

Conflict Management and Preferred Style for Resolving Conflict

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ABSTRACT - The purpose of this paper is what the common causes of conflict in Middle East (Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, K.S.A and Kuwait), and what is preferred style for resolving conflict in these countries. Conflict is inevitable and often necessary to management techniques build personality and relationships high-performing teams will evolve through form, storm and norm, so the conflict is not the problem poor management of the conflict is the problem, sometimes use power to win too emotionally involved and others around you can solve the conflict by many methods intended for addressing conflict between opponents also might be considered. This paper will provide an overview of the concepts of conflict, where conflict occurs, differences between competition and conflict, conflict type, Common causes of conflict, how to minimize the conflict, how to build team work, how to manage conflict, conflict strategy and style, prefer style that using when resolve conflict and steps for resolving conflict. We make a questionnaire in much country in Middle East in construction field. First we found that conflict is natural and should be happened between teams up to 95%. Secondly we found the most reason that increases conflict is due personality issues (personal chemistry) up to 90%. At last we found that up to 90% of managers are using collaborating and accommodating as a mode of conflict resolving, which is found to be more commonly used in handling conflict. The paper presents a useful source of information which would benefits organizations in its globalization, which has faded the national boundaries and has brought people of different culture to work together on a single platform.

Keywords: Conflict Causes; Resolving Conflict Style, Middle East, personal chemistry.

المستخلص - النزاع والصراع بين مجموعات العمل أمر لا مفر من هو غالبا ما يكون ضروريا لتقنيات إدارة بناء الشخصية. وبالتالي فإن الصراع ليس هو المشكلة ولكن سوء إدارة الصراع هو المشكلة. ويمكن حل الصراع بكثير من الطرق التي تتناسب مع كل مشكلة وإيضا مع طبيعة كل شخصية وتوقيت المشكلة. ولقد قمنا بعمل استبيان ببعض دول الشرق الاوسط واتضح لنا اولا ان احتمالية حدوث الصراعات بين فرق العمل تصل الي 95%. ثانيا السبب الرئيس لحدوث الصراعات هو المشاكل الشخصية (الكيمياء الشخصية) بنسبة تصل الي 90% مع العلم ان هذا العامل هو الاخير في دول العالم المتقدم. ثالثا وجدنا ان معظم المديرين يفضلون أن تكون جميع الاطراف فائزة في حلولهم للصراعات. اخيرا يفضل المديرين استباق الصراعات وبناء اواصر من الحب والتعاون والعمل بروح الفريق بين الافراد مما يقلل الصراعات والنزاعات مستقبلا.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict has become inseparable part and parcel of our lives, we experience conflict as we experience joy or sorrow in our day to day life. It has become a natural phenomenon of our personal and professional existence. It is

an unavoidable component of human activity [1]. On a general level, conflict prevention and conflict management are broad terms for methods and mechanisms used to avoid, minimize, and manage conflicts between different parties [2]. Channelling conflict in a

positive or negative way may affect the nature of the conflict whether beneficial or destructive^[3]. Conflict prevention is a set of instruments used to prevent or solve disputes before they have developed into active conflicts^[4]. Conflict is one of the most frustrating and uncomfortable experiences for managers^[5].

Conflict resolution has traditionally referred to measures attempting to resolve the underlying incompatibilities of a conflict, including attempts to get the parties to mutually accept each other existence^[6].

All members of any organization need to have ways of keeping conflict to a minimum and of solving problems caused by conflict, before conflict becomes a major obstacle to your work. This could happen to any organization, whether it is a Non-governmental organization (NGO), Congressional Budget Office (CBO), a political party, a business or a government.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management is a theoretical concept focusing on the limitation, mitigation, and containment of a conflict without necessary solving it^[7]. Conflict management is the process of planning to avoid conflict where possible and organizing to resolve conflict where it does happen, as rapidly and smoothly as possible. For any organization to be effective and efficient in achieving its goals, the people in the organization need to have a shared vision of what they are striving to achieve, as well as clear objectives for each team, department and individual.

You also need ways of recognizing and resolving conflict amongst people, so that conflict does not become so serious that co-operation is impossible. Conflict management is what we are doing when we identify and deal with conflict in a reasonable manner. To manage conflict the United States Department of Agriculture says we must develop and use skills like effective communication, problem solving and negotiating. When we resolve issues, we need to focus on the things we need or desire as a group and not things needed or

wanted by individuals. This promotes working with each other instead of against each other. There are some proven strategies that you can use to help resolve conflicts within your groups. The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management describes five popular styles for resolving conflict.

On a general level, it is important to note here that the traditional separation of conflict prevention, management and resolution not only treat them as different concepts, but also as separate processes. Such ideas are opposed in this paper, in which also the concepts are seen as being closely related and in many ways even inseparable. Overall conflict management should aim to minimize affective conflicts at all levels, attain and maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict, and use the appropriate conflict management strategy to effectively bring about the first two goals, and also to match the status and concerns of the two parties in conflict^[8].

In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers began using the intentions of the parties involved to classify the styles of conflict management that they would include in their models. Both Thomas (1976) and Pruitt (1983) put forth a model based on the concerns of the parties involved in the conflict. The combination of the parties concern for their interests (i.e. assertiveness) and their concern for the interests of those across the table (i.e. cooperativeness) would yield a particular conflict management style. Pruitt called these styles yielding (low assertiveness/high cooperativeness), problem solving (high assertiveness/high cooperativeness), inaction (low assertiveness/low cooperativeness), and contending (high assertiveness/low cooperativeness). Pruitt argues that problem-solving is the preferred method when seeking mutually beneficial options.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COMPETITION AND CONFLICT

Competition and conflict are concepts that have the same root, but lead to very different

consequences. It might even be fair to say that conflict is a form of competition, so long as that conflict remains constructive. Making sure that conflict remains constructive has been one of the hallmarks of the free market for many centuries. Competition usually brings out the best in people, as they strive to be top in their field, whether in sport, community affairs, politics or work. In fact, fair and friendly competition often leads to new sporting achievements, scientific inventions or outstanding effort in solving a community problem.

When competition becomes unfriendly or bitter, though, conflict can begin and this can bring out the worst in people. Conflict may be useful (positive) such as clearing up important problems or issues, bringing about solutions to problems, getting everyone involved in solving issues, causing real communication, releasing emotion, anxiety, and stress in a positive way, helping people learn more about each other and cooperate, developing understanding and skills.

Conflict may be not useful (negative) such as taking attention away from other activities, damaging the spirit of the team or an individual, dividing people and groups, and making cooperation difficult, making people or group focus on their differences, leading to harmful behavior, like fighting or name-calling. The manager should focus on negative effect and resolve it.

Some people are not willing to admit that they may not be the best at conflict management, but that does not mean that they are not sometimes involved in the management process. You cannot change the way that people behave or approach conflict, but you can arm yourself with some tools to help you successfully navigate conflict when not everyone is on the same page. Don Wallace and Scott McMurry talk about some of those tools using Robert Bramson's book coping with difficult people in an article titled how to disagree without being disagreeable in the November 1995 issue of Fast Company Magazine.

COMMON CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Causes or sources of organizational conflict can be many and varied. The common causes in general are the following:

1. Scarcity of resources (finance, equipment, facilities, etc....).
2. Different attitudes, values and perceptions.
3. Disagreements about needs, goals, priorities and interests.
4. Poor communication.
5. Poor or inadequate organizational structure.
6. Lack of teamwork.
7. Lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities.
8. Delay or lack of team building.

But when we make our questionnaire in the Middle East in Islamic countries we found that the common causes of conflict in these countries as in Figure 1 are:

1. Personality issues (Personal chemistry)
Including Conflicting Values or Action. For Example Strong interpersonal natures among workers do not seem to match, we do not like others because they seem too much like ourselves (we often do not like in others what we do not like in ourselves). It is clear that personality issues are not within the common causes of conflict in advanced countries.

2. The Alignment or the Amount of Resources Is Insufficient

There is a disagreement about who does what, Stress from working with inadequate resources.

3. Poor Communications

Employees experience continual surprises, for example, they are not informed of major decisions that affect their workplaces and lives, Employees do not understand the reasons for the decisions, they are not involved in the decision making, As a result, they trust the rumor mill more than their management.

4. Leadership Problems

For example, inconsistent, missing, too strong or uninformed leadership (at any level

in the organization), evidenced by avoiding conflict, passing the buck with little follow through on decisions, Employees sees the same continued issues in the workplace, supervisors do not understand the jobs of their subordinates. It is clear that leadership problems are not within the common causes of conflict in advanced countries.

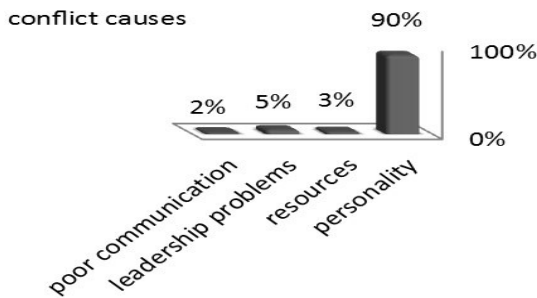


Figure 1: Common Causes of Conflict in Middle East

CONFLICT TYPE

Conflict between Individual

People have differing styles of communication, ambitions, political or religious views and different cultural backgrounds. In our diverse society, the possibility of these differences leading to conflict between individuals is always there and we must be alert to preventing and resolving situations where conflict arises.

Conflict between Groups of People

Whenever people form groups; they tend to emphasize the things that make their group better than or different from other groups. This happens in the fields of sport, culture, religion and the workplace and can sometimes change from healthy competition to destructive conflict.

Conflict within a Group of People

Even within one organization or team, conflict can arise from the individual differences or ambitions mentioned earlier or from rivalry between sub-groups or factions. All leaders and members of the organization need to be alert to group dynamics that can spill over into conflict.

Especially in the workplace, two main types of disputes have been noted (although

these two types may also happen in other situations). These are: Disputes of right, where people or groups are entitled by law, by contract, by previous agreement or by established practice to certain rights. Disputes of right will focus on conflict issues such as employment contracts, legally enforceable matters or unilateral changes in accepted or customary practices.

A dispute of rights is, therefore, usually settled by legal decision or arbitration and not by negotiation. Secondly disputes of interest, where the conflict may be a matter of opinion, such as where a person or group is entitled to some resources or privileges (such as access to property, better working conditions, etc...). Because there is no established law or right, a dispute of interest will usually be solved through collective bargaining or negotiation.

HOW TO IDENTIFY SIGNS AND STAGES OF CONFLICT

Stages of Conflict

The handling of conflict requires awareness of its various developmental stages. If leaders in the situation can identify the conflict issue and how far it has developed, they can sometimes solve it before it becomes much more serious. Typical stages include: Where potential for conflict exists in other words where people recognize that lack of resources, diversity of language.

Or culture may possible result in conflict if people are not sensitive to the diversity, latent conflict where a competitive situation could easily spill over into conflict, at a political rally or in the workplace where there are obvious differences between groups of people, Open conflict which can be triggered by an incident and suddenly become real conflict, aftermath conflict the situation where a particular problem may have been resolved but the potential for conflict still exists. In fact the potential may be even greater than before, if one person or group perceives itself as being involved in a win-lose situation.

Signs of Conflict between Individuals

In the organization leaders and members should be alert to signs of conflict between colleagues, so that they can be proactive in reducing or resolving the conflict by getting to the root of the issue. Typical signs may include colleagues not speaking to each other or ignoring each other, contradicting and bad-mouthing one another, deliberately undermining or not co-operating with each other, to the downfall of the team.

Signs of Conflict between Groups of People

Similarly, leaders and members can identify latent conflict between groups of people in the organization or the community and plan action before the conflict becomes open and destructive, cliques or factions meeting to discuss issues separately, when they affect the whole organization, one group being left out of organizing an event which should include everybody, groups using threatening slogans or symbols to show that their group is right and the others are wrong.

HOW TO BUILD TEAMWORK AND CO-OPERATION

Teamwork and co-operation are essential in an organization which aims to be effective and efficient, and not likely to be divided by conflicting factions. The best teamwork usually comes from having a shared vision or goal, so that leaders and members are all committed to the same objectives and understand their roles in achieving those objectives.

Important behaviors in achieving teamwork and minimizing potential conflict include a commitment by team members to share information by keeping people in the group up-to-date with current issues, express positive expectations about each other, empower each other publicly crediting colleagues who have performed well and encouraging each other to achieve results, team-build by promoting good morale and protecting the group's reputation with outsiders, resolve potential conflict by

bringing differences of opinion into the open and facilitating resolution of conflicts.

THE COMMON FACTORS THAT MINIMIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFLICT

1. Regularly review job descriptions. Get your employee's input to them. Ensure: Job roles do not conflict, No tasks fall in a crack.
2. Intentionally build relationships with all subordinates. Meet at least once a month alone with them in office, Ask about accomplishments, challenges and issues. ,
3. Get regular, written status reports that describe: Accomplishments, current issues and needs from management plans for the upcoming period.
4. Conduct basic training about interpersonal communications, conflict management and delegation.
5. Develop procedures for routine tasks and include the employees' input. Have employees write procedures when possible and appropriate get employees' review of the procedures, distribute the procedures, and Train employees about the procedures.
6. Regularly hold management meetings with all employees. For example, every month communicate new initiatives and status of current products or services.
7. Consider an anonymous suggestion box in which employees can provide suggestions. This can be powerful means to collect honest feedback, especially in very conflicted workplaces.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND STYLES

Conflict management techniques missionaries get into conflict with each other. Pastors and lay people get into conflict. Volunteers in ministry organizations find themselves in conflict. Human relations managers in businesses often find themselves managing situations of inter-personal conflict, how can you manage disagreements in ways that build personal and collegial relationships rather than harming them? Such

disagreements or conflicts can occur between individuals or between groups of people. Here are five strategies as in Figure 2 from conflict management theory for managing stressful situations.

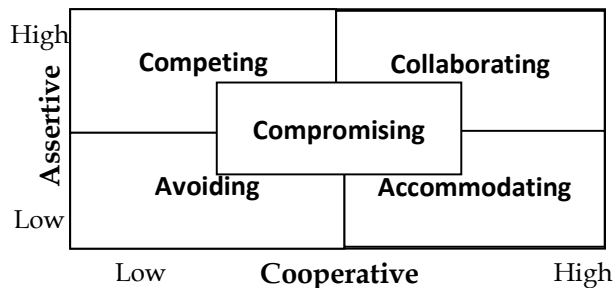


Figure 2: Conflict Strategies and Styles

None of them is a one-size-fits-all solution. Which one is the best in a given situation will depend on a variety of factors, including an appraisal of the levels of conflict. Here are the major ways that people use to deal with conflict:

1. Collaborating (I win, you win)

Fundamental premise: Teamwork and cooperation help everyone achieve their goals while also maintaining relationships. Strategic philosophy is the process of working through differences will lead to creative solutions that will satisfy both parties' concerns when to use: when there is a high level of trust, when you don't want to have full responsibility, when you want others to also have ownership of solutions, when the people involved are willing to change their thinking as more information is found and new options are suggested, when you need to work through animosity and hard feelings. Drawbacks is the process takes lots of time and energy, Some may take advantage of other people's trust and openness.

2. Compromising (You bend, I bend)

Fundamental premise: Winning something while losing a little is OK. Strategic philosophy both ends are placed against the middle in an attempt to serve the common good while ensuring each person can maintain something of their original position when to use, when people of equal status are equally

committed to goals, when time can be saved by reaching intermediate settlements on individual parts of complex issues, when goals are moderately important. Drawbacks is important values and long-term objectives can be derailed in the process, may not work if initial demands are too great, can spawn cynicism, especially if there's no commitment to honor the compromise solutions.

3. Accommodating (I lose, you win)

Fundamental premise: Working toward a common purpose is more important than any of the peripheral concerns, the trauma of confronting differences may damage fragile relationships Strategic philosophy appease others by downplaying conflict, thus protecting the relationship when to use, when an issue is not as important to you as it is to the other person, when you realize you are wrong, when you are willing to let others learn by mistake, when you know you cannot win, when it is not the right time and you would prefer to simply build credit for the future, when harmony is extremely important, when what the parties have in common is a good deal more important than their differences. Drawbacks are One's own ideas don't get attention; Credibility and influence can be lost.

4. Competing (I win, you lose)

Fundamental premise: Associates winning a conflict with competition. Strategic philosophy, when goals are extremely important, one must sometimes use power to win, when to use, when you know you are right, when time is short and a quick decision is needed, when a strong personality is trying to steamroller you and you don't want to be taken advantage of, when you need to stand up for your rights. Drawbacks are can escalate conflict, losers may retaliate.

5. Avoiding (No winners, no losers)

Fundamental premise: This isn't the right time or place to address this issue, Strategic philosophy avoids conflict by withdrawing, sidestepping or postponing when to use, when the conflict is small and relationships are at stake, When you're counting to ten to cool off,

when more important issues are pressing and you feel you don't have time to deal with this particular one, When you have no power and you see no chance of getting your concerns met, When you are too emotionally involved and others around you can solve the conflict more successfully, When more information is needed. Drawbacks are important decisions may be made by default, Postponing may make matters worse.

But when we make our questionnaire in Middle East in Islamic countries we found that up to 90% of managers are using collaborating and accommodating as a mode of conflict resolving, in these countries as in Figure 3.

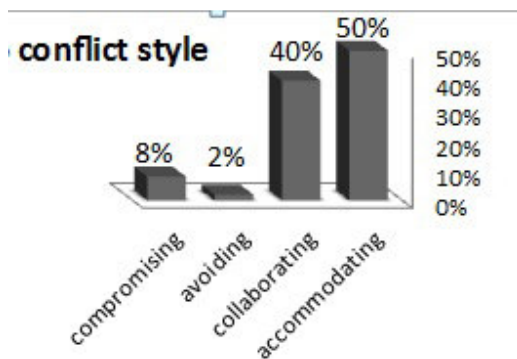


Figure 3: Conflict Style in Middle East

STEPS OF RESOLVING CONFLICT

1. Clarifying Confusion about Conflict

Conflict occurs with two or more people who, despite their first attempts at agreement, do not yet have agreement on a course of action, usually because their values, perspectives and opinions are contradictory in nature. Conflict can occur: Within yourself when you are not living according to your values, when your values and perspectives are threatened, when there is discomfort from fear of the unknown or from lack of fulfillment, conflict is inevitable and often necessary when forming high-performing teams because they evolve through form, storm, norm and perform periods.

Getting the most out of diversity often means addressing contradictory values, perspectives and opinions. Conflict is often needed. It: helps to raise and address problems, energizes work to be focused on the

most important priorities, helps people be real and motivates them to fully participate, helps people learn how to recognize and benefit from their differences, conflict is not the same as discomfort. The conflict is not the problem – poor management of the conflict is the problem. Conflict is a problem when it: Hampers productivity. Lowers morale, Causes more and continued conflicts, causes inappropriate behaviors.

2. Interview the Parties Involved

Take time to formally gather information from those involved. Remember to keep emotions calm and focus on the issues, what do the parties involved want to see happen? What is best for the club? What would the board like to see happen? Summarize these findings in a detailed report.

3. Identify The Solutions. What Are The Alternatives?

Identify several possible solutions to the problem, Come up with ways to implement the solutions, what are the outcomes of each solution? Resolve the conflict collaboratively rather than adversarial, Narrow the solutions and come up with the top priority resolution.

4. Select the Appropriate Solution

Determine the best solutions for all involved. Allow parties to examine the top resolutions, educate parties and get agreement to participate in the process. Bring parties together and narrow the solution to a jointly agreed upon and owned solution. Get parties to commit to implement the resolution and set a specific date to meet and review the resolution.

5. Follow Through And Evaluate The Solution.

Create a written report to document all that transpired throughout the process, File the report and keep on file for a period of 10 years, Have a follow-up meeting with all involved to touch base and make certain the conflict has been resolved, Celebrate and let parties know that they have collaboratively worked through a problem and the solution or action taken allows the board to focus its attention to fulfilling its mission.

6. We Have an Impasse and No Resolution Was Reached

Troubleshooting: Determine that you have the right objective people involved in the resolution process, go back to the beginning and attempt to work through the process again. In other words, be sure that the people mediating are not part of the problem. Also be sure that all the people involved in the conflict are interviewed and part of the process, seek the advice of the membership liaison in your area, as a last resort, and consult the U.S. Figure Skating Grievance Committee chair.

CONCLUSIONS

The success of project managers in managing their project teams often depends a great deal on their ability to resolve conflict; different project managers may have different conflict resolution styles.

We made our questionnaire in countries in Middle East such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan in construction field. We take 100 samples in these countries. First we found that conflict is natural and should be happened between teams up to 95%. Secondly we found the most reason that increases conflict is due personality issues (personal chemistry) up to 90%, although this factor is the latest in civilized countries.

In these countries the reasons of conflict can be ordered as follow Schedules, priorities, manpower, technical, procedures and finally personality. At last we found that up to 90% of managers are using collaborating and accommodating as a mode of conflict resolving, which is found to be more commonly used in handling conflict. And significantly, almost all of the case incidents which used the both style approach were said to have achieved positive consequences.

Finally Conflict is natural and forces a search for alternatives, Conflict is a team issue, openness resolves conflict, conflict resolution should focus on issues, not personalities, conflict resolution should focus on the present, not the past. Conflict resolution style should be win-win solution. The paper presents a useful source of information which

would benefits organizations in its globalization, which has faded the national boundaries and has brought people of different culture to work together on a single platform

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