

“TEAM MANAGEMENT SKILL”

Lecture6.

**RESOLVE APPROPRIATELY WORKPLACE PROBLEMS
AS PER CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES**

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2.1. Resolve workplace problems

2.1.1. Key terms

Conflict

Conflict in the workplace is a normal occurrence in most organizations. Dictionary definitions vary from calling it a sharp disagreement to opposing ideas and interests. Wherever people work together, conflict is likely to arise, and it presents a challenge to which management must respond constructively.

Conflict management

Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict. The aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in an organizational setting.

Conflict management is the process by which disputes are resolved, where negative results are minimized, and positive results are prioritized.

This key management skill involves using different tactics depending on the situation, negotiation, and creative thinking. With properly managed conflict, an organization is able to minimize interpersonal issues, enhance client satisfaction, and produce better business outcomes

2.1.2. Common workplace issues

Communication problems

Communication between management and staff is very often one of the biggest causes of workplace issues. If management is not open to listening or implementing solutions that would make life easier or more efficient for workers, it can be perceived as cold-hearted or uncaring. This, in turn, can cause it to lose the respect of the employees.

Low motivation and job satisfaction

Generally, employees want to do a good job. Their intention is to become a valuable member of the organization, and hopefully, impress their managers and customers in the process. However, some managers may unintentionally fail to notice the effort and contribution that their staff puts

forward. Yet, intentional or not, employees who feel underappreciated tend to become disengaged and even dissatisfied with their job.

Interpersonal conflict

Although we may try to please everyone, sometimes we encounter an individual with whom it's difficult to find common ground. Whether colleague, superior, or subordinate, when professional viewpoints don't fit together, productivity and efficiency often suffer.

Harassment and Bullying

One of the most dangerous problems in the workplace is office bullying, which often goes hand-in-hand with harassment. The main difference is usually the power dynamics between the primary players. Bullying happens most often between employees of equal stature, whereas harassment is usually defined by one person exerting his or her control or authority over someone in a weaker or subservient position. The consequences of each are harmful, both to individuals and corporate teams.

Gossip

Gossip in the workplace is another very common issue that can damage relationships and diminish productivity of people, teams, and even entire divisions. It's understandable on some level for people be interested in their co-workers' lives; with many workweeks stretching beyond 40 hours, workers may see their colleagues more than just about anyone else. When gossip rages about sensitive issues, such as a co-worker's failing marriage or a possible workplace romance, however, it can become destructive and can create a great deal of negativity.

Discrimination

Workplace discrimination against protected categories like age, gender, race is illegal. But organizations do it anyway.

Performance issues: when someone's performance is not good enough it creates issues.

Poor Job fit: this issue come up if you are not fitting perfectly into the job

2.1.3. Conflict management

1. Causes of conflicts in workplace

a) Differences in goals

Organizational sources of conflict occur when departments are differentiated in their goals. Departments within the organization feel like they are working at cross-purposes, even though they're both operating under the assumption that their choices are best for the company. Very often, the possibility of conflict increases substantially when departments in the organization have different or incompatible goals. For instance, the goal of a computer salesperson is to sell many computers as fast as possible. Another example is when the research and development team at an electronics company might be instructed to come up with a new electronic device, then the manufacturing team gets together to look at this new design, and finally the manufacturing team disagrees with research and development team about this product.

b) Limited resources

Resource scarcity also leads to conflict. If there aren't enough material and supplies for every worker, then those who do get resources and those who don't are likely to experience conflict. In many work situations, we have to share resources. The scarcer the resource in the organization, the greater the chance for a conflict situation. Resource scarcity leads to a conflict because each person that needs the same resources necessarily undermines others who pursue their own goals. Limited resources may include money, supplies, people, or information.

c) Reward structures

An organization's reward system can be a source of conflict, particularly if the organization sets up a win-lose environment for employee rewards.

For instance, an organization might set a standard where only a certain percent of the employees can achieve the top ranking for raises and bonuses. This standard, not an uncommon practice,

creates heavy competition within its employee ranks. Competition of this nature often creates conflict.

Other forms of rewards that might incite conflict include employee of the month or other major awards that are given on a competitive basis.

d) Difference in perceptions

In interpersonal interaction, perception is more important than reality. What we perceive and think affects our behaviour, attitudes, and communication. workers may view the same incident in dramatically different ways. An example is of what might happen if a new administrative assistant were hired in the organization. One associate might see the new hire as an advantage (one more set of hands to get the job done), while another associate might see the same new hire as an insult (a clear message that the current associates are not performing adequately).

a) Unfair treatment

When workers are treated unfairly it create conflict in the organization, a very simple example is when you have limited resources, because everyone requires a share of the resources (office space, supplies, the boss's time, or funding) to complete their jobs. it should come as no surprise when an employee is always told not to use resources and yet have to finish the job or task on due deadline. Another example is when an employee is given extra jobs all the time while having other responsibilities and yet there is someone else who is free.

b) Leadership management aspect

Management deals with the process of controlling employees so that the work of the organization is done on time and in a correct manner, when leaders are not good enough in the organization it results in misunderstanding and conflict.

2. Types of Conflict

a) Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict is conflict due to differences in goals, value, and styles between two or more people who are required to interact. As this type of conflict is between individuals, the conflicts can get very personal.

b) Intrapersonal Conflict

The intrapersonal conflict is conflict experienced by a single individual, when his or her own goals, values or roles diverge. A lawyer may experience a conflict of values when he represents a defendant that he knows to be guilty of the charges brought against him.

c) Intergroup Conflict

Intergroup conflict is when conflict between groups inside and outside an organization disagree on various issues. Conflict can also arise between two groups within the same organization, and that also would be considered intergroup conflict.

d) Intragroup Conflict

Intragroup conflict is conflict within a group or team, where members conflict over goals or procedures. For instance, a board of directors may want to take a risk to launch a set of products on behalf of their organization, in spite of dissenting opinions among several members. Intragroup conflict takes place among them as they argue the pros and cons of taking such a risk.

If we are to try to understand the roots of conflict, then we need to know what cause of conflict is present. Below are some of the conflicts we may consider:

1. *Goal conflict.* Goal conflict can occur when one person or group desires a different outcome than others do. This is simply a clash over whose goals are going to be pursued.
2. *Cognitive conflict.* Cognitive conflict can result when one person or group holds ideas or opinions that are inconsistent with those of others. This type of conflict is evident in political debates.
3. *Affective conflict.* This type of conflict emerges when one person's or group's feelings or emotions (attitudes) are incompatible with those of others. Affective conflict is seen in situations where two individuals simply don't get along with each other.
4. *Behavioral conflict.* Behavioral conflict exists when one person or group does something (i.e., behaves in a certain way) that is unacceptable to others. Dressing for work in a way that "offends" others and using profane language are examples of behavioral conflict.

Each of these types of conflict is usually triggered by different factors, and each can lead to very different responses by the individual or group.

3. Conflict management styles

1. Withdraw/avoid.

Retreating from an actual or potential conflict situation; postponing the issue to be better prepared or to be resolved by others. avoidance, denial or retreat involves giving up, pulling out or retreating. It also refers to refusal to deal with the conflict. It involves ignoring conflict as much as possible.

This style is appropriate when a “cooling off” period is needed to gain better understanding of the conflict situation and also when the others party involved in the conflicts is both unassertive and uncooperative.

2. Smooth/accommodate.

Emphasizing areas of agreement rather than areas of difference; conceding one’s position to the needs of others to maintain harmony and relationships.

It works when the issues are more important than personal positions and aspirations of the parties involved. Since smoothing tends to keep peace only in the short terms, it fails to provide a permanent tends to keep peace only in the short term, it fails to provide a permanent long-term solution to the underlying conflicts. Generally, conflict reappears again in another form.

3. Compromise/reconcile.

Searching for solutions that bring some degree of satisfaction to all parties in to temporarily or partially resolve the conflict. This approach occasionally results in a lose-lose situation. Compromising is primarily “bargaining” – receiving something in exchange for something else. It involves considering various issues, bargaining, using trade-off negotiations and searching for solutions that bring some degree of satisfaction to both parties involved in the conflict. In this mode, neither party wins but both get some degree of satisfaction out of the situation.

Temporarily, both parties may feel hurt because they had to give up something that was important to them but compromising usually provides acceptable solutions. A definitive resolution to the conflict is achieved when a compromise is reached and accepted as a just solution by both parties

involved in the conflict. The only problem with compromising in a project situation is that, sometimes, important aspects of the project might be compromised

4. Force/direct.

Pushing one's viewpoint at the expense of others; offering only win-lose solutions, usually enforced through a power position to resolve an emergency. This approach often results to a win-lose situation.

It is used when there is no common ground on which to bargain or negotiate, and when both parties are uncooperative and strong-willed. Project managers may use it when time is of the essence, an issue is vital to the well-being of the project, and they feel they are right based on the information available. Under such circumstances project managers take the risk and simply dictate the action to move things forward.

This approach is appropriate when quick decisions are required or when unpopular issues such as budget cuts, fast-tracking or staff cutbacks are essential in a project.

5. Collaborate/problem solve.

Incorporating multiple viewpoints and insights from differing perspectives; requires a cooperative attitude and open dialogue that typically leads to consensus and commitment. This approach can result in a win-win situation.

This approach requires a give-and-take attitude between the parties, meaning that both parties are somewhat assertive and somewhat cooperative. It involves pinpointing the issue and resolving it objectively by defining the problem, gathering necessary information, generating and analysing alternatives and selecting the best alternative under the circumstances

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