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COURSE: Conflict Management and Negotiation

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Introduction

Conflict management and Negotiation

Conflict is a natural and inevitable occurrence in any organization setting which makes it unavoidable. The organization that will excel in productivity, profitability, agility and sustainability must incorporate effective management of conflict, as a success factor in its quest to achieve and surpass corporate objectives. - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

 Impact of conflict

According to wall and callister [1995] conflict can be defined as a process in which one party or individual perceives that its interest are being opposed or negatively affected by another party or individual. In other words, conflict occurs when a discrepancy of perspectives is marked by tension, emotion, and polarization. Conflict in an organization is not entirely debilitating because there are functional conflicts that can be beneficiary to an organization if properly stimulated as against dysfunctional conflicts that threaten organization.

Runde and Flanagan [2012] assert that when conflict is mismanaged, cost mount and some out of pocket costs like absenteeism and lawsuits are relatively easy to see and compute. - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

 Function versus Dysfunctional conflict

The contrast between functional conflict and dysfunctional hinges on whether the organization is served better or threaten by war of the conflict. Some conflicts support the objectives of the organization and enhance performance hence the term functional, cooperative or constructive forms of conflict. There are also some types of conflict that impede organizational performance sometimes with gross detrimental effect and these are termed dysfunctional or destructive conflicts. The good understanding on antecedents of conflict will enable managers become proactive through awareness and anticipation which should be followed with action to resolve it, if it becomes dysfunctional. - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

Types of conflict

Personal conflict

 Personal conflict can be defined as interpersonal dissent based on personal dislike, disagreement, ideological difference or different styles [kreitner and kinicki, 2013]. Personal conflict is inevitable in any organization because of different personality traits among employee.

One of the cardinal actuators of personality conflicts in an organization is incivility. Incivility that erodes healthy organization values and ethics which leads to depletion of resources. This ultimately leads employees to decrease work effort, time on the job, productivity and performance. When vicious incivility is not decimated, job satisfaction and organization loyalty will fail, which will have a negative ramification on the organization like individual or class action lawsuits against the organization.

Intergroup conflict

This type of conflict that exist among work groups, teams, and department is a profound threat to organizational competitiveness. Contact hypothesis is a recommended antithesis to intergroup conflict.

According to contact hypothesis, the more the members of different groups interact, the less intergroup conflict they will experience. [Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006]

Cross cultural conflict

Cross cultural conflicts emanated from cross cultural differences and differing assumptions on management styles, values, and attitude. One of the acceptable means of reducing cross cultural organization is by hiring an international consultant while a manager with good cultural intelligence will also reduce cases of cross cultural conflicts.

Managing conflicts

There are diversities of conflicts in organization and requisite skills with techniques are needed to manage conflicts which are paramount for mastery for mastery by managers against the challenges triggered by conflict. These requisite skills and techniques form the fulcrum of conflict management and conflict resolution. Conflict management deals with reducing the negative facets of conflict and enhancing the positive aspects of it, while conflict resolution deals with removal of all manner of conflict [Alper and Tjosvold, 2000]

Stimulating functional conflict

Functional conflict is also termed constructive conflict since it can be stimulated for the benefits of the organization. There are two proven method for stimulating functional conflicts which are devil’s advocacy and dialectic methods. Devil’s advocacy in today’s organizations involves assigning someone the role of a critic while dialectic method calls for managers to foster a structured debate of opposing viewpoints prior to making a decision. [schwenk, 1984

Conflict Triangle

According to Ruzich [1999] a conflict triangle “occurs when two people are having a problem and, instead of addressing the problem directly with each other. One of them get a third party involved.” The remedial option against conflict triangle is de-tingling which involves the third party channeling the disputants’ energy in a direct and positive manner toward each other. - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

Alternative styles for handling dysfunctional conflict

There are five different conflict handling styles which are integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. [Rahim, 2012]

Alternative dispute resolution. This is a process in which a neutral third party as mediator or arbitrator helps parties who are enmeshed in a dispute come to an agreement. - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

Negotiation

Negotiation can be defined as a give and take decision making process involving interdepend parties with different preferences [Neale and Bazerman. 1992]. Negotiation in conflict management is a method of settling differences as well as a process by which compromise is reached or agreement made so as to avoid disputes. Common examples include labor management negotiations over wages, hour, and working conditions and negotiation between supply chain specialist and vendors involving price, delivery schedules, and credit terms. Self-managed work teams with overlapping task boundaries also need to rely on negotiated agreements. - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

Types of Negotiation

There are two types of negotiation and they are distributive and integrative negotiation. A distributive negotiation usually occurs when one person gains at the expense of the other. Integrative negotiation happens when both parties have something in favorable or beneficial from the agreement. Distributive negotiation involves traditional win-lose thinking while integrative negotiation calls for a progressive win-win strategy.

Ethical pitfalls in Negotiation

The success of integrative negotiation, such as added value negotiation, hinges to a large extent on the quality of information exchanged. Dishonesty, secrecy, misrepresentation of facts and other unethical ploys will reduce trust and goodwill, both vital in win-win negotiation. - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

Organizational benefits of conflict management and Resolution

Effective conflict management and conflict resolution are of prime importance in boosting employee morale and enhancement of effectiveness while also deepening employee loyalty. Employees must give 100% at work to ensure optimal productivity which will not be feasible if the employees are constantly entangled in fighting and vicious criticism.

Conflict management and resolution play a paramount role at work places to prevent conflicts and for the employees to focus on their work for superb effectiveness. Some surveys have shown that managers spend 20-40% of their time resolving conflicts which inhibits action and impedes innovation. - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

Strategic initiatives

These initiative were meant to enhance conflicts competencies among managers and leaders in the organization when implemented which in turn boosted employee effectiveness and productivity.

The following will help organization to achieve strategic initiatives

1. The organization should ensure vicious cycles of incivility are avoided, or broken early, with an organization culture that places a high value on respect for co-workers. This requires managers and leaders to act as caring and courteous role models. A positive spirit of cooperation, as opposed to one based on negativism and aggression
2. Programs and training should be devised for workplace etiquette training.
3. Managers should discourage in group thinking and excessive cohesiveness which are the seeds of intergroup conflicts
4. Human resources management should encourage contact hypothesis which state that the more members of different groups interact, the less intergroup conflict they will experience
5. Leaders should conduct team building to reduce intergroup conflict and prepare employees for cross functional team work
6. Stimulation of functional conflict through devil advocacy and dialectics should be encouraged among the managers and supervisors
7. Human resources management to institutionalize the five different conflict handling styles which are: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising
8. Managers to foster positive attitudes toward members of other groups [empathy, compassion, sympathy]
9. The organization should create a favorable policy toward entrenchment of alternative dispute resolution, while discouraging conflict triangles which has to do with inordinate invitation of third party into a conflict
10. Stereotypes also need to be identified and neutralized so as to reduce cross cultural conflict.
11. The organization should constantly train business facing staff on negotiation and fundamental principles guiding negotiations as a way of deescalating conflict in the work place.

Critical success factors

These factors enable the organization achieve the objectives of employees’ effectiveness and increased organizational productivity through building and development of conflict competencies among the managers and line supervisors.

.Human resources alignment. Strategies cannot be effective unless the people who have to carry it out are motivated and trained to do so. Motivation and training are, the natural domain of HR, which typically carries out annual performance review and personal goal setting and manages employee incentive and competency development programs.

. Management and monitoring of the strategic initiatives. This implementation of this strategy should lie with executive management, managers and human resources management. It is imperative that an Ad hoc team be created to effectively manage and monitor the implementation of this conflict management and resolution initiatives.

. Business communication of strategy. Effective business communication to employees about strategy and expectations is vital if employees are to contribute to the strategy. This communication should be a top bottom approach at all cadres so that all employees will be on board with this strategy initiatives

. Knowledge sharing and management. This entails sharing of knowledge arising from the implementation of this strategy for positive feedback and amendment where needed

. Organization Alignment. The company can execute strategy well only if it aligns the strategy of its business units, support function, and external partners with its broad enterprise strategy. A key component of alignment is translating an organization’s core values into behaviors and decisions on the part of every member of the organization and this translation takes effort and continuous reinforcement. Alignment creates focus and coordination across even the most complex organizations, making it easier to identify and realize synergies. - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

Outcome and benefits

The benefit of the strategy and techniques when implemented improved employee effectiveness and loyalty while enhancing organizational productivity.

1. Cost reduction through employee effectiveness, higher return on investment and employee retention
2. This increased productivity through reduction in absenteeism and spike in innovation which spurred the company to greater heights.
3. It betters the risk management framework of the organization through reduction in aggression, workplace violence, sexual harassment and the risk of individual and class action law suits.
4. The loyalty and commitment among employees increase, which in turn reduces employee turnover and correlate and positive with brand equity of the organization.
5. Work pressure, stress and tensions was greatly reduced in the workplace and in turn lowered the occurrence of health issues related to work pressure, stress and emotional tensions with the cost associated with the health treatment by the organization.
6. The strategies fostered stronger relationship between employees and management by increasing awareness and understanding of different perspectives over issues
7. The implementation invigorated a problem solving mindset among employees which is synonymous with critical thinking and a precursor to pioneer innovation. . - Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

Negotiation in business

Your success in business and in life will be determined by your ability to negotiate in your best interests in every situation. Negotiating is a key skill that affects everything you do or say, and almost all your interactions, both personal and in business. If you cannot negotiate well on your best behalf, then you automatically become the victim of people who are better negotiators than you. You will always achieve a better income, or get a better deal, if you are good at negotiating.

Your ability to negotiate successfully is essential to your success in all your interactions with other people. Negotiating has been going on since the beginning of civilization because humans have always had an interest in improving their relative position in life. Everyone wants to achieve more of those things that are good -happiness, wealth, position, love, security, status, prestige and success. And people want to achieve their goals in ways that are faster and easier, and at the lowest possible cost of time and money.

It is by compromising, trading, and negotiating that we balance conflicting and competing wants and needs to ensure that we achieve the best possible outcome for ourselves. -Negotiation, Brian Tracy

Negotiation is learnable

Even little children negotiate. They know that little hugs and affection are the currency with which they negotiate with their parents and relative. Your ability to negotiate can make an extraordinary difference in your financial life, your career, your relationship, and almost everything you get or give in the course of daily life.

Negotiation is a skill, and all skills are learnable. Everyone who is an excellent negotiator today was once a poor negotiator who ended up with far worse deals than today. -Negotiation, Brian Tracy

Everything is Negotiable

There are very few fixed prices or terms on everything, even if they are written down or printed. No matter how firm or inflexible the prices and terms seem to be, everything is negotiable. My job is to simply find out where and how I can get a better deal. Than the one I’m offered. -Negotiation, Brian Tracy

Prices are Arbitrary

The fact is all pricing is arbitrary. Businesses set their prices based loosely on cost, anticipated profitability, and competitive conditions. As a result with changing information, all price can be revised and adjusted in some way. You should develop the attitude that no matter what the asking price is at the moment, you can improve this deal in some way in your /my favor. -Negotiation, Brian Tracy

Overcoming fear of negotiation

The key to getting a better deal is simple. Ask, ask for a lower price or for better terms and condition. Ask for revisions and changes in the agreement. Ask for additional inclusions, discount, concessions, or extra product or services to be included as part of the overall deal. -Negotiation, Brian Tracy

 The knowledge of negotiation change my understanding

I’m a boy who was brought up in business, when I was in my mum restaurant, I was the person that she always send to the market to buy meat, rice, spaghetti, yam, beam, maize, tomatoes and other materials needed at the restaurant. She so much believe that whenever I go to the market to buy things for her, I always come home with things that are good and with a better price. So this knowledge of negotiation has helped me to negotiate things right from beginning.

When I go to the market to buy meat for example , I always make sure that I select a meat that is very good because I was taught by my mum to always go for a product that is very good before I start negotiating. After I have selected what I want to buy, sometimes I will criticize the meat in order to psychological lower the price from the seller’s mind. I don’t criticize the way the seller will be angry but I criticize in a constructive way. When I criticize constructively, some sellers will smile and tell me the reasons why it was like that.

Before I ask you for the price, I always make sure that I gist with you for some minute before I ask for the price, because I found out that the more I gist with you, the closer we become, and the closer we become, the more they sale it for me at a very good price. So I have been using this method of sharing a little story before asking for the price.

So over to price, when you tell me the price of your meat is N1, 000, I will shout a little as if I’m offended in your price, and then I will keep quiet for some seconds. The reason for all this action is so that the seller will feel as if the price of what he/she selling is too high. After I have use all the negotiation skill I know, I will then tell you that I will pay N4, 75 for the meat.

Whenever I price this way, some sellers will get angry while some will smile and tell me that it is more than that. So we will continue to negotiate until we reach a fair price.

Conclusion

Every individual need the knowledge of how to handle conflict in every situation of life. There was time in our construction site, a Christian staff and a Muslim staff were trying to crack a jokes but along the way we discover that one of them is trying to say things that are bad about the other person’s religion, so we ask them to stop that joke and change the topic of discussion because allowing them to continue may lead to misunderstanding, so they changed the topic and work continue smoothly.

Another way that we try to avoid conflict in our business is, we respect our workers and we don’t encourage the habit of discrimination.

Finally, the knowledge of conflict management and negotiation has helped me to become a better person both in business and as individual. Thank you.

Reference

. Managing Conflict and Negotiation, Anthony Nwobodo – California southern University.

. Negotiation- Brian Tracy

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. Psychology of selling – Brian Tracy