Lecture 27/28, Mar 20, 2023

Organizational Conflict

- Conflict doesn't have to be interpersonal, could also be about a task
    - Could be between individuals, or groups
- Involves antagonistic attitudes and behaviours
- Causes of conflict:
    - Group identification and intergroup bias
        * People think more positively of their in-group
        * Self-esteem is a critical factor
        * People don't just represent themselves; in complex groups people can represent an entire group of people and their ideals
    - Interdependence (reliance on one another)
        * When one group is reliant on another, it creates a power unbalance
        * Does not always lead to conflict
    - Ambiguity in goals, jurisdictions, performance criteria, etc
    - Differences in power, status, culture
        * Power: one-sided dependence
            - People protest together because they don't have the power to push for the change themselves
        * Status: authority within an organization
        * Culture: clashes in beliefs and values between very different cultures can result in conflict
    - Resource scarcity
        * Power jockeying (to get into a better position by any means) leads to conflict
- Types of conflict:
    - Relationship conflict: interpersonal tensions that stem from their relationship
        * Always interpersonal, between individuals
        * e.g. personality clashes
    - Task conflict: disagreements about the nature of work (what we need to do)
        * Difference in understanding of the task
        * e.g. differences in opinion about goals or technical matters
    - Process conflict: disagreements about how work should be organized and accomplished (how we should do it)
        * Difference in understanding of how the task needs to be accomplished
        * e.g. disagreements about responsibility, authority, resource allocation
- Conflict leads to lower member satisfaction and performance, and prevents the development of cohesiveness
    - Conflict is unpleasant because it requires change – that is what we're really afraid of
    - Conflict requires change, and change leads to stress
- However not all conflict is detrimental; some occasional conflict might be beneficial (opens up diverse perspectives, encourages resiliency, etc)
- Conflict leads to discomfort, and if discomfort becomes too much, it will cause aggressive behaviour
    - The consequences of a little conflict and a lot of conflict are very different
    - Conflicts are productive to a point
    - Relationship conflicts especially are bad
- Conflict can be functional when it promotes necessary organizational change
    - New ideas are considered
    - Each party monitors the other's performance more carefully
    - Signals that a redistribution of power is necessary

Conflict Resolution Styles

- Different individuals approach conflict differently
    - Even as the same person, we approach conflicts differently based on who the conflict is with
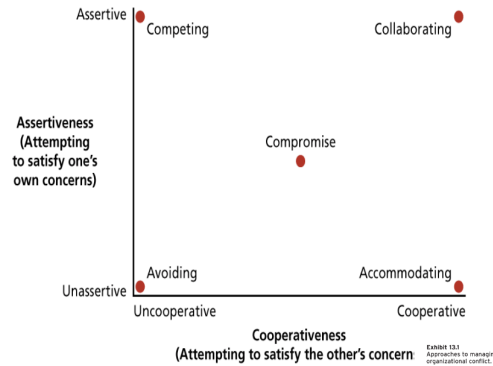
Assertive • Competing   Collaborating •

**Assertiveness
(Attempting
to satisfy one's
own concerns)**

Compromise •

Avoiding   Accommodating
Unassertive •   •

Uncooperative   Cooperative

**Cooperativeness
(Attempting to satisfy the other's concern)** Exhibit 13.1 Approaches to managing organizational conflict.

Figure 1: Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)

    (e.g. family, friends, professors)
- TKI measures conflict management behaviour in two dimensions:
  - Assertiveness: how far are you willing to go to get what you want
  - Cooperativeness: how far are you willing to make sure others get what they want
- Avoiding: uncooperative, unassertive
  - Short term stress reduction, but doesn't change the situation in the long term
  - Effective when:
    * The issue is trivial
    * Others in the group are aggressive and need to cool down
- Accommodating: cooperative, unassertive
  - Cooperating with the other party and not asserting one's own interests
  - Effective when:
    * You are wrong
    * The issue is more important to the other party
    * You want to build good will
- Competing: high assertiveness, low cooperation
  - Effective when:
    * You have a lot of power/confidence/knowledge
    * The situation is win-lose
    * There are no long-term consequences (you won't have to interact with the other person again)
- Compromise: intermediate assertiveness and cooperation
  - Nobody gets what they truly want
  - Does not result in the most creative response
  - Not useful for resolving conflicts that stem from power asymmetry
  - Effective when:
    * Conflict from scarcity
    * As a fall-back option
- Collaborating: high assertiveness and cooperation
  - Advocating for ourselves and the other party
  - Pushes for creative responses that result in a win-win situation
  - Enhances productivity and achievement, but hard to develop
  - Effective when:
    * Each party has information useful to the other
    * Conflict is not intense

Stress

- Conflict leads to stress
- Stress is a response to some motivator – it is the flight or flight response or preparation for action

- – The decision to engage or not engage
- – When high effort leads to low rewards (effort-reward imbalance model), strain follows
  - * We're not motivated enough to engage more
- The *stressor* is the person or event that triggers the stress
- *Distress* (stress reactions) are the adverse psychological, physical, behavioural, and organizational consequences that follow as a result of stress
  - – e.g. sweat, nail biting, fear, nervousness, anxiety
  - – Our ability to deal with emotions decreases, which projects as anger
  - – Some of these are passive responses that the individual has no control over (e.g. elevated blood pressure)
- Personality can make you more or less susceptible to stress
  - – Locus of control
  - – Positive/negative affectivity
  - – Type A behaviour pattern (aggressiveness, ambitiousness, competitiveness, hostility, impatience, sense of urgency)
- Common stressors occur in particular roles:
  - – Executive and managerial roles: heavy responsibility, role overload
  - – Operative-level roles: poor physical working conditions and job design
  - – Boundary roles (people who straddle the boundary between the organization and its environment)
- What can an organization do?
  - – Reducing physical and task demands
  - – Training, mentoring
  - – Better treatment, more control
  - – Better work-life balance
- Jobs have demands and resources
  - – Demands: physical, psychological, social, or organizational features of a job that require sustained effort
    - * High demands lead to burnout
    - * e.g. work overload, time pressure
  - – Resources: features of a job that are functional in that they help achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and meet growth needs
    - * They come from the organization, interpersonal social relations, organization of work, or the task itself