WCWPDS: Conflict Management – Having Challenging Conversations

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Our Objectives

• Recognize how conflict can be both positive and negative and identify common causes of conflict in the workplace.
• Apply strategies to effectively manage challenge and conflict.
• Understand how differences in behavior styles might cause tension with another person, especially under stress, and effectively coach employees to recognize and manage style differences in order to prevent conflict.
• Describe different conflict management modes in order to better work together to reach a resolution to a conflict.
• Engage in a high stakes conversation to achieve a resolution that moves a situation forward while making the relationship stronger.

“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity” - Albert Einstein

Understanding Organizational Conflict
Understanding the Nature of Conflict

*Conflict isn’t always destructive or negative – it can be positive as well.*

**When do you think conflict can be positive?**
*Write your thoughts in the chat function.*

- Causes people to consider different ideas and alternatives
- Results in increased participation and more commitment to the decisions and goals of the group
- Results in issue clarification and/or reassessment
- Helps build cohesiveness as people learn more about each other

Understanding the Nature of Conflict

*Conflict can be positive when it:*

- Leads to bullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Diverts energy from more important issues and tasks
- Polarizes groups so that cooperation is reduced
- Destroys the morale of people, or reinforces poor self-concepts
Activity: Examining a Workplace Conflict
Do the activity “Examining a Workplace Conflict”. You’ll be placed in discussion groups for this activity for 10 minutes then we’ll debrief.

Your spokesperson is the person in your group whose birthday is closest to today going forward.

Examining the Nature and Cost of Conflict: Themes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Issues of the Conflict</th>
<th>Cost of the Conflict</th>
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What Causes Conflict in Our Organizations?

- Interpersonal style differences
- Competing priorities
- Unclear expectations
- Differing personal values, cultures, beliefs, etc.
- Taboos
- Human tendencies: need to be "right", self-preservation, ego, etc.
- Unclear or inaccurate perceptions
- Inconsistent reward/recognition practices

What are some of the major causes of conflict at your organization?

When it comes to conflict, a strong leader:

A strong leader:
- Understands that conflict can yield positive outcomes.
- Is aware of the likely sources of conflict within their team and organization.
- Continually observes and listens for signs of destructive, toxic conflict.
- Does not avoid actively taking steps to keep things moving forward when conflicts arise.

Interpersonal Communication Style and Conflict
Interpersonal Style Model

**Fast pace, action oriented**
- Takes charge of the situation
- Challenges the other party
- Direct, honest, candid
- States opinions
- Speaks quickly
- Makes quick decisions

**Moderate pace, stability oriented**
- Goes along with the other party
- Subtle, roundabout, thoughtful
- Asks questions
- Thinks about issues
- Slower rate of speech
- Takes time to consider

**Relationship/people focus**
- Informal
- People feeling oriented
- Spontaneous
- Friendly, warm
- Shows and shares feelings
- Casual, easy to get to know

**Logic/Task focus**
- Structured
- Logic, fact oriented
- Self-controlled, disciplined
- Hard to read
- Doesn’t share or show feelings
- Hard to get to know

**Goal oriented**
- Direct, straightforward
- Brief, concise, brutally honest, blunt
- Just the facts
- May not invite or encourage others’ ideas and thoughts

**Idea oriented**
- Enthusiastic, entertaining, persuasive, influential
- Expresses ideas and opinions freely
- Emotions are evident
- Easy to talk to, approachable

**Data oriented**
- Careful, deliberate, observant
- Quiet, reserved
- Fact and detail oriented
- Controlled and orderly, structured
- Needs time to process

**Relationship/people focus**
- Easy-going, traditional, calm, patient, sincere
- Draws others out
- Excellent listener and participant
- May not speak until through processing entire situation
POLL: What style best describes you? Think about what is most natural for you when you’re not adapting to a role or situation.

Interpersonal Style Model

Interpersonal Styles Under Stress

Activity: Identifying and Avoiding Interpersonal Style Tension

Answer the two questions for your assigned style. The person who is wearing the most interesting footwear is your team spokesperson.
May come across as...

To reduce interpersonal conflict try to...

Preventing Destructive Conflict
1. Provide opportunities to listen.
2. Communicate clearly, honestly and inclusively.
3. Demonstrate consistency in all of your actions.
4. Become adept at spotting interpersonal style differences and stress reactions.
5. Follow the rule of 3’s; look for patterns.
Preventing Destructive Conflict

1. Provide opportunities to listen.
2. Communicate clearly, honestly and inclusively.
3. Demonstrate consistency in all of your actions.
4. Become adept at spotting interpersonal style differences and stress reactions.
5. Follow the rule of 3’s; look for patterns.
6. Be especially diligent in times of change and transition.
7. Reward positive behaviors.
8. Actively dis-incent negative behaviors.
10. Watch for organization mis-alignments and call them out.

Which of these strategies will you pay special attention to going forward? Put the number(s) of the strategy in the chat box.

Resolving Conflict

[Image: Handshake]
Four Approaches to Conflict Resolution

- Negotiation
- Mediation
- Arbitration
- Litigation

Pitfalls to avoid when resolving conflict

1. Getting hung up on what is “fair”
2. An “us versus them” mentality.
3. Not relying on facts.
4. Not focusing on mutual interests.
5. Not following up afterward.

6. Not accepting responsibility for your actions.
7. Focusing on the people, not the problem.
8. Not being clear about exactly what outcome you want.
9. Escalating tensions with threats and provocation.
10. Allowing emotional reactions to get in the way.
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Preparing to Resolve a Conflict:
Understanding Conflict Management Modes

**COOPERATIVENESS**
Focus on others’ needs and mutual relationships

**ASSERTIVENESS**
Focus on my needs, desired outcomes and agenda

- Competing
  - Zero-sum orientation
  - Win/Lose

- Collaborating
  - Expand range of possible options
  - Win/Win

- Compromising
  - Minimally acceptable to all
  - Win-Lose/Lose-Win

- Avoiding
  - Withdraw from the situation
  - Lose/Lose

- Accommodating
  - Accede to the other party
  - Lose/Win

Activity: Characteristics of Each Mode

Pg. 7, work in pairs

**COOPERATIVENESS**
Focus on others’ needs and mutual relationships

**ASSERTIVENESS**
Focus on my needs, desired outcomes and agenda

- Competing
- Collaborating

- Compromising
- Avoiding
- Accommodating
Activity: Conflict Mode Quiz Answers

1. Not worth the time and energy to you
2. Takes a long time
3. Your values/desires aren’t as important as the other party’s
4. Acknowledge you made a mistake/decide it was no big deal
5. Effective when the other person or party has a better plan or solution
6. Considered an easy way out when you need more time to collaborate to find a better solution
7. Delay your response instead of voicing concerns
8. Results in a “lose-lose” approach
9. Create room for multiple ideas.
10. May be appropriate for emergencies when time is important
11. Requires time and effort from both parties

Activity: Conflict Mode Quiz Answers

12. Try to find fast, mutually acceptable solutions to conflicts that partially satisfy both parties
13. Identify underlying concerns of a conflict
14. Take on a “win-lose” approach where one person wins and one person loses
15. Assert own views while also listening to other views and welcoming differences
16. Does not rely on cooperation with the other party to reach outcome
17. Seek a “win-win” outcome
18. Put relationships first, ignore issues, and try to keep peace at any price
19. Appropriate temporary solution
20. Can create some space in an emotional environment
21. Build emotional capital for the bigger fight

Preparing to Resolve a Conflict: When To Use Each Mode

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Competing</th>
<th>Collaborating</th>
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<td>- When time is of the essence</td>
<td>- You have the time and energy</td>
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<tr>
<td>- You have the data to proceed</td>
<td>- Want to boost engagement, morale</td>
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<td>- You’re OK with relationship damage</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>- Not worth the time and energy to you</td>
<td>- Your values/desires aren’t as important as the other party</td>
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<tr>
<td>- It really doesn’t matter in the long run</td>
<td>- Want to improve or maintain a relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Save energy for the bigger fight</td>
<td>- Build emotional capital for the bigger fight</td>
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Preparing to Resolve a Conflict

1. ACCURATELY describe the conflict. *What is happening? When is it happening? Why does it matter? What assumptions might you be making?*
2. Identify your desired outcome. *What would it look like if this conflict were resolved?*
3. Understand the other party's needs and style. *How would the other party describe the conflict?*
4. Understand your orientation to the conflict. *What are you willing to give up or be flexible on?*
5. Identify how you will connect with the other party. *What are our mutual goals or desires?*

Group Activity: Examining a Conflict

**Scenario:** You and your colleagues are responsible for compiling materials to be sent to your clients. You frequently find mistakes your colleague has made. You suspect they are working too quickly and not paying attention to detail. You’re frustrated that this wastes time and that this colleague gets away with slacking off.
Conducting a Resolution Conversation

Kick of the conversation in a way that builds trust.

Ask for the other person’s story.

Share your story and the impact the conflict is having.

Come to a mutually acceptable agreement.

Kick of the conversation in a way that builds trust.

• Reference the mutual interests both parties have.
• Consider the other party’s style and what they might trust.
• Gain agreement on something: “We both want to deliver the best client solution possible, right?”
• Resist the temptation to blame, shame, label, judge, be right, be better, be more...
• Own the goal of this conversation and its outcome.

Group Activity, p. 16:

Looking back at our scenario, how could we kick off this conversation in a way that builds trust?
Ask for the other person's story.

• "I'd like to understand why..." "Tell me more about..." "I'd like to hear your thinking on..."
• Confirm the other party's feelings, experience and perspective.
• Listen intently and ask good questions to help you understand the other party's perspective, **NOT** to confirm your own.
• Watch out for red herrings that might distract you from the goal of this conversation.

Group Activity, p. 16:

Looking back at our scenario, how could we ask for our colleague's story?

• Use "I" statements to express your interests directly.
• Share what you are seeing, hearing, or sensing, the emotions you are feeling and the impact this is having on a result or outcome.
• "When you don't attend project meetings, I don't know the status of your work which impacts resource allocation."
Share your story and the impact the conflict is having.

Group Activity, p. 16:
Looking back at our scenario, how could we share our own story about the impact the conflict is having?

• Create a list of mutual interests and criteria that reflects them.
• Offer a solution to try, OR
• Brainstorm a list of options that meet those criteria and evaluate them using a grid or other tool.
• Try one solution for a while, then another; evaluate which is best based on criteria.

Come to a mutually acceptable agreement.

Group Activity, p. 16:
Looking back at our scenario, how could we come to a mutually acceptable agreement?
Suspending Emotional Reactions

- Take a few deep breaths to allow your brain to process the emotion and re-focus.
- Ask a question to clarify your perception.
- Paraphrase what you just heard so both parties can reflect on the meaning and clarify where necessary.
- Stop the conversation and resume at a point in the future to ensure you act rather than react.
- Reframe the conversation toward interests you both have. Re-focus on the facts, the goal of the conversation and the mutual purpose you have.

Activity: Preparing to Resolve a Conflict

In groups of two, read the two scenarios and answer the questions (p. 13).

What did you learn as a result of this activity?

Follow-up Activities

- Document the terms.
- Follow up at an agreed-upon time.
- Use objective measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.
Good Luck!
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