

Making Conflict Work!

Conflict is a way of life. Without conflict we would never have the opportunity to really understand the things that make each of us different and unique. Conflict is, however, very uncomfortable for most people. Healthy relationships can be built and maintained by simply understanding the reasons conflict occurs and how to deal with it in a productive manner.

Unresolved conflict often surfaces when there is chaos or change in the environment. The energy used to cover the conflict is diverted to dealing with the change and the conflict becomes obvious.

Conflict is described as events and/or conditions between people that may bring hostility or disorder to the situation or relationship. Often, conflict is the result of unmet expectations or needs. Learning to effectively communicate is a key to managing conflict situations.

Conflict can be functional or dysfunctional. Whereas dysfunctional conflict is destructive to individuals, relationships or companies, functional conflict is not only good—but necessary.

Functional conflict will:

- Bring people to a common understanding or agreement,
- Define relationships and clarify values and expectations,
- Increase creativity, and
- Facilitate better understanding of ourselves and others.

DISC

Natural behavioral styles play a part in understanding people and how they will respond in a conflict situation. The DISC is one of the oldest recognized behavioral tools. It looks at four distinct styles and the tendencies of each.

D—Dominant is demanding, strong willed, competitive and decisive. These people react to conflict with aggression and a win-lose approach.

I—Influencer is warm, trusting, social and optimistic. These people react to conflict by trying to find common ground and compromise.

S—Steady is passive, patient, consistent and resistant to change for the sake of change. These people react to conflict by accommodating it to keep things steady and stable.

C—Conscientious is cautious, evasive and systematic. These people react to conflict by avoiding it.

Approaches to conflict are personal. Your approach is the result of your behavioral style and conditioning. One of the most common ways to describe style is:

- Avoidance – which is to deny or withdraw from any situation that would result in conflict.
- Competition – where a conflict situation is viewed as an opportunity to exert power and

dominance over the other person.

- Accommodation – or the smoothing over of the situation to prevent the conflict from escalating.
- Compromise – is when the conflicted subject is negotiated to bring about a settlement. Neither party in the conflict is completely satisfied with the outcome.
- Collaboration – is a problem-solving approach to conflict, where all parties work together to bring about solutions that best meet the overall goals.

Dr. Eric Berne's work in Transactional Analysis was popularized in his lay book "Games People Play." Berne identifies ego states that are common to all people. He states that each person contains the ego state of child, parent and adult. The child can be expressed as:

- Compliant – fearful and seeking approval,
- Free – mischievous and fun loving, and
- Rebel – manipulative and defiant.

Parent ego states are the Nurturing or Critical Parent. Nurturers try to overprotect those around them, where the critical parents criticize and belittle.

The healthy person will stay in the adult ego state under most circumstances. In conflict situations, staying in the adult state will allow one to use logic and prior knowledge and experience to resolve conflict productively.

One of the keys to managing conflict is to learn to communicate effectively. Since conflict is often the result of unmet expectations, the ability to express expectations can decrease the number of conflict situations. The PARA method is a communication tool that can ensure understanding.

The PARA method is a skill, and like any skill requires practice to use it effectively. Although the method is time consuming, it will save time in reducing the conflicts that must be resolved.

Notice

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Generational Workforce Issues

We all sometimes wonder what makes us—and especially others—tick. If, however, we need to hire, to motivate or, indeed, punish an employee we need to know how generational differences impact an individual. As the graying of America continues, the workforce will rapidly change and management must be prepared to change along with it.

Probably the major portion of your management team and your workforce falls in the boomer generation, which is the largest generation and the one which will have the biggest impact on the economy as it ages.

- Boomers will begin to reach age 65 in 2010.
- By 2020, almost 20 percent of the U.S. population will be 65 or older.
- By 2020, there will be as many Americans of retirement age as there are 20–35 year olds.

Generational Cohorts

Matures (born between 1909-1945)

68.3 million

- ★ Experiences include success over adversity (Great Depression, WWI, WWII, Korean War, and the cold war) through hard work, self-sacrifice and discipline.
- ★ Tenacity and belief in government and business proved successful.
- ★ Core values of self-denial, hard work, obedience to authority, financial and social conservatism and saving money. Vacation time is reward for hard work.
- ★ Self-confident, more willing to share their wisdom (Smith and Clurman, 1997).

Boomers (born between 1946-1964)

78 million

- ★ Born during post-war expansion. Parents had read authorities such as Dr. Spock and became the most permissive generation to date.
- ★ Enjoyed unprecedented economic, educational and employment opportunities in their youth.
- ★ “Me generation” grew to embrace the attitude of entitlement.
- ★ With little economic deprivation, they had more time to pursue own personal goals and focus on instant gratification. Fixated on self-improvement in all areas of health, leisure and work.

Generational Value Differences

Matures

- Self-sacrifice
- Hard workers
- Tenacious
- Belief in government and business
- Self-disciplined
- Self-denial
- Obedience to authority
- Focus on family
- Financial and social conservatism

Boomers

- “Me” focused
- Entitlement
- Instant gratification
- Fixed on personal goals and self-improvement
- Demanding
- Spend more/Save less
- Career = Identity
- Live to work
- Achievements = Fulfillment

Xers

- “Why me?”
- Life full of trades
- Pragmatic/Skeptic
- Today oriented
- Peer focused
- Work smarter
- Keep options open
- Diversity
- Job = Means to an end
- Love high tech

Nexters

- Optimists
- Willing to work and learn
- Steeped in diversity
- Patriotism and self-sacrifice
- Admire the Matures
- High tech globally

- ★ Look inward to evaluate achievements versus Matures who measure worth in objective, external terms (Smith and Clurman, 1997).
- ★ Spend more and save less than Matures. Thus less likely to afford early retirement.
- ★ Work and careers provide meaning and fulfillment. Many feel lucky to have jobs.

- ★ Looking for simplicity in their lives including work. Not necessarily interested in more technology that forces them to do more for themselves.

Xers (born between 1965 and 1983)

44.6 million

- ★ Referred to as the “why me” generation. Their formative years were full of

Recruitment Methods Valued by the Generations

Matures

- FT and PT opportunities
- Job shares
- Flexible
- Skill training
- Stability
- Health Insurance
- LT care
- Newspaper Ads
- One-on-one personal interviews

Boomers

- Money, Money, Money
- Flexible
- Career Mobility
- Elder care for aging parents
- Child care for grandchildren

Xers

- References—difficult due to job hopping
- M-F; episodic
- Growth opportunities—on to next job at same place or next educational opportunities.

Nexters

- Stability/Flexibility
- Caring culture
- Value interaction with colleagues
- High priority on Money
- High tech/High touch advertising
- Mentor/preceptor programs

Compensation Values From the Generational Viewpoint

Matures

Favor longevity over performance
Across-the-board raises
Don't like maximum ranges
Pay for time and OT
Equity is important

Boomers

More frequent raises
Vacation over Money
Like spot rewards
Career ladders
Entitlement mentality
Expect pay related to effort

Xers

Individual flex
Project bonuses
Frequent raises
Spot awards
Variable/Quick compensation
Time off versus Money
Pay for results

Nexters

Spot awards
Career advancement
Family leave

Benefits Valued by Generational Differences

Matures

Early retirement with incentive
Health issues and LTC
Vacation Packages
Vision, hearing, dental
Sick time is basic
Need incentives not to retire

Boomers

Like early retirement
Flex benefits/options
Education benefits important
Elder care
Child care basic
Vacation time highly valued
Health promotion, fitness facilities

Xers

Expect cash balance pension - 401K
Non-traditional approach to benefits
Tuition support
Support for health/fitness
Child care subsidy
Recreational activities valued

Nexters

Similar to Xers but want more
emphasis on educational
opportunities
Family leave
Opportunities to work with seasoned
people

Rewards Valued by Generational Differences

Matures

Service and longevity awards
Acknowledgment by boss
Pins, gifts, certificates valued

Boomers

Teams given recognition
Acknowledgment by colleges and
boss
Like options for gifts

Xers

Awards fast and frequent
Acknowledgment by team mates
Cash and time off

Nexters

Service awards
Acknowledgment by team mates
and boss
Pins, gifts, certificates valued

- political and economic upheaval (American Society for Healthcare Human Resources Association, 2000).
- ★ Doesn't take anything for granted and lives life to the fullest. Believes everything is a tradeoff. As such are more flexible to change. "Day care kids" who basically socialized and learned in "packs," thus they are peer-focused and socially comfortable with small enclaves of friends.
 - ★ Diversity is the key fact of life—albeit cultural, political, sexual, racial and social (Smith and Clurman, 2001).
 - ★ Most likely to agree that they are the least likely to describe work as a career. Want a job and a life.
 - ★ Because they saw their parents get laid off after many years of loyalty to a job, they are more skeptical of institutions, willing to keep their options open, and more adaptable to change. This group will be more resourceful, work smarter, and use technology to the fullest.

Nexters (born 1980s to present)

- ★ Are the upcoming optimists. They are willing to work and learn. They are steeped in the value of diversity, corresponding with Internet penpals across the globe.
- ★ Just entering the workforce, this group seems to be in tune with family values, feel the most affinity to their WWII-era grandparents and great-grandparents. They subscribe to a stricter moral code, care about manners and believe in civic action.
- ★ Loyalty is their marker. They prefer a learning environment that promotes teamwork and technology. This cohort combines the can-do attitude of the Matures with the teamwork ethic of the Boomers, and the technological savvy of the Xers (Zemke, Raines and Lilipczak, 1999).

References

- American Society for Healthcare Human Resources Administration (2000). HR commission monograph on the workforce for the new millennium. Nov. 1, 2000.
- Smith, J. W., and Clurman, A. (1997). Rocking the ages, the Yankelovich report on generational marketing. Harper Business.
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Systems-Sensitive Leadership Part 3

In system one we learn that the world is capricious and uncertain, constantly threatens our existence and our compelling drive is survival. As we become toddlers system two kicks in—the world seems ruled by unseen forces of good and evil that controls our well-being and our compelling drive is safety from the unseen.

Armour and Browning tell us the system three worldview is a dog-eat-dog place where only the tough survive and the compelling drive is power over the adversary. For American children, system three begins to develop early in the elementary school years.

Where those in system two see threats coming from the unseen, those in system three see threats coming from other humans. It's a much more competitive place. Games take on a win-lose flavor.

System Three Gives Us

- The joy of basking in the glory of victory

- Resolution to stand tough
- Daring and courage
- Defiance in the face of overwhelming odds
- Our sense of
 - ★ shame for acting cowardly
 - ★ humiliation when subjected to indignity
 - ★ anger at not being respected

While in system three, Armour and Browning say, winners make the rules—not by virtue of moral or intellectual superiority, but simply because they have prevailed in the struggle. Losers have no voice because they have no power.

System Three Strengths and Treasures

- Adapts quickly to change if winning is at stake
- Fosters and rewards courage
- Provides the drive to win
- Builds resolution to stand firm
- Gives us the world of competitive play based on physical prowess and control of space
- Knows how to enjoy life's pleasures.

System Three Weaknesses and Limitations

- Sees force as the solution to every problem
- Is little governed by principle
- Takes “unfair advantage” without pangs of conscience
- Exploits people and leaves them embittered
- Has a meager sense of the future
- Does not consider long-range consequences
- Tends to dehumanize opponents and to humiliate the vanquished.

More from the E-mail

Alexander Hamilton was the man that originated the “put and take” system into our National Treasury: the taxpayers put it in, the politicians take it out. —Will Rogers

Some things never change! Keep 'em coming! —Leslie



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