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Conflict Management through Effective Negotiation

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Abstract:

The word 'conflict' refers to perceived incompatibilities resulting typically from some form of interference or opposition. Conflict management is one of the employment strategies to correct these perceived differences in a positive mode. For many decades, managers or employers had been taught to view conflict as a negative force. However, conflict may be either functional or dysfunctional. Whereas dysfunctional conflict is destructive and leads to decreased productivity, functional conflict may encourage greater work effort, help task performance and team spirit. The discussion aimed at good consensus is called Negotiation by which employers and employees settle differences. It is a process by which compromise or agreement is reached while avoiding unnecessary argument and dispute. In any disagreement, individuals understandably aim to achieve the best possible outcome for their position. However, the principles of fairness, seeking mutual benefit, and maintaining a relationship are the key components to a successful outcome. This paper analyses how to resolve conflict, clash, or difference of opinions through effective negotiation between managers and employees. Negotiation skills can be of a great deal or benefit in resolving any differences that arise between employers and employees.

Keywords: *conflict, incompatibilities, functional or dysfunctional, negotiation, a difference of opinions...etc,*

Introduction:

Negotiation takes place when two or more people, with differing views or opinions, come together to attempt to reach consensus on an issue. It is persuasive communication about getting the best possible deal in the best possible way. A conflict or negotiation situation is one in which there is a conflict of interests or what one wants isn't necessarily what the other wants and where both sides

prefer to search for solutions, rather than giving in or breaking off contact. Employees enjoy dealing with conflicts-either with bosses, peers, subordinates, friends, or strangers. This is particularly true when the conflict becomes hostile and when strong feelings become involved. Resolving conflict can be mentally exhausting and emotionally draining. But it is important to realize that conflict requires resolution neither good nor bad. There can be positive and negative outcomes. It can be destructive but can also play a productive role in both personal and professional life.

Research has shown that negotiation skills are among the most significant determinants of career success. A negotiation is an art form to some degree and there are specific techniques that anyone can learn. Understanding these techniques and developing skills will be a pivotal for professional and personal success.

Major Causes of Conflict:

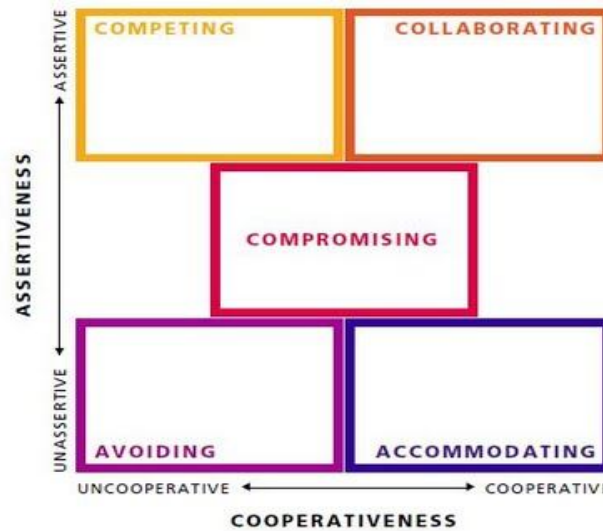
A conflict is a psychological state of mind when people are in a state of dilemma whether to do or not. In organizational conflict, it may imply a difference of opinion with associates or groups and sometimes they manage to showdown and slow down other and plan strategies for that. Below are the few causes of conflict.

1. Competition over limited resources and time pressure.
2. Ambiguity over responsibility and authority.
3. Differences in perceptions, work styles, attitudes, communication problems, individual differences...etc
4. Increasing interdependence as boundaries between individuals and groups become increasingly blurred.
5. Improper or partial performance appraisal and reward system. Sometimes favoritism towards individuals or groups.
6. Continuous tension exists between equity and equality.

The Five Stage Model of Resolving Conflict:

In the 1970s, Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann collaboratively identified five main styles of dealing with conflict. These styles are varying in their degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness. They argued that people typically have a preferred conflict resolution style. The Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI) conflict mode helps to identify some resolutions when conflict arises between individuals and groups in the working places. According to them, conflict can be

resolved by following below five stages modal.



Competing (trying to satisfy your concerns at the expense of others):

Competing mode is an assertive and non-cooperative. It refers to addressing only one's own concerns at the cost of the concerns of the other. It is a power-oriented mode and one uses whatever power dynamic seems appropriate to get a favourable outcome for oneself. An individual's ability to debate, their position in the hierarchy, or their financial power matters the most. Competing is defensive and it strictly means standing up for your individual.

Collaborative (trying to find a win-win solution which completely satisfies both people's concerns):

People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution when there have been previous conflicts in the group or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.

Avoiding (Sidestepping the conflict):

Avoiding is both unassertive and uncooperative. The individual wants to neither address their own problems nor the problems of others. This ultimately means that they do not want to engage in the conflict at all. Avoiding might be seen at times as a diplomatic move involving bypassing or ignoring the issue. It could also involve putting off the issue until the time is favourable, or simply stepping back from an uncomfortable or hazardous situation.

Accommodating (trying to satisfy the other person's concerns at expense of your own)

This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative. Accommodation is appropriate when the issue matters more to the other party, when

peace is more valuable than winning, or when you want to be in a position to collect on this “favor” you gave. However people may not return favors, and overall this approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes.

Compromising (trying to find an acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies both people’s concerns)

The last outcome falls on the average point on both the assertiveness and cooperativeness scales. The goal here is to find a mutually acceptable or understanding, and in some ways, satisfies both the individuals. It comes midway between competing and accommodating. It addresses an issue more directly than avoiding but falls short of investigating it with as much depth and rigor as collaborating. In certain situations, compromising might involve seeking middle-ground solutions, providing concessions, or looking for a quick solution.

In general, most successful negotiators start off assuming collaborative (integrative) or win-win negotiation. A good negotiator will try for a win-win or aim at a situation where both sides feel they won. Negotiations tend to go much better if both sides perceive they are in a win-win situation or both sides approach the negotiation wanting to “create value”. The two most important kinds of negotiation are Distributive (win-lose) and Integrative (win-win). All bargaining situations can be divided into two categories.

Distributive: (Competitive, zero sum, win-lose or claiming value).

In this kind of bargaining, one side “wins” and one side “loses.” In this situation there are fixed resources to be divided so that the more one gets, the less the other gets. In this situation, one person’s interests oppose the others. In many ‘buying’ situations, the more the other person gets of your money, the less you have left. The dominant concern in this type of bargaining is usually maximizing one’s own interests. Dominant strategies in this mode include manipulation, forcing, and withholding information. This version is also called “claiming value” since the goal in this type of situation is to increase your own value and decrease your opponent’s.

Integrative: (Collaborative, win-win or creating value).

In this kind of bargaining, there is a variable amount of resources to be divided and both sides will have chance to “win.” The dominant concern here is to maximize joint outcomes. An instance is resolving a different opinion about where you and a friend want to go to dinner. Another example is a performance appraisal situation with a subordinate or resolving a situation of a subordinate who attends late to his work. Dominant strategies in this mode include cooperation, sharing information, and mutual problem solving. This type is also called “creating value” since the goal here is to have both sides leave the negotiating feeling they had greater value than before.

It needs to be emphasized that many situations contain elements of both distributive and integrative bargaining. For example, in negotiating a price with a customer, to some degree your

interests oppose the customer like you want a higher price and he wants a lower one, but to some degree you want your interests to coincide like you want both customer and you to get satisfied at the end of deal (you want to be happy and you want your customer to be happy).

Conclusion:

In nutshell, compromise is often a useful strategy when dealing with relatively small concerns. This differs from an accommodating strategy, in which the conceding party finds an issue unimportant that the opposing party considers comparatively important. A manager might enlist a compromise approach most effectively when both parties consider the issue to be of moderate or little importance. In such cases, compromising saves both parties the time required to employ problem-solving techniques to address the fundamental core of the conflict.

While, all of these modes have their place among the strategies available to the managers, the collaborating approach to conflict management presents the most beneficial mode for any types of conflict management. In the collaborating approach, conflict itself acts as a managerial tool. The manager utilizes the conflict to guide the conflicting parties to address what essentially are obstacles faced by the organization. Through collaborative behaviour, the conflicting parties pool their creative energies to find innovative answers to old problems. Collaboration as a conflict-handling mode, on the other hand, represents an attempt to channel conflict in a positive direction, thus enabling the manager to use conflict as a tool to resolve otherwise incompatible objectives within the organization. However, any of the five conflict resolution styles may be appropriate and effective depending on the specific situation, the parties' personality styles, the desired outcomes, and the time available, the key to becoming more prepared is to understand the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

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