



10.2 Conflict Management Reading #1

Conflict Definitions and Stages

Conflict has multiple definitions. Defining conflict from an elementary perspective as “a difference of opinion or interests; an incompatibility or interference, as of one idea, desire, event, or activity with another” allows for utilization of a conceptual framework. This framework can be used with other definitions to show how conflict progresses and when poorly managed, can result in arguments, struggles, fights, and battles. In this sense, we can show how conflicts progress in an organized manner and how to properly manage the conflict at each stage. This interpretation integrates how differences of opinion can escalate, how to develop conflict management styles and how to use the MBTI as resources to manage a conflict. Learning to use a Stage Model for defining how conflict can escalate will help teams to manage their differences of opinion effectively.

Stages of Conflict

1. Latent Difference of Opinion

Being aware of a condition where a potential conflict can emerge. Parties acknowledge conditions that exist that can become conflicting. Some of these conditions are competing for resources, differing goals, differing expectations, differing perspectives of a problem, and considering opinions as facts.

2. Acknowledgement of Differences of Opinion

One or more parties acknowledge the potential pitfalls regarding the difference of opinion. Usually appropriate use of a collaborating conflict management style or the use of the competing conflict management style by a person in authority can mediate at this juncture. If conflict is minor, acknowledgement may include a decision to avoid the conflict because discussion will not be necessary.

3. Discussion of Differences of Opinion

Parties begin discussion of differences by discussing their common interests for settling the conflict from appropriate or inappropriate conflict management styles. Individual parties fluctuate between avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, competing, and compromising. Parties separate the people from the problem and use objective criteria and all decide that the differences can be settled through finding interest for mutual gain. If not, arguments ensue.

4. Differences of Opinion - Argument with Frustration

Parties realize they are experiencing the conflict in markedly different ways and have different guiding principles and values regarding the conflict. Parties use

inappropriate or less effective conflict management styles causing people to use emotional responses rather than an objective discussion of the difference of opinion. The emotional responses are then substituted as an evaluation of the differences rather than the objective criteria. Parties then begin to adjust their personal perceptions regarding the difference of opinion to meet this new evaluation measure.

5. Differences of Opinion - Argument with Hostility

In order to support the switch from principled discussions on differences to a positional discussion; personal values, beliefs, and attitudes enter the evaluation on how the differences are being perceived. Negative stereotyping of the other party is initiated. Empathy disappears. Parties feel forced into roles that they feel they cannot escape.

6. Difference of Opinions Mediated

Parties seek mediation services to understand the consequences of their perceived differences. If successful, parties are able to institute structural changes to their differences of opinion such as agreed upon ground rules. Parties change their perception of the problem and make adjustments or parties are unable to respect the process and the differences remain unsettled. Good mediators are able to separate resolution from settlement in a work place situation because in this environment people can work together when all issues are not resolved. In personal situations this may not be an option.

7. Differences of Opinion Unresolved

Perceptions are solidified and parties remain intractable.

8. Isolation of Conflict by Parties or Violence

Parties remain constant in their values, attitudes, and beliefs about a difference of opinion.

As seen in the above model, conflicts have either positive or negative outcomes and how the conflict is managed decides the outcome. Conflicts are described in terms of two different dimensions - assertiveness and cooperation. Assertiveness is the degree that a party attempts to satisfy their own interests and cooperativeness is the degree to which a party satisfies the other parties' interests.

There is a fundamental principle that keeps your over used style dominant. The underlying principle in regard to your use of this style is that you are attempting to make a positive contribution to settling the conflict."

Some Typical Differences of Opinion that are usually settled by Stage 2 or 3:

1. Having different opinions about each other's ability to do the research
2. Disagreements about direction of the project

3. Not helping the oral presenter create the oral presentation
4. Stating you will do something and then not doing it in a timely manner
5. Having to share equipment with other teams
6. Equipment breaking down and having to wait for parts
7. Inadequate data analysis; not analyzing your data soon after you complete the experiments
8. Not accomplishing assignments as scheduled by Project Leader
9. Dealing with stress
10. Taking a risk
11. Disobeying requests or rules
12. Not adhering to safety rules
13. Family issues that have an impact on one team member's time and focus.
14. Not completing project management assignments timely.

Some Typical Problems that escalate into Stage 4 and 5 conflicts on the team:

1. Having a different motivation level than another team member
2. Not adhering to the ground rules multiple times
3. Leaving lab early
4. Double booking classes
5. Talking about a team member to the other team member
6. Disagreements about milestones of the project
7. Testing someone's power or control when you are not the Project Leader
8. Speaking up for someone's rights or beliefs
9. Criticizing someone's performance, behavior, or attitude
10. Being ignored or belittled
11. Letting one or two team members do all the work
12. Attempting to do all the experimental work in the last 4 weeks
13. Not communicating serious problems with the project or the team to the project management coordinator or faculty advisor before the problem affects the project's progress.
14. In Rotation 1 not clearly discussing the project so that the proposals have the same information when you write the paper individually
15. One team member having a double major and becoming overwhelmed by assignments during Rotation 2 when collaborating on reports is essential.
16. Team member has an extra-curricular activity that they did not anticipate having an impact on their time.
17. One team member has part of a collaborative assignment and the other team members cannot locate them
18. Faculty advisor says you do not have to do a certain task and industrial consultant disagrees.
19. Seniors taking the course have ineffectual organization of team in ICE leaving ICE assignments to last minute and have to focus on these assignments rather than the 10.26 assignments.

Conflicts if ignored that can escalate to Stage 6:

1. Making up data in preliminary reports to change later because of time constraints
2. After changes to ground rules system for constantly being late to meetings and not respectfully implementing changes to behavior
3. Bullying a team member
4. Considering your athletic commitments more of a priority than meeting the deadlines for papers and oral presentation, and analyzing data timely.
5. Consistently missing lab periods because you double booked courses
6. Not being able to accept positive criticism without crying or becoming hostile.
7. Inability to discuss problems of time management with your faculty advisor.
8. Not participating in laboratory experiments before week 5.
9. Not acknowledging faculty advisor's recommendations when deciding on direction of the project.
10. Scope creep that goes unacknowledged which is when a number of small changes in the project pile up and become a major time management problem for the project and the team.

Principled Negotiation

Negotiation is a basic means of getting what you want from others. A back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement when you and the other side have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed. Negotiation serves two primary purposes for a team.

1. A method of resolving conflict within the team
2. An integral part of the team decision-making process

The Four Points of Principled Negotiation

PRINCIPLE #1

Separate the people from the problem.

Learn to separate people difficulties from substantive issues. "Be soft on the people and hard on the problem." Use psychological tools to handle psychological difficulties; analytical tools to address substantive issues.

PRINCIPLE #2

Focus on interests, not positions.

Positional bargaining causes people to "dig in their heels" and maintain their position to avoid losing face. Learn to look behind positions for interests, some of which you may share.

PRINCIPLE #3

Invent options for mutual gain.

Work with your partner to create additional options to explore. Use brainstorming techniques to create a larger number of quality ideas to serve your common interests.

PRINCIPLE #4

Insist on objective criteria.

Appeal to objective standards and outside sources to judge the quality of your agreements. This not only helps "separate the people from the problem", but also allows negotiators to work together to identify possible measures of fairness. (Fisher, R., Ury, W. & Patton, B., 1991)

"BATNA" - Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement: (from Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton, [Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In](#))

Goals of a "wise" negotiation: Protect yourself from making an agreement you should reject. Make the most of your assets so that any agreement that you reach will satisfy your interests as well as possible.

The Bottom Line vs. BATNA

The Bottom Line: Limits your ability to benefit from what you learn during negotiation. It inhibits imagination and is likely to be set too high.

Creating your BATNA: Determines what will you do if you do not reach an agreement. It invent a list of actions you might conceivably take if no agreement is reached and it improves some of the more promising ideas and convert them into practical alternatives. Selection should be made tentatively, by brainstorming and narrowing to one alternative that seems the best BATNA for the situation.

Remember: BATNA in action gives you the confidence to reach a "wise" agreement. Judge every offer against your BATNA. The better your BATNA the greater your ability to improve the terms of any negotiated agreement.

How to Use a BATNA

BATNA, an acronym (Fisher & Ury) for Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement is the alternative action that can be taken if a proposed agreement with another party will result in an unsatisfactory agreement or when an agreement fails to materialize. When the potential results of a current negotiation only offers a value that is less than the BATNA, then negotiations can cease and the BATNA should be implemented. When using a BATNA, prior to the start of negotiations, each party should determine their own individual BATNA. (www.negotiations.com) A BATNA is not a bottom line but an alternative. BATNAs assist in establishing a reasonable end point to reaching an agreement. A BATNA does not help create any objectives in a negotiation, but rather determines the course of action if an agreement is not reached within a person's established time frame. BATNAs are a gauge used to determine what is being offered by the other side is reasonable and of better value than ending the negotiation. BATNAs are a support system, which aids a person from accepting an unfavorable agreement or one that is not in their best interests because it provides a

better option outside the negotiation or allows the person to know what to expect if they do not accept an unfavorable offer.

A party should generally not accept a worse resolution than its BATNA. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that deals are accurately valued, taking into account all considerations, such as relationship value, time value of money and the likelihood that the other party will live up to their side of the bargain. These other considerations are often difficult to value, since they are frequently based on uncertain or qualitative considerations, rather than easily measurable and quantifiable factors.

Using a BATNA as the alternative to what a negotiated agreement would be permits far greater flexibility and allows much more room for innovation than a predetermined bottom line, which is used in hard bargaining and not in principled negotiations. Having a strong BATNA, allows a party to exert more influence because if an acceptable agreement is not achieved they can institute their BATNA. In contrast, a bottom line signifies the worst possible outcome that can be accepted. The bottom line acts as a final barrier to an agreement and narrows the ability of the person to negotiate, while a BATNA fosters flexibility, creativity innovation, and incentive to seek tailor made solutions to settle differences. When creating a BATNA, a person should:

1. Brainstorm a list of all available alternatives that might be considered should the negotiation fail to render a favorable agreement.
2. Choose the most promising alternatives and expand them into practical and attainable alternatives.
3. Identify the best of the alternatives and keep it in reserve as a fall back during the negotiation.

A viable BATNA that is well conceived and clearly defined can be advantageous and act as an insurance policy when a negotiation must be ended because it is clear that a beneficial outcome is not possible. A BATNA allows you to know the consequences should the negotiation fail. Having the ability to break off a negotiation allows a person to adopt a more firm and forceful stance when proposing ideas and interests as the basis for an agreement. Once your BATNA is established then it is important to create what you think the other side is creating as their BATNA.

The next step is to decide when to reveal your BATNA and when not to disclose it. There are times when revealing your BATNA to the other side can be beneficial. Usually this will depend on the strength/attractiveness of the BATNA. If your BATNA is strong, disclosing it may be beneficial, so the other parties will understand a viable alternative exist for you if they do not come to an agreement. However, if your BATNA is weak, it may be prudent not to disclose the BATNA, especially if the other party is over-estimating their own BATNA. If you learn that the other party is over-estimating its BATNA before the start of a negotiation, you will be able to effectively use this information to lower the negotiation expectations of the other party.

In situations where both parties possess a strong BATNA, it is wise to acknowledge these BATNAs to the other party and then discuss if proceeding is practical. The parties may decide that there is very little incentive to reach an agreement. When both parties possess strong BATNAs an acceptable alternative is to decide to accept their BATNAs and not reach an agreement amongst themselves.

In the reverse situation, what can you do with a weak BATNA? Can you turn the tables? Yes, there are two ways this might be accomplished. The first possibility is to strengthen your own BATNA. The second way is to reduce the BATNA of your counterpart.

1. Be Creative - Simply ask yourself what other options you might employ that could increase your [bargaining](#) position. Brainstorm the situation with all the key players in your organization. Your planning must also factor in your counterpart's interests and options.
2. Improve Your BATNA - Endeavour to expand your options. One possibility is to consider bringing into the mix, other interested third party partners. A third parties interests may coincide with key components of your interests, or of your counterpart's. For example, this might entail creative financing which presents a more attractive option to your counterpart. If you weaken the other side's best alternative by injecting another element into the mix, the game takes on a whole new slant.

Use Experts - Neutral parties with their own relevant expertise might be able to unravel your problem into a newly designed, but more attractive perspective. If your side lacks some area of expertise, get the experts to lend a hand.

(www.negotiations.com/articles/best-alternative/)

3. When parties fail to explore their BATNAs, they expose themselves to hard bargaining practices, which create strong internal pressure to make an agreement. Being unaware of what will happen should the negotiation fail allows narrow options to persist such as:
 - a. Being overly optimistic about proposed agreements that can result in associated costs not being fully appreciated;
 - b. Becoming too committed to reach an agreement, making the parties unaware of alternatives outside the negotiation, fostering pessimism about prospects if the negotiation fails
 - c. Committing to the premise that when persons agree to something this is entirely dependent on the attractiveness of the available alternatives.

(<http://www.negotiationtraining.com.au/articles/next-best-option/>) (adapted from Venter D., BATNA Explained, www.negotiationtraining.com.)

Failing to have available options during a negotiation is simply unwise. Having a good alternative empowers you with the confidence to either reach a mutually satisfactory agreement, or walk away to a better alternative.

(www.negotiations.com/articles/best-alternative/)