Module 10.3.e Compromiser Team

Conflict management styles do not solve conflict. Once you develop an understanding that differences of opinion are context specific, you can identify whether the persons involved are managing the conflict effectively. People have fifteen options when managing a conflict. When faced with a difference of opinion with others you choose from five management styles to settle the conflict. Your decision is usually predicated upon what style you are most comfortable with and have used many times in the past rather than the most effective style. Choosing the appropriate style is the major factor in whether the conflict is settled appropriately or not.   People are usually unaware that they are choosing a style that they are either under using, over using or appropriately using. If in the survey the person's score is lower than 50% then the person under used the style, over 50% over used the style, and if the score is 50% used the style appropriately.

Compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution, which partially satisfies both parties. It falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating. Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding, but doesn't explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

You may want to review why you over use Compromising

You try to find an acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies your concerns and those of your team members.

Contributions: You provide a practical, pragmatic force for moderation on your team. When competitors deadlock you suggest workable middle ground positions. When collaborators are unable to find a win-win solution, compromisers suggest acceptable temporary solutions. Your style is helpful in finding fair workable settlements. You put less strain on goodwill than does a competitive style and takes less time than using a collaborative style.

Characteristics: You tend to see conflict as a chance to find middle ground and as an opportunity to make deals. You are flexible and believe in pragmatism, being reasonable about what is possible in a situation and avoid extreme positions. When people are in conflict, you believe they need to moderate their positions to find a workable agreement. You regard team members as amicable negotiating partners. You

value moderation, reasonableness, and pragmatism. You seek favorable settlements but use exchange and reciprocity (soft bargaining) to achieve fairness-trading concessions, splitting the difference, giving and taking.

When Especially Helpful:

1. When the team needs a quick, temporary settlement on a complex issue
2. When fairness is important on zero sum issues – to share the gain or pain among team members
3. As a fallback position when competitors deadlock or the team can't find a win-win solution

Behaviors to Guard Against:

Posturing: using misrepresentations or inflated demands to get a favorable settlement.
Rushing to settlement: proposing an expedient compromise when the issue is crucial and time permits a longer discussion.
Eroding a principle: compromising on integrity, ethics, or core values
Sub optimizing: compromising when an elegant win-win solution is possible
Settling short: agreeing to a compromise that does not meet team needs on an important issue

Reactions to Different Styles:
As a compromiser you may appreciate the value of other styles when they clearly fit the situation and benefit the team. Likewise, people with different styles are likely to respect your contributions when they are clearly appropriate. However, both you and they maybe sensitive to, even resent, some aspects of each other's styles.

In Teams:

Conflict Styles in Action: Behavior and Different Types of Issues:

Agenda: splitting time between different topics "Suppose we split our time between Frank's and Judy's agenda items so that each gets a little discussion."

Truth: moderating a conclusion "I think the quality problem is severe, but you think it's not. Can we call it a moderate problem?"

Goals: seeking partial concessions to goals "I'd settle for a partial resolution of the quality problem if you could free up a bit more money for it."

Action: splitting the difference "I wanted $60,000 but you only offered $40,000. How about a middle ground settlement of $50,000?"

Conflict Styles in Action Behavior and Different Types of Issues in Teams:
As a Collaborator your perception of conflict and you team members' perceptions are relevant. When settling a conflict you will use your guiding principles and values and your team members will be doing the same. These perceptions, guiding principles and values could be an integral part of the conflict and each team member's perception could be different.

Perception of conflict: a negotiation to find a middle ground settlement

Perception of team members: amicable negotiating partners

Guiding Principle: belief in pragmatism-being reasonable about what is possible in a situation

Values: moderation pragmatism, reciprocity, exchange

Intended Contributions to Team Effectiveness: Providing moderation and balance. You provide a pragmatic force for moderation, balance, and fairness in your team. When you deadlock or collaborators are unable to find a win-win solution, you suggest workable middle ground positions.

Appropriate Use of Compromising:

For Team Effectiveness:

Common Examples:

"Soft " bargaining (exchanging concessions)
Taking turns
Moderating your conclusions

Benefits:

Pragmatism: Practicing "the art of the possible"; getting a deal that's good enough
Speed and expediency: Making expedient settlements
Fairness: Providing equal gains and losses for both people
Maintaining relationships: Meeting halfway to reduce the strain on relationships

Costs:

Partially sacrificed concerns: Both people's concerned are compromised; leaving some residual frustration; issue isn't fully resolved, may flare up again
Suboptimal solutions: Compromise solutions are less innovative and of lower quality than successful collaborative decisions
Superficial understandings: Agreements often paper over differences with vague

statements that don't accurately reflect the beliefs of the people who disagree

Deciding when to Compromise:

Try not to compromise on vital issues

Take turn bearing small costs

Compromise on significant issues when competing and collaborating are not practical
   1. When people of equal power face a win-lose issue
   2. When you need a temporary solution to a complex issue
   3. When you need an expedient decision under time pressure
   4. When more assertive modes would harm a relationship
   5. When competing and collaborating have failed

Behavioral Skills for Compromising:

Moving from competing; making partial concessions
   1. Take stock of your situation
   2. Suggest compromise without looking weak
   3. Make partial concessions-as long as they are reciprocated

Focusing on fairness: principled compromise
   1. Insist on a criterion of fairness up front
   2. Determine the facts as objectively as possible
   3. Apply the criterion

Uses:
1.   Goals are moderately important, but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes.

2.   When two opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals – as in labor-management bargaining.

3.   To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues.

4.   To arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure.

5.   As a backup mode when collaboration or competition fails to be successful.

If you scored High:
1. You may concentrate so heavily upon the practicalities and tactics of compromise that you sometimes lose sight of larger issues – principles, values, long-term objectives, company welfare.

2. You may place an emphasis on bargaining and trading to create a cynical climate of gamesmanship. (Such a climate might undermine interpersonal trust and deflect attention away from the *merits* of the issues discussed.)

If you scored **Low**:
    1. Do you find yourself too sensitive or embarrassed to be effective in bargaining situations?

    2. Do you find it hard to make concessions? (Without this safety valve, you may have trouble getting gracefully out of mutually destructive arguments, power struggles, etc.)

How Compromisers Interact amongst other Styles on a Team:

Competitors

How you may see others	How others may see you
They may appear to be hardliners, unwilling to budge or bend, and missing out on possible deals	You may seem to make concessions to easily-taking too soft or weak a stand
They may appear not to be acting in good faith-not really trying to find common ground	You may seem to eager to make a deal-squandering some of your bargaining power
They may appear to be unfair-wanting it all their way and violating your norms of reciprocity	You may seem to be "selling out" by compromising your views

Collaborators

How you may see others	How others may see you
Others may seem impractical-ignoring real work constraints that limit solutions	You may seem shortsighted-favoring temporary settlements that don't really resolve issues
Others may appear to be perfectionists, seeking perfect rather than good enough solutions	You may appear too willing to settle for imperfect, less than optimal solutions
Others may seem to over analyze issues that don't require creative solutions	You may seem unimaginative or uncreative-seeking only the middle ground

Avoiders

How you may see others	How others may see you
Others may seem to be delaying a settlement-holding the team back	You may seem to be pushing them to make or accept an offer before others are ready
Others may seem unwilling to engage in the necessary give and take	Your penchant for exchanging concessions may seem like a tiresome game to them
They may appear to be losing out-leaving their issues unsettled and getting nothing	Your bargaining may seem to expend more energy than a compromise settlement is worth

Accommodators

How you may see others	How others may see you
Others may seem too worried about offending other people to negotiate a settlement	You may appear to place settlements ahead of relationships
Other may appear too generous-giving away more than they need to	You may appear crass-pushing others for favorable concessions
Others may seem too unassertive to ask for a fair settlement-failing to get what they deserve	Your bargaining may seem to expend more energy than a compromise settlement is worth

Dealing Constructively with Other Styles

You can build on your existing strengths if you can incorporate some key insights from other styles into your thinking. You can also reduce the cost of your compromising by learning to address the special concerns of people with different conflict styles.

With Competitors

1. Recognize that there are win-lose issues where compromise would be unacceptable or disastrous when you need to maintain your position.
2. Learn to make demands or to respect counteroffers when you are clearly in the right
3. When you see that compromise would be wiser for your team than maintaining its position, explain why e.g. when there is a deadlock and you are running out of time

With Collaborators

1. Recognize that win-win solutions are possible on many issues-often both parties can do better than a compromise
2. Learn not to offer a quick compromise on important issues – first, give collaborators some time to search for a win-win solution
3. Tell your team when you see that compromise looks more practical than continuing to search for a win-win solution

With Avoiders

1. Recognize that some unimportant issues are not worth the time required to work out a compromise
2. Try to sidestep unimportant issues and reduce the negotiating time used up by posturing or resorting to gamesmanship
3. When an issue seems worth the time required to negotiate a settlement, tell avoiders why-and give them advance notice so they can be prepared

With Accommodators

1. Recognize that there are times when it is more important to accommodate than to seek a compromise e.g. when you need to apologize for something you did wrong
2. Learn to notice when hurt feelings and resentments are the most important issues in a conflict – and to let people talk about them
3. When you see that accommodation isn't necessary and that a compromise would be better for your team, tell other team members why.

References

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