Effective Conflict Management

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Agenda

Understanding Conflict Management
  • Defining Conflict
  • Types of Conflict
  • Styles of Dealing with Conflict
  • Managing Conflict

Building a Positive Culture for Conflict Management
  • Lead by Example
  • Consider the Soft Skills
  • Proactive Leadership Training
Understanding Conflict Management
Conflict Management

• Conflict can be defined as different objectives and attitudes between two or more parties

• Conflict management is the process of identifying and addressing differences that, if left unresolved, could affect objectives

Source: Association for Project Management
Conflict in today’s divisive world abounds in the political and cultural arenas
If we manage conflict constructively, we harness its energy for creativity and development.

— Kenneth Kaye —
Understanding Conflict

Downsides of Conflict
• Negatively affects productivity
• Negatively effects morale
• Damages relationships
• Lose program support
• Lose student participation
Understanding Conflict

Benefits of Conflict

• Better work outcomes
• Opportunity to learn and grow
• Improved relationships
• Job satisfaction
## Types of Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Positional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagreement over what work is needed</td>
<td>Disagreement over how work is done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Types of conflict commonly overlap or migrate*

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Relationship Conflict

• Usually starts as another form of conflict
• Interpersonal or emotional conflict
  • Snapping at each other
  • Interrupting or talking over a colleague
  • Using a condescending tone
  • Arguing over who’s right and who’s wrong
  • Ignoring colleagues
• Everyone brings baggage to work
  • Insecurities
  • Habitual victimhood
  • Need for power and control

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Relationship Conflict

Benefits of Managing Relationship Conflict

• Opportunity to learn about ourselves and others
• Better understand each others values, working styles and personalities

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Positional Conflict

- Less common than relationship conflict
- Jockeying for power
- Competing for role or specific job
- Competing for status symbols
- Arguing over or dominating shared resources

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Positional Conflict

Benefits of Managing Positional Conflict

• Creates stable social hierarchies
• Clear hierarchy is efficient as everyone knows their role

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
"What" Work is Needed Conflict

- Most common source of disagreement at work
- Program goals
- How to prioritize
- How success is defined or measured
- Whether students or employees should come first

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
“What” Work is Needed Conflict

Benefits of Managing “What” Conflict

• Clarifies goals
• Defines success

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
“How” Work is Done Conflict

- Disagreement on how to do a task or process
- Best way to deliver a new program
- Best way to prepare food
- Best way to present or serve food
- Often overlaps with “What” conflict
  - confuse the desired outcome with the process to achieve it

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
“How” Work is Done Conflict

Benefits of Managing “How” Conflict

• Can bring about process improvements
• Can improve results by drawing on the talents of the team

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Know Your Conflict Style

• Two types of people
  • Avoiders
  • Seekers

• Neither style is better nor worse

• Knowing your style and understanding other’s style can help make good choices about how to address conflict

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Know Your Conflict Style

Avoiders

• Shy away from disagreements
• Value harmony and positive relations
• Often try to placate people or change the topic
• Don’t want to hurt others’ feelings
• Don’t want to disrupt team dynamics

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Know Your Conflict Style

Seekers

• Are eager to engage in disagreements
• Care more about directness and honesty
• Strongly advocate for their own perspective
• Lose patience when people aren’t being direct and honest
• Don’t mind ruffling feathers

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Know Your Conflict Style

Factors Affecting Your Conflict Style

• Past experience
• Cultural norms
• Workplace context
• Gender norms

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Know Your Conflict Style Activity
## How Conflict Styles Work Together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your counterpart is an avoider</th>
<th>You are an avoider</th>
<th>You are a seeker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Manager my need to take the lead</td>
<td>• Acknowledge that you both don’t like conflict</td>
<td>• Ask for active participation in the conversation – don’t hide opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Acknowledge that you both don’t like conflict</td>
<td>• Try to draw out counterpart in a sensitive manner</td>
<td>• Don’t be a bully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Don’t shy away if things get tough</td>
<td>• Don’t shy away if things get tough</td>
<td>• Be patient with the pacing of the conversation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your counterpart is a seeker**

| • Explicitly ask for what you need - I need you to be patient with me and watch your tone | • Earn the seekers respect by being direct and to the point | • Take extra time to prepare for the conversation |
| • Earn the seekers respect by being direct and to the point | • Don’t signal disrespect | • Schedule the discussion in a way that allows for breaks |
| • Don’t signal disrespect | | • Meet in a neutral or calming environment |

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
## Options for Addressing a Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address Directly</th>
<th>Actively address the situation with the counterparts and seek consensus on a solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address Indirectly</td>
<td>Addressing the situation privately with each individual involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Nothing</td>
<td>Conscious choice - may be an option if the conflict is minor and/or will resolve itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit</td>
<td>If conflict is ongoing, consider reassignment or discipline up to and including discharge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Managing a Conflict

Assess the Situation
• Understand the counterparts
• Look for patterns
• Get input from others
• Identify the type of conflict

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Conflict Resolution

Interest-Based Relational Approach

1. Make good relationships a priority
2. Separate people from problems
3. Listen carefully to different interests
4. Listen first, talk second
5. Set out the “Facts”
6. Explore options together

Source: Mindtools.com: Conflict Resolution Using the Interest-Based Relational Approach
Conflict Resolution

Make good relationships a priority
• Establish ground rules
• Treat each other with respect
• Discuss matters constructively

Source: Mindtools.com: Conflict Resolution Using the Interest-Based Relational Approach
Conflict Resolution

Separate people from problems
• Conflict is rarely one-sided
• Address problem rather than personalities
• Avoid blaming

Source: Mindtools.com: Conflict Resolution Using the Interest-Based Relational Approach
Conflict Resolution

Listen carefully to different interests

• Ask each person’s viewpoint
• Confirm that you need cooperation to solve the problem
• Ask each person to try to understand the other’s motivations and goals
• Encourage active listening

Source: Mindtools.com: Conflict Resolution Using the Interest-Based Relational Approach
Conflict Resolution

Listen first, talk second

• Encourage listening without defending
• Focus on work issues, not personalities
• Listen with empathy
• Explain issues clearly and concisely
• Encourage the use of “I” versus “you” statements
• Be clear about feelings
• Remain flexible and adaptable

Source: Mindtools.com: Conflict Resolution Using the Interest-Based Relational Approach
Conflict Resolution

Set out the “Facts”

- People can perceive problems differently
- Agree on the problem and relevant facts

Source: Mindtools.com: Conflict Resolution Using the Interest-Based Relational Approach
Conflict Resolution

Explore options together
• Appropriate solution may be obvious
• If not, seek win-win solution
• Ask each person to help generate solutions
• Make the final call
• Document the agreement

Source: Mindtools.com: Conflict Resolution Using the Interest-Based Relational Approach
Navigating Difficult Situations

Dealing with a Bully

- People act out when their ego is threatened
- Call out bad behavior when it happens
- Enlist help from the team
- Know the limitations
- Document the interactions

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Navigating Difficult Situations

Managing Two People That Hate Each Other

- People often fear losing something – status, respect, etc.
- Hear them out both individually and together
- Determine if you contributed, e.g. unclear roles, etc.
- Help them see each others’ side
- Focus them on work
- Encourage a self-correcting team

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Navigating Difficult Situations

Dealing with Mental Illness

- National Institute of Mental Health estimates that 18% of adults in the U.S. have a mental illness
- Look for behavior patterns that are erratic or outside the norm
- Don’t diagnose – ask HR for help
- Be compassionate – don’t judge
- Go by the book – follow any formal rules
- Document your interactions

Source: Harvard Business Review: Guide to Dealing with Conflict
Case Study Activity
Building a Positive Culture for Conflict Management
Lead by Example

• Frame conflict as an opportunity to learn and grow
• Model good communication skills
  • Encourage giving and receiving feedback
  • Listen actively and empathetically
  • Observe body language
  • Demonstrate emotional intelligence
  • Engage in business storytelling
Consider the Soft Skills When Hiring

Communication

Positivity is a key component of motivation.

Flexibility

Feedback
Proactive Leadership Training

- Formal Training
- Social Learning
- Interactive Training
- Lead by Example
- Peer-to-Peer Mentoring
- On-the-Job Training
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