Conflict Management

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Conflict Management Workshop
Agenda

• Welcome and objectives
• What is conflict?
• Conflict manifestation tasks
• Ways of handling conflict
• Communication freezers
• Outcomes of conflict
• Tips
• Evaluation and close
Objectives

- To identify how conflicts arise
- To recognise our preferred conflict management style
- To develop strategies for more effectively dealing with conflict
- To become familiar with techniques that can ensure optimal outcomes
What is Conflict?

• A disagreement between people that may be the result of different:
  – Ideas
  – Perspectives
  – Priorities
  – Preferences
  – Beliefs
  – Values
  – Goals
  – Organisational structures
Sources of Conflict

- Ambiguous jurisdictions:
  “I don’t know who has the sign off on that issue.”

- Conflict of interest:
  “Doesn’t she belong to the College too?”

- Communication barriers:
  “They never return phone calls.”

- Unresolved prior conflicts:
  “We always have a problem with the Feds about the final report.”

- Over dependency of one party:
  “We will have to wait until the Budget is announced.”
Misconceptions about Conflict

- Harmony is “normal”
- Conflict is “abnormal”
- Conflicts and disagreements are the same
- Conflict is the result of “personality problems”
- Conflict and anger are the same
Conflict Manifestation

- Phase One
  - Frustration

- Phase Two
  - Conceptualisation of cause

- Phase Three
  - Behaviour directed at cause

- Phase Four
  - Outcome as a result of the behaviour
• Task One

• In pairs, each identify a conflict situation experienced recently
  – Write down what frustrated you
  – Make a note of what differences caused the conflict
Four ways of Handling Conflict

- **Avoidance**
  - Denying the existence of conflict

- **Accommodation**
  - Letting the other party totally decide

- **Competition**
  - Aggressively pursuing ways to achieve your win

- **Collaboration**
  - Actively looking after your own interests but not losing sight of the interest of others
Ways of Handling Conflict

- Compete
- Collaborate
- Avoid
- Accommodate
Ways of Handling Conflict

Compete
Useful: with limited resources
Best: goal is to win
Worst: goal is to cohere group

Collaborate
Useful: trying to satisfy all parties
Best: goal is long-term
Worst: trust, respect & communication skills are limited

Avoid
Useful: in early stages
Best: nothing to lose, no time, inappropriate context
Worst: goal is long-term

Accommodate
Useful: resolving immediate needs
Best: issue more important to others, harmony needed
Worst: trying to tease out differences
• **Task Two**

• **Back in pairs, focus on the conflict situation you experienced**
  – What was your behaviour?
    • Avoidance
    • Accommodation
    • Competition
    • Collaboration
  – What communication skills did you use?
Communication Freezers

• Telling the other person what to do
  – “You must....”

• Threatening with “or else”
  – “If you don’t....”

• Telling the other person what they ought to do
  – “It’s your responsibility to ....”

• Making suggestions without being asked
  – “It would be best if you....”
Communication Freezers

- Attempting to educate the other person
  - “Experience tells us that….“

- Judging the other person negatively
  - “You’re wrong”

- Giving insincere praise
  - “You have so much potential”

- Putting labels on people
  - “You just don’t concentrate”
Communication Freezers

- Psychoanalysing the other person
  - “You have problems with authority”

- Making light of the other person’s problems by generalising
  - “behind every cloud there is a silver lining”

- Giving the third degree
  - “Why did you do that?”

- Making light of the problem by kidding
  - “You think you’ve got problems”
Going Beyond “Freezing” Behaviours

- Begin with communication
  - Focus on active listening techniques
  - Ask a lot of open-ended questions

- Separate the problem from the person
  - Find common ideas and support them
  - Redefine the conflict

- Use “I” statements
  - “When you do ..., I feel…”

- Negotiate partial solutions or compromise
  - Solidify adjustments
• Task Three

• Back in pairs, focus on the conflict situation you experienced
  – What happened as a result of your behaviour?
    • Constructive
    • Destructive
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- In constructive conflict
  - Growth occurs
  - Problems are resolved
  - Groups are unified
  - Productivity is enhanced
  - Commitment is increased

- In destructive conflict
  - Negativism results
  - Resolutions diminish
  - Groups divide
  - Productivity decreases
  - Satisfaction is decreased
Outcomes of Conflict

Win / Lose

Win / Win

Lose / Lose

Lose / Win
• Task Four

• Back in pairs, focus on the conflict situation you experienced
  – Map the outcome of your conflict
    • Win / Lose
    • Win / Win
    • Lose / Lose
    • Lose / Win
Preparation Tips

• Keep goals
  – Short term
  – Flexible

• Rehearse process
  – Reacquaint with background
  – Prepare “worst and best case scenarios”
Setting Tips

• Location
  – Neutral ground
  – Minimal distractions
  – Break-out space

• Duration and Frequency
  – Short initial session (less than 90 minutes)
  – Try to schedule more than one session (at least three)
Negotiation Tips

- Focus on positive outcomes
- One issue at a time
- Review, don’t resurrect, previous issues
- Agree to disagree if necessary
• Task Five

• Back in pairs, focus on the conflict situation you experienced
  – Work out what you did that was effective
  – What could you have improved?
  – What would you do differently?

• Role play a new ending with your partner
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