CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: Necessary Skills in Today’s Workplace

Conflict Competency in the Workplace
November 20, 2018 | 11:00 am to 12:30 pm

Jim Fielding Innovation and Commercialization Space
Cliff Fielding Research, Innovation and Engineering Building
Second Floor | Laurentian University | Sudbury
Why Conflict Mgmt is so Important?

- Intergenerational Differences – major divide between millennials and baby boomers
- Flood of anti-harassment/bullying legislation in recent years
- Greater emphasis placed on creating a civil work environment – partly driven by legislatives changes and demands of employees
- Greater level of sophistication in the modern workforce – won’t stand for humiliation and ill-treatment
Conflict Management

Conflict is inevitable when more than one person associates with one another...
Conflict Management

“Dealing with people is probably the biggest problem you face, especially if you are in business. Yes, and that is also true if you are a housewife, architect or engineer.”

Dale Carnegie, author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*
Conflict Management

- **Conflict occurs inevitably in every form of organization:**
  - Conflict is a disagreement or clash between ideas, principles, or people. Anger, resentment and displeasure are manifestations of conflict.

- **Conflict left unchecked or unresolved may lead to:**
  - Decreased productivity
  - Poor employee morale
Conflict Management

- increased sick leave
- higher turnover rates
- employee resistance and subtle forms of sabotage
- communication breakdown
- deterioration of team concept
- poor service to clients
- poor work performance throughout the unit or department
Conflict Management

Two (2) forms of conflict within organizations:

- **Interpersonal**
  - conflict or discord between individual people;
  - the nature of the conflict may be due to differences of opinions or personality issues.

- **Organizational**
  - conflict with different parts of the organization;
  - the nature of the conflict is broader and involves groups of people.
Conflict Management

Conflict Management Styles
Conflict Management Styles include:

- Competing
- Accommodating
- Compromising
- Avoiding
- Collaboration
Conflicts Management

Common Sources of Conflict are:

- dissatisfaction with behaviour
- difference of opinion
- misunderstanding or confusion
- dissatisfaction with roles and responsibilities
- competition for resources, benefits and/or privileges
Conflict Management

Resolving Conflict
One of the single most apparent stumbling block is one’s failure to understand his/her contribution to the conflict...
Resolving Conflict

- Identifying the behaviour tendencies of your employees can help you deal with a conflict before it escalates;
- Behaviours to look for include:
  - Passive Behaviour
  - Aggressive Behaviour
  - Passive-aggressive Behaviours
Conflict Management

Be assertive:

✓ Assertive behaviour is generally the most effective method of getting what you want while not taking advantage of others;

✓ Assertiveness is the process of expressing thoughts and feelings while asking for what one wants in an appropriate way;

✓ Do not avoid “Difficult Conversations”;

✓ Being assertive can create a win-win situation.
Conflicts Management

Initiating conflict resolution:

- Avoid making accusations and attributing motives to the respondent – avoid “you” statements;
- Maintain personal ownership of the problem;
- Succinctly describe your problem in terms of behaviours, consequences and feelings;
- Specify the expectations or standards that have been violated;
Conflict Management

- Persist until understood;
- Encourage two-way interaction by inviting the respondent to express her perspective and ask questions;
- Don’t “dump” all your issues at once;
- Appeal to what you share (principles, goals, constraints).
Responding to conflict resolution:

- Analyze and respond appropriately to the initiator’s emotions;
- Show genuine concern and interest; respond empathetically, even if you disagree with the complaint;
- Avoid justifying your actions as your first response;
Conflict Management

- Ask questions that channel the initiator’s remarks from general to specific and evaluative to descriptive statements;
- Focus on one issue, or one part of an issue at a time;
- Agree with some aspect of the complaint (facts, perceptions, feelings or principles);
- Ask the initiator to suggest something more acceptable;
- Agree on a remedial plan of action.
Conflict Management

Mediating conflict resolution:

✓ Acknowledge that a conflict exists and treat it seriously;
✓ Do not belittle the problem or be dismissive;
✓ Break down the issues; begin working on one component at a time; start with one of the easier components;
✓ Do not take sides, remain neutral;
Conflict Management

- Focus discussion on the impact the conflict is having and the detriment of a continued conflict;
- Keep interaction issue oriented, not personality oriented; do not allow a disputant to dominate the conversation;
- Keep conflict in perspective by identifying areas of agreement or common viewpoint;
Conflict Management

- Help disputant’s generate alternatives;
- Ensure satisfaction with the proposed resolution and commitment to implementation.
Thank you!