

Navigating Through Conflict

Facilitated by Emilio N. Williams

Session Goal

Understanding conflict including: definition, structure and impact on overall mission/goal; staff/personal development and strategies to assist in the inevitable development and/or clash between interests and/or positions resulting in “conflict”.

Objectives

Participants will be able to define and better understand:

1. Definition of conflict
2. Structure of conflict
3. Distinctions between interests vs. positions
4. Learn conflict resolution skills, and have an opportunity to
5. Practice helping others work through conflicts

Training Design/Process

Training Design		
Method	Description of Activities	Length of time
Introduction & Mini-Teach	What is conflict, definition of terminology and distinctions between positions and interests	30minutes
Small Group Activity	Participants were asked to each identify a specific conflict that s/he is currently experiencing, write it up, get into triads, and share their issues while the other two provided clarifying questions and input towards resolution. Each person then swaps positions and shares with the other two members of their triad. Share, process and apply.	45 minutes
Open Mic	Q&A, review all handouts and do evaluation forms.	15 minutes

Trainer Bio

Emilio N. Williams, President of The Koi Group, has more than 25 years of experience in training, group facilitation and human resource development. *The Koi Group* based in Maryland, is a select group of training professionals specializing in staff and organizational development, team building, and audio/video production. Training areas include but are not limited to, cultural competency and cultural change initiatives, building collaborations, communications skills, conflict resolution/management, experiential learning, goal setting, group facilitation, leadership, recruitment and retention, resiliency, team building, training of facilitators/trainers, stress management, sustainability, wellness, and others.

Most recent training, staff and organizational development clients include American Zoos and Aquarium Association (AZA), Cleveland MetroParks Zoo, Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS), Epilepsy Foundation, Environmental Protection Agency, National Network of Forest Practitioners, Aspen Institute, University of Wisconsin NEEAP, Amtrak, Prudential Insurance Company, National Parks Conservation Association, Maryland National Capitol Park and Planning Commission and the University of Michigan.

Emilio holds a Masters of Human Services from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He previously served on the Board of NAAEE, as Chair of the Urban and Multicultural Commission, and currently serves on the Board of the Adopt-A-Watershed, and serves as a member of the Cultural Diversity Working Group for the National Network of Forest Practitioners. Emilio is a high energy and inspirational person. He is interested in *Cultural Competency* and the extent to which organizations and individuals can become "*intentionally inclusive*" in their practices, hiring, programs, grants, partnerships and work with culturally diverse audiences. He is also committed to working with young people, helping them through rites of passage, and teaching them to capitalize on their assets.

Most recently Emilio was able to open the [TKG Online Store](#) where [The Koi Group](#) will work with other producers of products and services to assist them in marketing, sale and distribution of their products and services. Many people we meet have great ideas and/or products but can't seem to get them to the marketplace. The [TKG Online Store](#) is designed to assist as clients become more entrepreneurial through micro-enterprises.

Managing Conflicts of Interest

The Nature of Conflict

People...are trying to either shun conflict or crush it. Neither strategy is working. Avoidance and force only raise the level of conflict...they have become parts of the problem rather than the solution. – DeCecco and Richards, 1975

The Constructive Outcomes of Conflicts

1. Conflicts, when skillfully managed, can be of great value to a group. Here are several of the potentially constructive outcomes of conflict:
2. Conflicts make us more aware of problems in our relationships that need to be solved. Conflicts increase our awareness of what the problems are, who is involved and how they can be solved.
3. Conflicts encourage change. There are times when things need to be changed, when new skills need to be learned, when old habits need to be modified.
4. Conflicts energize and increase one's motivation to deal with problems.
5. Conflicts make life more interesting. The disagreement of others with your ideas may inspire you to find out more about the issue.
6. Conflicts reduce the day-to-day irritations of relating to someone.
7. Conflicts can stimulate creativity by promoting an awareness of different ways of viewing problems and situations.
8. When a group enters into conflict with another group, its cohesiveness increases and its sense of identity becomes clearer.

FROM POSITIONS TO INTERESTS¹

Draft by Kevin Wolf based on a variety of sources including Marianne Moutoux

The traditional method of settling disputes is through the courts. In that system there are assumptions such as: the parties must take sides, their interests are competing, the solutions and positions are in conflict, and there are winners and losers.

POSITIONS (How)

Positions are proposals as to HOW interests might be satisfied and resolved through addressing the real issues of the dispute. Negotiating from positions is problematic. They are usually:

Less Flexible: They define the problem too narrowly, one possible solution out of many

Polarizing: Each person's positions takes in only his/her needs. The two sides usually support opposite solutions to a problem. It fosters a contest between two parties' positions.

Generating more problems than they resolve: Each person comes in thinking that his/her position is the best or creates a better position for getting a better "deal" at the end. When a position is stated it often becomes more invested with emotional commitment giving it strength, even though some of this might be "acting". As a person becomes more emotionally invested in his/her position and ego is on the line, change becomes more difficult.

INTERESTS (Why)

Conflicts and disputes have their roots in:

- Interests not being met
- Interest being infringed upon by others
- Interests of one being in conflict with another

Interests may be broadly defined as principles, values, or belief systems, all of which need to be satisfied if the conflict is to be resolved equitably, practicably, desirably and durably. Interests are what people are about and are therefore not negotiable.

Asking "why" one's own or an "opponent's" proposed solution is being advanced uncovers the underlying interests. This clarifies which interests they have in common and leads to identifying common goals and strategies.

¹ Kevin Wolf, Positions to Interests, Kevin Wolf & Associates, Davis, California, (See Attached)

<http://www.dcn.davis.ca.us/go/kjwol>

Interests Are:

Related to basic human needs. (Physical security, health, economic security, self-respect, self-esteem, recognition, belonging, beauty, order, knowledge)

Reasons why a person feels and acts in a particular way. "I want to get rid of the dog (position) because I think I will gain sleep (need) which will satisfy my health interest (need)"

Non-Negotiable, Priority Negotiable. Because interests are fulfilling a perceived need of the individual they are nonnegotiable. However, they are subject to change, since the satisfaction of one interest can cause the primary interest to become less important. Example: I want a raise, money (economic security) which was a primary interest, becomes less important when the interests of self-esteem and recognition are met through a change in job title and possibly responsibility or hours they work or other needs being satisfied.

Satisfaction. Satisfaction reaching key milestones leads to greater trust and belief in what is possible. As satisfaction with the process and some of the results continues, it leads to long term resolution and improved relationships. Both parties are satisfied because they have each had needs met.

Example: Two children are arguing over who gets the last orange. As the parent-mediator, you intervene since your interest is peace and quiet. The fair position that immediately comes to mind is to cut the orange in half and give half to each child. To make it more equitable, one child cuts the orange and the other chooses. This solution does not fulfill the needs of either party since half an orange does not fulfill the needs or interests of either one. You begin a process of aiding in the discovery of the interests of each person. You discover that Joe is thirsty and hungry and needs the juice of a whole orange to quench his thirst. Sue is making icing for a cake and needs the rind from the whole orange. Rather than splitting the orange in half, the solution lies in giving Sue the rind and Joe the juice. The conflict has been resolved because the interests of both parties have been identified and met. This is a win-win situation

Conclusion:

We are not used to thinking in terms of interests. Often we are unaware of our own interests. Therefore, every aspect of the collaborative negotiation process should help to uncover, reprioritize, and satisfy the interests of the disputants. In active listening, the mediator/facilitator and both sides are discovering the stated or underlying interests of the parties. Through establishing goals and prioritizing lists of brainstorming solutions, possibilities are brought forth to satisfy the interests of both parties. The interests of all parties must be met if the final written agreement is to provide long-term satisfaction.

GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

1. Accept conflict as natural – treat it as an opportunity to examine issues and to learn more about underlying values and assumptions held.
2. Bring hidden conflicts out into the open – if you think or see signs of unexpressed disagreement, ask folk what they are feeling, and call it out at an appropriate time
3. Disagree with ideas not people
4. When defining an issue or problem, always define it as shared (“We”)
5. Identify and focus on the most important, central issues to the conflict
6. Don’t polarize the conflicting positions
7. Don’t compromise too quickly
8. If you aren’t centrally involved in a conflict, don’t take sides too quickly
9. Try to be aware of your own feelings and opinions during a conflict
10. Remember at times, the best tool for constructive conflict is a little quiet time
11. When normal meeting discussion doesn’t seem sufficient to work out a conflict, you may want to set up a special, structured process for dealing with it

THE 10 TOP WAYS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

- 1. Use a mediator or referee.**
- 2. Listen to the other persons' point of view.**
- 3. State your side clearly and calmly.**
- 4. Put your self in the other person's shoes.**
- 5. Express your feelings honestly.**
- 6. Make sure that you understand the problem.**
- 7. Let each side speak without interruption.**
- 8. Compromise, give a little and get a little.**
- 9. Find a win-win solution.**
- 10. If all else fails, seek expert advice.**

Managing Conflict

Key Actions

Key Principles

1
Describe WHAT
you want to talk
about and WHY

- Focus on what's been said or done
- Don't accuse
- Don't be defensive

- Listen and respond with empathy

2
Gather
and review
DETAILS

- Be sincere
- Provide specifics
- Use open-ended questions to seek specifics (who, what when, how, why, etc.)
- Summarize (check for understanding)

- Maintain or enhance self-esteem
- Listen and respond with empathy
- Ask for help in solving the problem

3
Explore
ALTERNATIVES

- Discuss possible solutions
- Seek other person's ideas first
- Offer suggestions
- Be flexible

- Maintain or enhance self-esteem
- Ask for help in solving the problem

NOTE: May have to indicate situation must change

4
Agree on
ACTIONS to
be taken

- Identify who will do what by when
- Use other person's ideas (if possible)

- Maintain or enhance self-esteem

5
Agree on
FOLLOW-UP

- Set specific date, time and place
- End on a positive note

- Maintain or enhance self-esteem

Conflict Management Skills Worksheet

After your next discussion involving conflict, fill out this worksheet and analyze the discussion and analyze the discussion. Be honest in your analysis.

1. What were the other person's principle objections?
2. How did you respond? What questions did you ask? How were they phrased?
3. What new things did you learn about the other person's perspective?
4. Did you avoid arguing by saying "yes, but" to the other person or trying to solve the problems prematurely?
5. How did you sum up the areas of agreement and disagreement? Did the other person agree with your summary?
6. What alternatives were discussed? Did you explore the advantages of the alternatives before the disadvantages?
7. Did you nail down the next step?

Communication Styles

The more one knows about his or her own personal communication style, the better equipped he or she will be in dealing with those who have similar styles. It will also be helpful to understand how other people with different styles operate and develop skills to deal with those differences.

ACTION STYLE

Sets objectives, makes quick decisions, likes working on own projects, responds to feedback

PEOPLE-SENSITIVE STYLE

Values teamwork, believes in collective agreement, may lose sight of entire task, seeks boss's approval

PROCESS DEVELOPMENT STYLE

Thoughtful, resists pressure, pays attention to details such as objectives, facts, strategies, and tactics

IDEA-SENSITIVE STYLE

Enjoys relating to interesting colleagues, little interest in ordinary boring activities, bold but sometimes unrecognized

Approaches to Conflict Resolution

AVOIDANCE – (I LOSE, YOU LOSE)

Some people do whatever they can to stay away from issues over which conflicts are occurring. They believe it is easier to withdraw than to face conflict, and generally do not like to work with people who are quick to engage in any sort of conflict.

COMPETITION – (I WIN, YOU LOSE)

Some competitive people believe that “winning is everything” and try to overpower their opponents by forcing their solution on them. Their goals are highly important to them, but the relationship is not. They do not feel that the needs of others are important, and seek to achieve their goals at all costs.

COOPERATION – (I WIN, YOU WIN)

These people value their own goals and relationships. They view conflicts as problems to be solved and seek solutions where both parties achieve their goals. In fact, they often see conflict as improving relationships by reducing tension between two people. They will go to great lengths to find a solution acceptable to both parties.

ADAPTATION – (I LOSE, YOU WIN)

People who feel that relations are more important than their personal goals fit the adaptation approach. They want to be liked and accepted by others. Harmony is the most important thing, and they are willing to give up their goals in order to save relationships.