Conflict Resolution

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Conflict: Definition

- A competitive or opposing action of incompatibles
- Antagonistic state or action
- Mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands
- The opposition of persons or forces that give rise to the dramatic action in a drama or fiction
- *Fight, battle, war*
- **Basically: a disagreement**

Source: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary
Conflict: Working Definition

- A disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns.

Key elements:

- Disagreement
- Parties involved
- Perceived threat
- Needs, interests or concerns
Conflict: Further Points to Consider

- Perceived threat to one’s well-being
- Response is based on the person’s perceptions of the situation (not objective review of it)
- Conflicts contain substantive, procedural, and psychological dimensions
- To a large degree, conflicts are predictable and expectable situations that naturally arise
- Creative problem-solving strategies are essential
Conflict: Anticipating It

Consider either your professional or personal life and think about the following:

- What are some key sources of conflict in your life?
- When do they tend to occur?
- How do people respond to these conflicts as they arise?
- When you solve problems, do you do so for the moment, or do you put in place systems for addressing these types of concerns in the future?

Quiz…Your Conflict Management Style
Conflict Resolution Styles

- Competing
- Accommodating
- Avoiding
- Compromising
- Collaborating

Which is your conflict resolution style?
Conflict Styles and Their Consequences

- **Competing**: relies on aggressive communication; low regard for relationships; low level of trust
- **Accommodating**: one’s needs is yielded to others’ needs; preserving the relationship is most important
- **Avoiding**: if we ignore it, it will go away; instead, conflict festers
- **Compromising**: series of tradeoffs; satisfactory but not satisfying
- **Collaborating**: pooling of individual needs and goals toward a common goal; “win-win”
Conflict: Other Responses

- Emotional responses
  - Feelings we experience in conflict
  - Range from anger and fear to despair and confusion

- Cognitive responses
  - Our ideas and thoughts about conflict such as the “inner voice” or internal observations we have

- Physical responses
  - Include such responses heightened stress, bodily tension, increased perspiration, shallow or accelerated breathing, nausea, and rapid heartbeat
  - Stress management techniques needed
Conflict: The Role of Perceptions

Keep in mind that each party involved in the conflict may have a different perception of the situation, and part of this difference may be due to:

- Culture, race and ethnicity
- Gender differences
- Knowledge (general and situational)
- Impressions of the messenger
- Previous experiences
Resolving Conflict: Interest-Based Relational (IRB) Approach Theory

- Make sure that good relationships are the first priority.
- Keep people and problems separate.
- Pay attention to the interests that are being presented.
- Listen first: talk second.
- Set out the “Facts.”
- Explore options together.
Eight Steps for Conflict Resolution

- Step 1:
  - Know thyself and take care of thyself
  - Understand your perceptual filters, biases, and triggers
  - Create a personally affirming environment (eat, sleep, exercise)
Eight Steps for Conflict Resolution

Step 2:
- Clarify personal needs threatened by a dispute
  - Substantive, procedural and psychological needs
  - Look at BATNA, WATNA, and MLANTA
    - BATNA: Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement
    - WATNA: Worst Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement
    - MLANTA: Most Likely Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement
- Identify desired outcomes from a negotiated process
Eight Steps for Conflict Resolution

Step 3:

- Identify a safe place for negotiation
  - Appropriate place for discussion/private and neutral
  - Mutual consent to negotiate/appropriate time
  - Role of support people (facilitators, mediators, advocates), as needed
  - Agreement to ground rules
Examples of Ground Rules

1) One person speaks at a time.

2) We will make a sincere commitment to listen to one another, to try to understand the other person's point of view before responding.

3) What we discuss together will be kept in confidence, unless there is explicit agreement regarding who needs to know further information.

4) We agree to talk directly with the person with whom there are concerns, and not seek to involve others in "gossip" or "alliance building."

5) We agree to try our hardest and trust that others are doing the same within the group.

6) We will support the expression of dissent in a harassment free workplace.

7) We agree to attack the issues, not the people with whom we disagree.
Eight Steps for Conflict Resolution

Step 4:

- Take a listening stance into the interaction
  - Seek first to understand, then to be understood
  - Use active listening skills:
    - Take a breath
    - Remove distractions as much as possible
    - Sit or face the other person directly with an open posture
    - Focus on listening as your first priority
Eight Steps for Conflict Resolution

- Step 5:
  - Assert your needs clearly and specifically
    - Use “I” messages as tools for clarification
    - Build from what you have heard – continue to listen well
    - Remain open
    - Remain flexible
Eight Steps for Conflict Resolution

Step 6:

- Approach problem-solving with flexibility
  - Identify issues clearly and concisely
  - Brainstorm – or generate options – while deferring judgment
  - Be open to problem definitions
  - Clarify criteria for decision-making
Eight Steps for Conflict Resolution

■ Step 7:
  ■ Manage an impasse calmly, patiently and respectfully
    ■ Clarify feelings
    ■ Focus on underlying needs, interests and concerns
    ■ Caucus, if appropriate
Eight Steps for Conflict Resolution

- Step 8:
  - Build an agreement that works
    - Is the agreement fair? Balanced? Realistic?
  - Implement and evaluate
What Would You Do?

- Scenario 1: Dr. Absent Advisor
- Scenario 2: Dr. Micro Mentor
- Scenario 3: Mr. Critical Colleague
- Scenario 4: Ms. Peculiar Peer
- Scenario 5: Mr. Claim Thecredit
Resources

- Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, Xicom, Woods Road, Tuxedo, New York, 10987