CONFLICT HANDLING

LESSON 5

What is conflict?

Conflict arises when opposing thoughts, actions, or ideas clash and disrupt the established order.

It is a common occurrence in our daily lives, stemming from natural human tendencies, often driven by self-interest, and occasionally yielding productive outcomes.

Unfortunately, due to its potential to escalate into violence and even warfare, the term 'conflict' is often associated with negativity. However, the truth is that conflict, when handled appropriately and with maturity, has the potential to bring about positive results and foster personal growth.

It presents an opportunity for individuals and groups to confront differences, explore diverse perspectives, and reach resolutions that can lead to meaningful progress and development.

Organizational conflict comes out of:

1. Lack of communication
2. Different personality types
3. Ambiguous expectations
4. Unclear responsibilities
5. Unfair distribution of resources
6. Organizational changes
7. Power struggles and conflicts of interest

Different Levels of Conflict

Interpersonal Conflict

Intrapersonal Conflict

Intergroup Conflict

Intraorganizational Conflict

Types of team conflict

There are several well researched types of conflict that emerge at work.
Being aware of the true roots and causes of conflict is the first step to successfully managing and resolving it.

Task conflict

Conflict around a particular task, the content of decisions made in a team, and differing ideas and views on how to approach and interpret a task.

Relationship conflict

Conflict around relationships with other team members involving different attitude, preferences, personal styles. Destructive, often underpins task conflict.

Process conflict

Conflict around the delegation and logistics of task accomplishment, as well as responsibility and strategy. Linked to task and relationship conflict.

Status conflict

Conflict embedded in an organization around who is (trying to be) on top of the social hierarchy, leading to power struggle over decision-making and resources.

Organizational conflict

Conflict emerging from organizational structure as a whole, often tied to lack of communication, absence of shared visions, and different values.

Conflict Handling Skills

Conflict handling skills are essential for effectively managing and resolving conflicts. These skills include:

➢ **Active listening,** which involves genuinely hearing and understanding the perspectives and concerns of others, while demonstrating empathy towards their experiences.

➢ **Effective communication** is also vital, as it entails expressing thoughts and emotions clearly and assertively, utilizing nonviolent communication techniques to foster understanding and collaboration.

➢ **Collaboration** plays a significant role in conflict resolution, as it involves engaging all parties involved, seeking win-win solutions, and working together to find mutually beneficial outcomes.

➢ **Negotiation** skills are crucial for identifying common ground, compromising, and reaching agreements that address the interests of all parties.

➢ **Emotional intelligence** is important in conflict handling, as it involves managing emotions effectively, understanding the emotions of others, and responding with empathy and respect.

➢ **Problem-solving** skills help in identifying the root causes of conflicts and working collaboratively to develop solutions that address these underlying issues.

➢**Mediation** may be necessary, utilizing a neutral third party to facilitate communication, guide the conflict resolution process, and help parties reach a mutually satisfactory resolution.

- One of the greatest challenges faced by leaders in fostering healthy conflict is the inclination to shield team members from harm.

- This often leads to prematurely interrupting disagreements and prevents individuals from developing essential conflict resolution skills. This approach also leaves individuals longing for resolution that never materializes.

- Hence, it is crucial for leaders to exercise restraint when their team members engage in conflict and allow the natural process of resolution to unfold, even if it may be messy at times.
  - This can be challenging as some leaders may feel that losing control during conflicts signifies failure in their role.

- Lastly, it is imperative for leaders to personally exemplify appropriate conflict behavior. By avoiding conflicts when necessary and productive—an approach often observed in many executives—team leaders inadvertently encourage dysfunction to thrive within the team.

- **As of Filley (1975) positive effects of a conflict are:**
1. Diffuses more serious conflicts
2. Stimulates a search for new facts or resolutions
3. Increases group cohesion and performance
4. Demonstrates measure of power or ability

- **On the other hand cons are:**
1. Hinders smooth working
2. Hampers the decision making process
3. Causes the formation of competing coalitions
4. Reduces productivity

- A tool of how to handle conflicts is the Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI).

- The TKI has five conflict–handling modes and it measures an individual's tendencies across them.

Source: Thomas-Kilmann Instrument

Conflict Handling Modes

- Competing: This mode reflects a high focus on one's own needs and goals, often at the expense of others. It involves a win-lose mindset and a desire to assert one's position and power.

- Collaborating: This mode emphasizes finding mutually satisfactory solutions by actively involving all parties and addressing their concerns. It aims for a win-win outcome through open communication, cooperation, and shared problem-solving.

- Compromising:
In this mode, individuals seek a middle ground by making concessions and finding mutually acceptable agreements. It involves a willingness to give up some of one's own goals to reach a satisfactory resolution.

- Avoiding:
The avoiding mode involves minimizing or ignoring conflicts altogether. It can be an intentional strategy to postpone or sidestep issues, often in an attempt to maintain harmony or avoid confrontation.

- Accommodating: This mode prioritizes the needs and interests of others over one's own. It involves selflessness, cooperation, and a willingness to yield to maintain relationships and avoid conflicts.

CASE STUDY

- Let's say there is 2 co-workers in a shipping company. They have been experiencing conflict while working in a very critical project. The progress of the project and the overall team is now affected tremendously. You as the team leader decides to use TKI method.

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	Member A	Member B
Competing:	High	Moderate
Collaborating:	Moderate	High
Compromising:	Low	Moderate
Avoiding:	Low	Low
Accommodating:	Low	Low