



A STUDY ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN WORK PLACE AND ITS IMPACT ON GOAL COMPATIBILITY

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Abstract: Conflict cannot be avoided since it is an inevitable aspect of work teams. 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. Conflict might escalate and lead to nonproductive results, or conflict can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final products. Therefore, learning to manage conflict is integral to a high-performance team. Although very few people go looking for conflict, more often than not. 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 organizational environment. This paper presents types of conflict describe the benefits and detriments of conflict and present the causes of conflict. Strategies are also presented to prevent and to effectively manage conflict.

Key Words: Interpersonal conflict, Intrapersonal conflict, Smoothing, Confrontation, Super ordinate goals

Conflict management: It 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 an organizational setting. Properly managed conflict can improve group outcomes. Conflict resolution involves the reduction, elimination, or termination of all forms and types of conflict.

Five styles for conflict management, as identified by Thomas and Kilmann, are:

- Competing
- Compromising
- Collaborating
- Avoiding
- Accommodating.

Business can benefit from appropriate types and levels of conflict. That is the aim of conflict management, and not the aim of conflict resolution. Conflict management does not imply conflict resolution.

Conflict management minimizes the negative outcomes of conflict and promotes the positive outcomes of conflict with the goal of improving learning in an organization.

Properly managed conflict increases organizational learning by increasing the number of questions asked and encourages people to challenge the status quo

Organizational conflict at the interpersonal level includes disputes between peers as well as supervisor-subordinate conflict.

Party-directed mediation (PDM) is a mediation approach particularly suited for disputes between co-workers, colleagues or peers, especially deep-seated interpersonal conflict, multicultural or multiethnic disputes. The mediator listens to each party separately, before ever bringing them into a joint session. It includes coaching and role plays. The idea is that the parties learn how to converse directly with their adversary in the joint session. Some unique challenges arise when organizational disputes involve supervisors and subordinates. The Negotiated Performance Appraisal (NPA) is a tool for improving communication between supervisors and subordinates and is particularly useful as an alternate mediation model because it preserves the hierarchical power of supervisors while encouraging dialogue and dealing with differences in opinion

There are three orientations to conflict:

- lose-lose,
- win-lose,
- win-win.

The lose-lose orientation is a type of conflict that tends to end negatively for all parties involved.

A win-lose orientation results in one victorious party, usually at the expense of the other. The win-win orientation is one of the most essential concepts to conflict resolution. A win-win solution arrived at by integrative bargaining may be close to optimal for both parties. This approach engages in a cooperative approach rather than a competitive one.

Although the win-win concept is the ideal orientation, the notion that there can only be one winner is constantly being reinforced in American culture:

"The win-lose orientation is manufactured in our society in athletic competition, admission to academic programs, industrial promotion systems, and so on. Individuals tend to generalize from their objective win-lose situations and apply these experiences to situations that are not objectively fixed

This kind of mentality can be destructive when communicating with different cultural groups by creating barriers in negotiation, resolution and compromise; it can also lead the "loser" to feel mediocre. When the win-win orientation is absent in negotiation, different responses to conflict may be observed.

International conflict management

Special consideration should be paid to conflict management between two parties from distinct cultures. In addition to the everyday sources of conflict, "misunderstandings, and from this counterproductive, pseudo conflicts, arise when members of one culture are unable to understand culturally determined differences in communication practices, traditions, and thought processing". Indeed, this has already been observed in the business research literature.

International conflict management, and the cultural issues associated with it, is one of the primary areas of research in the field at the time, as existing research is insufficient to deal with the ever-increasing contact occurring between international entities.

Conflict frequently arises in the workplace. Goal incompatibility between groups or individuals, differentiation, task interdependence, scarce resources, ambiguity, and communication problems can all lead to a situation that promotes conflict.

There are a number of conflict management styles that can be used to effectively resolve such conflicts: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.

However, although each individual has his/her own preferred conflict management style, not every style is optimally effective in every conflict situation. To maximize the

effectiveness of conflict management efforts, management and parties to the conflict need to be aware of their short- and long-term goals and strategies for both the task and the people involved, their personal involvement and emotions in the conflict, their personal conflict management style, and which styles work best in which situations.

It often seems as if whenever two or more parties attempt to work together there are at least three opinions. Although sometimes this situation can lead to synergy and a more creative final product, in many cases it leads to conflict. Although the most common view of conflict is that it is by its very nature dysfunctional and needs to be resolved, in many cases, if it is properly managed it can be both functional and help the conflicting parties work together better or to produce a better product than if the conflict had not arisen in the first place. Conflict between groups may also improve team dynamics, cohesiveness, and task orientation. However, if the conflict becomes too emotionally charged, a win-lose mentality can arise, with negative results such as groupthink, frustration, job dissatisfaction, and stress.

Very few people have the option to work in complete isolation of others. Even those who telecommute or work independently frequently find themselves in a position in which they need to interact with others: clients, suppliers, editors, etc. In virtually any situation in which there is more than one party with interests in the outcome, conflicts are likely to arise. In this context, conflict refers to any situation "in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by" the interests or actions of another party. Conflict can manifest in any number of ways ranging from a mild disagreement between individuals to an all out war between nations.

In the workplace, conflict typically begins with a situation that is conducive to conflict, such as the need to share a single piece of equipment or other scarce resource.

For example, Group A needs the copier to reproduce a proposal for a tight deadline for a potential client and Group B needs to use the copier to produce a deliverable to an equally tight -- and incompatible -- deadline for a current client.

As the parties come to believe that conflict exists, the situation usually next manifests itself in actions that outwardly demonstrate that an underlying conflict exists (e.g., a member of Group A tries to monopolize the copier so that it cannot be used by Group B). Conflict need not lead to a dysfunctional workplace, however. Through appropriate conflict management techniques, either actions taken by one or more parties to the conflict or by an objective outside party in the attempt to de-escalate the conflict, the severity and form of the conflict can be altered to maximize its benefits and minimize its negative consequences of the situation.

Types Of Workplace Conflict Goal Incompatibility

First, conflict can arise in the workplace due to incompatible goals between individuals or groups. For example, if two individuals are competing for the same promotion, it is likely that conflict will arise unless more than one position is available. Goal incompatibility becomes an even stronger source for potential conflict in situations in which there are financial rewards for achieving one's goals since, in such situations, employees tend to be more motivated to achieve their own goals at the expense of others.

A second source of conflict in organizations is differentiation. This occurs when individuals or groups of employees hold divergent beliefs and attitudes as a result of their different backgrounds, experiences, or training. For example, differentiation often leads to conflict situations following business mergers and acquisitions. In such situations, the cultures, practices, and shared experiences of the formerly separate entities lead to an "us-them" situation.

A third source of potential conflict in organizations is task interdependence. This is the degree to which individuals or groups must share common inputs, interact during the course of performing their separate tasks, or receive outcomes that are partly determined

by the mutual performance of both parties. There are three basic types of task interdependence:

- Pooled interdependence,
- Sequential interdependence, and
- Reciprocal interdependence

The lowest level of interdependence is pooled interdependence. Under this condition, individuals or teams work independently of each other except for their common reliance on a resource or authority.

Sequential interdependence is a situation in which the output of one person or group becomes the direct input for another person or group. This situation frequently arises in assembly-line.

The third type of interdependence in organizations is reciprocal interdependence. This is the highest level of interdependence and occurs in situations in which work outputs are exchanged back and forth among individuals or groups.

When vertical conflict takes place between operational workers and administration, their sources refer to:

- ✓ Psychological Distance: Workers Don't Feel Involved In The Organization And Feel That Their Needs Are Not Met;
- ✓ Power And Status: Workers Feel Powerless And Alienated;
- ✓ Differences In Value And Ideology: This Difference Represents Underlying Beliefs On Objectives And Goals Of An Organization And;
- ✓ Scarce Resources: Disagreements Regarding Benefits, Salary And Work Conditions.

In vertical conflict, apparently individuals in lower organizational level seek to avoid conflicts with higher hierarchical levels. It is expected that the top management peers perceive more conflict internally between their groups than those of lower position. This happens because of the following reasons:

- ✓ people in higher hierarchical level, rather than the lower ones, are engaged in non-routine activities and development of politics, where orientation for the actions are less clear and chances for disagreement, bigger and;
- ✓ people in higher hierarchical level, rather than the lower ones, are probably less flexible in their points of view.

Hence conflict resolution is more difficult. Considering the vertical conflict, research examines the short-term and long-term effects of perceived fairness in organizational conflicts between employees and supervisors. Employee's fairness is important in the resolution of organizational conflicts. When employees realize that there was fairness in the conflict resolution, the bond between the groups strengthens. Perceived and distributive fairness significantly enhances job satisfaction, positive organizational commitment and satisfaction with outcome of conflicts

Human conflict is inevitable not because it is part of social life, but for it is a biological fact lying within us all. Later writers have used Freud's assertion, too. Nineteenth century social Darwinists stressed the role of competition and conflict in all human societies.

Katz identifies three sources of conflict. These are:

- Structural conflict (conflict arising out of the need to manage the interdependence between different organizational sub-units)
- Role conflict (conflict arising from sets of prescribed behaviour)

➤ Resources conflict (conflict stemming from interest groups competing for organizational resources).

Robbins identifies three sources of organizational conflict and indicates that an understanding of the source of a conflict improves the probability of effective conflict management. The main factors which serve as sources of conflict are identified as

- Communicational (conflicts arising from misunderstandings etc.),
- Structural (conflicts related to organizational roles), and
- Personal (conflicts stemming from individual differences).

Methods of conflict management which are appropriate in one case may not necessarily be appropriate when applied to a conflict generated from another source. Different perspective which traces the source of organizational conflict to the unit of analysis involved. Units of analysis are the parties to a conflict. They perceive, initiate and sustain a conflict. Their characteristics specify the conditions which affect the course of a conflict and determine the mode of its management. Thus, we have conflicts that originate in the individual person, conflicts that have their basis in the relationship between individuals, and conflicts that occur as a result of interactions between groups. In such a situation it is common for individuals to experience frustrations and to allow their conflict situation to be expressed in a range of behavioural strategies ranging from apathy and boredom to absenteeism, excessive drinking or destructive behaviour. Jung declares that conflict is clearly associated with power and can emerge when goal achievement of an organization is avoided. It is also believed that people are aware of the factors that generate conflicts such as scarcity, obstruction and incompatible interests or goals. Conflict can also be broken out when one party avoids the goal achievement of the other one. However, opined that it is probable that causes for conflicts are not highly correlated with goal and objective achievement in situations of routine behavior where procedures are well defined and environment is stable. In these circumstances, conflict variables are probably more related to personality, autonomy reasons, functional interdependence and status. Some of the reasons that justify conflict escalation.

- ✓ As departments grow, people lose contact with other departments, or yet, members of a department start to think differently from other areas;
- ✓ The increase of emphasis in the financial measures as a tool for motivation for managers and the establishment of different profit centers inside an integrated business system end up creating many conflicts;
- ✓ The increasing rise of emphasis in functional specialization, politics of promotion and recruiting reinforce the isolation of departments, generating conflicts;
- ✓ Today there is more room for workers to show criticism among each other, while this freedom of speech can be beneficial for society as a whole, in organizational context can be transformed into conflicts and
- ✓ Consumers demand lower prices, better quality in products and services, creating pressures so that departments work more effectively which can result in conflicts among departments.

Another reason pointed by Kumar N, Scheer L, Steenkamp J, 1995 for the occurrence of conflicts is the asymmetric degree of interdependence that affects the level of trust and commitment of the groups.

Asymmetric interdependence occurs when parties have different levels of dependence among each other. That is, in one same group some individuals can depend on people that,

in turn, show independence in relation to them. In total interdependence, on the other hand, individuals are totally dependent on one another. Kumar et al states those relationships with total interdependence have less conflict than the ones with asymmetric interdependence. For, conflict is smaller in highly dependent relationships because, in general, the dependent party conforms itself that it can not alter the situation and accepts the leader's power.

According to Capozzoli (1995) there are seven causes of conflict:

1. Team members bring culturally diverse values to their work teams.
2. Team members have different attitudes that result in different goals for team members.
3. Team members have different needs that are not met, which result in frustration that exacerbates conflict.
4. Various expectations of the team members are not met and result in conflict.
5. Team members have different perceptions that result in differing interpretations of the same information.
6. Limited resources often result in an increase in conflict.
7. Team members have different personalities that clash with each other.

Conflicts would arise between individuals and groups if the goals were not specified for individuals within a group. Additionally, according to the literature, there are innumerable origins of organizational dispute and each produces its own variety of effects. In general, there are six major sources:

- a. the interpersonal disagreements that arise when one person is experiencing individual stress;
- b. the problems resulting from role conflict, a condition that occurs when there is a clash over one's role in the organization;
- c. the power struggles that pit persons and groups against one another to achieve their own selfish objectives;
- d. the misunderstandings and disagreements from differentiation, i.e., the clashes that arise because people approach common problems from very different orientations;
- e. the interdependence requirements for collaboration which, if not extensive and balanced between the parties, cause communication and interaction breakdowns which, in turn, if critical, lead to more intensive conflicts; and
- f. the external pressures from forces outside the enterprise that breed internal pressures as the system seeks to adapt but not to disrupt its internal order.

Managing Conflict:

Effective conflict management succeeds in

- ✓ minimizing disruption stemming from the existence of a conflict
- ✓ providing a solution that is satisfactory and acceptable.

All organizations, however simple or complex, possess a range of mechanisms or procedures for managing conflict. The success or effectiveness of such procedures can be gauged by the extent to which they limit conflict behaviour and the extent to which they help to achieve a satisfactory solution. Conflicting Resolution Model Different people use different strategies for managing conflict. Usually we are not aware of how we act in conflict situations. We just do whatever seems to come naturally. But we do have a personal strategy; and because it is learned, we can always change it by learning new and

more effective ways of managing conflicts. When you become engaged in a conflict, there are two major concerns individuals have to take into account:

Achieving your personal goals - Individuals are in conflict because individuals have a goal that conflicts with another person's goal. Individual goal may be of high importance to him, or it may be of little importance to him. Keeping a good relationship with the other person Individuals may need to be able to interact effectively with the other person in the future. The relationship may be very important to individual or may be of little importance to him. How important your personal goals are to you and how important the relationship is to you affects how you act in a conflict. Given these two concerns, it is possible to identify styles of managing conflict in an organisation are as follows:

Avoiding: The basic goal of the avoidance is to delay. Person would rather hide and ignore conflict than resolve it. This leads to the uncooperative and unassertive. Person tend to give up personal goals and display passive behavior creating lose-lose situations. Person believes it is easier to withdraw from a conflict rather than to face it. Avoiding strategy may help to maintain relationship that would be hurt by conflict resolution and very effective way to affront conflictive situations at short term.

Disadvantage may be conflict remain unresolved, overuse of the style leads to others walking all over them. Appropriate time to use this style when stakes are not high or issues is trivial, when confrontation will hurt a working relationship, when there is little chance of satisfying your wants, when disruption outweighs the benefit of conflict resolution, when gathering information is more important than an immediate decision, when others can more effectively resolve the conflict and when time constraints demand a delay.

Following are the ways to manage structure based conflict:

✓ Super ordinate goals: An organizational goal that is more important to both parties in a conflict than their individual or group goal is a super ordinate goal. Goals cannot be achieved by an individual or by one group alone. The achievement of goal requires cooperation by both parties. Super ordinate goal converts a conflict between departments to friendly interactions, develops favorable attitudes and seeks to achieve solutions that are mutually satisfactory.

✓ Reduce interdependence between groups: Interdependency is one of the major causes of conflict. It is necessary to identify and clarify poorly defined and poorly arranged interdependencies through unifying workflow. This work flow can be designed either to increase the interdependencies or to eliminate them entirely. The other option could be to make the two units totally independent of one another.

✓ Increase resources: Conflict will occur whenever the wants and needs of two or more parties are greater than the some of the resources available for allocation. This conflict can be reduced by planning ahead about the proper distribution of such resources instead of making haphazard and last minute allocations.

✓ Mutual problem solving: This is one of the most frequently used techniques for increasing collaboration. It requires the conflicting parties to come together, analyze and define the problem, understand each other's viewpoints and arrive at a rational and objective solution through mutual interactions.

✓ Formal authority: When two groups are conflicting each other, top management can use authority to resolve conflict. Management must use Management by Wondering around (MBWA) technique so management will come to know covert conflict in an organisation. The superior take up the role of an arbitrator and integrator.

- ✓ Increase interactions: Organisations should provide more opportunities to the employees in subunits to interact with each other. If people interact with each other not only would they develop better understanding of each other's way of functioning but also may discover common interests, problems and priorities.
- ✓ Encourage initiative – think about job design and developing individuals
- ✓ Balance personal and business needs – Flexible working patterns help to improve the work-life balance of employees and the effectiveness of the business.
- ✓ Develop new skills – It is worth thinking about Invest in People (IIP) to promote training and communication.
- ✓ Build trust between employee representatives and management – do relationships add value to the organisation by working effectively to respond to change.
- ✓ Efforts should be made by the managers to occasionally stimulate conflict by encouraging divergent views and rewarding staff and unit/department for outstanding performance.
- ✓ Proper communication procedures should be put in place to resolve conflict. For instance, when any disagreements arise among the employees, it should be reported to the management and then management should get statements from the parties involved, brainstorm the issue and make recommendation on how to resolve the conflict.
- ✓ Efforts should be made by the management to organize seminars/workshops on organizational conflict management from time to time for the employees. This will enable employees learn about conflict and how it can be effectively managed for individual and organization effectiveness.

Lastly, group interaction and activities should be followed up so as to ensure a degree of functionality compatible to conflicts. Positive conflicts will only be possible if particularities of the organization are analyzed. Conclusion: Origination is social units divided into hierarchies and departments and individuals. Comparisons, Competition and conflicts between units and subunits always present in organisation. Conflict is omnipresent feature at each of the organisational levels. Conflict may be functional or dysfunctional consequences, it is essential for management to explore various methods and techniques of conflict management. Wide range of conflict management intervention can be utilized to deal with conflict at various organizational levels. Organizations should develop diverse but appropriate strategies to resolve and manage conflicts as they arise before escalating to unmanageable level.

Conclusion

As long as organizations continue to use work teams, conflict cannot be avoided since it is an inevitable aspect of work teams. Conflict is an outcome of behaviors. It is an integral part of human life. Whenever there is interaction there is conflict. Conflict means expression of hostility, negative attitudes, antagonism, aggression, rivalry, and misunderstanding. It is also associated with situations that involve contradictory interest between two opposing groups. It can be defined as a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its view over others.

It states that more than one party is involved and that there may be future component attached to it. Conflict means to be in opposition to one another. It refers to disagreement between people or members of organisations. Such disagreement is inherent in relationships between all human beings, always exists between people, groups of people,

members of an organisation and between organisations which are related in one way or another. Organizational conflict is defined as the behaviour intended to obstruct the achievement of some other person's goals. Conflict is therefore a product of incompatibility of goals and it arises from opposing behaviours.

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