

Conflict Resolution

Adv. SPM

Conflicts

- Conflict is as inevitable in a project environment as change seems to be.
- When project team members interact during the course of completing their tasks and responsibilities, there is always a potential for conflict. In fact, it is virtually impossible for people with diverse background skills and norms to work together; make decisions, and try to meet project goals and objectives without conflict.
- Project managers must identify, analyze, and evaluate both positive and negative values of conflict and their effect on performance

Views of Conflict

	Traditional View	Contemporary View	Interactionist View
Main Points	Caused by troublemakers Bad Should be avoided Should be suppressed	Inevitable between humans Not always bad Natural result of change Can be managed	Results from commitment to goals Often beneficial Should be stimulated Should aim to foster creativity
Effect on Performance	Performance declines as the level of conflict increases	Performance mainly depends on how effectively the conflict is handled. Generally performance increases to a certain level as conflict level increases, then declines if conflict is allowed to increase further or left unresolved	Certain level of conflict is necessary to increase performance. Performance increases with conflict up to a certain level, then declines if conflict increases further or remains unresolved

Categories of Conflicts

- All potential conflict fits one of three categories, although a particular conflict situation may be based on two or more of the categories:
 - Goal-oriented conflicts are associated with end results, performance specifications and criteria, priorities, and objectives.
 - Administrative conflicts refer to the management structure and philosophy and are mainly based on definition of roles and reporting relationships and on responsibilities and authority for tasks, functions, and decisions.
 - Interpersonal conflicts result from differences in work ethics, styles, egos, and personalities of the participants.

Sources of Conflict

- Conflict over project priorities
- Conflict over administration procedures
- Conflict over technical opinions and performance trade-offs
- Conflict over human resources
- Conflict over cost and budget
- Conflict over schedules
- Personality conflict

Sources of Conflict	Definitions	Suggested Solutions
Conflict over project priorities	Views of project participants differ over sequence of activities and tasks. Includes goals incompatibility and differences in long-term versus short-term perspectives.	Develop a master plan compatible with long-term strategies.
Conflict over administration procedures	Conflicts over managerial and administrative issues of how the project will be organized and managed.	Clarify roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships at the beginning of the project.
Conflict over technical opinions and performance trade-offs	Disagreements over technical issues, performance specifications, and technical trade-offs.	Use peer review and steering committees to review specifications and design.
Conflict over human resources	Conflicts concerning staffing and allocation of project personnel and where to get them and how.	Develop a work breakdown structure and a corresponding responsibility matrix.
Conflict over cost and budget	Conflict over cost estimates from support areas regarding work breakdown structures and estimating techniques.	Develop overall budgets supported by detailed budget and cost estimates of subproject tasks and activities
Conflict over schedules	Disagreements about the timing, sequencing, and scheduling of project related tasks and information system to prepare and monitor project schedules.	Develop an overall schedule that integrates schedules for subprojects with staffing and other life constraints.
Personality conflict	Disagreements on interpersonal issues.	Emphasize team building and create an environment that emphasizes respect, diversity, and equality.

Conflict Management Styles

Style	Description	Effect
Withdrawing/avoiding	Retreats from an actual or potential conflict situation	Does not solve the problem
Smoothing /accommodating	Emphasizes areas of agreement rather than areas of difference	Provides only short-term solution
Compromising	Searches for and bargains for solutions that bring some degree of satisfaction to all parties	Provides definitive resolution
Forcing	Pushes one's viewpoint at the expense of others; offers only win-lose situations	Hard feelings may come back in other forms
Collaborating	Incorporates multiple viewpoints and insights from differing perspectives; leads to consensus and commitment	Provides long-term resolution
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Strategies for Managing the Conflicts

- Preparing for Conflict
 - Expecting conflict
 - Planning ahead
- Facing the conflict
 - Serving as a lightning rod such as
 - Personally absorbed aggression
 - Communicated and listened effectively
 - Counseled their teams to maximize their output
 - Encouraged openness, emotional expression, and new ideas
 - Sewed as role models in planning, delegating, and so forth
 - Minimized potential conflict whenever possible
 - Stimulated conflict to foster creativity and innovation
 - Surface the real issues
- Resolving the conflict
 - Look for win-win alternatives
 - Formulate conflict management strategies within the group