**Define and demonstrate conflict management and resolution strategies.**

**The Relative Nature of Conflict and Its Resolution**

Personality and upbringing influence the way we handle conflict. Think about it this way. In some households, it's completely normal to walk away from conflict and never bring it up again. In other families, problems are discussed rationally until a compromise is reached, while some families resolve their problems with dramatic flair.

Imagine having three team members who were each raised in a different one of these environments. One is going to walk away, another is going to attempt to have a conversation and the third might raise her voice and become emotional. Each one thinks they're handling conflict in a normal way and views the behavior of the other two co-workers as odd. Conflict management's definition is an attempt to bring everyone on the same page with a process for addressing difficult scenarios. However, for these techniques to be successful, each employee must be trained in the process to give everyone common ground.

**Understanding Your Team's Makeup**

The first conflict resolution strategy involves getting into a team huddle to discuss conflict management before a problem occurs. While workplace conflicts can happen between employees and upper management or employees and customers, most conflicts occur between employees who spend most of their time together. Ask everyone to think about how they are most comfortable handling conflict in their daily lives. Common ground might exist already.

**Five common conflict resolution behaviors are:**

1. Avoidance
2. Competition
3. Accommodation
4. Compromise
5. Collaboration

**Avoiding the Conflict**

Avoidance involves walking away and ignoring the conflict entirely, doing nothing that might be perceived as rocking the boat. This feels safe to the individual but does not solve the problem. The problem might even worsen if it's left unaddressed.

In a team setting, one person may pick up the slack of a co-worker who avoids conflict, which can lead to frustration and resentment. If everyone on the team has an avoidance strategy, productivity is low when a problem arises because no one wants to step up to the plate.

It's easy for someone who leans toward this conflict resolution style to accommodate another person's wishes because they'd rather agree with someone to resolve the conflict. However, their needs don't get met this way, which can cause problems down the road.

**Competing to Win Conflicts**

Some people view conflict as a chance to win. They have no interest in compromising, collaborating or avoiding the conflict. They want to get their way and aren't afraid to assert their opinions.

In a team environment, a competitive attitude toward conflict can easily slide into bullying. It can also cause frustration among co-workers who don't feel like their points of view are taken seriously. As frustration builds, co-workers can end up taking a competitive approach to conflict resolution, and the problem escalates.

Compromise represents the only option that allows someone with this mindset to win, although settling on a compromise can still involve a power struggle.

**Accommodating the Other Person**

Team members who aren't necessarily afraid to talk through conflict may nonetheless never have any demands of their own. Instead, they bend over backward to accommodate the other person's demands and iron out the conflict.

An accommodating conflict resolution technique does not allow all viewpoints or information to be brought to the table. Accommodating people inevitably hold back their frustration or downplay their feelings. Over time, this can cause frustration to build and leads to an expectation among the assertive co-workers that they'll always get their way.

Ideally, accommodating people can be encouraged to state their needs during conflict management sessions to move toward collaboration.

**Compromising During Conflicts**

A compromising conflict resolution strategy aims to settle on a solution that's deemed fair. Everyone works together, so no one completely gets their way. Instead, each team member makes a sacrifice to ensure everyone has a small consolation prize.

Compromise sounds excellent at the outset, but a solution that's fair is not always a solution that's effective. This conflict resolution strategy is still too focused on competition and misses a major point: What does each person need? That's where collaboration comes into play.

**Collaborating to Find a Solution**

Collaboration maximizes the assertiveness and cooperation capabilities of each team member. Everyone speaks up to state their needs, and after the full picture has been painted, the team cooperates to do what's necessary to meet everyone's needs to the greatest extent possible. Everyone leaves happy.

Of course, collaboration may not always be possible, but it's worth striving for. Too often, conflicts arise due to misunderstandings and poor communication. If everyone on the team is willing to state their needs and help meet the needs of others, a truly collaborative environment is born.

**Coaching Your Team Toward Collaboration**

After you have your team together and understand the kind of conflict resolution technique each person typically falls back on, you can give them personalized guidance in what they need to do to collaborate at work. Some team members may need to be more assertive, and others may need to be more cooperative. You can act as a mediator in the early stages and help individuals through the process.

In theory, each person involved in the conflict states their needs. After that, they brainstorm a resolution that meets those needs. When both parties agree on the resolution, it's time to implement it. As time goes on, your team will become comfortable enough with the process to handle it themselves, seeking your guidance only when they feel stuck.

However, the process is not straightforward in practice. Real-life is messy, and real people are emotional. You should set some ground rules to make sure conflict management sessions remain focused and don't spiral into finger-pointing behavior.

**Ground Rules for Conflict Resolution Techniques**

Give your team some autonomy in this process by allowing them to give input on the ground rules. The list doesn't need to be long, but it needs to cover what co-workers expect from each other when there's a problem. Set this up ahead of time, before anyone loses their cool due to a conflict.

For example, "I" language is recommended for conflict management instead of "you" or "they," which typically precedes a statement of blame. Instead, if team members focus on saying "I," they take ownership of the situation and narrow in on what they can do to solve it. Another ground rule might be to only focus on the issue at hand and not to bring up past examples of similar problems. This allows the conversation to remain solution-oriented.

After all, the goal of conflict resolution in the workplace is to help everyone do their job. There's no point in turning a conflict into a personal vendetta. Not every decision is a personal strike against someone. For successful conflict resolution, focus on the job and what's needed to accomplish it.

**The Manager's Role in Conflict Resolution**

Although you should train your employees to handle conflict according to the guidelines established as a company or team, you play a pivotal role as a manager in curtailing conflict and resolving it. Have you ever considered that you may inadvertently create conflict within your team? Success starts with giving clear instructions and ensuring your team understands your expectations. Be as specific as you can when assigning tasks and covering the who, what, when, where, why and how. Be sure not to trespass into micromanagement territory when you do.

Learn how to be an active listener. Listen with the intent to understand, not to reply, and use your body language to show the speaker that you are attentive and following along. Remain professional and unbiased in all of your interactions to earn and maintain the respect of your team. Avoid meeting with people individually. Group meetings ensure there are no doubts about special treatment behind closed doors.

If there's a chance that someone might misconstrue your message or tone in an email, pick up the phone. If you're setting unreasonable deadlines and creating a bottleneck somewhere, fix it. You might not realize that you contributed to a problem until you're mediating a conflict resolution session, in which case you should speak up and state your own needs and become an active participant in the collaboration session. Bring in someone else to act as the mediator if needed, as this will showcase your integrity and earn your team's respect.

**Know When to Take a Break**

Sometimes everyone needs to take a break before they can come together, follow the ground rules and collaborate to get things done. If you feel like emotions are running higher than normal, suggest that everyone take a 10-minute break to let off some steam before beginning the conflict resolution session. A brisk walk outside, some alone time listening to music or deep breathing techniques can calm nerves.

It can also be helpful to encourage people to take their time responding during the moment. Give everyone a turn to speak during which they are not interrupted. This gives them some time to gather their thoughts and truly respond, not knee-jerk react, to what has been said. It also prevents a strong personality from dominating the session.

Finally, if you notice that you're spending an inordinate amount of time resolving conflicts, especially those involving the same people, you may need to ask for help. Someone higher up in the company may have more conflict resolution experience and can guide you, or you can consult with a conflict management coach. However, as much as you try to solve conflicts, sometimes, you may end up trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. A position on a different team in the company might work out better for an employee who can't get along with a current team member.

**Reference:**

https://smallbusiness.chron.com/effective-communication-conflict-resolution-3163.html