

8.14: Summary

In this chapter, we have dealt with managing conflict. We have defined conflict and identified dangers that can arise from it. We have leadership approaches to conflict and reviewed the nature of conflict in the work environment. We have also explored effective conflict management strategies and explained how to develop and when to use a crisis communication plan. Conflict is a perennial and nature part of group communication which can be managed effectively if we understand the important concepts and skills shared in this chapter.

Review Questions

Interpretive Questions

1. In what 2–3 ways has your view of conflict changed as a result of reading this chapter?
2. To what degree do you feel that techniques which are effective for managing conflict in small groups can produce positive results within large organizations or between nations? On what evidence or experience do you base your view concerning this question?

Application Questions

1. Think of one of your ongoing relationships in which conflict plays a larger or more harmful part than you would prefer. Which conflict management strategies from this chapter are you willing to put into use in that relationship? Please report back to one or more of your classmates in two weeks concerning the outcome of your plan.
2. Think of a leader you know who you believe manages conflict particularly effectively. Arrange an interview with the person in which you ask him/her for examples of how s/he used one or more of the strategies mentioned in this chapter. Ask also if the person has further advice for you to use in a conflict situation. Present your instructor with a short written description of the results of your interview.

Summary of Learning Outcomes

Conflict in Organizations: Basic Considerations

How do you recognize and resolve short- and long-term conflicts among group members and among groups?

Conflict is the process by which a person or group feels frustrated in the pursuit of certain goals, plans, or objectives. Conflict may take one of four forms: (1) goal, (2) cognitive, (3) affective, or (4) behavioral. Conflict may occur on several levels, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and interorganizational.

Causes of Conflict in Organizations

How does conflict arise in organizations?

Conflict in organizations can be caused by task interdependencies, status inconsistencies, jurisdictional ambiguities, communication problems, dependence on common resource pools, lack of common performance standards, and individual differences. A model of the conflict process follows four stages. Conflict originates (stage 1) when an individual or group experiences frustration in the pursuit of important goals. In stage 2, the individual or group attempts to understand the nature of the problem and its causes. In stage 3, efforts are made to change behavioral patterns in such a way that the desired outcome, or stage 4, is achieved.

Resolving Conflict in Organizations

When and how do you negotiate, and how do you achieve a mutually advantageous agreement?

Ineffective conflict resolution strategies include nonaction, administrative orbiting, due process nonaction, secrecy, and character assassination. Strategies for preventing conflict include (1) emphasizing organization-wide goals; (2) providing stable, well-structured tasks; (3) facilitating intergroup communication; and (4) avoiding win-lose situations. Strategies for reducing conflict include (1) physical separation, (2) use of rules and regulations, (3) limiting intergroup interaction, (4) use of integrators, (5) confrontation and negotiation, (6) third-party consultation, (7) rotation of members, (8) identification of interdependent tasks and superordinate goals, and (9) use of intergroup training. Negotiation is the process by which individuals and groups attempt to reach their goals by bargaining with others who can help or hinder goal attainment. Negotiation is helpful in three primary instances: (1) a conflict of interest, (2) the absence of clear rules or procedures, and (3) when there is a desire to avoid a fight. Distributive

bargaining attempts to resolve a win-lose conflict in which resources are limited and each party wishes to maximize its share of these resources. Integrative bargaining occurs when both parties attempt to reach a settlement that benefits both sides in a dispute.

Negotiation Behavior

How do you recognize and respond to cultural differences in negotiation and bargaining strategies?

A resistance point is the point beyond which an opponent will not go to reach a settlement. Planning for a negotiation session involves (1) understanding the basic nature of the conflict, (2) knowing what the group wants to achieve in the session, (3) selecting a chief negotiator, and (4) understanding one's opponent. Cultural differences play a major role in the negotiation process and influence such factors as persuasion techniques, the key characteristics of the negotiators, and communication patterns.

Chapter Review Questions

1. Identify the types of conflict commonly found in organizations, and provide examples of each.
2. How can conflict be good for an organization?
3. Identify some reasons for the prevalence of intergroup conflict in organizations.
4. How does intergroup conflict affect behavior within a work group? behavior between two or more groups?
5. Review the basic conflict model discussed in this chapter. What lessons for management follow from this model?
6. Of the various strategies for resolving and preventing conflicts that are presented in this chapter, which ones do you feel will generally be most effective? least effective? Why?
7. What is the difference between distributive and integrative bargaining? When would each be most appropriate?
8. How can cultural differences affect bargaining behavior? If you were negotiating with a Japanese firm, what might you do differently than if you were facing an American firm? Explain.

Management Skills Application Exercises

1. You might find it interesting to see how you approach conflict resolution. To do this, simply complete this self-assessment. When you are done, refer to [Appendix B](#) for scoring details.

What Is Your Approach to Conflict Resolution?

Instructions: Think of a typical situation in which you have a disagreement with someone. Then answer the following items concerning how you would respond to the conflict. Circle the number that you feel is most appropriate.

	Highly Unlikely			Highly Likely	
1. I firmly push for my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I always try to win an argument.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I try to show my opponent the logic of my position.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I like to discuss disagreements openly.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I try to work through our differences.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I try to get all concerns on the table for discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I try to work for a mutually beneficial solution.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I try to compromise with the other person.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I seek a balance of gains and losses on each side.	1	2	3	4	5

10. I don't like talking about disagreements.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I try to avoid unpleasantness for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I avoid taking positions that may incite disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I try to think of the other person in any disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I try to preserve relationships in any conflict.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I try not to hurt the other person's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5

Managerial Decision Exercises

The president of your company has just told you that an Indian multinational company is interested in purchasing a large amount of the products that you and your group are responsible for. You have been charged with meeting with the team from India, hosting their visit, and negotiating the agreement, including pricing. How do you communicate during the meeting with your colleagues? What are some aspects of the social and business interactions that you will want you and your staff to avoid? What will you report back to the president regarding the meeting, and will you encourage her to take part in the meeting?

Critical Thinking Case:

College Corp.

Janice just graduated college, she's ready to head out on her own and get that first job, and she's through her first interviews. She receives an offer of a \$28,000 salary, including benefits from COLLEGE CORP, from an entry-level marketing position that seems like a perfect fit. She is thrown off by the salary they are offering and knows that it is lower than what she was hoping for. Instead of panicking, she takes the advice of her mentor and does a little research to know what the market range for the salary is for her area. She feels better after doing this, knowing that she was correct and the offer is low compared to the market rate. After understanding more about the offer and the rates, she goes back to the HR representative and asks for her preferred rate of \$32,500, knowing the minimum that she would accept is \$30,000. Instead of going in for her lowest amount, she started higher to be open to negotiations with the company. She also sent a note regarding her expertise that warranted why she asked for that salary. To her happy surprise, the company counter offered at \$31,000—and she accepted.

Questions:

1. What key points of Janice's negotiation led to her success?
2. What could have Janice done better to get a better outcome for her salary?

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