

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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Conflict Management



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Conflict is ...

Conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. Conflict on teams is inevitable; however, the results of conflict are not predetermined.



What is Conflict Management?

Conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflicts can decrease the odds of nonproductive escalation.

Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in your environment.



What causes Conflict within Organizations?

- Poor Communication
- Management Style
- Trouble Dealing With Change
- Competition
- Difference in Personalities
- Misunderstanding the Information



How do people react to Conflict?



- Competing
- Compromising
- Avoiding
- Collaborating
- Accommodating

Keys to managing Conflict effectively

1. Create and maintain a bond, even with your 'adversary'.
2. Establish a dialogue and negotiate.
3. "Put the fish on the table".
4. Understand what causes conflict.
5. Use the law of reciprocity.
6. Build a positive relationship.



Create and maintain a bond, even with your 'adversary'

The key to defusing conflict is to form a bond, or to re-bond, with the other party. We do not have to like someone to form a bond with him or her. We only need a common goal. Treat the person as a friend, not an enemy, and base the relationship on mutual respect, positive regard and co-operation. Leaders must learn to separate the person from the problem, genuinely want to help the other party and avoid negative responses to attacks or intense emotions.



Establish a dialogue and negotiate

At all times it's important to keep the conversation relevant, stay focused on a positive outcome and remain aware of the common goal. It is imperative to avoid being hostile or aggressive. The next stage is negotiation, in which we add bargaining to the dialogue. Talking, dialogue and negotiation create genuine, engaging and productive two way transactions. We need to use energy from the body, emotions, intellect and the spirit.



“Put the fish on the table”

This expression means, simply, raising a difficult issue without being aggressive or hostile. The analogy comes from Sicily where the fishermen, who work through the messy job and are rewarded by a great fish dinner at the end of the day. If you leave a fish under the table it starts to rot and smell.

On the other hand, once an issue is raised, we can work through the mess of sorting it out and find a mutually beneficial outcome. We should be direct, engaging and respectful, always helping the other person to ‘save face.’ In addition, timing is important. We can decide not to put the fish on the table as a tactic, but not because we wish to avoid the conflict. Choosing the right time and the right circumstances are part of an effective conflict management strategy.



Understand what causes conflict

To be able to create a dialogue aimed at resolving the conflict, we need to understand the root of the disagreement. Among the common causes of disagreement are differences over goals, interests or values. There could be different perceptions of the problem, such as 'It's a quality control problem' or 'It's a production problem', and there may also be different communication styles. It is crucial to determine whether a conflict relates to interests or needs. Interests are more transitory and superficial, such as land, money, or a job; needs are more basic and not for bargaining, such as identity, security and respect. Many conflicts appear to be about interests, when they are really about needs. The most conflict provoking losses have to do with needs, and those needs may connect to the deeper wounds people have suffered in their life.



Use the law of reciprocity

The law of reciprocity is the foundation of cooperation and collaboration. What you give out is likely to be what you get back. Humans have a deeply hardwired pattern of reciprocity. Researchers have recently discovered mirror neurons in the brain, suggesting that our limbic system (emotional brain) that establishes empathy, re-creates the experience of others' intentions and feelings within ourselves. Mutual exchange and internal adaptation allows two individuals to become attuned and empathetic to each other's inner states. Hence a powerful technique to master in any kind of dispute is to empathize with the feelings and views of the other individual by managing what we express – both verbally and non-verbally. This social awareness allows you to make the right concessions at the right time. Once you have made a concession, it is likely that the other party will respond in kind. Moreover, when you recognize a concession has been made, reciprocate with one of your own.



Build a positive relationship

Once a bond has been established, we must nurture the relationship as well as pursue our goals. We need to balance reason and emotion, because emotions such as fear, anger, frustration and even love may disrupt otherwise thoughtful actions. We need to understand each other's point of view, regardless of whether we agree with it or not. The more effectively we communicate our differences and our areas of agreement, the better we will understand each other's concerns and improve our chances of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. The deepest bonds are founded on what the eminent psychologist Carl Rogers called 'unconditional positive regard'. We can all learn to communicate acceptance of the other person while saying no or disagreeing with a specific point or behavior. Feeling accepted, worthy and valued are basic psychological needs. And, as hostage negotiation demonstrates, it is more productive to persuade than to coerce.



Benefits of Conflict Resolution

1. Builds Relationships

2. Leads to Goal Achievement

3. Enhances Commitment

4. Generates New Insight



QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

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