

# Software Engineering Group Project

## COMP2043.GRP

### **Session 05:**

### **Conflict Management**

# Acknowledgements

- Some of the materials we use may come directly from previous teachers of this module, and other sources ...
- Thank you to (amongst others):
  - Dr Julie Greensmith



# Overview

- [From before]
- Personality Types and Team Roles
- Conflict in Projects
- Constructive versus Destructive
- Basics of Conflict Resolution



# Learning Outcomes

- Appreciate that teams are constructed of people with different personalities
- Understand what causes conflict in teams
- Appreciate what conflict may occur in your own groups/teams
- Learn the basics of working towards conflict resolution



# What causes conflict?

- People!
  - own opinions, ideas, cultural context and beliefs
- Different types of conflict:
  - Conflict of ideas
  - Conflict of personality
  - Conflict of ethics
  - Conflict ...



# A certainty

- We don't have a choice as to whether we will experience conflict in our lives
  - it will happen in a number of situations
- We do have the choice of how to deal with conflict and confrontation



# Emotional responses

- In human conflict, our emotions play a key role
  - whether we intend them to or not
- Anger can arise as a result of disappointment or frustration
- A conflict is like an iceberg
  - interaction on the surface is only the tip of the story
- There are visible and invisible components



# Invisible components

- Body language
- Cultural expectations
- Self worth/self esteem
- Previous interactions
- Attitudes
- Dreams/Desires/Wishes
- Hidden agendas





# Golden rule in conflict

- **Never** use electronic communication to try to resolve conflict
  - it will not allow dealing with the invisible components
  - can be easily misinterpreted
  - will make things worse
- Face to face in a calm and neutral environment works best



# Aggression & assertion

- Passive-aggressive behaviour is the indirect expression of hostility, e.g.:
  - procrastination, hostile jokes, stubbornness, resentment, sullenness, ...
  - deliberate/repeated failure to accomplish requested tasks for which one is (often explicitly) responsible
- Direct aggressive behaviour is easy to detect, but difficult to overcome
- Assertive behaviour affirms the person's rights or point of view without aggressively threatening the rights of another
  - what we should strive for



# Five basic styles

- Competition: I win; you lose
- Avoidance: we all lose; nothing happens
- Accommodating: I lose; you win
- Compromise: we both win/lose a bit
- Cooperation: we both win



# Is all conflict bad?



# Group Exercise 1

- Think of examples of constructive conflict that you have experienced
  - Share this with the group
- Write down how you will deal, as a group, with constructive conflict
- Write your resolution ideas in your journal



# Group Exercise 2

- Think of examples of destructive conflict that you have experienced
  - Share this with the group
- Write down how you will deal, as a group, with destructive conflict
- Write your resolution ideas in your journal



# Understanding the behaviour of others starts with understanding yourself ...

- Red flag!!!
- What in the behaviour of others makes you:
  - impatient
  - angry
  - scared
  - intimidated
  - happy

**Write it down  
and share with  
your team**



# Resolving conflict

- Stage 1: Reflection: consider what you have done, what is your viewpoint, and how things have happened
- Stage 2: Airing of the conflict: allow/encourage both sides to represent views
- Stage 3: Agreement: come to some consensus
- Stage 4: Planning: how to move forward together?





# Use positive paraphrasing

- Shows that you understand the other party and can diffuse a difficult situation
- Helps build up empathy between people
- Produce paraphrase of what someone is saying allows people to be reflective



# Jack said ...

- The group project is driving me crazy! I try to organise meetings and only half the team turn up. Once there was only me! When we do meet, we just argue and can't agree on anything. People say they will do a task and then it is just excuses. Next time I will just do it all myself.
- How would you paraphrase this for Jack to help bring the group back together?



# Steps in paraphrasing

- Identify with the speaker:
  - “You felt that you were doing all the work, this happened to me before”
- Restate facts, reflect feelings and intention
  - “You were upset that you were the only one who turned up, it must have been stressful for you to wait around all that time”
- Do not judge the speaker:
  - “You were unhappy when you were left by yourself”
  - NOT: “So what you are trying to say is ...”
- Do not paraphrase and leave the other person feeling as if they are too stupid to speak for themselves



# Be a mirror, not a parrot

