Building Practical Leadership Skills: Conflict Negotiation

“Do not think of knocking out another person's brains because he differs in opinion from you. It would be as rational to knock yourself on the head because you differ from yourself ten years ago.”

― Horace Mann

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Learning Objectives

1) Discuss scenarios influenced by conflict and identify why conflict developed at organizational and interpersonal level.

2) Explore 5 conflict handling modes, including strengths and weaknesses of each.

3) Identify key elements of the Interest-Based Relational Approach to conflict negotiation.
Conflict: What Purpose?

“Discord” or “Dialog”?
Three Levels

Organizational Context

Interpersonal Conflict

Organizational Conflict
Organizational Conflict: Key Elements

1) **Relation Conflict**: interpersonal animosity, tension, annoyance between group members (affective)

2) **Task Conflict**: awareness of difference in viewpoints and opinions about the group’s tasks (cognitive)

3) **Process Conflict**: disagreements about assignments of duties and managing resources
OC: Key Elements

1) **Relation Conflict**: interpersonal animosity, tension, annoyance between group members (affective)

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3) **Process Conflict**: disagreements about assignments of duties and managing resources (management)

**Majority of Team-Based Conflict**
Concord Hospital

Mortality Rate

4.8%

2.1%

Collaborative Rounds Instituted

Conflict: Handling Modes

“The willingness to ask practitioners to ask others to challenge them openly, in front of others, including patients and family members, is counter-cultural, requiring self-confidence on the practitioners’ part.”

-Paul Uhlig, MD. Concord Hospital

Three Levels

Organizational Context

Interpersonal Conflict

Organizational Conflict
Conflict: Handling Modes

Thomas & Kilmann (psychologists) Index: 1970s
Validated in US & and internationally

2-dimension behavioral analysis
assertiveness—extent to which individual attempts to satisfy own concerns
cooperativeness—extent to which individual attempts to satisfy another’s concerns

5 conflict handling modes w/ attributes & weaknesses
Conflict: TKI Modes

- **Competing**
  - "I win, you lose"

- **Collaborating**
  - New solution = "win-win"

- **Compromising**
  - "Win some, lose some"

- **Avoiding**
  - "Punt"

- **Accommodating**
  - "I lose, you win"
Mr. B is your delightful 79 yo clinic patient. Over the past 4 months, he has lost 35lbs, complained of terrible abdominal pain. His wife notes he passed out twice last week when he had BRBPR. He is slightly hypotensive, tachy, mildly confused, and has a large ecchymosis on his cheek. You call the ED worried he needs to be admitted and relay the workup you think he needs.

You follow closely through EPIC, note they have given him 2L NS, 60mEq KCl, note his UA is negative, and that he is ready for d/c with PCP (you) for further evaluation.

You pick up the phone to call the ED.

*What are the sources of conflict?*
TKI Breakouts

ADVANTAGES

➢ With your partner, identify how using this conflict mode may be advantageous in this situation.

DISADVANTAGES

➢ Also identify why utilizing this conflict mode may be problematic.
Conflict: Competing

**ADVANTAGES**
- Provides rapid clarity (e.g., in emergency)
- Augments power (short-term)

**DISADVANTAGES**
- Doesn’t incorporate others’ ideas
- Wrong path risk
- Easily angers others
Conflict: Accommodating

**ADVANTAGES**

- Builds good will → “political capital” for later
- Preserves harmony
- Saves energy for issues more important to you
- Rebuilds trust if previously wrong

**DISADVANTAGES**

- If habitual -> culture of “yes”
- Lowers influence, respect
- Silences good ideas
Conflict: Compromising

ADVANTAGES

- Balances goals & relationships: “fair”
- Can move on (for a time)
- Deadline usually moves discussion forward

DISADVANTAGES

- Requires give & take → relatively time-consuming
- Can foster power struggle
- Can lose sight of big picture, long-term value → cynicism
Conflict: Avoiding

**ADVANTAGES**

- Defer unimportant issues
- Sidestep low-utility conflict
- “Cool down” period
- Time for inquiry

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Problems fester
- “Walking on eggshells” culture → emotional drain
- External forces dictate solutions
Conflict: Collaborating

ADVANTAGES

- Meets wants of both sides
- Fosters dialog, builds relationships
- Creates novel, typically better, solutions → “resolves the problem”

DISADVANTAGES

- Requires exploring disagreements deeply → time-consuming
- Requires high degree of trust/commitment
Conflict: Constructive Resolution

Interest-based Relational Approach

Make sure that good relationships are the first priority: focus on trust before “winning”

Keep people and problems separate: people generally have good intentions

Pay attention to the interests being presented: understand why the person is adopting a certain approach/position

Listen first, talk second: seek first to understand, then be understood

Set out the "Facts": share objective data

Explore options together: be open to the idea that you can create a third position collaboratively
Take Home Points

Conflict is inevitable whenever people work together

Conflict provides “tension”
Benefit (spring → forward momentum)
Detriment (earthquake → destroy value)

Managing conflict is a fundamental teamwork skill
Different approaches for different situations
Guiding principle: listen + understand + share
Can be practiced!