Conflict Management

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Masters Education Management Development Program

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Welcome to Conflict Management!

*Ever want to run and hide rather than face someone or some situation that aggravates you?* There are many different techniques for conflict management and resolution; learning about these should help you address conflict in a more effective manner. This course will explore: sources of conflict, modes of conflict resolution, consensus, and negotiation. Today you will complete a conflict management instrument that will identify your preferences for conflict resolution. We will consider the advantages and disadvantages of the various resolution techniques. You will also have an opportunity to apply some of your new-found knowledge to practical situations that you as a clerk or finance officer might confront. I hope you will discover that there are many ways to achieve positive and constructive outcomes where conflict is concerned.

Today’s Learning Objectives

- Identify likely sources of clerks’ workplace conflict
- Assess your conflict resolution mode(s)
- Identify advantages & disadvantages of various management strategies
- Apply strategies to practical examples

**IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ**

In order to earn 6 hours of credit for training; you must attend the entire course. Please adhere to the course schedule you have been provided and be sure to follow all ground rules presented by the instructor.

It is also important that you carefully follow all administrative directions so that you receive proper credit for this course. It is your responsibility to ensure that the instructor receive any required forms directly from you; please do not leave them on the table or give them to someone else to turn in.

Please be sure to ask the instructor if you need clarification or additional information.

*THANK YOU!*
COMMON SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN ORGANIZATIONS

Which of the following “GRIPS” are familiar in your organization?

**Goal Conflicts** occur when individuals and groups in organizations have different opinions about the mission of the organization. These different opinions may arise because goals are not clearly defined by the leaders; goals have been interpreted differently by major players; goals are clearly defined, but are disputed by major players; goals may be conflicting; goals may be unrealistic and work against the best interests of the organization.

**Role Conflicts** occur when an organization has individuals with role overload, role ambiguity, role overlap, and/or role competition.

**Interpersonal Style Conflicts** occur because people have different ways of viewing the world, solving problems and communicating with each other.

**Procedural Conflicts** occur because different units of an organization, e.g., accounting, personnel, management team, technical support, may have a variety of procedures that may overlap and/or conflict when individuals and groups attempt to get their work done.

**Structural Conflicts** occur when organizations have any of these negative structural elements: dependence on blind trust of those in power; unclear goals and objectives; psychological distance between groups; physical distance between groups, which then operate as if they do not have any relationship to each other; limited communication between individuals or groups who need to work together or communication only through intermediaries.
STAGES OF CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT

Expectations Developed
↓
Unmet Expectations
↓
Confusion/Disappointment/Anger
↓
Blaming/Attacking
↓
Defensiveness/Counter-Attacking

↓
Lowered Trust
↓
Ineffective Communication
↓
Misunderstanding
↓
Continued Conflict

↓
Recommitment to Problem Solving
↓
Discuss Unmet Expectations
↓
Develop Understanding of Viewpoints
↓
Increased Communication/Trust
↓
Resolution of Conflict
DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Remember that you have choices in a conflict:

  Assertiveness – the degree to which you try to satisfy your own concerns
  Cooperativeness – the degree to which you try to satisfy the other person’s concerns

Conflicts can be both positive and negative. Conflicts can help us solve problems, weigh the strengths of our arguments, and motivate us to excel. Conflicts can also rob productivity and erode relationships.

Forms of Conflict

1. **Goal Conflicts:** disputing parties aim for goals that are basically incompatible, with each party’s goals threatening the goals of the other. Resolution entails reconciling ambitions of the conflicting parties.

2. **Judgment Conflicts:** parties differ over factual issues – one feels the other’s conclusion is incorrect. May agree on the goal but disagree on how to attain it. Resolution involves combining information and insights to form a conclusion that meets both parties’ standards of accuracy. Miscommunication lies at the root of many of these conflicts.

3. **Normative Conflicts:** one party evaluates the other on the basis of how they should behave; plays to notions of justice, equity and values. Violations of normative standards can trigger emotional reactions of blame and anger. Reconciliation may require an apology/reparation from the violating party.
## DETERMINING YOUR STYLE

### STYLES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION: WHO ARE YOU?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>IDENTIFIED BY</th>
<th>WHEN APPROPRIATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMPETING, FORCING-SHARK</td>
<td>Use of power often of position</td>
<td>Crisis that needs immediate decision; one way right beyond doubt and stakes are very high; goal is very important, but relationships are not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLABORATING-OWL</td>
<td>Groups problem-solve together; bring up all relevant info; all parties recognize abilities and expertise of the others; issue explored from all angles</td>
<td>When commitment is necessary from both sides; when time is not critical; when expertise is needed from both sides; when goal and relationships are highly important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPROMISING-FOX</td>
<td>Bargaining; meeting each other half way</td>
<td>No hope for achieving mutually satisfactory result; necessary to forestall a win-lose situation; resources are limited; goal and relationship are of moderate importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOIDING-TURTLE</td>
<td>Attempting to get rid of conflict by denying it exists</td>
<td>Issue not worth fighting over’ issue too hot to handle; both sides prefer to avoid issue; relationships not that important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCOMODATING-TEDDY BEAR</td>
<td>Giving in and giving all</td>
<td>Issue is not important to either side; when future favor in return is desired; no-win situation that doesn’t warrant a lot of energy; relationships are very important; goal not of importance.</td>
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DEFINING RESOLUTION STYLES

Competing: Shark Style

Assumes

- a conflict is a contest of wills
- the participants are adversaries
- opponents cannot be trusted
- an entrenched position is effective
- threats and posturing are effective
- the goal is victory for the shark

Philosophy

- “Might makes right.”
- “Nice guys finish last.”
- “Let me make you an offer you can’t refuse.”
- “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”
- “Walk softly and carry a big stick.”
- “A person who will not flee will make his or her foe flee.”
- “The arguments of the strongest always have the most weight.”
- “If you cannot make a person think as you do, make that person do as you think.”
- “Put your foot down where you mean to stand.”
Collaborating: Owl Style

Assumes

- conflict is natural but can be solved
- the participants are problem solvers
- all the participants should be involved
- the interests of all the participants deserve respect
- firm or bottom-line positions should be avoided
- objective criteria and reason are essential problem solvers
- the goal is a wise outcome, effectively reached

Philosophy

- “Come now and let us reason together.”
- “A question must be decided by knowledge and not by numbers if it is to have a right decision.”
- “By digging and digging, the truth is discovered.”
- “Seek till you find, and you’ll not lose your labor.”
- “Try and trust will move mountains.”
DEFINING RESOLUTION STYLES

Compromising: Fox Style

Assumes

- conflict will submit to bargaining
- the participants must follow the rules
- the participants must show goodwill by exchanging concessions
- the participants can exaggerate their demands, knowing that they must eventually make concessions
- the participants must be tough
- appeals to justice and the common good are effective and expected
- the goal is compromise

Philosophy

- “Turn about is fair play.”
- “Meet somebody halfway.”
- “You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.”
- “Better half a loaf than no bread.”
- “A fair exchange brings no quarrel.”
- “Tit for tat is fair play.”
- “One gift for another makes good friends.”
DEFINING RESOLUTION STYLES

Accommodating: Teddy Bear Style

Assumes

- conflict must be avoided
- the participants are friends
- the participants can be trusted
- concessions and offers cultivate the relationship
- pressure demands submission
- the goal is agreement

Philosophy

- “Don’t stir up a hornets nest.”
- “When two quarrel, she who keeps silence first is the most praiseworthy.”
- “It is easier to refrain than to retreat from a quarrel.”
- “The person who fights and runs away lives to fight another day.”
- “He loses least in a quarrel who keeps his tongue in cheek.”
- “Discretion is the better part of valor.”
DEFINING RESOLUTION STYLES

Avoiding: Turtle Style

Assumes

- conflict is irrational
- conflict can be ignored
- avoidance behavior is acceptable
- observers need not be participants
- the goal is compliance without commitment

Philosophy

- “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall inherit the earth.”
- “A soft answer turneth away wrath.”
- “Turn the other cheek.”
- “Soft words win hard hearts.”
- “Smooth words make smooth ways.”
- “Kind words are worth much and cost little.”
- “Kill your enemies with kindness.”
WHEN ANALYZING A CONFLICT

Determine Your Objectives

➢ How important is the issue to you?
➢ Is it worth resolving?
➢ How much time can you spend resolving it (a few minutes? a day? weeks?)?
➢ What’s your relationship with the other person?
➢ What impact will the conflict have on that relationship?

Analyze the Conflict

➢ Who are you really in conflict with?
  • You and another person?
  • You and the system?
  • Us and the system?

➢ What’s the conflict about?
  • Methods
  • Opinions
  • Attitudes
  • Goals

➢ Why is the conflict occurring?

➢ What is the root cause?
  • Different information?
  • Different expectations?
  • Different roles and responsibilities?
  • Different priorities?
  • Different values?
CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

**Arbitration:** The hearing and determination of a case in controversy by a person chosen by the parties or appointed under statutory authority.

**Consensus:** Group solidarity in sentiment and belief; a collective opinion reached through a process of group communication, whereby all group members agree to support the decision which has been made.

**Litigation:** A legal contest carried on by judicial process. A formal legal process whereby a judge, and at times a jury, renders the decision after evidence is presented.

**Mediation:** An intervention between conflicting parties by a non-biased party which promotes the reaching of a decision which is satisfactory to all parties.

**Negotiation:** To confer with another to arrive at the settlement of some matter.
DECISION BY CONSENSUS

Consensus development is a decision-making process that uses group communication to reach a collective solution to which all members agree to lend support.

Basic Guidelines:

1. Remember that all group members should be equal partners in the decision-making process. All should have an equal opportunity to give their opinions on issues facing the group.
2. Listen for facts.
3. Use paraphrasing to check out your assumptions about the other’s ideas, attitudes, etc.
4. Ask questions for clarification when meanings are not clear. Do not assume you know what someone else thinks or feels.
5. Avoid blaming statements and sarcasm.
6. Allow some flexible time for brainstorming new ideas in addition to ideas presented initially.
7. Discuss positive and negative consequences of all possible solutions. It is appropriate for people to state their reservations about an idea as well as their enthusiastic support.
8. Do not use voting, tabulating averages, or coin tosses to reach decisions.
9. Keep discussing areas of concern about the solutions that are most acceptable.
10. When differences of opinion continue, ask people if they would be willing to support a decision even thought they are not 100% in favor of it. If they cannot, see if any possible adjustment can be made to satisfy their concern so they can lend support.
11. When an agreement seems to have been reached on an appropriate solution ask all members to verbally make a commitment to support. They may state that they have reservations. Consensus has boot been reached unless all parties, in good faith, agree to support the solution.
12. Write the solution down.
EIGHT STEPS IN THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

_The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution_ by Dudley Weeks, Ph.D.,

Conflict Partnership is a process that empowers people to build mutually beneficial relationships and to resolve conflict effectively. Try following its _eight steps_:

1. Create an Effective Atmosphere
2. Clarify Perceptions
3. Focus on Individual and Shared Needs
4. Build Shared Positive Power
5. Look to the Future, then Learn from the Past
6. Generate Options
7. Develop "Doables"
8. Make Mutual Benefit Agreements

The "partnership process" is based on the following five principles. Keep them in mind whenever you are involved in a conflict:

1. Think "we," rather than "I versus you" - working together helps solve conflicts.
2. Try to keep in mind the _long term_ relationship.
3. Good conflict resolution will _improve_ the relationship.
4. Good conflict resolution _benefits both parties._
5. _Conflict resolution_ and _relationship building_ go hand in hand.
EIGHT STEPS IN THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

Step 1 - Create an Effective Atmosphere

Creating an effective atmosphere is a very important step in the conflict resolution process. It is more likely for mutual agreements be reached when atmosphere is given careful consideration. When thinking about atmosphere, remember these ideas:

- **Personal preparation** -- doing all you can to ready yourself in positive ways to approach issues honestly and openly.

- **Timing** -- choosing a time that is best for all parties involved. A time in which no one is feeling pressed to move on or pressured in other ways.

- **Location** -- where you meet is as important as when you meet. It is best to pick a place where all parties can feel comfortable and at ease.

- **Opening statements** -- try to start out on a good note. Good openings are ones that let others know you are ready and willing to approach conflict with a team-like attitude that focuses on positive ends. They should also ensure the trust and confidentiality of the parties involved.

Step 2 - Clarify Perceptions

Clarify individual perceptions involved in the conflict. You can't solve a problem if you don't know what it is about.

1. **Sort the parts** of the conflict - ask what it is about.

2. **Avoid ghost conflicts** -- get to the heart of the matter and avoid side issues.

3. **Clarify** what, if any, values are involved.

4. Recognize that the parties involved **need each other** to be most effective.

Additionally, clarify your perceptions of the other party.

1. Avoid stereotyping.

2. Listen carefully.

3. Recognize the other's needs and values.
4. Empathize - ask why they feel the way they do.

**EIGHT STEPS IN THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS**

**Step 3 - Focus on Individual and Shared Needs**

Expand on shared needs. Realize that you need one another in order to successfully resolve conflicts. Be concerned about meeting others needs as well as your own. When you take the time to look, you will recognize that individuals often share needs in common.

**Step 4 - Build Shared Positive Power**

Power is made up of people's outlooks, ideas, convictions, and actions. A positive view of power enables people to be most effective. A negative outlook on power proves *dismalpowering*. Instead of "power with," it encourages "power over." **Positive power** promotes building together and strengthening partnerships. When parties in conflict have this outlook, they can encourage each other to use shared positive power. This gives an ultimate advantage to all involved because each person's positive energy is being drawn upon for a worthwhile solution.

**Step 5 - Look to the Future, then Learn from the Past**

Don't dwell on negative past conflicts, or you won't be able to deal positively in the present or the future. Try to understand what happened in the past, and avoid repeating the same mistakes over. Don't get stuck in a rut; learn from past conflicts and be forgiving. Let others know "I'm not mad at you, I'm mad at what you did."

**Step 6 - Generate Options**

1. Beware of preconceived answers.
2. Look for common threads.
3. Make sure options are workable for all parties involved.
4. Set aside disagreements and focus on options that seem most workable.
5. Avoid spin-off conflicts by bypassing options that won't work for all involved.
EIGHT STEPS IN THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

In Generating Options:

1. Ask first for the conflict partner's options -- listen and learn.

2. Try free-flowing options:
   - make new suggestions
   - write them down
   - wait to discuss them till they're all out on the table
   - group similar options together
   - narrow down the list
   - predict possible outcomes

3. Identify Key Options; these are ones that will:
   - meet one or more of the shared needs
   - meet individual needs and are compatible with other's needs
   - use mutual positive power
   - improve the relationship
   - be at least acceptable but preferably satisfying to all involved

4. When looking at options, don't let past experiences cloud present perceptions and decisions.
EIGHT STEPS IN THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

Step 7 - Develop "Doables" -- Stepping-Stones to Action

Doables are specific actions that have a good chance at being successful. Doables are:

- the ideas that have the best chance at success
- steps that never promote unfair advantages on any sides
- found on shared input and information from all parties
- trust builders - they add confidence in working together

Step 8 - Make Mutual Benefit Agreements

Mutual-Benefit Agreements should give you lasting solutions to specific conflicts.

1. Instead of demands, focus on developing agreements and find shared goals and needs.

2. Build on "Doable" things by working on the smaller stepping-stone solutions.

3. Pay attention to the needs of the other person in addition to your own interests.

4. Recognize the "givens" - basic things that cannot be altered or compromised.

5. Clarify exactly what is expected of you in the agreement - your individual responsibilities.

6. Keep the conflict partnership process going by using and sharing these skills with others.
MORE IDEAS ON MANAGING CONFLICT

Handling Anger

It's alright to feel anger, but we should not allow it to rule. Instead, we should identify the source of our anger and then try to move past it. When this is done, we can focus on the positive steps of conflict resolution. In partnerships, the idea is not to break down - it is to **focus on building up.**

Dealing With People Who Only Want Things Their Way

Effective conflict resolution is not deciding who gets their way.

When the other party seems to be defining conflict resolution as an "I-versus-you" struggle:

- try extra hard to set a partnership atmosphere
- state clearly that you see conflict resolution as a process in which you need each other
- focus on shared needs and shared power

If the other party is focusing on power or control and thinking losing either will weaken them:

- focus on developing an "our" power attitude

When the other party focuses on controlling the situation rather than on the needs of the situation:

- encourage them to talk about what they think the needs of the situation really are
- try to come up with doables based on those needs
MORE IDEAS ON MANAGING CONFLICT

Dealing with Conflicts that Involve an Injustice

An injustice involves a violation of values or principles that are important to you.

1. Make sure that you understand the differences between behavior that is unjust and behavior you simply do not like.

2. If you are confident that a conflict does indeed involve an injustice, you need to tell the other party involved how you see what has occurred.

3. Focus on the behavior, not on the person. In injustice situations, we often hear people saying, "You aren't fair!" This kind of statement could result in a reply such as "Well, if you think I'm an unfair person, then I guess we have nothing to talk about." A better way to handle this would be to start with a positive opening statement such as, "I feel what you did was unfair, and I want to understand why you did it. Were you aware I might feel unjustly treated? Would you feel unjustly treated if someone did that to you?" This is more likely to result in a positive response and some feedback.

4. Clearly state when you think an injustice has been done. Do it in a way that encourages positive behavior and successful resolution.

**You could:**

- Ask what alternate behavior could have been used.
- Ask them to put themselves in your shoes to understand how you were affected by their behavior.
- Focus on the positive by reminding them of past examples when their fair behavior resulted in good partnership resolution.
HOW TO RESOLVE ANY CONFLICT

Three ways to resolve any conflict:

1. **POWER Contests**: conflicting members use resources (physical strength, threats, allies) to coerce or intimidate opponents to comply with demands.

2. **RIGHTS Contests**: conflicting members appeal to a source of authority (the boss, policy, courts) to prove that their rights are more legitimate.

   In both POWER and RIGHTS contests there is a winner and a loser

3. **INTEREST-BASED NEGOTIATION**: What do you really want? Conflict tends to divert our attention from our real interests by creating another interest: winning.

   Our “natural” instinct to any conflict situation is FIGHT or FLIGHT.

   A better way is to THINK our way out of the conflict, by reconciling interests through a managed mediated process. How do we do that?

   ✓ First there must be dialogue between the conflicting parties.

   ✓ Second, the dialogue must be protected from interruptions, distractions and intrusions.

   ✓ Third, the dialogue must be given time.

   ✓ And fourth, the dialogue must be facilitated.

   Stated another way, mediation is dialogue that is directly between disputants, limited by rules (no fight or flight), about the issue to be resolved, sustained long enough to find a solution.
Basic Guidelines for All Parties to Follow:

- Acknowledge the other person’s position
- Listen as well as talk
- Agree on the aim of the negotiations
- Set time limits
- Try to start and end on a positive note
- Try to understand why the other person wants what he/she wants
- Try to separate the personal issues from the problem
- Make sure you deal with objective criteria
- Know the facts
- Gain the other person’s trust
- Locate areas of mutual interests and agreement
- Maintain a question/answer exchange
- Try to generate as many options as possible
- Stay on the subject
- Don’t lock yourself into a position
- Try to find ways both parties succeed
- Handle objections tactfully
- Summarize frequently
- Don’t give up
WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE THIS SITUATION?

1. Apparently, it’s been known around for quite some time that two employees, Yvette and Yolanda, do not get along. Whatever the reason, it seems odd since they have so much in common. They are close in age and each has a teenage son. Both are active in their communities. In fact, they were good friends back in high school. Their conflict has not posed a problem since they have always worked in different areas. That is about to change. Yvette has worked with you in the Clerk’s Office for some time. Yolanda is good at her job and you just recently hired her from another department to fill a vacancy. Her job in your office will be a promotion from the position she was last in. Yolanda’s past work history leads you to believe she will be excellent in your unit; she was far and above the other candidates for the position. Unfortunately, you did not hear that Yvette and Yolanda do not get along until after Yolanda accepted your promotional offer. A major project is underway and you will need to assign both these individuals to it. Already everyone in the office is grumbling as they await Yolanda’s arrival.

2. Valerie is a top-notch administrative assistant in the Recreation Department. She has solid skills and abilities and gets along well with her peers. For some reason, that even you do not understand, Valerie just really annoys you. Maybe it’s what she says or how she says it, but, one thing is certain, whatever she says seems to “rub you the wrong way”. Without fail, she has questions about how she can advance her career. While she does not work directly with you, she knows that you have been very successful, having come up through the ranks to your position as Finance Officer. She is friendly but you are not interested even in a conversation with her much less assisting her in career planning.

3. You have had a long career in local government. You have worked hard and have been rewarded with consistent promotions. You became the deputy clerk a few years ago and are happy and proud to have served your government for so many years. One day you notice that a smaller organization (in a different part of the state) is looking for a clerk. You are happy in your job but recognize that you have been successful at the number two level. You apply for the position just to see if you can compete and surprise yourself… by getting an offer. After some deliberation, you decide to accept the position. A month after taking the new job you find out something you were not told during the interview process. The current office is in a shambles. There is a huge backlog of minutes, records and files are in complete disorder, and the employees are not getting along. When
they are not pointing fingers, the people involved act as if they are a part of two entirely different offices.

4. You finally take some well-deserved leave time. You decide to stay in town for the 2 weeks to relax and get a few things done around the house. You have put one of your employees (who has seniority but little management experience) in charge during your absence. On Tuesday of the second week, you run an errand near the office and so decide to stop in. There’s some sort of commotion: two employees are in a screaming match while a few employees are gathered to watch the scene. One is making loud comments. The person you left in charge is saying something in a normal speaking voice but no one is listening. Everyone is so involved that they do not even notice you are there.

5. The last few years you have devoted much time and energy to the Council’s/Commission’s information needs. You and your staff have contributed too many improvements by using technology and streamlining many processes; you even had fax machines installed in every Council/Commission member’s home. It seems that, as far as one of the council members is concerned, you never spend enough time on his needs. This is not true; in fact, some of the other members have been neglected while you spend time with him. Now this council member is beginning to remark to the other council members and some department heads that you and your employees are a bunch of slackers.

6. There’s an older, retired employee who likes visiting your workplace. For many years, he was responsible for sending his department’s agenda items to your office. While he is quick to leave if no one is in the break room, he frequently pops in on Friday afternoons. You find his presence a nuisance but the other folks in the office seem to like having him around. Aside from you, everyone seems to be in a better mood after they see him.