Conflict Management

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Importance

Conflict happens all the time. It is the part of everyday life and it can happen to anyone on all age groups. Many of us face some form of conflict on a daily basis. It could be something as simple as what to eat for breakfast or much more complicated, like an argument between two coworkers. People have different preferences, habits, and opinions—sometimes those differences create conflict People often feel reluctant to get involved in a conflict situation. Unfortunately, conflicts are rarely self-healing conditions. Because of the increasing diversity of life, we're seeing more conflict than ever before. Conflict can be a positive or negative experience. What makes the difference is the ability to deal with and resolve conflict which is important in this present world.

Key Concepts

Conflict: An active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles.

Conflict Management: It is the ability to be able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently.

Conflict Management Techniques

A) Collaborating: -Collaboration works by integrating ideas set out by multiple people.
B) Compromising: - The compromising strategy typically calls for both sides of a conflict to give up elements of their position in order to establish an acceptable, if not agreeable, solution.
C) Accommodating: - The accommodating strategy essentially entails giving the opposing side what it wants.
D) Competing:- Competition operates as a zero-sum game, in which one side wins and other loses.
E) Avoiding:-The avoidance strategy seeks to put off conflict indefinitely. By delaying or ignoring the conflict, the avoider hopes the problem resolves itself without a confrontation.

Introduction

Conflict is a fact of personal life .The study of conflict can assist in the renegotiation process, letting you see which styles backfire, which ones work best, and how much productive power you have available. **Conflict management** is the process of limiting the negative aspects of **conflict** while increasing the positive aspects of **conflict**. Therefore the art of managing conflict is inevitable for a woman who does multi-tasking i.e., managing the day to day activities of a house and the job positions which they are into.

Factors Affecting Conflict

- Personality traits affect how people handle conflict.
- Threats from one party in a disagreement tend to produce more threats from the other.
- Conflict decreases as goal difficulty decreases and goal clarity increases.
- Men and women tend to handle conflict similarly. There is no 'gender effect'.

Symptoms of Conflict

- Tensions
- No desire to communicate
- Work not done properly
- Disastrous meetings
- Anger occurs quickly and easily
- Failing productivity
- Slipping morale
- Absenteeism
- Accidents
- Escalating costs
- Slamming doors
- Shouting
- Bad times

Common ways of dealing with conflicts within a group

1. *Avoiding* - withdraw from the conflict situation, leaving it to chance.
2. *Harmonizing* - generally cover up the differences and claim that things are fine.
3. *Bargaining* - negotiate to arrive at a compromise, bargaining for gains by both parties.
4. *Forcing* - push a party to accept the decision made by a leader or majority.
5. *Problem solving* - confront differences and resolve them on a collaborative basis.

Conflict Management Techniques
Which one is the best in a given situation will depend on a variety of factors, including an appraisal of the levels of conflict.

Collaborating

I win, you win

Symbol: Owl

Fundamental premise: Teamwork and cooperation help everyone achieve their goals while also maintaining relationships

Strategic philosophy: The process of working through differences will lead to creative solutions that will satisfy both parties' concerns

When to use:

- When there is a high level of trust
- When you don't want to have full responsibility
- When you want others to also have "ownership" of solutions
- When the people involved are willing to change their thinking as more information is found and new options are suggested
- When you need to work through animosity and hard feelings

Drawbacks:

- The process takes lots of time and energy
- Some may take advantage of other people's trust and openness

Compromising

You bend, I bend

Symbol: Fox

Fundamental premise: Winning something while losing a little is OK.

Strategic philosophy: Both ends are placed against the middle in an attempt to serve the *"common good"* while ensuring each person can maintain something of their original position.

When to use:

- When people of equal status are equally committed to goals
- When time can be saved by reaching intermediate settlements on individual parts of complex issues
- When goals are moderately important

Drawbacks:

- Important values and long-term objectives can be derailed in the process
- May not work if initial demands are too great
- Can spawn cynicism, especially if there's no commitment to honor the compromise solutions

Accommodating

I lose, you win

Symbol: Teddy Bear

Fundamental premise: Working toward a common purpose is more important than any of the peripheral concerns; the trauma of confronting differences may damage fragile relationships

Strategic philosophy: Appease others by downplaying conflict, thus protecting the relationship.

When to use:
- When an issue is not as important to you as it is to the other person
- When you realize you are wrong
- When you are willing to let others learn by mistake
- When you know you cannot win
- When it is not the right time and you would prefer to simply build credit for the future
- When harmony is extremely important
- When what the parties have in common is a good deal more important than their differences

Drawbacks:
- One's own ideas don't get attention
- Credibility and influence can be lost

Competing

I win, you lose

Symbol: Shark
Fundamental premise: Associates *"winning"* a conflict with competition
Strategic philosophy: When goals are extremely important, one must sometimes use power to win.
When to use:
- When you know you are right
- When time is short and a quick decision is needed
- When a strong personality is trying to steamroller you and you don't want to be taken advantage of
- When you need to stand up for your rights

Drawbacks:
- Can escalate conflict
- Losers may retaliate

Avoiding

No winners, no losers

Symbol: Turtle
Fundamental premise: This isn't the right time or place to address this issue
Strategic philosophy: Avoids conflict by withdrawing, sidestepping, or postponing
When to use:
- When the conflict is small and relationships are at stake
- When you're counting to ten to cool off
- When more important issues are pressing and you feel you don't have time to deal with this particular one
- When you have no power and you see no chance of getting your concerns met
- When you are too emotionally involved and others around you can solve the conflict more successfully
- When more information is needed

Drawbacks:
- Important decisions may be made by default
- Postponing may make matters worse

Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it.

5 Tools for conflict resolution

1. Stop, Cool off, and take a deep breath.
2. Listen, to each other. Find out what you both need.
3. Talk, share your feeling using I statements.
4. Empathies, Really try to understand how the other person feels.
5. Plan, Brainstorm solutions and agree on a plan.

Four R's in conflict management

- **Reasons**: - Explore the reasons and causes for the conflict.
- **Reactions**: - Encourage the reactions to the conflict to identify destructive reactions that they should correct and constructive reactions that they should foster.
- **Results**: - Identify what might happen if the conflict is unresolved and how team members can constructively work together to resolve it.
- **Resolution**: - Have the team decide upon the approach that will most effectively resolve the conflict.

Successful conflict resolution depends on your ability to:

- Manage stress while remaining alert and calm. By staying calm, you can accurately read and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Control your emotions and behavior. When you're in control of your emotions, you can communicate your needs without threatening, frightening, or punishing others.
- Pay attention to the feelings being expressed as well as the spoken words of others.
  Be aware of and respectful of differences. By avoiding disrespectful words and actions, you can resolve the problem faster.

Unhealthy responses to conflict are characterized by:

- An inability to recognize and respond to matters of great importance to the other person.
- Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions.
- The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment.
- The expectation of bad outcomes.
- The fear and avoidance of conflict.

Activity corner

(I) Have participants pair up. Provide each person with a copy of the handout. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for partners to interview each other. Follow with a group discussion of the interviews and then go over the discussion questions.

Conflict—How Do You See It?

a) How do you define conflict?

b) What is your typical response to conflict?

c) What is your greatest strength when dealing with conflict?

d) If you could change one thing about the way you handle conflict what would it be? Why?

e) What do you do when someone avoids conflict with you?

f) What are some reasons you choose to avoid conflict?

Discussion Questions

    a. Were your partner's perspectives different from your perspective?
    b. What were some things you learned by considering another's perspective?
    c. Is conflict good or bad?
    d. What are some ways in which conflict is detrimental to the team?
    e. What are some ways in which conflict enriches the team?

Procedure

Break large groups into smaller teams of four to seven participants (having at least three small teams' works best). Give each person a sheet of paper and have participants write down one thing that is making them nervous or concerned about applying their newfound skills in their everyday lives. Collect the sheets of paper, then shuffle them and pass them out again. Have each small team brainstorm ways to overcome the challenges identified (make sure they write down their ideas on the original paper). After five minutes, have the teams pass their sheets of paper to another team to brainstorm. Three rounds are usually sufficient. Then have the teams present their concerns and solutions to the large group.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel now about your concerns?

2. What insight did you gain by problem-solving your issues?

3. In what way did this activity make you more confident about using your new skills?

Four Word Exercise

Ask each person to write down 4 words that come up for them when they think of the word or concept being explored. They should not consult with others; just write down their own ideas. For example, if the word being explored is 'conflict' someone may have written:

War - Argument - Disagreement – Fight

Next, ask the members of the group to form pairs.

In the pairs, there will now be 2 people with 8 words between them which represent, 'conflict'. Ask them to agree on 4 words to keep from the 8 original words, and therefore they will also have to eliminate 4 words. This can lead to a lot of discussion about the words and the reasons why they chose them. Through doing so they will come to understand each other's reasons for the words they chose and how they understand the original word or concept. Their decision to keep or eliminate a word will need some form of decision making and the means by which this happens can, in itself, be of interest later in the exercise. So now the pair has 'their' 4 words for the word or concept being explored. (In the case of a group of 3 they will have reduced their original 12 words down to 4)

This further discussion of the original word, this time with each pair bringing their learning's and insights from their own discussion, creates even deeper exploration of the word or concept.