

Conflict Management

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Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict. The aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in organizational setting

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 co-workers. 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.

Conflict Management Techniques

- ✓ **Collaborating:** -Collaboration works by integrating ideas set out by multiple people.
- ✓ **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.
- ✓ **Accommodating:** - The accommodating strategy essentially entails giving the opposing side what it wants.
- ✓ **Competing:** - Competition operates as a zero-sum game, in which one side wins and other loses.
- ✓ **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.

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



Conflict Management Techniques

Conflict situations are an important aspect of the workplace. A conflict is a situation when the interests, needs, goals or values of involved parties interfere with one another. A conflict is a common phenomenon in the workplace. Different stakeholders may have different priorities; conflicts may involve team members, departments, projects, organization and client, boss and subordinate, organization needs vs. personal needs. Often, a conflict is a result of perception.



Accommodating

The accommodating strategy essentially entails giving the opposing side what it wants. The use of accommodation often occurs when one of the parties wishes to keep the peace or perceives the issue as minor. For example, a business that requires formal dress may institute a "casual Friday" policy as a low-stakes means of keeping the peace with the rank and file. Employees who use accommodation as a primary conflict management strategy, however, may keep track and develop resentment.

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. Those



who actively avoid conflict frequently have low esteem or hold a position of low power. In some circumstances, avoiding can serve as a profitable conflict management strategy, such as after the dismissal of a popular but unproductive employee. The hiring of a more productive replacement for the position soothes much of the conflict.

Collaborating

Collaboration works by integrating ideas set out by multiple people. The object is to find a creative solution acceptable to everyone. Collaboration, though useful, calls for a significant time commitment not appropriate to all conflicts. For example, a business owner should work collaboratively with the manager to establish policies, but collaborative decision-making regarding office supplies wastes time better spent on other activities.

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. This strategy prevails most often in conflicts where the parties hold approximately equivalent power. Business owners frequently employ compromise during contract negotiations with other businesses when each party stands to lose something valuable, such as a customer or necessary service.

Competing

Competition operates as a zero-sum game, in which one side wins and other loses. Highly assertive personalities often fall back on competition as a conflict management strategy. The competitive strategy works best in a limited number of conflicts, such as emergency situations. In general, business owners benefit from holding the competitive strategy in reserve for crisis situations and decisions that generate ill-will, such as pay cuts or layoffs.

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

1. **Reasons:** - Explore the reasons and causes for the conflict.
2. **Reactions:** - Encourage the reactions to the conflict to identify destructive reactions that they should correct and constructive reactions that they should foster.
3. **Results:** - Identify what might happen if the conflict is unresolved and how team members can constructively work together to resolve it.
4. **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 behaviour. 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.



