Conflict Resolution

Nathan Bachmeier, Michael Saturno, Sean Sackett

LDR 531: Organizational Leadership

December 1, 2015

Mr. Eric Heard

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Conflict Resolution is an important skill that managers need to understand and apply to different situations. These might range from bad news, downsizing, or managing team expectations.

**Delivering Bad News**

Over a long enough period of time, it becomes guaranteed that something bad will happen. When this occurs the team needs to have the trust and confidence to report the negative status completely and correctly. If they lack the trust of their management, then the member will falsify facts, filter important details, and say that all is good when it is anything but (Robbins & Judge, 2013). This will lead to the organizational making poor choices and missing out on opportunities.

To overcome these challenges leaders need to be on the lookout for these overly optimistic status updates (Lopp, 2012). One method for identifying these scenarios is to ask for the supporting data. By forcing people to show evidence of their statements, it holds the group to a higher standard. It is equally important to not “shoot the messenger.”

Another challenge can arise from people wanting to believe the good news, even though it is clearly false. For example, if others on the team are busy with their own work they might be more willing to ignore the lack of details. This is unethical behavior and confronted in a private manner. Let them know that they are hurting the chances of success of the team.

The third type of challenge with bad news, is the employee that has the right answer but doesn’t want to speak up. For these scenarios it is best to shoot them an informal e-mail and ask if they had any ideas to contribute.

**Breaking the News: A Tell Your Team about Downsizing Adventure**

As a manager, one is responsible for sharing information with the team members that is both positive and negative. While positive messages are easier to share, negative messages require a more strategic approach to ensure that the negative message has little impact, reduces the spread of gossip, and leaves the team members with a positive feeling. The method in which a negative message is delivered has a great impact on the team members. Negative messages should be delivered in a manner that honestly reports the negative information but provides a positive aspect of the message that provides comfort and reassurance. For example, when a company is downsizing, employees benefit from knowing what to expect during downsize and whether they should fear for their job. Honesty provides a sense of knowing and time to prepare for the changes. Honest communication is the best method because it lets team members know that they are important and being looked after and fought for by their manager.

Unfortunately, when rumors are spread about upcoming changes within a company, gossip begins and the real changes are oftentimes over exaggerated and create a sense of fear where fear is not needed. The best method for handling gossip is to address the rumors early on and provide honesty. When a team member knows the truth about what is taking place, the rumors cease and the unknown becomes common knowledge no longer worth talking about and trying to get down to the bottom of. Honesty is the best way to end the spread of rumors and ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Regardless of who is directly impacted in a negative situation, every individual within the company experiences the negative change is slightly impacted. The feelings that evolve from negative situations range from sadness, guilt, fear, and many more. Employees that once felt safe in their position begin to fear that their job may be next on the cutting block. As a manager, the manager must ensure that workers know how important they are to the company, what they are doing to benefit the company, and what the employers expectations are so the employee can meet those expectations. Though this communication, employees can feel needed and secure within the company while also understanding what is expected of them to maintain their position within the company.

**Strategies to Manage Team Expectations and Avoid Conflict**

Adequate planning is vital to the successful execution of team projects. As deadlines approach, severe stress may begin to resonate with team members from the pressure to complete projects before their due date. One strategy to avoid unnecessary stress in both individuals and team members is to execute a planning schedule and “set realistic deadlines for planning tasks,” (Power, n.d., p. 1). While an organization may have specific deadlines for a project, it is in the team’s best interest to complete their individual tasks ahead of time for final review. Having a preliminary due date and accomplishing tasks ahead of schedule can significantly reduce stress levels of team members.

Another strategy in managing deadlines is to set team expectations at the very beginning of the project’s inception. All team members should know their roles and responsibilities, and should have the adequate tools and resources to execute their work. Any discrepancies or disagreements should be ironed out in the beginning to avoid conflict when stress levels rise during the development of the project.

**Conclusion**

Managing conflict can become one of the most challenging issues to deal with in a team setting. While conflict may be unavoidable, it is best to mitigate disputes and quickly come to a resolution as soon as practicable. Communication should be open within a team environment to prevent hindrances, misunderstandings, and loss in productivity. Effectively managing conflict can help the team to move continue working effectively and efficiently to accomplish the goals of the organization.

# **References**

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