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# Conflict Management: Significance, Types And Styles

## Introduction

Nowadays, companies are facing an increasingly competitive and more demanding market, where customers have diverse options of access to information which generates a constant search for better products and services, the consumer at the same time an option to compare, analyze cost benefits, checking complaints and reports from other people, from an Internet.

In turn, companies are constantly looking for improvements and innovations in the services and products offered, and in their processes of production and delivery, focusing on the maximization and effectiveness of the final product/service. These are some of the strategies that organizations have been using to try to stand out and survive the daily market competition.

This process of globalization has brought many impacts to the business, such as principal, the integration of people and services in different countries and regions connecting different markets, variety of offers, new products, and services, a growing demand for better services, accessibility and information sharing.

Analyzing this scenario, it becomes necessary to adapt the companies to the market, seeking good ideas and innovations. As a consequence of these developments, companies must invest in the interaction between services and sectors, thus generating a heterogeneous organization prepared to work in front of the new objective.

Inevitably, when different people work together and there are various opinions, conflicts begin to appear. Conflict affects organizational performance, either positively or negatively. However, many companies still hold the concepts advocated by the classical organization theorists (Fayol, 1916/1949; Gulick & Urwick, 1937; Taylor, 1911; Weber, 1929/1947) where conflict was interpreted as something totally damaging.

Actually, the conflict can add really positive points, favoring the group, being an important factor to reach the desired goals, and it is possible to affirm that it is necessary to have a certain level of conflict for the organization to have maximum and optimized levels of effectiveness. It is important to emphasize that in order to use conflict as a driving force for quality, it is necessary to have a correct Conflict Management.

## Significance of Conflict

Conflict exists in all organizations, some types take on a personal character, others are only professionally, but regardless of the motive, the conflict will always exist, because people think differently and it is necessary to analyze the best way to give it to them.

In a company is no different, conflict can be generated from a difference of thoughts, disagreements, ways of acting, different ways of facing tasks, beliefs, relationships, lack of support, when they do not share behavioral preferences, problem with resources, changes in the market, qualities and personal defects, all these factors can start a misunderstanding in the

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organization. This idea is quoted by Rahim (2011, 4th ed. P.14)

Conflict is inevitable among humans. It is a natural outcome of human interaction that begins when two or more social entities (i.e., individuals, groups, organizations, and nations) come in contact with one another in attaining their objectives.

## Levels and Types of Conflict

In order to manage conflict correctly, the responsible person must identify the reasons and where it started, doing this analyze in advance, it will allow choosing effectively the appropriate management strategies to solve the question.

Several problems could cause a conflict, usually, the main reasons are Substantive issues and Emotive issues. Talking about the first one, it involves disagreements about the organizational practices and policies, role relations, different perceptions, competition, size of the organization or even resources and supplies.

Imagine a company, where the project sector needs finish a new project in two weeks, in order to complete the financial tasks, the Project Manager asked the financial sector to send a professional specialist in accounting. The Financial manager does not agree with the solicitation, and reject it, reporting that the sector needs the professional to help during the payroll week.

In this case, both sectors are seeking for the same human resource, they have to complete tasks in a short time and is inevitable to avoid a conflict between them. To solve this problem is required a mediation intervention by a third party, that could be the main Director, who should analyze the case and start looking for some forms to bargain, helping both sectors and avoiding a destructive impact on organizational life.

In addition, the Emotive issues are based on negative feeling between the parties, when it involves relationships and attributes between individuals and groups. This can be noticed when are goals incompatibility, conflicting power status, uncertainty and ambiguity, diverse personal background and traits, also it happens when the group is formed for people from different countries with different cultures and customs.

On this hand, Robbins (2007, p. 15) talks about an important topic, how to manage conflicts when they are motivated by different cultures and backgrounds.

Even in your own country, you are going to find yourself working with people who were born and raised in different cultures. What motivates you may not motivate them. Or your style of communication may be straightforward and open, but they may find this approach uncomfortable and threatening. To work effectively and also managing conflicting situations with people from different cultures, you need to understand how their culture, religion, geography have shaped them, and how to adapt your management style to their differences.

In order to manage the emotive issues, is essential the conciliation intervention by a third party, providing a total understanding of how these acts could impact the whole company. Aligning objectives with business interests could be necessary to readapt some topics to clarifies the

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steps and motivate the group to find a compatible goal.

## **Styles to handle conflict according to Thomas e Kilmann**

Analyzing a conflict situation between individuals or groups, where each other want to satisfy their own concern versus the other party's concern, a fundamental question arises. How to manage and develop a solution to a problem that involves two different interests?

Usually, in cases like that, the parties very often want a kind of solution that the other does not want to accept. Depending on a dealing proposed, one of the parties could fell in disadvantage and probably it will not result in a positive situation.

Giving an idea about the subject, Thomas e Kilmann explained in 5 steps a style of handling conflict fitting a specific situation, they are: Competing, Avoiding, Compromising, Accommodating and collaborating style, each of these five styles is appropriate in certain cases.

- **Competing Style:** Reflects assertiveness to get one's way. Must be used during emergencies cases, when a quick acted is expected and the important reaction is needed. Also is used to protect yourself against people who are looking to take advantages or having a non – competitive behavior.
- **Avoiding Style:** Reflect neither assertiveness nor cooperativeness. It is used only when the issue is trivial and have no other way to solve the case. Also when a delay to analyze and find new pieces of information is needed or when others can resolve the conflict more effectively.
- **Compromising Style:** It reflects a moderate amount of both assertiveness and cooperativeness. When opponents have equal power and both sides are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals. Also, when you recognize that the objectives are partly important, but it does not deserve the effort or the search for more assertive modes.
- **Accommodating Style:** Reflects a high degree of cooperativeness, when the problem is more important to the other person than oneself. When building up social credits for future issues which are considered important and when preserving harmony and avoiding disruption are especially relevant.
- **Collaborating Style:** It styles reflects both a high degree of assertiveness and cooperativeness, allowing all parties involved to be winners building an integrative solution where both concerns are important and not to be compromised. Is an opening learn option, where assumptions and Tests are accepted. Also is a mode to work through the felling, that could interfere with an interpersonal relationship. Robbins (2007, p. 790)

## **Functional vs. Dysfunctional Conflict**

The functional conflict is a constructive process, that supports the goals' company, helping to improve the performance and the real internal purpose. It supports to find clean air when the organization is in rough times, introducing new rules and also modifying rules. It is a process to be encouraged. The whole system of analyses and brainstorming should be regulated, seeking to keep these actions in a positive track, doing a correct approach and ensuring that the conflict will add a positive topic.

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The dysfunctional conflict is a destructive process, it is totally negative and should be eliminated or resolved because it could be a hinder organizational performance. This process is a waste of time and energy of all the parties involved, also this organizational stress is a huge and difficult situation that can cause a higher cost or lose production.

## Human Interaction and Team Work

The interaction could be defined when two or more individuals start being connected for a social or work relationship, usually, they are looking for something in common. The members can develop a higher perception of the sense of identify, sense of loyalty and sense of purpose and leadership.

When the group is formatted inside a company, between professionals who are looking for similar goals, with complementary skills, it is named Teamwork group. Talking about the working scenario, is relevant the group be united because they can gain an advantage over rivals, such as Increased Performance, where the synergy will increase and the group will produce more and achieve higher quality.

Also, the group develops the Increased Responsiveness, as the member is professionals formates from different backgrounds possessing diversity skills, they can be more responsive to change, reacting to customer needs and the competitive market.

In addition, Increased Innovation and Increased Motivation are important points in teamwork. It is can be noticed analyzing the member's actions, they alone do not possess all the knowledge necessary, and they can find a bigger sense of satisfaction working in a team.

After a team has been formatted, it develops through different stages, where requests the manager attention, especially because of the member's diversity. The challenge for leaders is to understand the stages of team development and take actions that will help the group improve.

According to Daft (2010, p. 699) one useful model for describing the teamwork stages is the Tuckman`s theory, where the stages are divided into five parts:

1. Forming: It is a stage of information and acquainted, is normal if some of them are uncertain about the roles and aims of the group. During this stage, members are concerned about what is expected and also being more cautious.
2. Storming: This is the conflict time, where the member becomes more clarifying into their own roles. Disagreements will happen, opinions, tensions, and individual personalities emerge, making this a very critical stage.
3. Norming: This is the time to solve the conflicts, where the members find unity again, differences are solved and they develop the working together skills. Belief is created between the group, usually, this is a short time duration stage.
4. Performing: In this stage, member are committed to the team's mission, they frequently interact with each other, confronting and resolving problems. Consequently, the focus on achieving the tasks and goals is improved.
5. Adjourning: This is the disband time, it could happen because the project is nearly ended or due to some company change. Task and goals are no longer the top priority, members become anxious and afraid about the future.

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Usually, those five stages happen in sequence, and each one needs special attention from the leader. Depending on what kind of teamwork and tasks, the stages could be accelerated and short.

As meditated before, the conflict could be positive, it helps to find a correct track, developing some ideas and finding the alternatives ways to obtain the goals. During the storming stage, it is noticed, conflicts are needed in order to improve the quality and maximization of the processes.

The managers have to be aware of the conflict management and how to use tools to manage the conflict time improving and developing the group focusing on goals.

## **Conclusion**

In order to survive in the current global market, the managers need to use the conflicts between the teamwork members to improve the quality and potentialize the organization.

The management of conflict situations is essential for people and organizations as a source of change, because of the conflicting tensions, of the different interests of the parties involved is that opportunities for mutual growth are born.

Using the teamwork and conflict management correctly the company will be able to innovate the products and services, developing good ideas offering a competitive differential.