

CLE

# Conflict Resolution

SELF-DIRECTED ASSIGNMENT

Janet Davies  
11/1/2011

# *Conflict Resolution*

## **Causes of Conflict in the Workplace<sup>1</sup>**

Most conflicts stem from poor communication in which one party misinterprets the words or actions of another party. Some of the key issues that can trigger conflict are:

- Values—one's belief systems, ideas of right versus wrong, etc.;
- Relationships—stereotypes, poor or failed communications, repetitive negative behaviours, etc.;
- Externals/Moods—factors unrelated to the conflict, psychological or physiological issues of parties in conflict;
- Data—lack of information, misinformation, too much information, data collection problems;
- Interests—each party's wants, needs, desires, fears, or concerns;
- Structure—limitations on resources like time and money, geographical constraints, organizational structure, authority issues;
- Different work methods;
- Different goals;
- Different perspectives; and
- Stress.

## **Six critical steps for conflict resolution:**

1. ***Identify the problem.*** Through discussion, parties define the things that both agree on, as well as the ideas that have caused the disagreement.
2. ***Brainstorm possible solutions.*** Parties brainstorm potential approaches to the problem without considering the feasibility of the ideas.
3. ***Evaluate each alternative.*** Parties analyze each approach to the problem, considering the pros and cons of each.
4. ***Determine the best solution.*** Parties choose the most mutually acceptable solution, even if it is not perfect for either party.
5. ***Implement the alternative.*** Parties agree on the details of what each party must do.
6. ***Continually evaluate the solution.***

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<sup>1</sup> From [http://www.westbrookstevens.com/conflict\\_Resolution.htm](http://www.westbrookstevens.com/conflict_Resolution.htm)

## Benefits of Managing conflict

Managed Conflict	Out of Control Conflict
Strengthens relationships and builds teamwork	Damages relationships and discourages cooperation
Encourages open communication and cooperative problem-solving	Results in defensiveness and hidden agendas
Resolves disagreements quickly and increases productivity	Wastes time, money and human resources
Deals with real issues and concentrates on win-win resolution	Focuses on fault-finding and blaming
Makes allies and diffuses anger	Creates enemies and hard feelings
Airs all sides of an issue in a positive, supportive environment	Is frustrating, stress producing and energy draining
Calms and focuses toward results	Is often loud, hostile and chaotic

\*Adapted from “Managing Workplace Conflict” – [www.mala.ca](http://www.mala.ca)

### Actions to Minimize Conflict

- *Respect others.*
- *Communicate expectations.*
- *Encourage teamwork.*
- *Empower people.*

### Task to be completed before November 16, 2011

1. List the three most important values that you expect to find in a workplace.
2. Describe a workplace situation where one or more of those values was not present. What happened? How did you feel?



*CLE*

*CAHIER*

*CONCERNANT LA  
RESOLUTION DES CONFLITS*

**NOVEMBRE 2011**

## Résolution des conflits

### Les causes de conflits en milieu de travail<sup>2</sup>

La plupart des conflits découlent de la mauvaise communication dans laquelle une partie a mal interprété les paroles ou les actions d'une autre partie. Certaines des questions clés qui peuvent déclencher un conflit sont les suivants:

- Valeurs personnels, les croyances, les idées du bien et du mal, etc.;
- Relations personnelles- stéréotypes, des communications mauvaises ou échouées, des comportements négatifs répétitifs, etc.;
- Facteurs externes et non liés au conflit, les problèmes psychologiques ou physiologiques des parties en conflit;
- Manque d'information, la désinformation, trop d'information, les problèmes de collecte de données;
- Les besoins, désirs, craintes ou des préoccupations;
- Structure- limites des ressources comme le temps et l'argent, les contraintes géographiques, la structure organisationnelle, les questions de l'autorité;
- Différentes méthodes de travail;
- Différents objectifs;
- Différentes perspectives et
- le stress.

### Six étapes essentielles pour la résolution des conflits:

1. Identifier le problème. Par la discussion, les parties définissent les choses que les deux d'accord, ainsi que les idées qui ont provoqué le désaccord.
2. Remue-ménages des solutions possibles. Parties brainstorming approches possibles du problème sans tenir compte de la faisabilité des idées.
3. Évaluez chaque alternative. Parties d'analyser chaque approche du problème, en considérant les avantages et les inconvénients de chacune.
4. Déterminer la meilleure solution. Parties de choisir la solution la plus acceptable, même si elle n'est pas parfaite pour les deux parties.
5. Mettre en œuvre les alternatives. Parties s'entendent sur les détails de ce que chaque partie doit faire.
6. Évaluer continuellement la solution.

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<sup>2</sup> De [http://www.westbrookstevens.com/conflict\\_Resolution.htm](http://www.westbrookstevens.com/conflict_Resolution.htm)

## Avantages de la gestion des conflits

<i>Conflit géré</i>	<i>Conflit hors contrôle</i>
Renforce les relations et renforce le travail d'équipe	Endommage et décourage la coopération & le travail d'équipe
Favorise la communication ouverte et résolution de problèmes	Crée des approches défensifs et des ordres du jour cachés
Résout les désaccords rapidement et augmente la productivité des ressources	Perte de ressources - temps, d'argent et humaines
Traite des questions réelles et se concentre sur win-win résolution	Se concentre sur la faute d'enquête et de blâmer
Rend les alliés et la colère diffuse	Crée des ennemis et des sentiments durs
Airs tous les aspects d'une question dans un environnement positif	Produit le stress
Calme et se concentre vers les	Souvent bruyant, hostile et chaotique

\* Adapté de «Gestion des conflits en milieu de travail» - [www.mala.ca](http://www.mala.ca)

### Actions pour minimiser les conflits

- Respect des autres.
- Communiquer les attentes.
- Encourager le travail d'équipe.
- Donner aux personnes.

## EXERCISE # 1

### Alligator River

Il était une fois une femme nommée Abigail qui était en amour avec un homme nommé Grégoire. Grégoire vivait sur la rive d'une rivière. Abigail vivait sur la rive opposée du fleuve. La rivière qui séparait les deux amants était grouillante d'alligators. Abigail a voulu traverser la rivière pour être avec Grégoire. Malheureusement, le pont avait été emporté.

Alors Abigail a demandé à Sinbad, un capitaine de bateau, de lui faire traverser la rivière. Il a dit qu'il serait heureux de si elle coucherait avec lui. Elle a refusé et est allé immédiatement à un ami nommé Ivan pour expliquer sa situation. Ivan ne voulait pas être impliqué du tout dans la situation.

Abigail senti sa seule alternative était d'accepter le plan de Sinbad.

Sinbad a ensuite transféré Abigail sur l'autre côté du fleuve.

Lorsque Abigail racontait à Grégoire l'histoire de Sinbad, Grégoire lui écarté avec dédain.

Abigail s'est tournée vers Slug avec son conte d'ennui. Slug, ressentait de compassion pour Abigail, et a battu Grégoire sauvagement. Abigail était heureuse de voir Grégoire obtenir son dû.

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***Classez les cinq personnages du personnage le plus offensant pour le moins répréhensible. Le personnage que vous trouvez les plus répréhensibles est le premier sur la liste, puis la deuxième plus répréhensibles, et ainsi de suite, avec la cinquième étant le moins répréhensible.***

***1 (le plus offensif) ... .. 2 ... .. 3 ... .. 4 ..... .. 5 (le moins répréhensible)***

***Interrogez-vous sur le personnage que vous avez classé comme le plus offensif:***

- ***Est-ce le genre de personne que vous voulez être au moins parfait?***
  - ***Quel genre de personne serait à l'opposé de ce personnage?***
  - ***Citez trois choses que vous pourriez faire ou sont en train de faire pour être comme le contraire de la personne que vous considérée comme la plus offensive.***
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# WORKBOOK ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

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Optimizing HBM Program

11/16/2011



Conflict is an inevitable part of human relationships. Conflict can arise from differing perspectives and seemingly incompatible values or priorities.

There are four key elements<sup>3</sup> common to all conflicts, whether large or small:

1. All conflict involves at least two parties - two or more people, two groups, two countries, a person and a group, a country and a group, etc.
2. Some sort of struggle or threat, either real or suspected, exists.
3. Interaction or interference takes place.
4. The interaction may be emotional.

Types of conflict:

Conflict type	Description
<b>Values conflict</b>	Involves incompatibility of preferences, principles and practices that people believe in such as religion, ethics or politics.
<b>Power conflict</b>	Occurs when each party wishes to maintain or maximize the amount of influence that it exerts in the relationship and the social setting such as in a decision making process.
<b>Economic conflict</b>	Involves competing to attain scarce resources such as monetary or human resources.
<b>Interpersonal conflict</b>	Occurs when two people or more have incompatible needs, goals, or approaches in their relationship such as different communication or work styles.
<b>Organizational conflict</b>	Involves inequalities in the organizational chart and how employees report to one another.
<b>Environmental conflict</b>	Involves external pressures outside of the organization such as a recession, a changing government, or a high employment rate.

Source <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/workplaces-staff-volunteer.cfm>

## Question

Among agencies in your community, which type of conflict is most frequent?

## Stages of conflict

<sup>3</sup> (<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/facts/06-067.htm>)

1. **Tension Development** - Various parties start taking sides.
2. **Role Dilemma** - People raise questions about what is happening, who is right, what should be done. They try to decide if they should take sides, and if so, which one.
3. **Injustice Collecting** - Each party gathers support. They itemize their problems, justify their position and think of revenge or ways to win.
4. **Confrontation** - The parties meet head on and clash. If both parties hold fast to their side, the showdown may cause permanent barriers.
5. **Adjustments** - Several responses can occur, depending on the relative power of each party.

### **Six critical steps for conflict resolution:**

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### **Group dynamics**

Teamwork originates with, and builds relationships among, a group of people who share a common interest or purpose. Working in teams allows individuals from different areas (e.g. programs, fund raising, marketing, etc.) with different roles (staff, volunteer, and client) and perhaps from different organizations to work together on issues of interest to team members.

A team focuses its work on common objectives and finding solutions to shared problems. It uses formal processes such as record keeping, facilitation and scheduled meetings to achieve its objectives.

There are three levels of need that have impacts on the productivity and flow of the team: team needs (building and maintaining of the team); task needs (getting the job done); individual needs. Conflict among these needs undermines the potential of the team.

In terms of individual needs, according to the HR Council of Canada, there are three basic interpersonal needs: inclusion, control and openness (see text box). These needs determine how each individual treats her people and how each wants to be treated by others.

### **Inclusion:**

- **Key Concern:** Who is in or out?
- **Feelings Experienced:** anxiety, anticipation, hope, hesitation, discomfort
- **Behaviours Expressed:** overly talkative, watchful, inviting, supportive, guarded
  
- **A tip to help work with this need:** Pay attention to whom is over- and under- participating. This can become an issue in the group as big talkers try to pressure the quiet member into talking more.

### **Control:**

- **Key Concern:** Who gets to decide what for whom?
- **Feelings Experienced:** frustration, stuck, incompetence, powerlessness, apathy
- **Behaviours Expressed:** resistance, competition, avoiding, challenging, bickering
  
- **A tip to help work with this need:** Notice if your group is preventing any decision-making procedures from being established. This can leave a group powerless and stuck. Try to establish an agreement on how your group will make decisions and define how and who will take on leadership.

### **Openness:**

- **Key Concern:** How do members feel about each other?
- **Feelings Experienced:** satisfaction, trust, warmth, safe, enthusiasm
- **Behaviours Expressed:** sharing, problem-solving, active listening, collaboration
  
- **A tip to help work with this need:** As a sense of togetherness develops, observe if extreme or rigid interpersonal behaviors are displayed, as some members can appear under- and over-personal. Either these members can act reserved, cautious or distant while others are overwhelming and regularly personalize situations and issues. By cultivating an environment of acceptance and trust, each member is known and treated as an individual, and their unique abilities can be used for the betterment of the whole group.

Source <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/workplaces-teams.cfm>

## **Understanding conflict response styles**

Thomas and Kilman developed a model that identified five common strategies or styles for dealing with conflict. They identified five conflict managing behaviours:

1. Competing. The goal of this stance is to win. In this mode the individual aims to pursue one's agenda at another's expense. This may mean standing up for one's needs, defending a cherished position and/or simply trying to win. The goal is deemed very important. This style is also referred to as a forcing or dominant style.
2. Accommodating. The goal of this stance is to yield. Typically a person using this conflict mode neglects his or her needs to satisfy the concerns of the other person.
3. Avoiding. The avoiding style is both unassertive and uncooperative. The goal of this stance is to delay.

- When the relationships matters the most, use the collaboration or accommodation strategies.
- When the goal is vital to maintain, above all else, use competitive or collaborative strategies.
- When the relationships and the goal are both relatively important to you, a compromising style will probably be most effective.
- If neither the goal nor relationships matter, avoiding conflict may be the best bet.

4. Collaborating. This style is both assertive and cooperative. The goal is to find win-win solutions to issues that satisfy the concerns of the conflicting individuals.
5. Compromising. The goal of this stance is to find middle ground: a mutually acceptable solution where each person gives up something.

Each style is appropriate in particular contexts. Each response style is useful and necessary. The more an individual can use the conflict styles appropriately, the more effective is the management of conflict.

The choice of style is based on what outcome is the most important to you and to the organization. For example, for some organizations coming to consensus and making decisions together are valued ways of working.

## **Actions to Minimize Conflict**

- Respect others.
- Communicate expectations.
- Encourage teamwork.
- Empower people.

## ***Building successful work teams***

### **Be clear about your objectives**

What do you want the team to achieve? Consider the potential roadblocks and opportunities. Make sure that all team members are aware of the objectives and how the team will reach them. Identify a team leader can help the group stay on task. Celebrate when the team achieves a milestone.

### **Determine who needs to be on the team**

Consider whether you need to include staff members, board members, volunteers and/or clients/or other stakeholders. Choose people who have a good understanding of the issue. Include people who will bring new perspectives and ideas and will learn from this process. Also consider politics. [Who is connected to management or leadership? Who can clear the way of organizational obstacles? Who gets along with whom? Who will be disruptive or uncooperative?] Don't be afraid to add new members as the process continues.

### **Establish a time frame for completion of the team's work**

Remember that group work can often take longer than individual work.

### **Empower the team to work well together**

Be sure the team members have the skills and resources they need to work well together - for example, facilitation skills, finances, support staff, executive support, access to technology and the skills to use it.

### **Identify how the team will communicate**

Establish a process for the team to report on its efforts and results. The team will have to establish how members will communicate among themselves and how they will communicate their work to others (for example, minutes of meetings, e-mail, web site and list-serves).

**Task**

Discuss Alligator River (attached)

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## Conflict Resolution Case

### Alligator River Story

Once upon a time there was a woman named Abigail who was in love with a man named Gregory. Gregory lived on the shore of a river. Abigail lived on the opposite shore of the river. The river that separated the two lovers was teeming with man-eating alligators. Abigail wanted to cross the river to be with Gregory. Unfortunately, the bridge had been washed away.

So Abigail went to ask Sinbad, a riverboat captain, to take her across. He said he would be glad to if she would consent to go to bed with him. She promptly refused and went to a friend named Ivan to explain her plight. Ivan did not want to be involved at all in the situation.

Abigail felt her only alternative was to accept Sinbad's terms. Sinbad then took Abigail across the river.

When Abigail told Gregory about her deal with Sinbad, Gregory cast her aside with disdain. Heartsick and dejected, Abigail turned to Slug with her tale of woe. Slug, feeling compassion for Abigail, sought out Gregory and beat him brutally. Abigail was happy to see Gregory getting his due.

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*Rank the five characters from the most offensive character to the least objectionable. The character whom you find most reprehensible is first on the list; then the second most reprehensible, and so on, with the fifth being the least objectionable.*

*1 (Most offensive) .....2.....3.....4.....5 (Least objectionable)*

*Ask yourself about the character you ranked as most offensive:*

- Is this the kind of person you least want to be like?*
- What kind of person would be the opposite of this character?*
- List three things you could do or are now doing to be like the opposite of the person you rated as most offensive.*