



NEXT STEP LEARNINGSM

Resolving Conflict

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About This Class

About This Manual

This manual provides conceptual information. Topics are arranged in modular units. This allows you to refer to this manual for self-study or reference, and you can select a unit and start reading at any point.

Units and lessons are arranged in a logical order according to adult learning principles. Each unit ends with a summary of main ideas for your review.

Some units conclude with a section of unit activities. These activities provide you an opportunity to apply the knowledge you learned in the unit.

About the Icons

The manual provides the following icons for special information:

❖ This icon indicates a note of special interest.

⚠ This icon indicates a caution or warning.

❓ This icon indicates a point of discussion.

✂ This icon indicates a brief activity.

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Class Objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- manage and resolve conflict.
- understand and manage change.

Unit:

Managing and Resolving Conflict

Unit Objectives

In this unit, you will learn how to:

- identify the nature of conflict.
- identify factors that promote conflict.
- use constructive ways to manage conflict.
- apply conflict management tools.

Lesson:

Understanding Conflict

Hostility, confrontation, struggle, difficult personalities, competition, anger, resentment, and fear are just a few of the many negative concepts associated with conflict. However, conflict itself is not inherently bad, though in most cases the emotions and reactions it promotes can be quite unfavorable. Because these emotions and reactions also tend to be intense and powerful, the impact and potential for damage that conflict can have on a group is significant. Therefore, when faced with conflict, you should be equipped with the knowledge and coping skills required to effectively manage the issues.

Before examining suggested approaches for dealing with conflict, you must first identify and define conflict. Conflict refers to a sharp disagreement or collision in interests or ideas. It describes the type of events that occur when individuals present two or more competing responses or courses of action to a single condition. At its most basic level, conflict is simply the existence of competing or incompatible options. However, there is much more involved with conflict than is implied by this simple definition. Conflict exists at many complex levels and has many influencing factors. There are several ways of categorizing and describing conflict based on type, stages of progression, and effect on the group. Gaining an understanding of these components can better prepare you for managing confrontational issues in the workplace¹.

¹ Information in this section is based in part on material from Peg Pickering, *How to Manage Conflict, 3rd Edition* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press)

Types of Conflict

Emotional disturbances experienced at an individual level caused by dissonance are the basis for internal conflict. Relative to the workplace, dissonance is caused when a person's values, attitudes, or skills oppose his or her job duties. This type of conflict represents the gap between what a person wants and what he or she is able to do about it.

Although it centers around a single individual, internal conflict can be an immobilizing force that hinders a person's performance and limits his or her contributions to the team. Internal conflict at its beginning stage manifests itself in various ways including physical symptoms like headaches, stomach disorders, and backaches. More intense internal conflict can lead to extreme stress levels, burnout, and even severe self destructive acts. Therefore, even issues based on a single team member's internal conflict should be of concern to you as a manager.

External conflict in a group setting most often manifests itself as interpersonal conflict or confrontations between individuals. Though it can be challenging to identify the real causes of interpersonal conflicts, they can usually be classified according to these three categories:

- **Issue based:** conflicts about ideas, decisions, actions, or directions. This type of conflict centers around tasks and processes, specifically the content and goals of work and how the work will be accomplished.

- **Personalized:** conflicts due to personality differences, fueled by emotion, perhaps questioning people's motive and character. This type of conflict involves team member relationships and can include personality clashes and hostile behavior. This type of friction is sometimes caused by a lack of mutual understanding or can be a reflection of deeper issues such as resistance to change.
- **Communication based:** conflicts that arise due to stifled, improper, incomplete, or inaccurate communication.

Conflict can also be described based by its overall impact on group dynamics. Dysfunctional conflict refers to conflict that is purely negative in nature and usually includes personalized conflicts. These types of conflicts always have detrimental effects on a team, hindering performance and causing discord, divisions, and misdirected efforts.

Functional conflict is actually considered a constructive influence, viewed by some as necessary for stimulating discussions of ideas that help improve group performance. Issue based conflicts about tasks and processes fall into this category. If managed properly, these conflicts can be converted into tools for facilitating productive idea-sharing and problem-solving sessions.

Stages of Conflict

Regardless of the type or category, conflict progress through three stages of development. Each stage is marked by varying intensity levels of emotional involvement as reflected by people's attitudes, perspectives, reactions, and even their communication style.

Stage I: Potential

Before a conflict can exist, conditions that create opportunities for conflict to arise must be present. The three most common factors that influence the potential for conflict are communication, organizational structure, and personal variables. These factors nicely correspond with the three types of conflict discussed earlier.

As a manager, you must identify the following situations that hold the potential to create conflict:

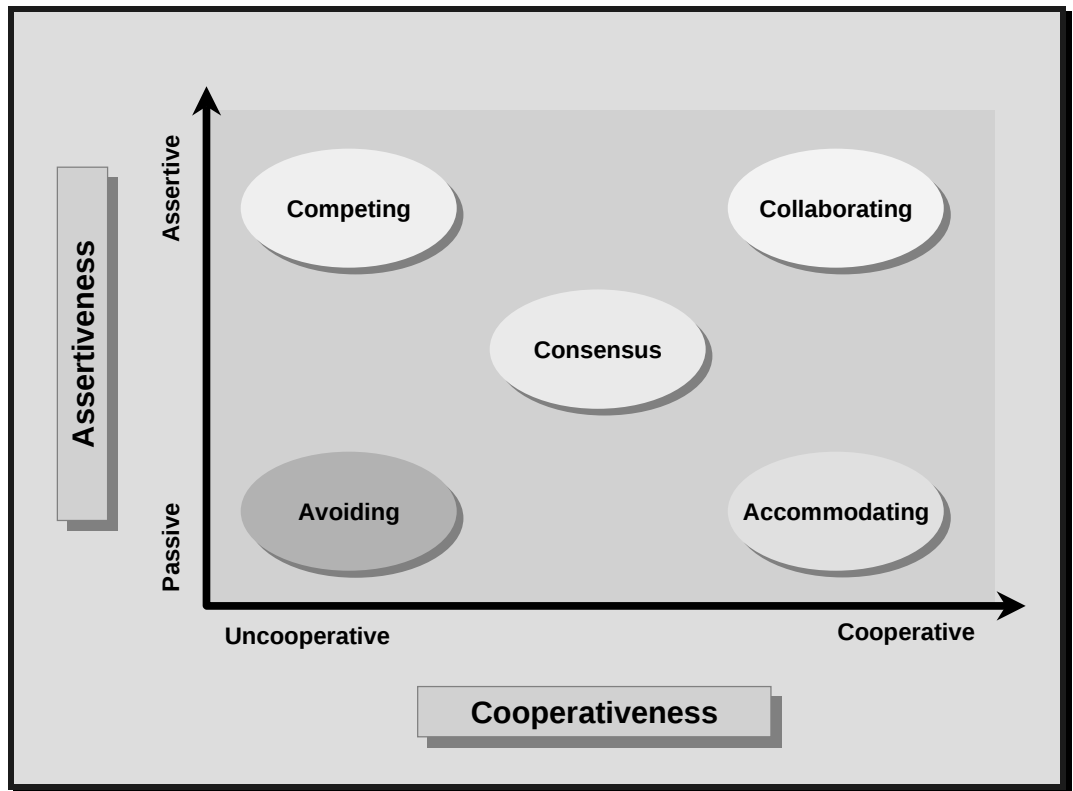
- Failed communication efforts that lead to misunderstandings
- Inherent designs in job roles, task requirements, or duties that create opposing goals for team members
- Individual values, norms, attitudes, perspectives, and idiosyncrasies that form the basis for personality clashes characterized by low tolerance, a lack of respect, resentment, and annoyance between team members

It is true that no one can completely control any one of these conditions. However, you can minimize their potentially negative impact by addressing them and giving your associates the tools necessary to understand, manage, and cope. For example, as discussed earlier, an effective communication process can help prevent misunderstandings caused by partial or inaccurate information. And though the definition of certain job roles places some team members' efforts in direct opposition with the efforts of others, you can help increase associates' understanding of the parameters and constraints by which everyone on the team is bound. This information, along with focused, directed communication, can contribute to a more collaborative approach. Even personality clashes can be minimized through increased awareness of individual differences and their causes.

Stage II: Manifestation

When the conditions that may lead to conflict are not successfully identified and managed, then conflict occurs. As the situation progresses to this stage, the individuals involved become aware of the conflict, perceive the potential for its negative impact, and become emotionally involved. At this point the conflict is felt by all parties involved. As they process the situation and internalize the possible consequences, they make conscious decisions to react in a given way. One of the primary dangers in a conflict lies beyond individual reactions and involves attributions. People tend to try and not only anticipate the perceived opposing party's actions, they try and explain the motives behind the actions. Since most of these efforts fail, many conflicts escalate at this stage due to one party attributing wrong motives to other people involved.

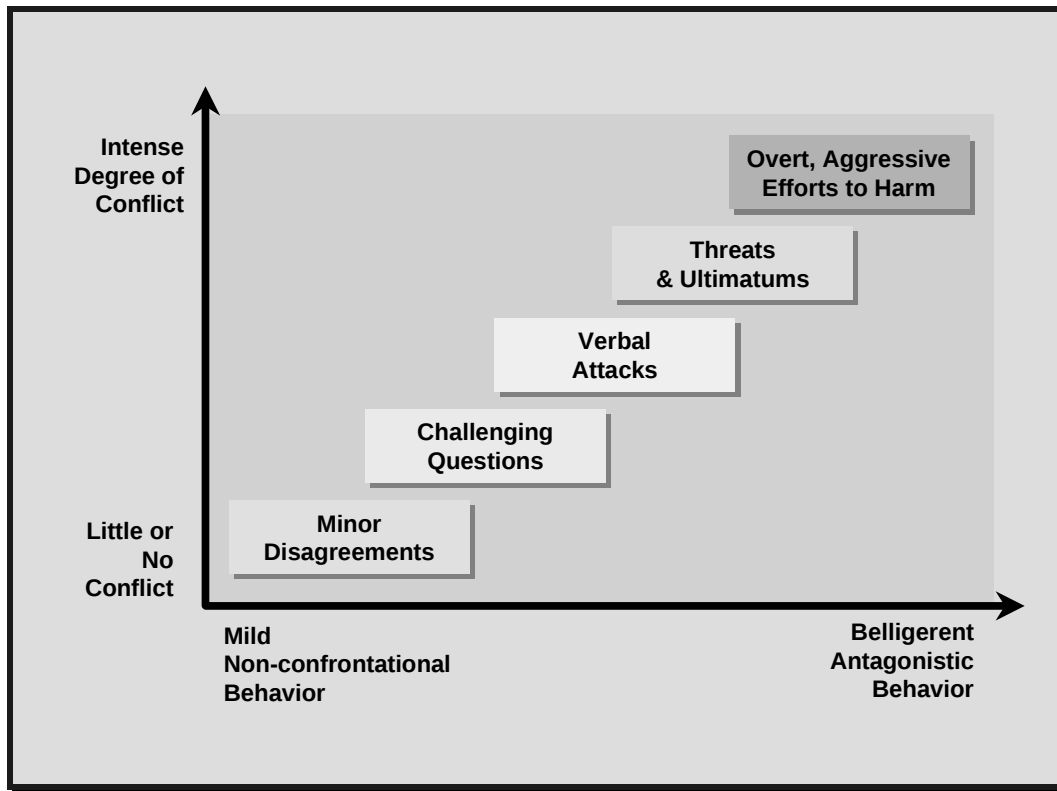
Reactions to conflict vary by individual. However, the following diagram illustrates the most common ways people attempt to deal with conflict and display their intentions:



Source: K. Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation Processes in Organizations," in M.D. Dunnette and L.M. Hough's *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 2nd ed. vol. 3 (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1992)

Peoples' intentions during a conflict are transferred into behavioral reactions. Based on the level of emotional involvement and perceived risks, a person's reactions may range from non-confrontational to overtly antagonistic and dangerous.

The following diagram illustrates the most common behavioral progression during a conflict:



Source: S. P. Robbins, *Managing Organizational Conflict: A Nontraditional Approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974); and F. Glasl, "The Process of Conflict Escalation and the Roles of Third Parties," in G. B. J. Bomers and R. Peterson's *Conflict Management and Industrial Relations* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1982)

As mentioned earlier, language and word usage also reflects intentions and is a manifestation of conflict. For example, speaking in generalizations using terms like "they" and "everyone". Exaggerations are also common, indicated by absolute phrases such as "always" and "never".

The main barrier you face when attempting to manage conflict at this stage is the personalization issue. At this point, most of those involved in the conflict have shifted focus away from the actual causes and problems and instead are concentrating on each other. Parties usually resist attempts to address and resolve the actual problems since they perceive the other people involved as the problem. Because of the degree of emotional involvement at personal levels, the conflict becomes vastly more complex and requires more than just coping strategies.

Stage III: Outcomes

The results of a conflict are determined not only by people's intentions and behaviors, but also by how those intentions and behaviors affect the group. Even after people have reacted and displayed their individual responses, destructive outcomes can be avoided. Dysfunctional outcomes occur when oppositions remain unchecked. The resulting discontent can literally destroy a group by dissolving ties that bind the team, counteracting communication attempts, and focusing everyone's attention on the disharmony between members instead of the team goals.

However, when oppositions are controlled and the intensity of the outcome is kept at low levels, the focus can be shifted to the task and process issues and real solutions rather than personal disagreements. Functional outcomes are generated when opposing ideas are used as a counter-measure to groupthink. Different concepts regarding task objectives and process flow can stimulate creativity and innovation, promote self-evaluation, and thus be the basis for improved decision making. As a manager, work to foster an open environment where associates feel free to share problems and concerns without fear of harsh judgmental responses. Make sure that even unusual ideas or points of view receive equal, fair consideration. Maintain the focus on the tasks, process, and feedback of team members, not the individual team members themselves.

Lesson:

Identifying Factors That Promote Conflict

While there are many conditions that contribute to conflicting situations, certain key factors can play a vital role in identifying potential conflict and reducing the degree of conflict during confrontations. By becoming aware of these factors, you can work to help your team better manage their interactions and lessen the occurrences of dysfunctional conflict.

Poor Communication

Communication's role in the successful operation of any organization is critical. The need for good communication systems that support effective transfer of information, ideas, and feedback cannot be overemphasized. When people are unsure of what is required of them, the significance of their team role and responsibilities, or the true meaning behind events and actions, they usually feel powerless and frustrated. They may attempt to compensate on their own, but even well intended actions based on misinformation can lead to mistakes, disharmony, and of course—conflict.

In addition to the structural components of established communication channels, one of the main concerns managers must also consider deals with the individual variables. Not only must the communication flow be intact, complete with feedback, it must be designed to compensate for differences between team members in semantics, viewpoints, priorities, values, attitudes, and culture. Effective feedback loops, combined with open forums for voicing concerns and problems are good ways to counteract communication barriers.

Low Associate Morale

Individual members can be greatly affected by group morale. A team's overall disposition toward roles and responsibilities creates a dynamic that influences member attitudes and impacts both performance and relationships. When morale is high, it reflects positive views toward the work environment and job satisfaction. People absorb this positive energy and are more prone towards solutions and answers rather than issues and problems.

However, low morale can indicate negative attitudes and a lack of job satisfaction. The ensuing environment can be a powerfully demotivating influence and cause people to focus on issues, problems, and people. When this occurs, people stop actively pursuing answers and resist implementing solutions - a classic formula for conflict.

Individual Associate Concerns

For some team members, personal issues can disrupt their performance and limit their team contributions causing discord. These potential causes for conflict are not necessarily factors that the associate is consciously controlling. They may be related to issues of low self-esteem or a lack of self-confidence. Or, perhaps the individual is experiencing a personal crisis at home that is overwhelming and distracting. Though your primary management role in cases like this is that of supporter, it is also important to control the impact these issues may have on the team and its performance. By targeting personal associate concerns on both an individual and team level, you can help prevent one person's unfavorable circumstances from having a negative effect on team relationships and thereby avoid a potential source of conflict.

Environmental Stresses

Even when the work environment is almost ideal—the right people with the right skills matched with jobs they enjoy—the potential still exists for environmental stresses. In any organization, there are diverse competing goals among members. In addition, time constraints, production demands, customer service issues, resource availability and task requirements can tax individual members and the team as a whole. While some of these factors can only be minimized, they should all be identified as they exist in your environment and addressed in order to avoid conflict. If left unchecked, these conditions can lead to frustration, resentment, and feelings of low job satisfaction in a climate of blame.

Diversity Issues

There is almost an endless list of factors that influence interpersonal relationships. High on that list is diversity. Today's workforce is increasingly heterogeneous in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity. Additionally, members of minority groups that vary from the norm are more prevalent, including those who are physically disabled, of a different sexual orientation, or perhaps older than the average team member. Since people's values, attitudes, and behaviors are affected by these lifestyle components, diversity has a direct bearing on their interactions with other team members. If not managed properly, these differences can create communication barriers, lead to dangerous assumptions based on inaccurate stereotypes, and cause interpersonal conflict.

To avoid such disruptions to your team's cohesiveness, assist your associates in coping with diversity issues. Instead of expecting those who are different to automatically want to blend in and adapt to the established norms, respond to their individual needs. Instead of expecting team members to instinctively understand cultural or lifestyle differences, help them identify the reasons for different viewpoints and behaviors according to other's unique individuality.

Lesson:

Using Constructive Ways to Manage Conflict

There are many schools of thought regarding conflict and its role in organizational behavior, however one conclusion is consistently drawn: conflict is a definite component of group dynamics and must be addressed in some manner. Most modern approaches advocate that conflict is itself neither inherently good or bad, but the way it is managed determines outcomes which can be good or bad. Moreover, there are numerous strategies for identifying potential causes of conflict and reducing the likelihood of confrontation. Additionally, coping strategies help control conflict and its outcomes, thereby minimizing the possibility of negative results.

Responding vs. Reacting

One of the most crucial elements of your conflict management strategy is your initial reaction when faced with a discordant situation. Since most events and actions surrounding conflict center around intense emotions, caution must be exercised when replying to those involved. Emotions can be extremely powerful, and if not controlled they can push us towards knee-jerk reactions that reflect little forethought. Whenever we allow ourselves to react, we yield control of the situation to others and perhaps even the conflict itself. Response differs in that it is a planned reaction. Your attempts at managing conflict will be much more successful if you respond to events and actions based on your knowledge of the nature of conflict and a consideration of the issues surrounding the current disagreement. It takes much effort to maintain emotional control when faced with stressful situations. However the benefits include the ability to calm involved parties and create a forum for expressing concerns and identifying problems in a non-aggressive manner.

Separating People from Problems

Another important step in effectively dealing with conflict is the identification of the real issues and their causes. As conflict escalates and becomes emotionally charged, the focus naturally shifts towards the individuals involved, their interests, and their concerns. However, addressing the people never results in conflict resolution. Everyone involved must come to an awareness regarding the problems and their causes. Once identified, you can lead the group towards creating and implementing solutions. The following is a list of suggested approaches for directing the attention towards conflict issues and away from the people involved:

- Avoid ambiguous language and do not allow generalizations to be made. Instead, base all discussions on concrete facts and use specific, discrete terminology.
- Eliminate preconceptions based on prejudicial evaluations and assumptions. Look for comments that reflect inaccurate, negative viewpoints towards other parties based solely on emotion rather than on an objective consideration of the facts. Immediately address and correct these viewpoints before they become an entrenched factor that influences communications and interpersonal relationships.
- Foster a supportive environment and create "safe-zones" for associate feedback. During intense conflict, anxiety is high and is usually accompanied by instinctive fight or flight responses. To help move your associates away from entrenched combative positioning, encourage and reward their expressions. You may have to take control measures to ensure all have equal opportunity to voice concerns and establish ground rules for group discussions. However, as the facilitator, you can work to create a forum where associates do not fear reprisals or negative responses to their expressions.

- Use the passive voice to describe situations, thereby directing the focus toward the action or event instead of the person involved.
- Challenge the people involved to try and understand the other party's point of view. Use role plays and illustrations to help those involved consider the issues from a different perspective.

Coping Strategies

In addition to carefully monitoring your responses and directing the focus toward actual conflict issues, it is also important to consider the factors that impact your ability to influence and control the people, events, and actions involved in the situation. Any coping strategies you develop must concede these factors, maximizing available resources to create effective management tools for your use.

The knowledge you have about the parties involved, their interests and priorities, and the nature of their interpersonal relationships is one such factor. The authority distributed among the parties, as well as your authority to make decisions and implement solutions, is also a factor. And, you may have power you can leverage to encourage desired actions or behaviors. Although it is important to incorporate these factors in your coping strategies, the foundation for your approach should be based on the ACES technique:

- Assess the situation
- Clarify the issues
- Evaluate the options and alternative choices
- Solve the problem

The Constructive Confrontation Model

Maintaining positive interpersonal relationships is the primary focus of the constructive approach to conflict management. This technique requires a comprehensive understanding of individual interactions at the group level, along with knowledge of the personalities involved. The Constructive Confrontation Model seeks to create a climate of trust, openness, and shared responsibilities. You can help foster this type of environment by encouraging equal participation in the resolution process among members. The goal is to solicit ownership and promote a collaborative approach to decision making. In some cases, assigning tasks that force team members to cross barriers and engage in cooperative efforts can help people realize that everyone shares the responsibility for contributing to a successful team.

Active listening is another tool employed in the Constructive Confrontation Model. When managers demonstrate their willingness to listen, it affirms their belief that their associates are important and have vital feedback to share. In turn, associates are more likely to listen to a manager who encourages open communication. More importantly, most causes of conflict can be traced back to poor listening. Whether it's listening to make sure we understand instructions or listening to really hear a person's concerns, effective listening is the only way to obtain the information necessary for productive team interactions.

The Constructive Confrontation Model also utilizes moratoriums. As a manager, you can use time-outs to step back and analyze the situation, obtain critical information, and allow for an occasionally needed cooling off period. A controlled delay in proceedings can be a resourceful way to gain the time needed to work behind the scenes managing influencing factors while providing others with the opportunity to objectively review their position and consider the possible outcome of the conflict and its impact. When introducing a moratorium, focus on the purpose of the delay and not the delay itself. For example, you might use the following suggestions from *How to Manage Conflict*, page 52, by Peg Pickering:

"We have some time; let's meet in small groups and look for alternatives."

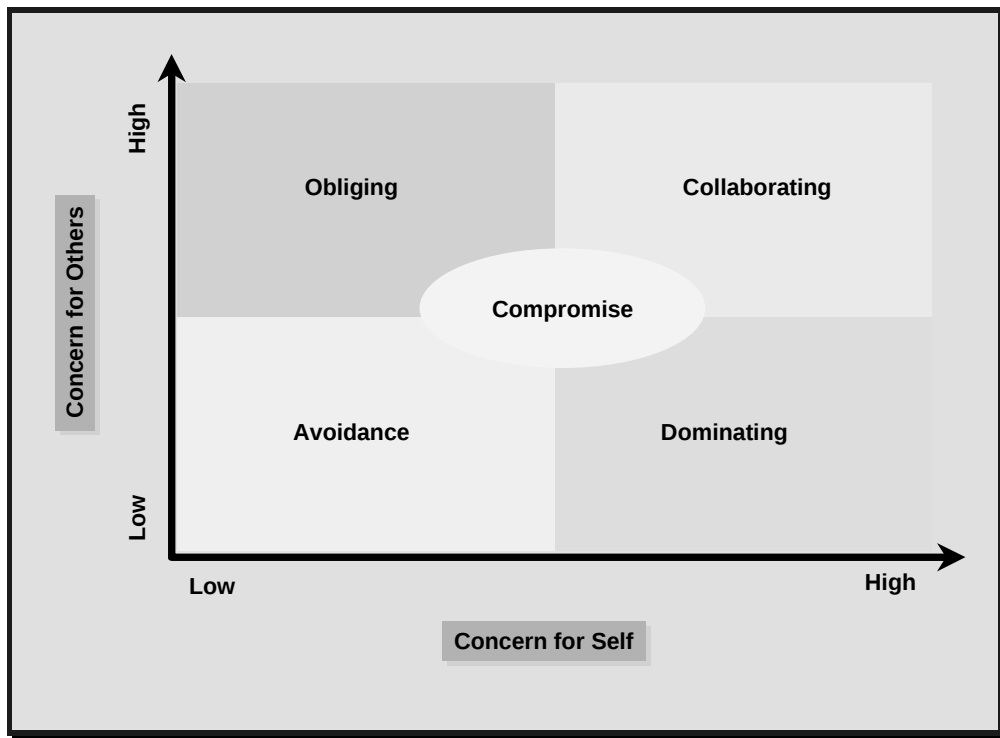
"No decision is worth hurt feelings. There are several people who have spent company time and proposed quality ideas. I want to find out why there is such diversity of opinion."

"The amount of time and energy that have been spent on this issue are significant. We're not ready to decide. Now that we've seen the issues a little more time invested at this point might help everyone."

Finally, the Constructive Confrontation Model stresses the importance of obtaining and using factual information rather than opinions. The idea is to separate and focus on perspectives rather than allowing the parties involved to challenge each other as liars. As conflict escalates, people readily blame and accuse, using their own perceptions as the lens through which they view everything. It takes due diligence to challenge such dispositions. Be alert to categorical statements that reflect these negative attitudes and replace them with statements of fact, along with skilled questions that encourage people to consider alternative perspectives.

Conflict Handling Intentions

As you incorporate tools and techniques discussed in this course into various strategies for addressing conflict, you might find different managing styles emerging. This is appropriate since each situation involving conflict differs, based on the type of conflict, the people involved, and the issues at stake. Though each person uses different approaches, there are five basic styles of addressing conflict. These styles, referred to as Conflict Handling Intentions, are illustrated in the diagram below:



Source: Peg Pickering, *How to Manage Conflict*, 3rd ed.,

Avoidance

Avoidance is the most pragmatic intention and seeks to defer taking action. The only way to use this tool effectively is with non-critical issues and situations that do not require immediate solutions. If not used carefully, avoidance quickly deteriorates into negligence, being perceived by others as your withdrawal from the conflict and sidestepping of issues. In order to prevent the parties involved from feeling abandoned, it is important to designate a specific time frame for any postponements and to follow-up as agreed.

Obliging

Obliging is most effective when there is the possibility that you have made an administrative mistake or when you need a means of determining the positions of the parties involved. Basically, obliging is a form of placating or conceding, and it empowers others. When used effectively, obliging can raise another person's perceived status and elevate them. Since this style actively seeks common ground and tries to satisfy and meet the needs of others, it can make the parties involved feel better about the issues at stake, build confidence and trust, and help preserve relationships.

However, extreme caution should be used when using this intention. Since obliging requires that you give up something, any power you relinquish should be expendable and you should use care never to abdicate your actual authority. The danger exists that others can view a person who obliges as weak and one who can be easily manipulated.

Dominating

When quick decisions need to be made and you have the expertise necessary to gather the facts, analyze the issues, and supply needed direction, the dominating style may work best. The focused, decisive, immediate action that results from using a dominating approach can generate increases in productivity and force people to pay attention to specific task requirements and process issues.

Nevertheless, because of its direct, almost reactionary approach, caution must also be exercised when using this intention. The dominating style is backed strictly by power, creates or reinforces clear lines of responsibility, and is often perceived as a hardball, insensitive management approach. It can yield incorrect actions, result in misplaced power, and should be used sparingly.

Compromise

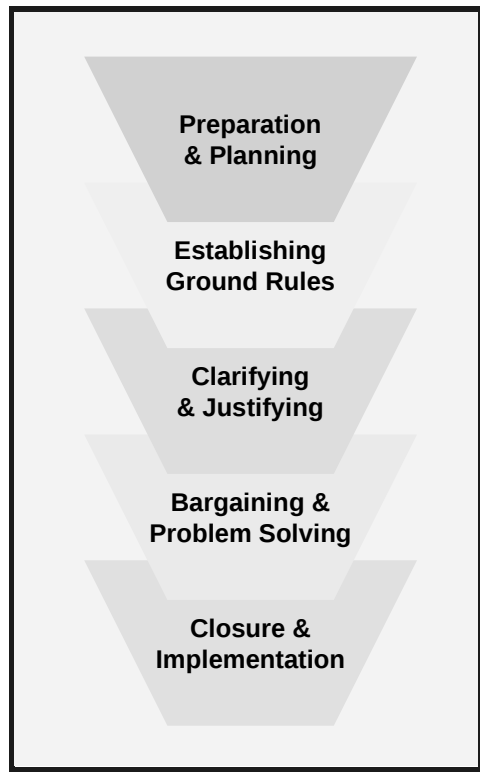
This Conflict Handling Intention takes a "give and take" approach and works well when there is a balance of power and losses can be minimized for all parties involved. Since compromise requires everyone to make at least one concession in order to arrive at a solution, it is sometimes best to use this tool when other approaches have failed and everyone involved is willing to seek middle ground. Though compromise rates neither high nor low in regard to concern for others or self, it is still challenging to be impartial and even more difficult not to appear as if you are guilty of favoritism. However, with fair controlled negotiations, compromise can encourage open discussions regarding the real problems, bring opposing viewpoints closer together, and help direct attention toward solutions and the benefits that can be gained.

Collaboration

Similar to compromise, the collaborative approach seeks to find a middle-ground and consider the interests of all parties involved. However, collaboration is preferred over compromise because it attempts to find solutions that are completely acceptable to all parties without requiring people to concede. Collaboration is an effort-intensive approach that works well in addressing complex issues when time and resources are abundant. It requires creative thinking to create alternative solutions based on information which has been synthesized from all of the divergent perspectives. To collaborate, individuals must be able to separate the people from the problems and focus on exchanging information and using different lenses to evaluate the issues. The underlying goal of collaboration is to reach a group consensus in which all parties realize the benefits from a solution they have helped design and implement.

Negotiation and Bargaining

Successful negotiation uses various bargaining strategies and relies on a five step process model:



Preparation and Planning

To develop a structurally sound bargaining strategy, you must first gather important information about the nature of the conflict, its history, and the perceptions of the people involved. After determining your own goals for the negotiation process, identify the goals for the parties involved. Try to discover intangible or hidden interests that may be motivating the team members involved in the conflict and assess their true positions. Also make sure that you have the facts and figures necessary to support your position.

When the conflict reflects entrenched, inflexible viewpoints, work to determine each party's Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA), or the lowest acceptable bargaining value in the negotiated agreement. Knowing each party's acceptance threshold in advance allows you to evaluate workable solutions relative to their bargaining limits. You can then develop your problem-solving techniques, negotiation strategy, or work to adjust unfavorable BATNAs accordingly.

Establishing Ground Rules

It would be nice if all negotiations could take place in a calm, controlled environment where everyone's ideas and concerns received equal considerations and the focus was directed towards resolving issues and solving problems. However, without intervention, that is rarely the case. Arrange matters so that the negotiations take place in a neutral area, free from distractions, and outline any scheduling constraints that affect the time available. Specify which issues will be addressed, and make sure that the procedure to follow when a deadlock is reached is understood by all parties involved. Team members should also be made aware of the communication rules which provide an equal opportunity for everyone involved to speak without interruptions or uncontrolled, destructive feedback. It is also useful to have the negotiating parties exchange written information outlining their perspective, concerns, issues, demands, and proposals.

Clarifying and Justifying

After the ground rules have been established and initial proposals have been shared, the next step is to make sure that all parties are educated regarding the issues, their significance, and any related demands. This information exchange should not be conducted in a confrontational matter. Rather, the goal is to allow parties to explain, clarify, and justify their positions. The outcome should be a clear understanding of where everyone stands and why.

Bargaining and Problem Solving

This phase is the essence of the negotiation process and can be based on two general strategies, distributive bargaining or integrative bargaining. Distributive bargaining seeks to divide a fixed amount of resources and usually results in a win-lose situation. Because it operates under zero-sum conditions, any gain one party makes is at the other party's expense. It basically takes the approach of trying to determine who gets what share of a fixed amount of available resources. In contrast, integrative bargaining attempts to solve problems by reaching settlements that create a win-win situation. This approach is much preferred but more challenging. It requires parties who are (1) willing to openly share their concerns, (2) are sensitive to others' needs, (3) able to view issues from different perspectives, and (4) agree to maintain flexibility. Additionally, everyone involved must work to find alternative solutions and use a creative approach to problem-solving. Unfortunately when the conflict becomes clouded by inappropriate focus on the people rather than the problems, it becomes increasingly difficult to develop this kind of solution. When you are able to implement the integrative bargaining approach, your team will realize a variety of benefits, including the potential for improved long-term interpersonal relationships and a more cooperative team dynamic.

The following check list is designed to help improve your bargaining skills and incorporate an integrative style:

- Begin with a positive overture
- Address problems, not people
- Accept initial offers, but do not weigh them heavily
- Foster an open, trusting environment
- Promote a collaborative approach to problem-solving
- Encourage creative, innovative ideas

- Force parties to consider alternative viewpoints
- Emphasize win-win solutions through consensus

Closure and Implementation

This final phase involves a quick review of the previous four phases and the decisions made at each step. All individuals involved should be made aware of the actions to be taken following the negotiation. Then, to complete the model, implementation of the actions must be undertaken.

Personal Inventory: Conflict Management Style²

A person's conflict management style describes the methods he or she uses when attempting to identify and resolve conflict. Consider the following questions that probe how we interact with those around us in stressful situations. Choose a single frame of reference, such as work or home, for answering these questions and try to objectively describe the way you usually respond to the situation described.

1. When the people you supervise become involved in a personal conflict do you intervene by settling the dispute, calling a meeting, offering to help, or do you ignore the problem?

² The above questions are based on the "Conflict Management Style Survey" by Marc Robert, *The 1982 Annual for Facilitators, Trainers, and Consultants*, edited by J. William Pfeiffer and Leonard D. Goodstein, San Diego, CA: University Associates, 1982

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2. When someone you care about expresses hostile emotions toward you do you tend to respond in kind, try to calm them down, try to remain objective and just listen, or do you walk away?

3. How do you respond when someone who is relatively unimportant treats you in a hostile manner?

4. How would you respond if you felt that another person is meeting his or her needs at your expense?

5. Generally speaking, when you are involved in a dispute do you tend to try and convince the other person that you are correct, consider the issues logically and objectively, look for a compromise, or let the dispute work itself out over time?

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6. When dealing with conflict, what qualities do you value most?

7. After you and someone you care about have been involved in a serious disagreement, do you react by wanting to revisit the issues and settle things your way, revisit the issues and compromise to work through them, worrying but not taking any further action, or do you tend to not be concerned and let the issues lie?

8. How do you respond when you observe a serious conflict developing between people about who you care?

9. How do you respond when you observe a serious conflict developing between people who are not significant in your life?

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10. How do people describe the way you respond to conflict and opposition?

11. When you try and communicate with someone with whom you are at odds, do you tend to try and overpower them, talk more than you listen, employ active listening skills, or passively let them do all the talking?

12. Do you ever use humor when involved in an unpleasant situation? If so, how?

13. How do you respond when someone does something that irritates or offends you?

Lesson:

Applying Conflict Management Tools

The following learning tools are provided to help you implement the previously discussed techniques, styles, and approaches when managing conflict³.

Tips for Controlling Emotions

- Do not engage in power struggles which can be marked by futile, combative arguments designed to question the defined norms and rules which govern group behavior.
- Do not detach yourself from the conflict. It may seem appealing to completely remove yourself emotionally from a difficult situation. Although objectivity and control are a must, people respond to sensitivity and a certain amount of emotional involvement is necessary in order to be concerned and motivated to find solutions.
- Do not allow the conflict and its intense emotions to control the situation. Even though people's feelings are important, they can not be allowed to establish the agenda or dictate the issues which are addressed.
- Do not allow the negative circumstances surrounding the conflict to cloud your perspective and force you to view the situation in the worst possible light.

³ Information in this section is based in part on Peg Pickering, *How to Manage Conflict*, 3rd ed., (Franklin Lakes, NJ: The Career Press, Inc.)

- Avoid projection - by parties involved and by you. Be careful not to allow anyone to project their own weaknesses, flaws, or expectations towards the parties involved. Stop people from making generalizations, prejudicial evaluations, or accusations regarding others' motives.

Defenses Against Verbal Attacks

When people attempt to use their angry behavior to control your responses and the process interactions, be careful to avoid the hostile bait. Use care to avoid arguing and threats, being sure to monitor and control your reactions.

- Pause before responding. Remember that when someone confronts you in a combative manner, you are not required to immediately respond. Wait a few seconds, collect your thoughts, and formulate a controlled response.
- Speak slowly and do not raise your voice. It is almost instinctive to talk rapidly and loudly when we are anxious. Instead, control your pace and volume. Speaking slowly also allows you more time to draft your response.
- Walk away from the situation if you become extremely agitated.
- Acknowledge the other person's complaints and recognize the feelings behind the attack. Maintain a level of dignity and respect for the individual, regardless of their disturbed state.
- Choose your words carefully to include non-inflammatory phrases. Be sure that what you say does not push the other person's "hot buttons". Also make sure that your body language, tone, and facial expressions are not perceived as aggressive.
- Work to help the other party see alternative options.

- Try to regain control of the discussion through questions. For example, direct their input by asking "When did you first notice this?" or "What are some of the factors that first led you to this conclusion?"
- Change the subject slightly and direct the conversation to a related issue.

Handling Routine Hassles

- Diffuse hostility with humorous responses for those people who predictably try to push your "hot buttons".
- Reduce friction by agreeing with rude, personal remarks intended to belittle, embarrass, or challenge you.
- Re-direct when an outrageous, unfounded accusation is made; pause and then respond with "Speaking of _____, did you _____?"
- When someone blames you for situations that are not your fault or holds you responsible for factors beyond your control, acknowledge the predicament and offer to help.
- Sidestep issues or move on when people have reached a deadlock or are intent on arguing. When issues are belabored, re-directing can also be an effective control technique.
- Respond with questions when people bombard you with questions or ask inappropriate questions.

Dealing with Anger and Aggression

A basic component of human nature involves reactions to unfulfilled needs or expectations not realized. When the needs are intense, the expectations center around important issues, or the person's demands have not been addressed properly, these reactions tend to involve anger and aggression. The following guidelines are appropriate whether dealing with situations involving associates or customers:

- Maintain your composure. It is difficult when confronted with emotionally charged situations to keep your own emotions in check. However, it is important to remain calm instead of becoming angry or defensive. Such responses only escalate the conflict. Remember, the dissatisfaction the person is expressing centers around their issues and problems, not you. Avoid the temptation to take their frustrations personally.
- Allow the other party to vent. When a person is overwhelmed with intense negative emotions, your responses or suggestions will have no impact on his or her position. Due to their current state of mind, the angry person is simply unable to process your explanations. Additionally, sometimes individuals feel slighted if not allowed to present their position. Listen attentively and wait until the other party has expressed all of his or her concerns before attempting to address the problems. You may also need to ask questions to clarify what the other person is saying.
- Realize how important the issues are to the other party and try to empathize with his or her reaction. Be careful not to alienate by showing indifference or by being defensive. Most times, the other person is looking for you to show that you understand the problem and how it has impacted them.

- Do not hastily offer solutions simply to appeal to the other party. Make sure you can follow through with any promises you make.
- Identify and analyze the problem. Often times when people are angry, they do not express themselves clearly. You may have to work to uncover the real problem and its cause.
- Find out exactly how the other person would like the situation to be handled. If you can address the problems in this manner, then by all means do so. If not, use their response as a starting point for negotiations.
- Focus on what you can do instead of trying to explain to the other person what you do not know, what you can not do, or why you are limited by company or union rules and regulations. Emphasize any measures you can take to solve the problem.
- Follow through. Whatever settlement agreement was reached, make sure the necessary actions are taken. Future relationships with this person depend on your dealings with them in the present.

Managing Intense Personality Types⁴

Overly Sensitive Types

Because of fears and insecurities, some people have a difficult time handling correction. Even constructive criticism causes them to be resentful and defensive. When you have to correct such an individual, it is best to use a diplomatic approach and begin by praising their successes. Your interactions with them require patience and you may have to spend additional time reassuring them.

⁴ Information in this section is based in part on material from Arthur R. Pell, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Managing People* (New York, NJ: Simon & Schuster Macmillian Company)

Negative Types

The reasons behind people's negativity vary greatly by individual. However, the effect of their pessimism is consistently demoralizing and you should work to minimize negativity. Sometimes the causes are deeply rooted in personality factors beyond your ability to influence. In other cases, it is simply a response or reaction pattern that can be adjusted. Take the time to speak with the negative individual and point out how disruptive their comments and actions are. Help them recognize their behavior patterns and replace reluctance, annoyance, impatience, and cynicism with realistic perspectives and more positive interactions with other team members. Keep in mind that maturity issues affect the person's ability to implement your suggestions.

Temperamental Types

Some individuals seem to be on emotional roller coasters, subject to violent outbursts in the middle of otherwise calm proceedings. In addition to concerns for the individual's personal health and safety, you should also be concerned about the impact his or her behavior has on the team. It can be difficult to recover from screaming tirades and hostile negative expressions that target other people. In some cases it is possible to anticipate such outbursts and diffuse the situation. However, that is not always true, as some people's behavior patterns are completely unpredictable. Following an outburst, it may be necessary to not only remind that person how his or her actions affect the group, you may also need to have the person take a time out. Disciplinary action and associate assistance programs may also need to be considered as tools for controlling such individuals and their impact on the team.

For Your Review

To summarize this unit, you have learned:

- Before examining suggested approaches for dealing with conflict, you must first identify and define conflict.
- Although it centers around a single individual, internal conflict can be an immobilizing force that hinders a person's performance and limits his or her contributions to the team.
- External conflict in a group setting most often manifests itself as interpersonal conflict or confrontations between individuals.
- The three most common factors that influence the potential for conflict are communication, organizational structure, and personal variables.
- Your attempts at managing conflict will be much more successful if you respond to events and actions based on your knowledge of the nature of conflict and a consideration of the issues surrounding the current disagreement.
- Maintaining positive interpersonal relationships is the primary focus of the constructive approach to conflict management.
- Successful negotiation uses various bargaining strategies and relies on a five step process model: preparation and planning; establishing ground rules; clarifying and justifying; bargaining and problem solving; and closure and implementation.
- Avoid arguing and threats and control your reactions to them.

- When managing sensitive individuals, use a diplomatic approach and begin by praising their successes.
- To best interact with negative types, help them recognize their behavior patterns and replace reluctance, annoyance, impatience, and cynicism with realistic perspectives and more positive interactions with other team members.
- When managing temperamental individuals, express concern for the individual's personal health and safety. You might also consider disciplinary action and associate assistance programs

Unit Activities

Role Play: Managing Difficult Situations

The following exercise is designed to encourage practical application of effective tools for managing conflict. It provides a comprehensive review of various approaches and techniques for resolving opposing interests and minimizing conflict's stressful impact on interpersonal relationships.

Participants will be divided into teams of three to five members. The objective is to identify situations involving conflict, analyze the situations and create strategies for resolving the issues, and finally to successfully implement the strategies.

Part 1: Identifying a Difficult Situation

Each team will consider past experiences in which members have been involved in stressful work-related situations. Your instructor may assign your team a category or conflict type, such as manager-associate relations, associate-associate relations, or associate/manager-customer relations. Teams will have 10 minutes to select the one experience that best represents a situation involving conflict in the work environment. Using the form below, document the event. Your analysis of the situation should reflect an understanding of the types and stages of conflict as well as factors that promote conflict. Be prepared to describe the experience and explain the surrounding circumstances. Do not however, include any information regarding how the situation was handled or the outcome in your presentation.

Describe the setting for the event:

Describe the principal parties involved based on job, responsibilities, age range, gender, and work history:

Managing and Resolving Conflict

Summarize the major issues:

List any factors that influenced the development or resolution of these issues:

Managing and Resolving Conflict

Clarify the issues:

Evaluate the options and alternative choices:

[illegible]

After you and your team have designed your conflict management strategy, select one team representative to implement the strategy in a role play exercise. The team who presented your assigned situation will play the role(s) of the other party(ies) involved. Try to resolve the issues by using an approach that employs mechanisms for controlling your emotions, defending yourself against verbal attacks, dealing with anger and aggression, and managing intense personality types. After the role play activities, be prepared to discuss your approach and the results.

Unit:

Understanding Change

Unit Objectives

In this unit, you will learn how to:

- create a mission statement.
- distinguish between frame-bending changes and frame-breaking changes.
- restructure an organization.
- reaffirm core values.

Lesson:

Creating a Mission Statement

When you ask someone what leaders do, one of the first things mentioned is envisioning. Leaders envision change and improvements more than nonleaders. They envision the whole organization and work to make it greater the sum of its parts.

To gain buy-in and commitment to the vision, leaders coordinate with a group of their constituents to create a mission statement. Effective leaders create a corporate culture in which everyone can be heard and contribute to the company mission.

Leaders who encourage employees to participate in establishing the company's mission can increase morale and create a positive work environment. By participating in creating the mission statement, employees can see how they impact the success of the organization.

Mission statements explain why an organization exists and its purpose. They also act as constant reminders of the leader's vision. This constant reinforcement helps institutionalize and solidify the values and goals outlined in the mission statement.

Components

There are four components of a mission statement that define an organization's perception of what determines success. Most mission statements contain the following components:

- Values
- Goals
- Employee focus
- Customer focus

Values

The organization's values define the things that are most important to the organization. For example, honesty, integrity, initiative, innovation, are common values shared by many different organizations. By including values in the mission statement, companies can reinforce and remind employees to incorporate values in their tasks and decisions.

Goals

Mission statement goals briefly describe the results that determine success. These goals summarize many goals throughout an organization and are not always specific.

- ❖ Because mission statements are concise, setting a specific, quantified goal is more appropriate at the department or individual level.

Employee Focus

Successful organizations treat their employees with the same level of service they treat their customers. Companies who put their employees' interests first, have employees who put the customers' interests first.

Customer Focus

Mission statements briefly describe how an organization successfully satisfies its customers. For example, quality standards, service levels, and delivery times are often described in mission statements.

Lesson:

**Distinguishing Between
Frame-bending Changes and
Frame-breaking Changes**

When leaders act as change agents to transform their organizations, their actions are either frame-bending changes or frame-breaking changes. Frame refers to the normal frame in which a business operates, such as the industry, products, and operations. Examining these changes helps distinguish between actions that fine-tune operations and those that result in entering a new business or industry.

Frame-bending Changes

Frame-bending actions result in changes that affect the business within its normal frame. These changes redirect the company's focus without making dramatic changes in the way they do business. Frame-bending leaders look for ways of fine-tuning the organization by making minor transformational changes.

An example of a frame-bending change is General Electric's focus on the Internet and digitization. Former CEO, Jack Welch, stressed the importance of digitization as key growth initiative. GE uses digitization to interact with its partners, vendors, and customers in ways they never could prior to the Internet revolution.

Frame-breaking Changes

Frame-breaking changes involve restructuring the business to an extreme extent. Some refer to frame-breaking changes as those that result from "out-of-the-box" thinking. Frame-breaking changes can result in an organization entering or abandoning a particular industry.

Mergers and acquisitions are examples of frame-breaking changes. Mergers can result in one company entering an industry or business that is entirely new to them. Changes resulting from mergers can include integrating new employees, learning new business processes, reconciling differences between corporate cultures, and creating new positions.

Entering a new business or industry drastically changes the way a company does business. The company must examine the current skill base of its employees and compare it to the new skill requirements. In some cases, the current employees can be retrained to fit with the new business and new job positions. Organizational restructuring and downsizing are also common among organizations that initiate frame-breaking changes.

Lesson:

Restructuring an Organization

The decision to restructure an organization is one of the most important and difficult decisions leaders must make. Restructuring can result in retraining, layoffs, low morale, and short-term decreases in productivity. On the other hand, successful restructuring can increase profitability, create new jobs, and increase morale over time.

Restructuring does not always mean downsizing or eliminating positions. It also refers to adding new business units, combining departments, changing the reporting structure, and other structural changes resulting from organizational development.

When restructuring an organization, leaders face many challenges. The first challenge is to decide whether restructuring is a necessary change. The decision can be driven by internal or external factors.

External Factors

Environmental changes such as increased competition and economic downturns can drive the decision to restructure and eliminate positions. When a company loses market share or the economy is down, its profit and revenue decrease. Companies facing these financial hardships take measures to reduce operating costs while developing a strategy to increase profits and gain market share.

Another external factor that can result in restructuring is changes in government regulations. For example, companies that produce hazardous waste material may need to invest in new equipment or change their business operations to satisfy new air quality standards or hazardous waste disposal procedures.

Companies that integrate new technology may need to restructure the business units most affected by the new technology. If a company integrates new technology that automates tasks, some jobs may be combined with existing jobs or eliminated. New technology may also create a need for new skills and new positions.

Internal Factors

Internal factors also drive a leader's decision to restructure. For example, a high turnover rate combined with an inability to find suitable replacements can result in the need to combine responsibilities, eliminate positions, and outsource some tasks.

Another internal change that can result in restructuring is the need for new skills and training that results from business process reengineering. The integration of new or improved business processes can eliminate tasks and create new ones. As a result, employees may take other positions in the company or experience changes in their job responsibilities

Communicating and Implementing Restructuring

Open communication with all employees is one of the most important aspects of successful restructuring. Effective leaders encourage employees to participate as much as possible in making the decision to restructure and during implementation.

When a company announces restructuring, the first thing that comes to the employees' minds is that they might lose their jobs. This usually results in low morale and decreased productivity. Management can appease employees' by communicating the need to retain most of the current employees and work with them to find the best position for them in the new organizational structure.

Lesson: Reaffirming Core Values

As mentioned in a previous lesson, reaffirming core values is essential to being an effective leader. Effective leaders focus on taking action that is always consistent with the company's values.

Leaders and their constituents often refer to the company's values to aid in making a decision. For example, one of The Body Shop's core values is to provide products that are environmentally safe and not tested on animals. The Body Shop's Chairman, Gordon Roddick, says, " If a product is harmful to the environment, or if the indigenous people are exploited by its production, then a customer won't want to buy it. And if I am a sales person I certainly would not want to tell you those things." ⁵

By buying products that are consistent with their values, The Body Shop's sales persons are more inspired and willing to tell customers about how their products are made from natural ingredients and never tested on animals. In addition, customers who share these same values are more willing to make a special effort to shop at The Body Shop, and maybe even pay a higher price than they would for similar products elsewhere.

⁵ From Robert H. Rosen, *Leading People*, (New York, NY: Viking, 1996)

Managing Change

In 1994, an article in *Business Ethics* magazine claimed that some of The Body Shop's products were contaminated and that its socially responsible programs were not what The Body Shop claimed. Anita Roddick (founder and Chief Executive) and Gordon Roddick (Chairman) who founded The Body Shop were very defensive about this article's attack on their company. The Roddicks worked hard to incorporate their values and beliefs into their business and they took this attack on their company personally.

The challenge facing the Roddicks was to uncover as much truth as possible about these claims and take corrective action. Since the release of that article, the Roddicks have reaffirmed their core values with their employees, franchises, vendors, and customers. They also initiated changes to ensure that all ingredients, products, manufacturing processes, practices are consistent with the company's values.

For Your Review

To summarize this unit, you have learned:

- Effective leaders create a corporate culture in which everyone can be heard and contribute to the company mission.
- The organization's values define the things that are most important to the organization.
- By including values in the mission statement, companies can reinforce and remind employees to incorporate values in their tasks and decisions.
- Mission statement goals briefly describe the results that determine success.
- Mission statements briefly describe how an organization successfully satisfies its customers.

Understanding Change

- Frame-bending actions result in changes that affect the business within its normal frame, and redirect the company's focus without making dramatic changes in the way they do business.
- Frame-breaking changes involve restructuring the business to an extreme extent.
- When restructuring an organization, leaders face many challenges. The first challenge is to decide whether restructuring is a necessary change. The decision can be driven by internal or external factors.
- Effective leaders focus on taking action that is always consistent with the company's values.
- Leaders and their constituents often refer to the company's values to aid in making a decision.

Unit Activities

Creating Mission Statements

After your instructor divides the class into groups, create a mission statement for your business unit, team, or organization. Select a spokesperson from your group to share your group's mission statement.

[illegible]

Breaking and Bending Frames

After your instructor divides the class into groups, read the following case study and complete the activity.

Case: You are part of a research and development team for Smarter Brothers, who develops games for all age groups. Your largest competitor has announced plans for a new board game to be available for the upcoming Christmas season. You realize that your most obvious reaction is to create a new an exciting board game. On the other hand, you want to consider all available options and ideas.

Work with your team members to develop a strategy to answer your competitor's latest entry in the board game market. Devise product plans and descriptions and prepare a short presentation to share your strategy with executive-level management.

After each group presents their strategy, your instructor will lead a class discussion.

Were any of the strategies frame-breaking? How?

Were any of the strategies frame-bending? How?

Reaffirming Core Values

Read the following case study about Johnson & Johnson and answer the questions at the end and be prepared to share your answers with the class.

In 1982, someone replaced Tylenol Extra-Strength capsules with cyanide-laced capsules, resealed the packages, and deposited them on the shelves of pharmacies, and food stores in the Chicago area. The poison capsules were purchased and seven people died. Johnson & Johnson, parent company of McNeil Consumer Products Company which makes Tylenol, had to explain to the world why its trusted product was suddenly killing people.

The first phase of Johnson & Johnson's public relations campaign was executed immediately after the first few deaths were proven to be caused by Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules.

The company immediately alerted consumers not to consume any Tylenol products. They told consumers not to resume using Tylenol until the extent of the tampering could be determined. Johnson & Johnson stopped producing and advertising Tylenol and recalled all Tylenol capsules. Johnson & Johnson recalled more than 100 million dollars worth of product.

The media praised Johnson & Johnson for their socially responsible actions. Johnson & Johnson also established relations with the Chicago Police, the FBI, and the Food and Drug Administration to help search for the person or persons who laced and planted the poison capsules and to help prevent further product tampering.

The October 11, 1982 edition of The Washington Post ran an article by Jerry Knight that stated "Johnson & Johnson has effectively demonstrated how a major business ought to handle a disaster." The article stated that, "This is no Three Mile Island accident in which the company's response did more damage than the original incident." The article applauded Johnson & Johnson for being honest with the public.

The Washington Post article stressed that it must have been difficult for the company to not deny a link between Tylenol and the seven sudden deaths in the Chicago area. They added that the company focused on determining the cause of the deaths.

The article added that, "what Johnson & Johnson executives have done is communicate the message that the company is candid, contrite, and compassionate, committed to solving the murders and protecting the public." The Washington Post also mentioned that Johnson & Johnson almost immediately put up a reward of \$100,000 for the killer.

James E. Burke, chairman of the board of the corporation at the time of the incident, said that the poisonings put everyone at Johnson & Johnson into shock. He added that some of the initial public relations decisions pertaining to this case were made immediately and without question.

Burke said that the decisions to pull advertising for Tylenol, recall all of the bottles from the lots that were laced with cyanide, and send warnings to health professionals, were made immediately. Although Johnson & Johnson did not want to believe they could be held responsible for the tampering, the company still had to decide whether or not they would issue a nationwide Tylenol recall.

There was a great deal of debate at Johnson & Johnson over recalling Tylenol nationwide. Some executives worried about the public panic. They also argued over which Tylenol products to pull and whether recalling 100 million dollars in Tylenol would motivate the killer to poison other products. The executives held off on the huge recall through the first weekend after the deaths.

After the first three funerals of the victims, Johnson & Johnson issued a nationwide recall of 31 million bottles of Extra-Strength Tylenol. The company also offered to exchange all Tylenol capsules that had already been purchased for Tylenol tablets. Although the exchange cost Johnson & Johnson several million, the company did not want to take any more chances.

Johnson & Johnson's basis for making decisions during the crisis were based on their business philosophy. Lawrence G. Foster., Corporate Vice President of Johnson & Johnson at the time of the poisonings, joined the company in 1957 and helped build Johnson & Johnson's first public relations department. When making decisions on handling the Tylenol situation, Foster said that they relied on their business philosophy called "Our Credo".

Foster stated that, at the time of the crisis, Johnson & Johnson had corporate planning groups working on crisis management and that no crisis management plan could have been appropriate to handle the Tylenol poisonings. Foster believed that no management at any company could ever be prepared for such a large-scale tragic crisis; therefore, they trusted their credo to drive decisions. "It was the credo that prompted the decisions that enabled us to make the right early decisions that eventually led to the comeback phase," said David R. Clare, president of Johnson & Johnson at the time.

Robert Wood Johnson, founder of Johnson & Johnson, wrote the credo in the mid-1940's. Johnson saw business as having responsibilities to society that transcended sales and profit incentives. In this respect, Foster explained, Johnson outlined his company's responsibilities to: "consumers and medical professionals using its products, employees, the communities where its people work and live, and its stockholders." Johnson believed his company would succeed if it maintained this sense of responsibility and he felt that his credo was both moral and profitable.

As the Tylenol crisis escalated, Johnson & Johnson top management turned to the credo for guidance. The credo stressed the need for Johnson & Johnson to be responsible in working for the public interest so they alerted the public and medical community, the Food and Drug Administration, and stopped producing Tylenol.

In the end, Johnson & Johnson was able to recover quickly and painlessly from possibly the greatest crisis ever to hit the pharmaceutical industry.

Understanding Change

How did Johnson & Johnson reaffirm core values?

Were Johnson & Johnson's actions consistent with their values? Please describe supporting arguments for your answer.

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