

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND NEGOTIATION

### CHAPTER 15 ABM MODULE B BY ASHISH SIR

**CONFLICT** is nothing but a fight either between two individuals or among group members.

A situation in which people, groups or countries disagree strongly or are involved in a serious argument. (Oxford Learners Dictionary)

**CONFLICTS AT THE WORKPLACE:** Workplace conflict tends to lower the team morale and increase absenteeism, which normally results in the decrease in productivity.

- leads to disruption of desirable state of harmony and stability in an organisation.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF 'CONFLICT':** Hocker and Wilmot (1991) have offered several principles on Conflict which are good indicators of the characteristics of Conflict.

- Conflict is **universal**.
- Conflict is associated with **scarce resources**.
- Conflict is associated with **incompatible goals**.
- Conflict is associated with **interference**.

- Conflict is not a sign of a **poor relationship.**
- Conflict **cannot be avoided.**
- Conflict **cannot always be resolved.**
- **Conflict is not always bad.**

## **MAIN CHARACTERISTICS**

**CONFLICT INVOLVES OPPOSITION:** conflict takes its course only when opposition is there.

**A CONFLICT IS MORE THAN JUST A DISAGREEMENT:** it is a situation in which one or both the parties perceive a threat.

**RESPONSE TO CONFLICTS IS BASED ON PERCEPTIONS:** It is based on the perceptions of the situation, which are influenced by the life-experiences, cultures, values and beliefs.

**CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE:** part of all relationships between individuals who work together.

**CONFLICT WILL ALWAYS REMAIN AMONG HUMANS:** an inevitable and unavoidable element of our personal and professional lives, and one should not try to avoid it.

**CONFLICT CANNOT BE AVOIDED:** Sometimes the end goal can make parties evolve stronger and better.

**CONFLICTS ARE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH:** give confidence and strength to believe that relationship can survive challenges and disagreements.

**ARE CONFLICTS BAD AND/ OR UNDESIRABLE? 3 Viewpoints are there**

- **Traditionalists** believe that **Conflict is bad** and should be avoided.
- **Human relations experts** feel that **Conflict is natural**. It provides an **avenue to know the opinions** and, an opportunity for creativity and persuasion. Thus, it calls for an open approach to Conflict.
- **Integrationists** view Conflict as **inevitable and helpful**. Conflict is viewed as a **positive force** except that when it is misdiagnosed, mismanaged, or improperly avoided. The only key to Conflict resolution is its proper diagnosis and resolution.

## TYPES OF CONFLICTS

**TASK CONFLICT:** involves differences based on work details and goals. It is **related to the concrete issues** related to employees' duties and expectations at work.

**RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT:** It is a **type of personal conflict** that develops over disagreements and differences between individuals or groups. **This type of conflict is over personal issues and not work-related.**

**VALUE CONFLICT:** arises from **fundamental differences** in the life experiences, cultures, identities, values, and beliefs.

**Disputes about values can also arise in the context of work decisions and policies also.**

## INTRA-INDIVIDUAL/ INTRA-PERSONAL CONFLICT

**intra-personal**, where an individual's objective and vision differ from his/ her company's overall vision. (a conflict within an individual)

**Intra-individual** conflict arises from frustration, numerous roles that demand equal attention but is riot always possible

to devote, and goals having both negative and positive aspects.

## GOAL CONFLICT

Goal conflict occurs when the attainment of one goal excludes the possibility of attaining another. Goal conflict is more complex than conflict from frustration.

3 major forms of goal conflict may be distinguished:

### 1. Approach-Approach Conflict

- **What it is:** When a person has to choose between two or more positive but mutually exclusive goals. Both options are appealing, but only one can be selected.
- **Example:** Deciding between two great job offers—one with a higher salary and the other with better work-life balance.
- **Key Challenge:** The difficulty lies in giving up one desirable outcome for the other.

### 2. Approach-Avoidance Conflict

- **What it is:** When a single goal has both positive and negative aspects. The person is drawn to the goal but also pushed away by its drawbacks.

- **Example:** Considering a promotion that comes with a higher salary (positive) but requires relocating to a less desirable city (negative).
- **Key Challenge:** Balancing the desire for the positive outcome while managing the negative aspects.

### 3. Avoidance-Avoidance Conflict

- **What it is:** When a person has to choose between two or more negative but mutually exclusive goals. Both options are undesirable, but a decision has to be made.
- **Example:** Deciding between paying a hefty fine for a traffic violation or attending a time-consuming driving school.
- **Key Challenge:** The difficulty lies in selecting the "lesser of two evils."

## CONFLICT FROM FRUSTRATION

Frustration occurs **when a motivated drive is blocked before a person reaches the desired goal.** An individual driven by an inner state of deficiency engages himself in some actions to fulfil the deficiency.

The frustrated individuals adopt any of four defence mechanisms:

- a. **Aggression** refers to the attack of the barrier, physical or symbolically.
- b. **Withdrawal** refers to backing away from the barrier.
- c. **Fixation** refers to the continuation of efforts to break the barrier.
- d. **Compromise** refers to the search for a new goal.

## ROLE CONFLICT

An individual is to play several roles simultaneously but finding time and resources inadequate to do so.

### 3 major types of role conflict.

1. a conflict between the person's personality and the expectations of the role.
2. **intra-role conflict:** contradictory expectations about how a given role should be played. **(from boss and staff)**
3. **inter role conflict:** differing requirements of two or more roles that must be played at the same time. **(Work roles and non-work roles)**

## REASONS FOR CONFLICT

**Resistance to change:** workforce is afraid of the management and does not see their ability to manage a change.

**Work habits:** A few work habits of the employees can be a cause of conflict in the workplace.

**Poor communication:** Different communication styles can lead to misunderstandings between employees and supervisors or managers.

**Personality clashes:** Team members and managers should understand and accept each other's approach to work and problem-solving. In the absence of such understanding, conflict may occur.

**Poor performance:** When one or more employees are not performing well or are not meeting their potential and the issue is not addressed.

**Poor supervision:** managers or supervisors may be incompetent at their job and they play a biased role and listen to only one side.

### Other reasons

- **Economics:** Insufficient remuneration to employees.



- **Stress from working conditions** such as functional situations.
- **Weak Leadership:** When the leader/ manager is less qualified and/ or having less experience than the team members/ employees.
- **Poor Organisational Structure** and Lack of Teamwork.
- **Status:** When senior position is needed for status and a "wrong" person is promoted.
- **Power struggle:** When everyone wants to be a leader, and nobody wants to be a follower.
- **Incongruence:** An employee is required to do something that is beyond his/her liking or interests.

## DIFFERENT PHASES OF 'CONFLICT'

**Prelude Phase:** It involves all the factors which possibly cause a conflict among individuals.

**Triggering Phase:** There must be an event which triggers the conflict.

**Initiation Phase:** when the conflict has already begun. **Heated arguments, abuses, verbal disagreements** are all warning alarms.

**Differentiation Phase:** The reasons for the conflict are raised

**Resolution Phase:** explores the various options to resolve the conflict.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION {L – T – R}**

**By resolving conflict constructively**, an organisation can turn a potentially destructive situation into an opportunity for growth, creativity and enhanced performance.

**LISTEN:** active listening skills are an important when dealing with conflict.

**TALK:** Clear and open communication is the cornerstone of successful conflict resolution. Appropriate communication tactics are required.

**RESOLVE:** it is expected that after listening to the parties concerned and having detailed discussions with them, the conflict will get resolved.

## **PROCESS OF RESOLVING CONFLICT**

**LISTEN FOR WHAT IS FELT AS WELL AS SAID:** When you really listen, you connect more deeply to your own needs and emotions, and to those of other people.

**MAKE CONFLICT RESOLUTION THE PRIORITY RATHER THAN WINNING OR "BEING RIGHT"**

**FOCUS ON THE PRESENT:** focus on what you can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem.

**PICK YOUR BATTLES:** to consider whether the issue is worth your time and energy.

**BE WILLING TO FORGIVE:** Resolving conflict is impossible if you're unwilling or unable to forgive others.

**AGREE TO DISAGREE:** If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.

## **THOMAS-KILMANN MODEL 5 DIFFERENT APPROACHES**

### **1. Avoiding**

- **Definition:** Ignoring or sidestepping the conflict in the hope that it will resolve itself over time or become irrelevant.
- **Example:** A manager decides not to address a minor disagreement between team members, assuming it will dissipate naturally.

### **2. Accommodating**

- **Definition:** Putting aside your own needs and desires to satisfy the concerns or demands of the other party.
- **Example:** Agreeing to a co-worker's approach on a project despite believing your method might be more effective.

### 3. Compromising

- **Definition:** Seeking a middle ground where all parties involved sacrifice part of their concerns to reach an acceptable resolution.
- **Example:** Two departments share a limited budget by agreeing to split it equally, even if neither gets the full amount they need.

### 4. Competing

- **Definition:** Pursuing one's own goals or desires at the expense of others, often with a focus on winning or asserting dominance.
- **Example:** A manager makes a decision on their own without listening to the opinions or concerns of their team. They focus only on what they want and don't involve others in the process

### 5. Collaborating

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- **Definition:** Working together with all parties to find a solution that fully satisfies everyone's concerns and needs.
- **Example:** A team brainstorms together to create a project plan that aligns with everyone's expectations and goals.

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS IN 5 STEPS

**STEP 1: FIND OUT THE SOURCE OF THE CONFLICT:** The more information you have about the cause of the conflict, the more easily you can help to resolve it.

**STEP 2: LOOK BEYOND**

**STEP 3: TAKE SUGGESTIONS FOR SOLUTION**

**STEP 4: IDENTIFY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTIONS**

**STEP 5: FINAL AGREEMENT:** The manager needs to get the two parties to accept one of the alternatives identified in Step 4. The goal is to reach a mutually accepted agreement.

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:** It is the approach and strategy geared towards achieving a positive outcome and resolution

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amongst the parties involved in matters relating to conflicts and minimising the affective conflicts.

## **ACTIONS TO MINIMISE CONFLICTS:**

### **Regular Review of Job Descriptions**

- a. A manager must get **progress report regularly**, indicating achievements, current needs, and future scenario.
- b. Every manager **needs to be provided training** in interpersonal communication, conflict management and delegation of authority.
- c. The managers **need to hold regular management meetings** to inform subordinates about new initiatives.
- d. **Suggestion Box** in which employees can provide suggestions.

An honest and practical **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT POLICY** with a transparent process may be useful to manage and finalising a conflict in an organisation.

## **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCESS:**

- **Acknowledge** that a difficult situation may exist
- Allow individuals **to express** their feelings

- **Understand** and **define** the problem
- **Determine underlying need:** The goal of conflict resolution is not to decide which person is right or wrong, the goal is to reach a solution that everyone can live with.

**Decide What to do if the conflict remains unresolved:** An outside **facilitator or an expert** may be able to offer other insights on solving the problem.

## **CONFLICT NEGOTIATION**

It is **communication focused on finding an agreement** that addresses the concerns of parties who want different outcomes.

**Common situations that involve handling conflicts in negotiation include:**

**CONFLICTS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES:** Employees may sometimes encounter conflict about responsibilities or work quality.

**COMPENSATION:** Whether finalising salary for a new employee or entering a contract with a vendor often requires negotiation

**DISPUTES BETWEEN A BUSINESS AND THE PUBLIC:**

Businesses that serve the public, sometimes need to respond to a dissatisfied customer or group of concerned individuals.

**DISAGREEMENTS DURING COLLABORATION:** Project teams could encounter conflict on factors like how to use limited resources of approach a client request.

**SKILLS/ STRATEGIES FOR RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS**

- a. Effective communication Skills**
- b. Listening Skills**
- c. Discussion:** All the participants must give their inputs and efforts must be made to find out an alternative.
- d. Patience:** One needs to be very patient to avoid conflicts.
- e. Impartial:** An individual has to be impartial to avoid conflicts.
- f. Never Criticise:** Make the other person understand if he is wrong. Don't Criticise.
- g. Positive Attitude:** is essential to avoid fights and conflicts.
- h. Address the conflict, not the person**
- i. Find shared interests:** to identify other negotiators' needs and find common ground.



j. Set an objective

k. Determine the '**Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement**' (BATNA): A skilled negotiator enters the discussion with the BATNA in mind. In addition, it is especially important during conflict resolution to determine the BATNA of the opposing negotiator.

**For example**, if you're negotiating for a higher salary and your BATNA is a job offer from another company, you know you have a solid fallback.