

Conflict Management - Prime Necessity!

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Abstract: A conflict free world is unimaginable therefore conflict free organization also. It's a natural disagreement. If it is not managed in a proper way at proper time it may lead to dysfunction or a break in good relationship. Different aspect of conflict right from the meaning, actual process, reasons, varieties etc. and how with different approaches and styles conflict could be managed are discussed.

Introduction:- A conflict free world is unimaginable therefore conflict free organization also. It's a natural disagreement. As personalities varied the way to look the world also varies. The perception differs, attitudes vary, and the way of thinking motivates to act in different ways which may results into disputes. Organizations are defined as group of people, who come together to achieve some common objectives and so we come across the disputes in an organization also. Conflict is undivided part of organizational life.

Meaning:- Various authors have defined conflict differently. Conflict may however be defined as situation in which there is a break down in decision making owing to irrational and incompatible stand taken by one or all parties concerned. In short it's a natural and sharp disagreement includes the perceived divergence of interest.

Classes of Conflict:- Much earlier, James C. March and Herbert A. Simon had classified conflict into different classes: -Individual Conflict 2. Organizational/ Intra-Organizational Conflict 3. Inter-Organizational Conflict.

Views behind Conflict:-

1. Conflict is the result of dysfunctional outcome resulting from poor communication, lack of openness and trust between people, failure of management to recognize the needs and aspirations of its employees. It is bad and must be avoided is the Classical approach and Traditional view of 1930's and 1940's.

2. The Interactionist Modern view has a broader scope; its approach is to encourage and maintain an ongoing minimum level of conflict to keep the group viable, self-critical and creative. It is essential on performance level.

Varieties of Conflict:- Basically there are four main varieties of Conflict-

1. Global Conflict,
2. Cognitive Conflict,
3. Affective Conflict,

4. Procedural Conflict.

Reason behind Conflict:- "Incompatibility". All this is due to the "incompatibility"-

- Incompatibility in preferred/expected outcomes.
- Incompatibility in ideas and thoughts within an Individual or between Individual.
- Incompatibility occurs due to feelings and emotions of Individuals.
- Incompatibility occurs when Individual differs in their process to achieve an objective.

The Process of Conflict:-

The process of conflict normally consists of four stages-

i. One party plans to block the attempts of another party from achieving a goal.

ii. The person whose attempts are sought to be thwarted perceives the harm that might be done to him and feels or realizes the potential damage. Realizations make him emotionally involved in him. Emotional environment makes him feel frustrated.

iii. In the third stage of conflict, the party (whose efforts were blocked in stage 1) now blocks the other party's attempts in attainment of goals. The conflict is now, out in the open.

iv. The conflict finally results in functional or dysfunctional conflict. If conflict is effectively handled, there is functional conflict. If it is mismanaged, it results in dysfunctional conflict.

As conflict beyond certain limit is dysfunctional, it should be reduced and resolved either with positive attitude or negative attitude or balanced attitude. There are many approaches to resolve conflict, but some processes are only of destructive conflict.

The processes commonly associated with conflict are-

Competitive processes, misperceptions and bias, emotionality, decreased communication,

blurred issues, rigid commitments, magnified differences, escalation of conflict etc.

Conflict management:-

Conflict should be managed; for smooth function it is necessary. Conflict management is consisting of: - diagnostic processes, inter personal styles, negotiation strategies and other interventions that are designed to avoid unnecessary conflict. There can be two approaches of managing conflict- preventive measures and curative measures. Each approach begins with a fundamentally similar two-dimensional frame work proposed by Dean Pruitt and Jeffrey Rubin (1986) and the research of Thomas and Kilmann. (1977)

Different strategies/ techniques are also used to manage conflict. They can be divided into broad categories: - a) Feldman and Arnold's techniques, b) Other techniques.

Through different styles also conflict can be managed. They are:-

1. Integrating style,
2. Obliging style,
3. Dominating style,
4. Avoiding style,
5. Compromising style,
6. Forcing style,
7. Collaborating style,
8. Accommodating style,
9. Competing style.

Kim and Kitani (1998), demonstrated how individualism, collectivism, influenced, preferences for conflict resolution styles in relationships as partners. (Asian-American), preferred obliging, avoiding and integrating styles, while partners from a more individualistic culture. (Caucasian-Americans) preferred dominating style.

Pearson and Stephen (1998) found more collectivist culture, (Brazil) preferred accommodation and collaboration style.

The Opinion Survey of Organizational Conflict- (OSOC) has prepared their styles of conflict management to help managers to examine and take necessary steps to improve their effectiveness to

Ref. books: -

Fred Luthes. (2010). Organizational Behavior - 12th Edition, McGraw Hill xarkana

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James D. Thomas. Organizational Management of Conflict-

manage conflict. They are as follows:-Resignation, Withdrawal, Appeasement, Diffusion, Confrontation,.Arbitration, Compromise Negotiation.These are eight keys, out of this four are avoidance styles and remaining four are approach styles.

In Conflict Management, Negotiation is the important and inevitable factor. It includes a combination of Compromise, Collaboration and possibly some forcing on vital issues. There are four different types of Negotiations. They are:-

1. **Distributive Negotiations:** Traditional win-lose, fixed amount situations, wherein one party's gain is other party's loss .the parties are engaged in tense, emotion-laden conflict. The forcing and compromise handling styles are dominant.
2. **Integrative Negotiations:** - the parties identify mutual problems, and assess alternatives, openly express preferences, and jointly reach a mutually acceptable solution. The collaborative and compromise handling styles are dominant.
3. **Attitudinal Negotiations:** - the parties seek to establish desired attitudes and relationships. The parties reveal certain attitudes that influence their interactions.
4. **Intra-organizational Negotiations:** - groups often negotiate through representatives. Each set of negotiators tries to build consensus for agreement and resolve inter group conflict before dealing with other.

Conclusion

As we all know that conflict is an inseparable part of life. If it is not managed in a proper way at proper time it may lead to dysfunction or a break in good relationship. We had gone through the different aspect of conflict right from the meaning, actual process, reasons, varieties etc. and how with different approaches and styles conflict could be managed. Managing conflict leads to maintain healthy relationship and creative performance level at personal level, family level or in organization. If thinking level and mentality changed then conflict can be reduced and managed.