What are the most common workplace issues for managers? Many people believe that on-going conflict is simply a group dynamic which is beyond our control and do little or nothing can be done to minimize its adverse effects on the workplace. We tolerate turnover, absenteeism and lost productivity as ‘costs of doing business.’ Managers say that, “Management would be easy if it weren’t for the people problems!” By the time an employee complains to management, they are ‘at the end of their rope’ and ready to leave. A manager has to watch for the occurrence of the problem behavior in the complained of employee and go through progressive discipline stages before the issue can be dealt with effectively or the person terminated if they refuse to change with warnings. This can take months! Healthy employees lose respect and confidence in management for ‘avoiding the problem’. Your good employees leave, costing the company one and a half to two times a good employee’s annual salary to replace them. Meanwhile the negative employees stay and grow in informal power. Likewise, others may be infected with similar behavior.

What are Team Norms, and how are they created? IAI uses a large group adaptation of the mediation process that assists groups in Creating and Maintaining a Positive Work Culture. The process serves to manage change and/or periods of stress that can create negativity in any team. The culture of a team is usually a random combination of personalities and dynamics between them that just happens. When assisting a business or team in the deliberate development of culture—via creation of Team Norms—we ask the group with which we are working to construct guidelines—or ‘norms of behavior’—to which coworkers agree to hold one another other accountable in the workplace—in order to make it and keep it a positive place to come to work each day. “Isn’t that what our Employee Handbook is for?” ask most managers... Well we ask you, how is that working for you now? IAI consultants could tell any group the probable list of norms they will create. If people would live by them, they would work to create a positive work environment. The problem is that people are rebellious by nature and if we do not develop our own agreements, which creates buy-in and make commitments to our peers, we won’t abide by such guidelines. Not without police enforcement anyway.

Everyone has endured a job which made getting up in the morning pure drudgery--when one must force one’s self to go to work only to find we cannot wait to leave. Hopefully, everyone has also experienced a great team and a job that is fulfilling and a joy to perform, making our work meaningful and fulfilling. Few people think about what makes one place great and the other a poisonous place, but if we force the question, most would say, “It was/is the people.” In creating Team Norms, we facilitate employees in build norms in 4 areas: 1) Teamwork/Internal Customer Service; 2) External Customer Service; 3) Communication and 4) Conflict Resolution. An example of a norm that makes everyone’s list is: “We will not gossip or be divisive.” It really does work if everyone wants a positive environment and defines together what is expected of them in future situations. They will abide by the norms because they helped to create the expectations! They will hold each other accountable because they come to value the positive environment in which they work and want to protect it. When organizations combine the power of Team Norms with Conflict Resolution Skills Training, in order to ensure that all employees have the necessary skills to carry out their Team Norms—time, money, productivity and human resources are saved! Well worth any company’s investment!

The power of Team Norms lies in the willingness of a team to create them together and hold each other accountable to them. IAI builds norms in 4 areas: 1) Teamwork/Internal Customer Service; 2) External Customer Service; 3) Communication and 4) Conflict Resolution. An example of a norm that makes everyone’s list is: “We will not gossip or be divisive.” It really does work if everyone wants a positive environment and defines together what is expected of them in future situations. They will abide by the norms because they helped to create the expectations! They will hold each other accountable because they come to value the positive environment in which they work and want to protect it. When organizations combine the power of Team Norms with Conflict Resolution Skills Training, in order to ensure that all employees have the necessary skills to carry out their Team Norms—time, money, productivity and human resources are saved! Well worth any company’s investment!

Experience Innovative Alternatives, Inc. (IAI) has worked with corporations, small business, nonprofits, universities, hospitals, churches and associations for 23 years, implementing, programs, performing mediations and providing conflict resolution and other training, assisting teams in establishing positive work culture and acting as an outsourcing resource for personnel-related mediations involving multiple parties, teams and/or departments. IAI is also a premier training and organizational development agency, having developed Violence Prevention Programs for schools which are sought after by other countries such as China, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Bosnia. Arranged through the US State Department, these delegations visited our agency in order to obtain knowledge in how to teach children new ways of handling conflict which do not involve war—in order to preserve the future of their cultures and nations.