"Dealing with Conflict: Addressing Challenging Issues and Relationships in Work Teams"

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Agenda

- Welcome/ Goals of this Presentation
- What is Conflict? How does it Happen in Work Teams?
  - Importance of Perceptual Filters & Frames
  - Personal Responses to Conflict/ Styles
  - What are some important conflicts you are called upon to address?
- Eight Step Conflict Resolution Process

How do Conflicts Arise in Work Teams?

What is Conflict?

- We define conflict as *a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns*:

  _ **Disagreement**
  _ **Parties involved**
  _ **Perceived threat**
  _ **Needs, interests or concerns**

What is Conflict?

- In conflict, the parties perceive a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns
- They perceive finite resources, limited options, and limited solutions
- People respond to the perceived threats, rather than to an "objective" reality
  - The role of "perceptual frames and filters"

Needs in Negotiation

- *Substantive needs* = the "stuff" of the conflict... typical definition of problem

- *Procedural needs* = how we foster a fair and well understood process... "Ground Rules"

- *Psychological needs* = concerning trust, honesty, safety, security, integrity

Personal Responses to Conflict

- Behavioral Responses:
  - Competing
  - Accommodating
  - Avoiding
  - Compromising
  - Collaborating
- Emotional Responses
- Physical Responses
- Cognitive Responses

Reflection Questions:

- What are some important conflicts that you face in your work teams?
- In what ways are they addressed?
- What works? What gets in the way of an effective response?

*** *Identify a conflict... use it as a way to 'track' the steps of the process we discuss.*

The Key Skills of Conflict Resolution

- Active Listening

- Assertive Communication

- Flexibility in Problem Solving

- Collaborative Negotiation

- Managing Impasse

Step #1: Understand the Surprise!
What's Happening Here?

- **Take a moment to reflect:** Clarify needs (substantive, procedural, and psychological) threatened by the conflict

- **Identify desired outcomes** from negotiation

- **Look at your alternatives...** *What will happen if we can't work this out?*

Step #2: Establish a "Safe Space" for Negotiation

- Consider privacy, neutral location

- Utilize third parties (mediators, facilitators, advocates), as appropriate

- Establish "ground rules" to support a collaborative negotiation process

Step #3: Take a Listening Stance

- Non-verbal messages
  - Body Language
  - Tone of voice
  - Eye contact
  - Removing distractions

Active Listening

- Verbal responses:
  - Encouraging
  - Clarifying
  - Restating
  - Reflecting
  - Summarizing
  - Validating

Step #4: Assert Your Needs Clearly and Respectfully

- Clarify your needs in the situation

- Identify specific desired outcomes

- Start with an "I-message"
  - _ "I feel_____ when you___ because_____"

- Continue to listen with respect

Step #5: Problem Solve w/ Flexibility

- Focus on underlying interests and needs as the basis for solutions

- Take one issue at a time

- Generate several possible responses

- Clarify criteria

- Stay flexible! There *are* solutions out there!

Step #6: Manage Impasse with Respect

If you get stuck…

- Set aside the issue and "name the impasse"
- Review definition of the problem – reframe the question in front of you
- Reiterate "ground rules"
- Consider a structured break
- Treat the impasse with respect

Step #7: Build an Agreement that Works!

- Patiently address all key issues

- Review the agreement for clarity

- Define in "actionable" terms, as much as possible

- Look for "Hallmarks" of a good agreement

Hallmarks of a Good Agreement

- Fair

- Balanced

- Realistic

- Responds to Needs of the Conflict

- Specific *Enough*

- As self-enforcing as possible

- Future-oriented

Step #8: Follow Through - Implement and Evaluate

- Do all you can to implement the Agreement

- Arrange a time to meet together and review the Agreement:
  - _ Did we follow through with the agreement?
  - _ Is it working? How can it be improved?
  - _ Are there any additional areas of concern?

Next Steps – Taking It Back!

- Everyone has 'homework' to practice
- Set up a 'conflict coaching' relationship with a friend/ co-worker
- Use the Conflict Resolution Skills site: www.ohrd.wisc.edu under "Leadership & Management Development"
- Please follow-up with Harry: hwebnebehrman@ohr.wisc.edu or
  608-262-9934

In Conclusion...

- Conflict resolution is a *process*
- Conflicts occur as a *normal* part of our work and relationships
- We need to establish processes to manage conflicts effectively
- We need to model effective approaches and support efforts to acquire skills

Additional Resources

- Roger Fisher & William Ury, *Getting To Yes*

- Susan Heitler, *From Conflict to Resolution*

- Robert Bolton, *People Skills*