

Conflict Management

A, 33 year old French banker, named Phillippe, left Paris for a new challenge in London. He thought that by switching his job in a fast growing British investment bank will definitely enrich his skills and experience and he will also get bigger salary and bonus which was a draw for him.

After some of the weeks passed and perception of that person has also change and it becomes a worst experience for him and also his job was in danger because the colleagues of his own was complaining to authorities for his management styles, but he had not realised that his style had created such conflict within his team.

Phillippe felt he had been acting according to the situations and approximately but his colleagues and team members felt that he had been inconsistent and becoming partial for some of the employees of his team and undermining others. His line manager had recommended him for the coaching so that he can able to develop his communication skills, and also public skills. He had agreed to the training and he aggrieved that the bank has not done more to his development, training and a proper induction. And the main problem was of Bank's matrix structure and its focus on only profit making, which encouraged managers to fight for territory and resources rather than esprit de corps. In short the bank deliberately created the culture of conflict rather than collaboration.

In this case, both sides have a point. Firstly phillppe has to become pervasive for the environment, in which he is operating. Secondly the organisation should work and take the feedback that why the conflict occurs, to prevent it and little has to done on organisational level to mitigate conflicts.

Organisational conflict is emerging as key workplace issue among the people. Conflict management "in a layman's language are generally disputes between the people and between the authorities regarding his/her power or duties. Therefore, to manage these controversies is called conflict management. Though, it is necessary to remove the negative aspects into positive aspects for the betterment of organisation and for the attainment of organisation's goals. Usually it happens in adjustment of the new employees because he is not familiar with the organisational rules.

There is a lack of skills or will to deal with conflicts and have many theories as to why it occurs and what happens when it take root. From being unwelcome distractions, conflict in a team or department can quickly spread, to damage relationships, lower productivity and morale and in extreme cases leads absenteeism, sabotage, litigation and even strikes. So why so many people experiencing conflict at work? There are two factors:

Firstly, the matrix structure adopted by many organisation has resulted in unclear reporting lines, increased competition for resources and also managers try to develop an appropriate management style.

Secondly, globalisation has caused change and restricting so that businesses operate more flexibility. There has been a rapid growth in virtual teams, people from different backgrounds and cultures working across vast regions and time zones. E-mail and electronic communications are the most practical ways to communicate, but these can be anonymous and lead to misunderstanding.

In addition to matrix managements styles and globalisation there are some more sources of conflicts including:

Different cultures and assumptions, differing values, opinions and beliefs, lack of sensitivity and discrimination against caste, creed, gender, race, education and ability, poor people skills especially communication, volatile, fast changing workplaces, limits on resources, physical and psychological.

- What are the ways to manage conflicts?
- How can managers ensure that it does not escalate out of control?

According to the Thomas – kilmann conflict instrument, there are five ways to manage conflicts:

1. **Forcing:** using your formal authority or power to satisfy your concerns without regard to the other party's concerns.
2. **Accommodating:** allowing the other party to satisfy their concerns while neglecting your own.
3. **Avoiding:** not paying attention to the conflict and not taking any action to resolve it.
4. **Compromising:** attempting to resolve the conflict by identifying a solution that is partially satisfactory to both parties but completely satisfactory to neither.

- 5. Collaborating:** co-operating with the other party to understand their concerns in an effort to find a mutually satisfying solution.

Another way to look at conflict is to decide the relative importance of the issue and to consider the extent to which priorities, principles, relationships or values are at stake. Power is also important issue- how much power do you have relative to the other person?

As a rule, the suggestion of collaboration is the way to deal with important issues, although forcing can sometimes be appropriate if time is an issue. For moderately important issues, comprising can lead to quick solutions but it does not satisfy either side, nor does it foster innovation, so collaboration is probably better. Accommodating is the best approach for unimportant issues as it leads to quick resolution without straining the relationships.

Lastly, conflicts does have a positive side: it can promote collaboration, improve performance, foster creativity, innovation and build deeper relationships. As jim Collins wrote in Good to great, " all the good to great companies had a penchant for intense dialogue. Phrases like 'loud debates' , ' heated discussions', and healthy conflicts.' The more skilled managers become in handling differences and change without creating or getting involved in conflict, the successful their team and companies will become.

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(B.B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) 3rd Semester