Leading With Diplomacy:
Dealing With Conflict

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The Nature of Conflict

Typical Definitions

- Prolonged warfare; a clash of opposing ideas, interests, etc.; disagreement (American Heritage Dictionary, 2nd College Edition)

- A real, perceived or potential sense that interests are being threatened or jeopardized (William F. Lincoln, In Pursuit of Promises)

- A conflict emerges when two or more persons or groups seek to possess the same object, occupy the same space, or the same exclusive position, play incompatible roles, maintain incompatible goals, or undertake mutually incompatible means for achieving their purposes. (Robert North, as cited in Win-Win Negotiating, John Wiley & Sons, 1984)
The Nature of Conflict

Alternative Definitions:

- Conflict is a way of learning about what is not working and discovering how to fix it.

- Conflict is a teacher and a source of transformation.

From Kenneth Cloke, Creative Techniques in Mediation
The Nature of Conflict

Negative Consequences of Conflict:

- Consumes unnecessary resources
- Destroys trust, affinity and goodwill
- Tarnishes credibility and respect
- Creates confusion/resentment
- Tears apart relationships, groups and coalitions
- Locks people into undesirable positions
Nature of Conflict

Positive Consequences of Conflict:

- Brings concerns and problems to the surface
- Improves communication/understanding
- Stimulates change
- Serves as an opening valve for emotions and undelivered messages
- Develops systems and remedies for future problems
The Nature of Conflict

Interests Underlying Conflict:

- Organization stability
- Desire to grow
- Political power
- Financial interests
- Loyalty and allegiance
- Reputation and public image

Self-Image
Respect
Survival
Privacy
Control
Camaraderie
The Nature of Conflict

What Makes People Difficult?
The Nature of Conflict

What Makes A Conversation Difficult?
Difficult Conversations

1. The “What Happened” Conversation
2. The Feelings Conversation
3. The Identity Conversation

From: Difficult Conversations, Stone, Patton, Heen
Conflict Styles: COMPETING

Objective:
- Situations have one of two possible outcomes: winning and losing. The strategy involves going all out to win your objective at the other’s expense.

Style Hallmarks:
- Making demands/threats
- Lecturing
- Interrupting
- Exploiting the weaknesses of others
- Uncooperative

Strategies:
- Control communications by withholding/distorting relevant information
- Withhold/ignore feelings
- If others disagree, cut them off or pressure to agree

Uses:
- Quick action needed
- Vital issue
- Protection from those who exploit collaborative behavior
Conflict Styles:

ACCOMMODATING

Objective:
- Preserving relationship and making others happy is a key objective.

Style Hallmarks:
- Quick concessions
- Little exchange over possible outcome
- Little substantive discussion

Strategies:
- Smoothing over differences
- Minimizing conflict
- Submitting one’s goals to others

Uses:
- Establish goodwill
- Demonstrate caring for other person
- Harmony is the key

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Conflict Styles: AVOIDING

Objective:
- Pretend that the conflict does not exist

Style Hallmarks:
- Not expressing opinions
- Not commenting on other’s opinions
- Absent from meetings or events

Strategies:
- Detachment
- Withdrawal

Uses:
- Issue is trivial
- Timing is wrong
- Emotions are too high
- Additional information is needed
Conflict Styles:

COMPROMISING

Objective:
- A little bit of winning coupled with a little bit of losing is the goal

Style Hallmarks:
- Split the difference
- An eye for an eye

Strategies:
- Leveraging
- Bargaining
- Trading

Uses:
- Each side’s goals are mutually exclusive
- Temporary solution
- Efforts at competition/collaboration have failed
Conflict Styles:

**COLLABORATING**

**Objective:**
- Seek ways to achieve everyone’s goals

**Style Hallmarks:**
- Active listening
- Objective criteria
- Focus on interests

**Uses:**
- Relationship important
- Objective to understand others’ perspectives
- Team effort

**Strategies:**
- Expand the pie
- Creative solutions
CONFLICT TRAP:
➢ Belief that *they* are the problem

CONFLICT SKILL:
➢ Move from certainty about “truth” to curiosity about their story
CONFLICT TRAP:
- Avoiding the issue/people/situation

CONFLICT TRAP:
- Developing judgment as to when, where and with whom to address conflict
CONFLICT TRAP:
- Problematic role assumptions

CONFLICT SKILL:
- Choose the right role for this conflict
CONFLICT TRAP:
- Being unapproachable

CONFLICT SKILL:
- Being open to addressing conflict before disaster strikes
CONFLICT TRAP:
➢ Statements that trigger conflict escalation

CONFLICT SKILL:
➢ Statements that encourage others to listen
CONFLICT TRAP:

- Planning your response before you understand

CONFLICT SKILL:

- Seek to understand before being understood
GUIDE TO MANAGING A CONFLICT

Before The Interaction

- If caught off guard, plan your response. Delay may be beneficial.
- Identify the problem(s)
- Who What When and Where: Plan the Process
- Do not stockpile ammunition
- Visualize success
- Be aware of your physical response; create an emergency plan
- Choose your approach based on judgment not anger or fear
GUIDE TO MANAGING A CONFLICT

During The Interaction

- Seek to understand before being understood
- Summarization of the other side’s perspective
- Use the Core Concerns To Understand and be Understood
- Consider Various Options
- Decide on Best Option
GUIDE TO MANAGING A CONFLICT

After The Interaction

- Tend to Relationship
- Check in Regarding Resolution
- Reflect on Lessons Learned
Team

• A group of people who are interdependent with respect to information, resources and skills who seeks to combine their efforts to achieve a common goal.
Team Conflict

- Interpersonal – Harmful
- Task Focused – Beneficial
Team Diversity

- Homogeneity Bias
- Heterogeneity Aversion
Team Challenges

• Information Dependence
• Group Think
• Abilene Paradox
• Polarization
The Role of Emotions

- Unavoidable
- Numerous
- Fluid
- Multi-layered

From Beyond Reason, (Shapiro and Fisher, 2005)
Simplify By Focusing On The Core Concerns

• Appreciation
• Autonomy
• Affiliation
• Status
• Fulfilling Role

From *Beyond Reason*, (Shapiro and Fisher, 2005)
The Role of Core Concepts

• As A Tool For Understanding
• As A Tool To Improve The Situation

From *Beyond Reason*, (Shapiro and Fisher, 2005)
Appreciation

Do you/the other side feel valued for your point of view?

From *Beyond Reason* (Shapiro and Fisher, 2005)