



HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP DIVISION

A Primer on Conflict Management

An exploration of organizational commitment, its possible influence on organizational efficiency, and actions leaders can take to build highly-committed workforces

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

“There are three ways of dealing with difference: domination, compromise, and integration. By domination only one side gets what it wants; by compromise neither side gets what it wants; by integration we find a way by which both sides may get what they wish.”

Mary Parker Follett

Introduction

Conflict, disagreements, and divergent opinions are a normal part of life. They occur at work, at home, and while we are socializing. They can be either a positive experience or an exercise in frustration. To effectively manage and resolve conflict, it is necessary to understand its origins and the various methods that can be used to address it; and to skillfully use the energy produced by conflict and direct it to productive ends.

Understanding Conflict

Managing conflict is different than resolving conflict; but before either can occur, it is necessary to understand the sources and underlying motivations that cause conflict.

Conflict can take several forms: it can occur within an individual, between individuals, within a group or organization, or between groups or organizations. The term *conflict* can be used to describe an encounter of divergent opinions, a discord of harmony, a variance within a process, or a cognitive dissonance among many others. Conflict occurs when two or more values, perspectives, or opinions are contradictory in nature and have not been aligned or agreed upon. It is a struggle between opposing priorities, needs, wishes, ideas, interests, or people. Conflict can occur within you when you are not living according to your values, when your values and perspectives are threatened, or from discomfort caused by fear of the unknown (McNamara, 2006).

Conflict occurs in all types of organizations because people interact in all types of organizations. When individuals with

different interests compete for the same resource pool, conflict will occur. In short, conflict can occur in “any situation in which people have incompatible interests, goals, principles or feelings” (Capobianco, Davis, & Kraus, 1999). The tension that develops can be dealt with constructively, in a way that stimulates creativity and positive change. In fact, lack of creative tension sometimes reflects an *I don't care* attitude that can lead to stagnation on the job. Effective managers are not afraid of conflict. They have been trained to deal with conflict and have trained their employees to constructively deal with conflict. They accept that conflicts must be faced and they strive to find constructive means to manage them.

Managers and leaders are most effective when they are selective about which conflicts they choose to pursue. This means that sometimes *not* actively engaging a conflict (and thereby following the path of least resistance) is the most effective course of action.

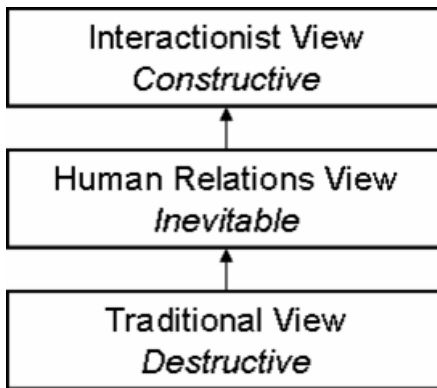
Historical Views

Dealing with conflict has changed as management practices have changed. DeJanasz, Dowd, & Schneider (2002) explain that perspectives toward conflict can be summarized from three different viewpoints over the course of time:

1. The **Traditional View** was predominant in the early 20th century when it was believed that conflict was always bad and should be avoided at all costs. This perspective posited that conflict was a result of dysfunctional managerial behavior and therefore could be stopped at the source.
2. The **Human Relations View** was the overriding perspective for the three decades spanning 1940 through 1970. Conflict was viewed as a natural and inevitable part of human existence and was accepted as a normal part of group interaction and relationships. Sometimes the conflict was functional, other times dysfunctional, but it was always present.

3. The contemporary **Interactionist View** holds that not only is conflict inevitable, but maintaining a degree of tension can actually be helpful in keeping a group energized and creative. In this view, conflict is seen as a positive force for change within organizations, groups, and relationships. The challenge is in finding constructive means for managing conflict while still maintaining some differences that energize a group toward continued discussion and innovation.

Figure 1: Evolving conflict management viewpoints



Although managers make mistakes and at times will even be the drivers of conflict, it is important to understand that this does not mean that they are doing their job incorrectly. Conflict is inevitable for any person who is actively engaged and interacting with others. Leaders recognize this and learn how to manage conflict in such a way that it has positive outcomes for all parties (DeJanasz, Dowd, & Schneider, 2002).

Drivers of Conflict

Conflict is an indication of different opinions about subjects of importance. It is driven by differing assumptions or motivations, and can occur when people have opposing opinions on how to

achieve the same objectives. Conflict can be heightened by:

- ***Lack of understanding*** – Most often occurs when individuals or groups react without attempting to gain information about a situation.
- ***Fear or insecurity*** – This is a symptom of an underlying (and sometimes unknown) factor. Before the conflict can be resolved, the fundamental driver must be exposed.
- ***Resistance to change*** – Change brings anxiety, even when the change is positive and desired. Proper transition through change will help manage the anxiety.
- ***Unclear expectations or roles*** – It is important to expend as much time and effort as possible to ensure all parties involved in a situation understand their roles and what is expected of them. Do not assume everyone is “singing from the same sheet of music.” Find out.
- ***Lack of control*** – This is the perceived inability to affect the outcome of a situation when control is an important factor. What needs to be determined to properly address this conflict driver is why the individual or group feels the need to be in control.
- ***Competition*** – Competition is usually healthy. However, if it is overdone, then winning becomes the only acceptable outcome, and resolution becomes difficult.
- ***Differences in values or beliefs*** – Most likely the hardest conflict driver to resolve. The key to successful management is to address the underlying attributes of tolerance, respect, and understanding.
- ***Task interdependency*** – When an individual or group is dependant upon the performance of another individual or group for the successful completion of a task or project, conflict instead of cooperation can be the result (McNamara, 2006).

Conflict can be a character-strengthening exercise. Proper handling of conflict can lead to personal growth, enlightenment, and greater respect from supervisors, peers, and employees. The outward effect of sound conflict management can be increased motivation and can lead to a more productive workplace.

Characterizing Conflict Behaviors

“Elephants don’t bite. It’s usually the little things like mosquitoes or black flies that get you.”

Joel Weldon

Conflict occurs in different degrees of intensity and at different levels. How conflict is managed and what steps are taken to resolve it should be appropriate to the intensity and level of conflict. The different levels of conflict are:

- ***Intrapersonal conflict*** – May occur when an individual is required to perform tasks and roles that do not match his or her expertise, interests, goals, or values.
- ***Interpersonal conflict*** – Involves two or more people.
- ***Intra-group (Intradepartmental) conflict*** – Occurs between members of a group or subsets within a group over goals, tasks, procedures, or other issues.
- ***Inter-group (Interdepartmental) conflict*** – Occurs between units within an organization such as line and staff, production and marketing, or headquarters and field staff.

Runde and Flanagan (2007) identify intensity levels of conflict as: differences, misunderstandings, disagreements, discord, and polarization. The levels represent what could be described as a continuum from normal and healthy to dysfunctional and destructive. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2: Continuum of intensity of conflicts



Differences exist and make life interesting, misunderstandings are normal and can be corrected with information, discord wastes time and resources, while polarization stops any forward progress. We all have differences with others. Having differences is not dysfunctional or destructive. It is an opportunity to “agree to disagree,” and then move on.

Misunderstandings occur because of either a lack of, or a breakdown in, communication. Remember, communication is a “two-way street:” both the sender and receiver have responsibilities. For effective communication to occur, the sender must ensure that the receiver of the information is:

1. Hearing the message
2. Understanding the message
3. Providing confirming feedback

The message receiver needs to:

1. Restate what the sender has communicated in his or her own words to ensure understanding. Statements that begin with “What I hear you saying is...” or “Do you mean....” are great ways to affirm understanding.
2. Provide confirming feedback that builds on the information being provided. This means going beyond answering with just a *yes* or *no*. It means asking probing questions about requirements and expectations such as time, cost, quality, and other appropriate concerns.

Disagreements are more intense than differences and misunderstandings. Disagreements can quickly become arguments, and arguments can elevate to discord. **Discord** is the intensity of

conflict at which productivity breaks down and potential destructive behaviors can emerge.

Polarization occurs when two individuals or groups are ready to do battle with the intent of winning all. There is no win-win, no finding common ground, and no acting in the best interest of all. Sound conflict management does not allow a difference to elevate to this intensity before taking action.

Helpful Behaviors

Although it is normal, conflict can be a source of stress and can hamper productivity. Much of this is due to the fear of confronting the person or situation causing the conflict. By approaching the conflict driver in a non-confrontational way, you are taking the first steps in resolving the situation. To do this, you should decide whether you want to confront the other individual involved in the matter. Sometimes the best way to resolve a conflict is to determine if it is worth the effort. This does not mean all conflict should be avoided or dismissed, only that it should be worth the energy to be expended trying to resolve it.

If you do decide to confront the situation, your behavior is important. Speak calmly, politely, and rationally. Keep to the facts, avoiding innuendo and personal attacks. Be careful not to express hostility in your non-verbal communication (body language). You should speak confidently and without showing aggression. Listen to the other person with the intent to understand. If you are forming your response while the other person is talking, you are not listening. It will help if you express interest in what the other person is saying. Acknowledging the other person's position does not mean that you are acquiescing to the other side of the issue. When you do have an opportunity to speak, clearly communicate what you want, offering positive suggestions and recommendations.

Positive Outcomes

According to DeJanasz, Dowd, & Schneider (2002), conflict is viewed as positive when it results in:

- ***Increased Involvement*** – Participants have the opportunity to develop goals, share ideas, and voice opinions, thereby gaining greater insight into other individuals and situations.
- ***Increased Cohesion*** – Members build strong bonds from learning how to resolve differences. The expression “if we can survive this, we must have a true relationship” embodies this benefit of conflict. In some cases, conflict reduces the cohesion that initially existed between parties. Reduced cohesion, in turn, can reduce the likelihood of *group think*.
- ***Increased Innovation and Creativity*** – When participants feel free to share ideas, this freedom from fear of being judged can lead to more discoveries, improvements, and creative solutions.
- ***Personal Growth and Change*** – Individuals become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and are challenged to learn and grow.
- ***Clarification of Key Issues*** – Through discussion, members reduce ambiguity, and focus energy on the real sources of conflict. They then work together to target the remaining issues that need to be addressed.
- ***Clarification of Values*** – Participants clarify who they are and what they stand for, understand who the other party is and what his or her values are, and learn when to sublimate personal interests to the larger needs of the group or organization.

Destructive Behaviors

“Those who come seeking peace without a treaty are plotting.”

Sun Tzu

Conflict can be destructive, a drain on resources, counterproductive, wasteful, and de-motivating. It can leave a legacy of mistrust. When this occurs, it is usually due to one or more factors, all of which have their roots in self-interest. Self-interest might be a motivator to prolong the conflict if the conflict itself is the desired result, or if having one side lose is the only acceptable outcome. The self-interest-driven approach to conflict is a resolution killer, and can take the following forms:

- ***Hidden Agendas*** – The reason for the conflict or the requirements for resolution are simply a pretense to the actual unspoken desired outcome.
- ***Power Plays*** – A win-lose approach that is driven by the need to control the other party.
- ***Politics*** – Similar to the hidden agenda, there are unspoken outcomes that are being sought by one party.
- ***One-Sided Resolutions*** – Similar to the power play with the exception that it is not the domination of the other party that is desired, but just a desire not to compromise on any *wants*.

Negative Outcomes

The outcome of dysfunctional conflict management can include stress, job burnout, distrust and suspicion, resistance to change, ineffective communication, decreased job satisfaction and performance, and the loss of commitment and loyalty. The four destructive forms identified above represent more than just poor conflict management, where a lack of understanding proper conflict management techniques can be addressed and corrected through education. These behaviors are intentional. This means the only way to deal with them is to expose them and refuse to participate until the other party is willing to operate openly and honestly.

Sound conflict management and resolution requires a desire on both sides to achieve an equitable outcome. It may not be possible to avoid a conflict situation with an individual or group who is not operating openly and honestly. It is possible to maintain a healthy distrust and defensive position until both sides agree to basic ground rules, and open and honest discourse.

Negative conflict is dysfunctional and hinders the organization's or the individual's performance and ability to attain goals or objectives. DeJanasz, Dowd, & Schneider state that conflict is viewed as negative when it results in:

- ***Unresolved Anger*** – Participants leave the interaction believing they have legitimate concerns that have not been addressed appropriately, or goals that cannot be achieved; organizations can be slowly poisoned by anger and hostility.
- ***Personality Clashes*** – Individuals lack understanding of their style differences and how to work cooperatively, and they are more tied to their own interests than those of others.
- ***Low Self-esteem or Self-confidence*** – Members have a diminished sense of self-worth or identity as a result of the conflict. Often this results from impulsive things said or done in the heat of the conflict.
- ***Unclear or Opposing Views on Who Is or Should Be Responsible for What*** – Parties have different expectations of each other and of their roles. Conflict is unresolved, unproductive, or ended prematurely, resulting in ambiguity.
- ***Problems of Efficiency*** – Participants decide they are unwilling or unable to work together, resulting in redundancies and poor use of existing resources.

The benefits of positive conflict far outweigh the time it takes to manage conflict well.

Approaching Conflict

“Move not unless you see an advantage; use not your troops unless there is something to be gained; fight not unless the position is critical. If it is to your advantage, make a forward move; if not, stay where you are. Anger may in time change to gladness; vexation may be succeeded by content.”

Sun Tzu

Conflict management is not the same as conflict resolution. While it is true that a conflict has to be effectively managed to be resolved, it does not have to be resolved to be effectively managed. Managing conflict entails recognizing its existence and minimizing its negative outcome in order to maximize its positive energy. Conflict resolution, by definition, necessitates bringing an end to the conflict to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. Generally, addressing conflict means engaging in activities such as:

- ***Discovery*** – Work on understanding the real issues, not just the surface issues. Know the stakeholders, and their *needs* versus their *wants*.
- ***Exposing hidden agendas*** – Hidden agendas must be exposed before any forward progress can be made. As long as agendas remain hidden, there can be no lasting resolution or healthy outcomes to conflict.
- ***Challenging first assumptions*** (Yours and Theirs) – Thoughtful, reflective behavior is essential. Our first assumptions are not always the right ones, no matter how sincere. If you start to find that your assumptions may have been incorrect, then you need to know when to retreat, get the facts, and regroup.
- ***Maintaining trust*** – Without trust on both sides, it is a negotiation from a position of power, not conflict management.

The approaches to conflict management and resolution have evolved over time. One approach to conflict analysis and resolution is known as the **4Rs Method**. According to Engleberg

and Wynn (2003), the steps of the 4Rs Method are:

1. **Reasons** – In this step, the causes or reasons for the conflict are explored and openly discussed while showing respect for the opinions of the others in the conflict.
2. **Reactions** – Self-reflection is practiced in this step. Instead of analyzing others, the individuals in conflict look at their own responses to the situation.
3. **Results** – The questions answered in this step are: *What are the consequences if the conflict is not resolved? How might the parties work together to resolve the conflict in a constructive manner?*
4. **Resolution** – In the final step, the parties determine the correct approach to resolving the conflict instead of allowing it to continue.

The Center for Creative Leadership has proposed an approach that compliments and expands the 4Rs Method. Their **Six Ways to Make Conflict Productive** (2006) are:

1. **Take another perspective** – Try to look at the issue from the other side. If you were “in the other party’s shoes,” what would you want? What would be your perspective then?
2. **Create solutions by asking creative questions** – The best way to break down assumptions and expose the unknown is to ask creative questions.
3. **Express emotions courteously and professionally** – It should not be surprising that a confrontational posture receives a confrontational response.
4. **Reconcile by making the first move** – This does not mean compromising your position, it simply means showing your willingness to come to a resolution that will benefit all parties.

5. ***Reflect on your emotions, solutions, and reactions*** – Paul Ekman (2003) states that once an emotion has been triggered, we enter a *refractory period*. This is a period when emotions are stronger than rational thought. By taking time to reflect, rational thought can regain control.
6. ***Be flexible and adaptive*** – By “digging in your heels” and stubbornly refusing to adapt, you may find yourself fighting for a position that you do not care about. This happens when you are approaching the situation with an emotional, rather than rational perspective.

Setting the Tone for Resolution

The approaches discussed above address behaviors and actions that will increase the opportunity for effective conflict management. In addition, with the proper attitude, an atmosphere can be created that will also increase the opportunity for success. Fisher and Shapiro (2005) state that the proper atmosphere for conflict resolution can be acquired by the following:

- **Appreciation:** Acknowledging the value of people
- **Affiliation:** Developing connections with other people
- **Autonomy:** Respecting the freedom of the people to make decisions
- **Status:** Recognizing the specialties of others
- **Role:** Making sure that people have a clear, meaningful purpose

Having a respectful and professional attitude and demeanor is a valuable component of your conflict management toolkit.

The research into conflict has produced various instruments to assist in the management and resolution of conflict. The **Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument** (1974) identifies

five general approaches to dealing with conflict:

- ***Avoidance*** – Avoiding the conflict, or even failing to acknowledge that there is one, will not cause it to go away. However, if the conflict does not affect the outcome or ability of the group to work, it might be more efficient to simply shelve it to be resolved later, if at all. In a situation where there may be a temporary project team or work group, much time can be wasted trying to resolve a conflict that does not add anything to the end result. Focus on the strategic objectives and avoid spending resources on conflicts that will yield no fruitful results.
- ***Accommodation*** – Accommodation occurs when an individual or group acquiesces to the position of the other party. While this sounds similar to avoidance, it is not. In avoidance the conflict is simply ignored, while in accommodation the other side *wins by default*.
- ***Competition*** – This is an actual win-lose situation that does not result from accommodation, but rather from each side actively engaging to win over the other. In a simple conflict, opposites feel passionate about their position and will do anything to maintain it. This type of conflict is marked with high emotional content, and has a high values base with each side “standing on principles.” The negative aspect of this kind of competition is when there is a hidden agenda on one or both sides and the so-called *principles* pretext for something else. In successfully negotiating a conflict, there can be no hidden agendas.
- ***Compromise*** – A compromising style to conflict resolution tries to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. Both parties end up giving up something or, better still, agreeing to take a little less so that the other party will also gain. Compromise is useful when the price of prolonged non-resolution (or conflict) is substantial to both parties.

- **Collaboration** – In his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People* (1989), Stephen Covey best describes this as “Win-Win.” That is, the resolution should be able to satisfy the needs of both parties. Notice the key word here is *needs*. *Wants* are not the same and might have to be set aside in order to find a truly collaborative solution. It is also important to understand that it takes time to differentiate *needs* from *wants*. The participants in this effort may not know the difference between the two.

Conflict Management Methods

How conflict is approached can determine how productive the outcome is. Not all methods or approaches produce positive outcomes.

In their book *Becoming a Conflict Competent Leader*, Runde and Flanagan (2007) explain that how conflict is personally managed can take various forms, not all of them beneficial. Just as other processes can be managed badly, so can conflict management. In fact, it is probably easier to manage conflict the wrong way than the correct way. Runde and Flanagan list six different styles of conflict management:

- **Integrating:** High concern for self and others; Collaborative problem solving
- **Obliging:** Low concern for self; High concern for others
- **Accommodating:** Neglecting one’s own concerns to satisfy the concerns of others
- **Dominating:** High concern for self; Low concern for others
- **Competing:** Win-Lose or Forcing
- **Compromising:** Intermediate concern for self and others

A methodology that uses a style that is *integrating* and *accommodating* will produce much more productive results than one that utilizes a *competing* and *dominating* approach.

Understanding these styles, the emotions that can be generated in a conflict situation, and the methods used in effectively managing conflict are important to arriving at a meaningful resolution.

Problematic Personalities

Proper conflict resolution requires each party to assume that the other party means well and wants to achieve a collaborative solution. They need to openly discuss their agendas and objectives as well as any feelings on the subject matter. They should clearly and unambiguously define the outcome and make sure everyone understands—and is committed to—the agreed-upon resolution (Wisinski, 1993).

Eddy (2003) describes ***high conflict personalities*** as those individuals who are driven by agendas that may have little or nothing to do with what appears to be the source of the conflict. You should deal with problematic personalities by trying to understand what motivates their behavior, then tailoring your actions to work with that personality type. Once you comprehend why people behave as they do, you will be able to interact more effectively with them.

It is important to understand that some parties involved in a conflict do not want a resolution; they want conflict. As discussed earlier, this behavior is driven by unspoken motives. If you think you are in a situation where you are dealing with a problematic personality, the best solution is to avoid engagement. However, if that is not an option, then understanding who you are dealing with is the next best step.

- **Blamers** do not take responsibility for their own actions: it is always someone else's fault. You should refocus the blamers back to their responsibility and insist that they seek assistance, if needed, before things go bad. Hold them accountable.
- **Egotists** believe they do not have to follow rules nor do they have to deal with those whom they believe are inferior. Egotists need to understand the personal repercussions for

not following the rules. Do not let them get away with “doing their own thing.” Most of the time, appealing to their spirit of teamwork will not work; pointing out what they will lose by continuing the behavior will work.

- **Bullies** try to pressure you into doing things you don’t want to do. Be firm with bullies. Be forceful in your opinions, but act with a bit of caution to prevent escalation of the situation.
- **Winners at All Costs** focus only on getting what they want, even resorting to lying and manipulating. These individuals are dangerous and can only safely be dealt with from a position of power. Avoid confrontation. If it cannot be avoided, look for ways to minimize loss and collateral damage.
- **Scene Stealers** must be the center of attention and will create conflict in order to focus attention on themselves. Follow the old saying “Just because the music plays, does not mean you have to dance.” Do not “buy into the drama.” Ask them what they themselves can do to improve the situation and refocus their attention on their own behavior.
- **Complainers** are never content. They relentlessly look for the negative aspect of every situation, and expand minor issues into major points of contention. Closely related to scene stealers, the main goal of complainers is to create discord to mask their own faults. Avoid acting too sympathetic if you feel their complaints are ill-founded. Instead, ask them what they want and ask them what actions they plan to take to change the situation. You can even go a step further and assign them a role in resolving the issue.

There is a difference between managing *a conflict* and managing conflict. The former is reactive and done after the fact; while the latter is proactive and gets ahead of the conflict, managing the tension and energy that result from it to achieve a better state. When managing *a conflict*, sometimes the best that can be hoped for is minimizing the negative impact.

Conclusion

“When you change your attitude, you change your life.”

William James

Advancing beyond conflict involves addressing it; learning from it; and improving your attitudes, behaviors, actions, and reactions. Conflict is a normal part of life. It cannot—and often should not—be avoided. Here are some concepts that you should keep in mind:

- Admit that a conflict exists. There is nothing unusual about conflict; so don't dwell on the fact that there is a conflict, instead focus on using what you have learned in this primer to manage the conflict.
- Be aware of the reasons for and causes of the conflict, and react accordingly.
- Determine which issues should be addressed and which are non-issues or distracters.
- Identify the parties or entities involved, and then decide how to manage them. Not all parties involved in the conflict are equal nor should they be given equal attention, although all should be treated with respect. (See Appendix B, Stakeholder Analysis)
- Learn to separate the people from the issues with a non-emotional plan for resolution. Focus on the issues. Avoid personalizing the conflict.

When the process of conflict management and resolution is handled properly, many positive long-term outcomes are achieved. These include: improved decision making; increased ability to arrive at alternative solutions; stimulated innovation, creativity, and growth; and enhanced individual and group performance. These outcomes are well worth the effort and energy put into the process.

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Appendix A

Preventing Conflict in Work Teams

While conflict can be healthy in an organization, work group, team, or personal relationship, it still makes sense to eliminate some sources of friction before they even begin. Following are some techniques that can be used to minimize conflict:

- **Setting clear objectives** – Don't assume everyone knows where the team or relationship is headed. Clearly define the purpose of the work group and member roles.
- **Developing shared goals** – Ensure that everyone involved has a stake in the outcome, and understands what that is.
- **Establishing team norms** – While the diversity of the team should be valued, it is more important to focus on the common objective and ensure that managing individual differences is not given a higher priority. How the group interacts and responds to one another should be based on the common objectives and goals.
- **Clarifying expectations** – Knowing what is expected of the team as a whole and of individual members will avoid many conflict drivers. Do not assume everyone knows what is expected unless it has been made explicit.
- **Planning projects and meeting deadlines** – Good project management cannot be undervalued. Sound and time-tested project management principles are available from the Project Management Institute (PMI).

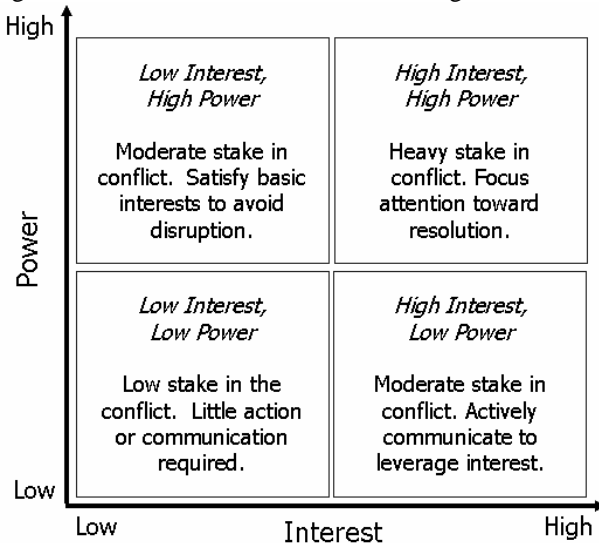
Appendix B

Stakeholder Analysis

“Stakeholder analysis can be defined as an approach for understanding a system by identifying the key actors or stakeholders in the system, and assessing their respective interest in that system” (Grimble, et al. 1996).

When attempting to identify the source and reasons for a conflict, it is important to determine who *owns* the issues that are causing the conflict and to ensure that any resolution that is agreed upon is satisfactory to everyone involved to the degree that they are affected. Some stakeholders (those who will be affected by the conflict and may have a *stake*, or interest, in any outcome) will be more important than others and some will have more at risk in the conflict resolution process.

Figure 3: Framework for stakeholder management



The interest of each party affected by the outcome of the conflict should be considered and respected. This does not mean that each party should be given equal weight. The above framework is an effective way to categorize the multiple interests and determine how to best communicate and apply finite resources.

Appendix C

Effective Conflict Management Questionnaire

Preliminary questions to answer:

- Whose problem is this?
- How does my behavior contribute to the dynamics of the conflict?
- What elements of the situation am I able and willing to change?
- What are the time and resource constraints?

	Critical Information
A.	Define the conflict situation
1.	What are the pertinent issues?
2.	What is the history of conflict?
3.	Who are the stakeholders?
B.	Organization Factors
1.	Are current policies or objectives understood?
2.	What are the organizational influences?
3.	What are the relevant working conditions?
C.	Human Factors
1.	Are expectations explicit?
2.	Has trust been established?
3.	Is the atmosphere professional and respectful?

Appendix D

The A-E-I-O-U Conflict Resolution Process

Wisinski (1993) in his book, *Resolving Conflicts on the Job*, sets forth the following model:

A	Assume that the other people involved in the conflict mean well.
E	Express your own feelings.
I	Identify what you would like to see happen.
O	Express the Outcome you would like to see while remaining open to another outcome that may satisfy your needs and concerns.
U	Each party in the conflict should Understand , and be committed to, the agreement.

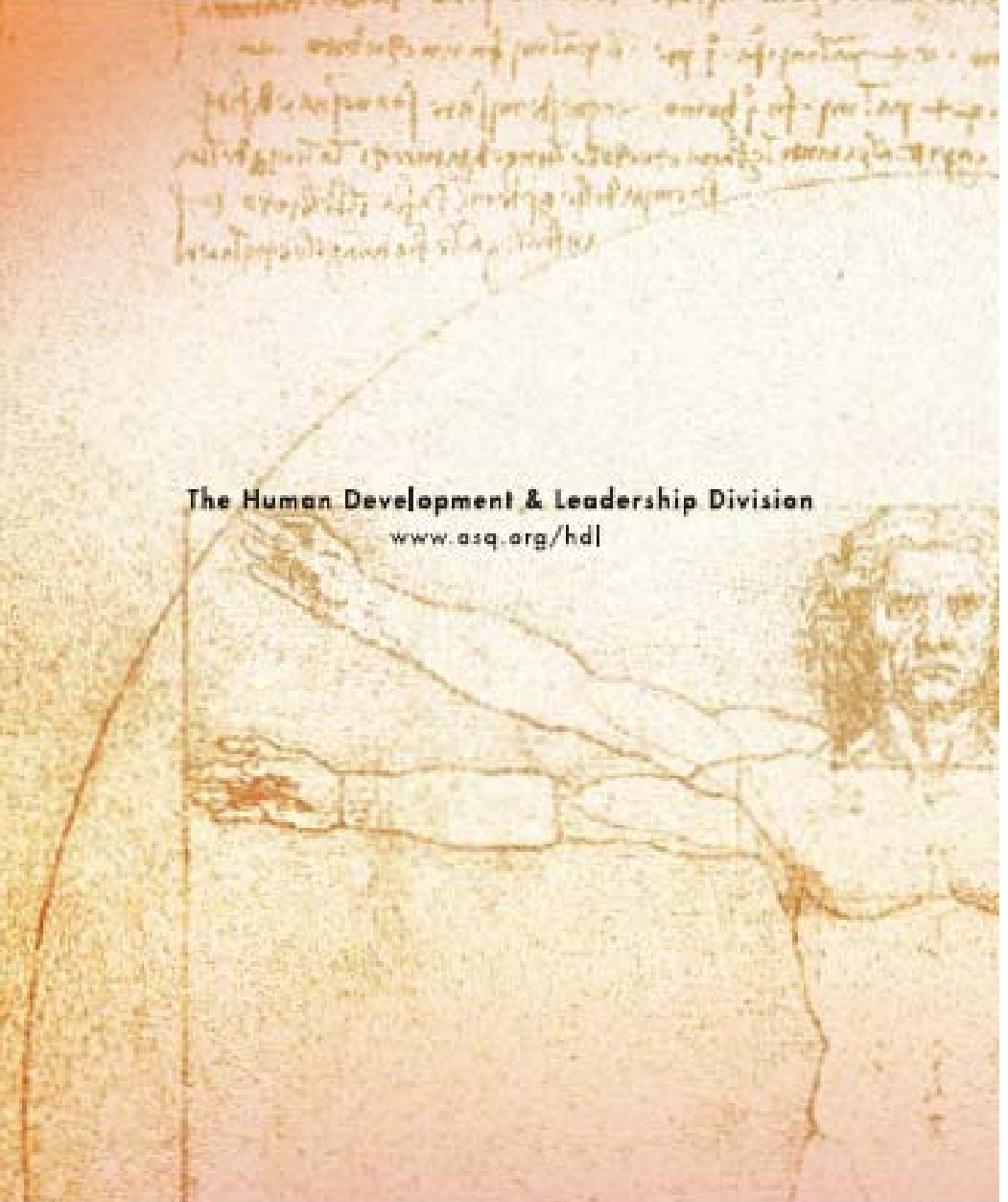
If each party in the conflict takes some time to think rationally about the conflict and prepare for the resolution process, it becomes an exercise in finding common ground, not in getting or giving ground. Once the conversation begins with *we*—instead of *I* or *you*—true resolution of conflict can occur.

About the Author

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