What is a Conflict?

Conflict is a difference of opinion. It happens when there are divergent views on the same situation and when two or more people cannot agree on a common solution.

Interpersonal and team conflicts can arise from a variety of sources, often stemming from differences in perspectives, priorities, and communication (Caputo, A., et al 2019). Some common **causes** of interpersonal and team conflicts:

• Differences in Goals and Priorities: Team members may have conflicting individual goals or priorities, which can lead to disagreements on what should take precedence.

• Poor Communication: Inadequate communication, including misunderstandings, lack of clarity, or misinterpretation of messages, can lead to conflicts.

• Personality Clashes: Differences in personality traits, working styles, or values can create tension and conflicts within a team.

• Role Ambiguity: When team members are unsure of their roles and responsibilities, it can lead to overlaps or gaps, resulting in conflicts.

• Scarce Resources: Competition for limited resources, such as budgets, time, or equipment, can generate conflicts over their allocation.

• Differences in Work Styles: Varied work habits and preferences can result in conflicts, especially if team members have opposing approaches to problem-solving or decision-making.

• Lack of Trust: A lack of trust in team members can lead to suspicions and conflicts, as team members may question each other's motives or actions.

• Competition: Internal competition within a team, driven by a desire for recognition or promotion, can lead to conflicts.

• Unclear Objectives: Conflicts can arise when team members have differing interpretations of project or organizational goals.

• Cultural Differences: In diverse teams, cultural disparities in communication styles, norms, and values can contribute to conflicts.

• Leadership Issues: Ineffective leadership, such as favouritism or inconsistent decision-making, can trigger conflicts among team members.

• Change and Uncertainty: Organizational changes, uncertainty, or a lack of information can create tension and conflicts stemming from fear or insecurity.

Types of Conflict

1) **Simple Conflict -** Simple conflict is usually over a fact or piece of information. Simple conflict is seldom serious and usually easily resolved.

2) **False Conflict -** You may think a conflict exists when in reality it does not. This is called false conflict. The following conflict between employees should not have happened—it was a false conflict.

3) **Ego Conflict -** In an ego conflict, the individuals view "winning" or "losing" the conflict as a measure of their expertise and personal worth. This type of conflict, which often results from personality clashes or conflicting ideas, is all too common. Ego conflict escalates when one or both parties introduce personal or judgmental statements.

4) **Values and Beliefs Conflict -** A values and beliefs conflict occurs when people differ in their feelings about an aspect of life, and those differences are brought into focus on a particular issue.

5) **Intragroup Conflict -** Intragroup conflict is a disagreement or confrontation between members of the same group or team/within a group. It can happen when group members have different opinions, values, or goals.

6) **Intergroup Conflict -** refers to any disagreement or confrontation between the members of at least two different groups

Preventing Conflicts
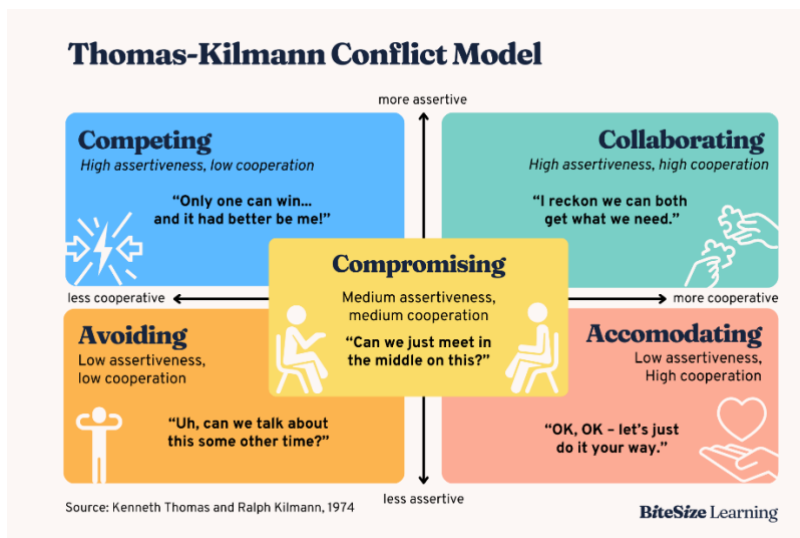
1) Build constructive relationships.
2) Discuss problems before they escalate to a conflict.
3) Watch your language when you are annoyed.
4) Stop and think before you react.

Conflict Resolution

The term conflict resolution refers to managing conflict by defining and resolving issues between individuals, groups, or organizations.

Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilman Model of Conflict Resolution (1970) : They identified five main styles of dealing Resolving Conflicts.

1) Competitive
2) Collaborative
3) Compromising
4) Accommodating
5) Avoiding

At the centre is the Compromising mode of conflict resolution: Medium assertiveness and medium cooperation. On the x-axis is cooperativeness, and on the y is assertiveness. The four other cells (besides the aforementioned Compromise) are as follows:

- High assertiveness and high cooperativeness: Collaboration

- High assertiveness and low cooperativeness: Competition

- Low assertiveness and high cooperation: Accommodation

- Low assertiveness and low cooperation: Avoidance

6 STEPS TO MANAGE CONFLICT

- Diagnose the Situation - Diagnosis includes determining the substance and history of the conflict, the positions each person has taken, and personalities of the various participants.
- Involve All Parities - Another important step in finding a solution to the conflict is to include all affected parties. This is accomplished by asking questions and encouraging others to respond. Listen as people respond to questions. Seek the opinions, feelings, suggestions, and input of adversaries.
- Collect Information - The third step in resolving the conflict is to collect information about the issues. When collecting information, you can see if your initial analysis of the conflict was accurate. This is also another time to put your listening skills to work.
- Reinforce Agreements - The next critical step in finding a solution to a conflict is to reinforce any agreements that exist. It's important to reinforce agreements before you attempt to negotiate disagreements. Adversaries tend to maximize their differences and so attention is focused on these differences. However, people in disagreement often share more common goals or values than they realize.
- Negotiate Disagreements - Often people want to begin conflict resolution by negotiating conflicts or disagreements. However, disagreements cannot be negotiated until everyone understands the facts and feelings that prompted the conflict in the first place
- Solidify Agreements - he last step of conflict management is to solidify agreements. This means confirm the agreed-upon solutions to the problem and identify when and how participants will make compromises.

Key benefits of conflict resolution:

1) **New Ideas emerge out of conflict**

Conflict can act as a stimulus for new thought, new ideas and new point of view. Conflict can open up new possibilities which otherwise could have been overlooked or not even been considered.

2) Conflict brings about a change

Change is the only constant in life. Change is very essential for personal and professional and organizational growth. Differences of opinion can often result in a status quo: meaning nothing changes. Things continue as usual since no solution can be found. Conflict can force people to ask difficult questions: Questions which have answers that can break deadlocks. Conflict presents an opportunity to bring about change, which is most often resisted.

3) Conflict builds relationships

Sometimes people stop communicating due to conflict. Or on the other hand, people just act nice to each other to avoid conflict. Either situation is very damaging for relationships. In the absence of communication or mutual respect, work is conducted on a superficial basis. This is a cause for escalations and slip-ups. Conflict forces people to communicate, listen to each other and respect another's point of view. This creates more channels for conversation and creates a more productive environment. Settlements arising out of conflict often bring people closer: at work or even in their personal lives.

4) Conflict opens minds

Team Members are constantly being told to think out of the box. To think creatively. But this is often not possible due to work constraints. Conflict can foster innovation and broaden people's perspectives to fresh, new and unexplored ideas. It can make them realize that they are thinking differently and this can result in different outcomes.

5) Conflicts beats competition

Organizations that avoid conflict lose a chance to see how they can improve their service or products. Competition is unyielding and in a tough environment, unless tough decisions are not taken, the bottom line can be impacted very adversely. Conflicts avoid stagnation and keep the product and ideas fresh and always ready to fight the competition.

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