together towards the company goals." People feel justified in playing their games and maybe even believe their survival depends on them. Resistance will be stronger if solutions are forced.**

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2. Identify the areas that are typical battle zones in your organization. Is it who gets assigned to what project? Is it sales coverage of regions? Is it the credit that's given or paid on certain work?
3. **Management must create an environment where people feel safe and communicated with. Once people are told where they stand and where the company is headed, they can begin to let go of some of their defensive and territorial behaviors.**
4. Create a desire for change. Territorial games fall into the arena of emotional behavior. These patterns are difficult to change unless people want to change it. Create strong incentives for the performance you want to see.
5. **Establish collective vision and boundaries. Bring disagreeing parties together and get all to participate and agree on what the team goal is and by what restrictions all will abide. Make sure performance is measured on these goals.**



While some territorial boundaries can't be totally eliminated, you can control how and where they are drawn. Unless you do, your staff will not be cooperating to achieve your goals as the owner of the company.

This isn't an easy topic to confront in your business. It takes clear communication and getting to the root cause of the issues. Call if we can help.

Sincerely,

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