

Types of Conflicts That Affect the Effectiveness of Organisations

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Abstract: Working in an organisation means to be involved in a conflict, as people working together have various personalities and different views on life. Consequently, they can't avoid conflicts in the workplace. During the past 25 years, organisations have changed, so did their attitude to conflict management. Companies try to adopt a strategic approach to managing organisational conflicts.

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INTRODUCTION

No matter what industry or setting you work in, unless you work for and by yourself you will most likely encounter workplace conflict. While workplace conflict can usually be resolved amongst workers, other times management or human resources must help solve the problem, or they are involved in the conflict themselves. There are several types of conflict in the workplace, with each having their own defining characteristics.

The types of conflict

Generally, there are four types of organisational conflict:

- Interpersonal conflict – conflict that can take an interpersonal form. The sources of this conflict may be personal dislikes or personality differences [1]. A California State University Sacramento report notes that people respond in different ways to disagreements, with personal feelings, attitudes and goals contributing to the conflict. The manager usually wants his employees to settle their differences without his personal intervention, but sometimes he needs to step in [2]. In 2010 a survey was conducted among 174 of the US managers. The purpose was to find the reason which makes them most uncomfortable in the workplace.

73% of managers said: "Building relationships with people I dislike"

25% said: "Asking for a raise"

24% (the distant second and third responses) said: "Speaking to large audiences" usually personality conflicts begin from insignificant irritations. Kinicki and Kreitner [3] are taking an illustrative example:

When Adam Weissman arrives at his public relations job he starts his working day not by grabbing a cup of coffee with his co-workers, but instead the account executive with DBA Public relations always goes to his office and turns on his iPod to listen to music through the speakers. To his mind the music helps him to be more focused. Weissman doesn't mind that he could irritate other people with his behaviour. His colleagues admitted that it is annoying when

Weissman drums on his desk or sings along. In such a way, Interpersonal Conflict was born between Weissman and his colleagues".

The scenarios like these are very common in workplaces. The incivility of people can end in violence creating an interpersonal conflict [3].

- Intra-group conflict - is the conflict within an internal group, team or department. This type of conflict involves more than one person within a group [1]. The harmony within departments of the company is essential. It helps to maintain productivity and workplace morale, among other things. When two or more people do not get along together, that personal conflict can affect everyone around them. Intra-group conflict may be connected with ethnic, religious or gender prejudice, and also various personality differences. Depending on how strong the conflict is, a manager may need outside help to resolve the issues. At this stage, it could be useful for a manager to have a trusted or otherwise objective third party who has experience in conflict management and settling disputes.
- Intergroup conflict – is the conflict between different groups, teams and departments. Battles between accounting and operations teams or between frontline workers and online customer service agents can be a big problem, especially if customers are involved. One group of employees can unite against other group. Such conflicts can arise from the differences in status and contradicting goals of the groups. Intergroup conflict usually leads to miscommunication or even to no communication, affecting an organisation's ability to function. The manager can try to resolve the problem through problem solving tactics or following an internal dispute resolution process. Sometimes a facilitator can be useful to help discuss issues of conflict and related concerns. Such types of conflicts should be solved quickly as if problem continues it can destroy the organisation [2].

The study of in groups has revealed changes connected with increased group cohesiveness:

- Members of in-groups view themselves as unique individuals but they stereotype members of other groups as ‘all alike’.
- In-group members see themselves positively, as people with high moral standards, as opposite to viewing members of other groups negatively, as immoral people.
- Outsiders are viewed as a threat to the group.
- In-group members exaggerate differences between their group and other groups.

In-group thinking is inseparable part of organisational life, which is why it is guarantees a conflict. Managers cannot eliminate in-group thinking, but they shouldn't ignore it [3].

- Inter-organisational conflict - is the conflict between different organisations [4]. There are three types of inter-organisational; conflict: substantive conflict, emotional conflict and cultural conflict.
 - I. Substantive conflict appears when a basic disagreement arises between the two organisations at a fundamental level. As an example here conflict between Ethical Treatment of Animals organisation and an organisation that carries on experiments on laboratory animals.
 - II. Emotional conflict takes place when people from different organisations react on an emotional level – out of fear, jealousy, envy or stubbornness.
 - III. Cultural conflict is based on cultural needs and desires. These conflicts are often the result of misunderstanding and stereotyping. Inter-organisational conflict most often can be resolved through mediation and acknowledging cultural differences [5].

Mueller [6] brings forward that research has proved that there are three main types of conflicts. Conflicts based on the work process, how work is performed and obligation of team roles and responsibilities. The second form of conflict is the relationship-based conflict, where relationships and interaction between team members are the source. Finally, the third form is the task-based conflict where disagreements about the work task itself causes the issue. Kurtzberg [7] claims that there is a linear correlation between team performance and task-based conflicts, research has pointed out that in some cases task-based conflicts, research has pointed out that in some cases task-based conflicts can actually be beneficial. Moreover, Kurtzberg [7] expresses that process-based and relationship-based conflicts only can have negative effects on team performance.

The positive contribution through task-based conflicts to Kurtzberg [7] the promotion and unveiling of different perspectives which could stimulate innovation and creative thinking. The possible negative effects of a conflict are thus always a threat, according to Kurtzberg [7] psychological affects and team member relationship are at all times very vulnerable. Kurtzberg [7] argues that “it is tremendously difficult for individuals to remain objective about a situation when they feel that others are disagreeing, or even disapproving, of their point of view”.

Suzuki [8] has a different perspective on conflicts and brings forward a different categorisation. The first conflict form is called “conflict of interest” and concerns issues between people and their interests. “Cognitive conflict” is the second from which arises through people having different views on things. The third and last form is called “value conflict” and occurs through disagreements concerning different values or expectations. Conflict issues brought forward by Ohbuchi [9] that can be linked to these main categories are:

Gain / loss issues – “We discussed my promotion!”

Correct / incorrect issues – “I was criticised for my work performance!”

Right / wrong issues – “I asserted that the other person violated a rule!”
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Suzuki [8] claims that research points out that gain/loss issues encourages “conflict of interest” while correct/incorrect issues demands collaboration and right/wrong issues encourages participants to confront the problem.

CONCLUSION

The workplace setting is fertile breeding ground for conflicts because of the dynamics and interdependency of the employee-to-employee, customer-to-employee, and employee-to-outside vendor relationships. Recognizing and addressing the factors that give rise to the potential for conflict can have a positive impact on workplace and the productivity in the workplace.

It is all about conflict in the workplace. Is it avoidable? Is it preventable? Is it necessary? The answer to all of these questions is “yes.”

Most people fear conflict and see it as something to avoid. In fact, conflict is a normal and natural part of our lives, both professionally and personally. Conflict in the right setting, handled in the right way, can be beneficial. It is through conflict that

an awareness of the need for some necessary changes can be made – at work and at home.

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