Addressing Conflict At Work: An Action Based Approach

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Questions

• Define Conflict

• What are the goals of conflict?

• **Conflict** = When what we want/need is different than what we can have (1)
What Conflict Isn’t About

• Who’s right or wrong
• Who’s more at fault
• Who should be the first to apologize

*If something is bothering you it’s yours to resolve (Don’t wait…*)
Ingredients of Conflict

- Differences
- Needs
- Perceptions
- Values
- Feelings
- Power
Traditional View of Conflict

- Negative experience (bad outcome)
- I vs. you (good vs. evil)
- Competition
- Winner & loser
- Temporary solution (no real fix)
Traditional Ways to Address Conflict (3)

- War
- Murder/Genocide
- Imprison
- Exile
- Assault
- Segregate
- Ostracize
Limitations of Traditional Approaches

- Not addressing underlying issues
- Loss of relationships
- Lost opportunity to learn
- Lack of growth
- Focus on winning and not resolving
- Breeds more conflict
Avoiding Conflict

I DON'T LIKE TO FACE PROBLEMS HEAD ON

I THINK THE BEST WAY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS IS TO AVOID THEM

THIS IS A DISTINCT PHILOSOPHY OF MINE...

NO PROBLEM IS SO BIG OR SO COMPLICATED THAT IT CAN'T BE RUN AWAY FROM!

WHAT IF EVERYONE WAS LIKE YOU?

WHAT IF WE ALL RAN AWAY FROM OUR PROBLEMS?

WHAT IF EVERYONE IN THE WHOLE WORLD SUDDENLY DECIDED TO RUN AWAY FROM HIS PROBLEMS?

WELL, AT LEAST WE'D ALL BE RUNNING IN THE SAME DIRECTION!
3 Main Reasons People Avoid Conflict

- Fear (outcome, repercussions, loss)
- Lack Skills
- Dislike Change
Benefits of Avoiding

- Don’t have to deal with it
- Reduced stress (short-term)
- Denial is bliss
- No need for accountability
- Making excuses is easier than taking responsibility
Consequences of Avoiding

- Increased stress (long-term)
- Problem not solved & issue often gets worse
- Usually more people get involved
- Sets a bad example for the organization
- Lack of accountability breeds more problems
Is Avoidance Always Bad?

• Too angry or emotional
• When you haven’t thought through it
• Take a break (time often allows perspective)
• Talk through it with others
• No benefits/can’t make a difference
Cycle: Conflict = Bad

- Conflict is Bad
  - Handle it poorly
  - Conflict Intensifies
  - Anxiety/Stress
- Avoid
Players in Conflict
3 Key Players in Conflict

- Victim
- Villain
- Hero
Victim (4)

- Powerless
- Innocent
- Controlled by villain
- Receives attention
- Guilt villain into apologizing
- Plays on hero’s value of saving
- Gives up personal power
Villain (4)

• Control victim (deprive of something)
• Focus on control & domination
• Desire to win
• Often past victims (evening the score)
Hero (4)

- Courageous
- Selfless, noble
- Can be viewed as self-righteous and manipulative
- Desire to ‘fix’
- Disempower victims
- Perpetuate the very conflict they are trying to solve
How We End Up in These Roles

- Family
- Socialization/modeling
- Life experiences
- Personality
- Level of empowerment
- Status at work
Importance of Understanding These Roles (4)

- Awareness
- Empathy & Understanding
- These roles are present in every conflict
- Experiences in these roles will help you transform the way you are in conflict
Skills & Strategies for Success
Overview of Communication (2)

- Sender
- Receiver
- Message
- Understanding
Effective Communication (2)

- When the sender sends a message to the receiver and the receiver's understanding is the same as what the sender intended.
Listening (2)

- Most important skill
- Most people listen at only 25% effectiveness
- People talk at rate of 175 wpm
- People listen at rate of 500 wpm
  - Extra time exists b/t what you hear & what you think
  - Gap is filled with things that are irrelevant or what you are going to say when they finish
More Effective Listening (2)

• Focus on speakers concerns
• Listen to what they want/need
• Put your desires/feelings aside (hardest)
• Concentrate on hearing them
• Awareness of own filters
Speaking

- Sooner rather than later
- Apologize (own your stuff)
- Clear
- Direct (but not personally attacking)
- Honest
- Check receipt of message
- Request vs. demand
- Intention isn’t an excuse
- Use “and” not “but”
Asking Questions

• Be curious first

• Open ended (who, what, when, where, how)
  - be careful of ‘why’ (often creates defensiveness)

• Use clarifying questions to get at underlying issue/needs
Conflict Reframed

- Opportunity
- Goal clarity
- Positive experience
- Partnership & collaboration
- Growth for all parties
- Improved relationship
- Resolution occurs
Cycle: Conflict = Opportunity

Conflict is an Opportunity
Resolution  Effectively Manage Stress
Effective Dialogue  Approach/Gather Data

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Creating a Conflict Dialogue
Conflict Dialogue (3)

- We (mutual benefits)
- Conflict addressed in context of overall relationship
- Do your homework first
- Equally contribute to exchange
- Seek to understand their perspective
- Decisions based on shared understanding
Setting Goals

- Don’t set based on intense emotions
- Be clear & specific about what you want/need
- Are the goals measurable?
- Chose behavior that leads you closer to the goals you desire
Closing Conflict

- Summary of what was decided
- Who will do what
- What will change
- New behaviors/expectations
- Check in time
- End on a positive note
Hope

- The images you hold of possibility or NOT will ultimately dictate your beliefs, filters & actions
Questions/Comments
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References


