

Managing Conflicts

Managing Conflicts

- Introduction
- Sources of conflict
- Consequences of Conflict
- Conflict Resolution
- The Management of Conflict



Managing Conflicts

Introduction

“Conflict is the intentional interference of one individual or group in goal achievement efforts of another individual or group.”
(Robey, 1986)

“Conflict is a process which begins when one party perceives that the other has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his.” (Thomas, 1976)

Conflict is not the same as competition

Conflict may, although not always, lead to suboptimal results



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Personality differences and defects

- People become emotional and defensive at times
- Poor judgment under stress



Interdependent Work Activities

- “Live-and-let-live” attitudes difficult to maintain when work activities or departments are interdependent
- Failure of coordinating mechanism
- When one department fails to make their required contribution in terms of time and quality



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Different Goals

- “Us” and “them” attitude
- Individuals become socialized into their groups
- People tend to overvalue their own group, unit



Shared Resources

- Sharing scarce resources - who use how much and when
- One party's gain is another's loss



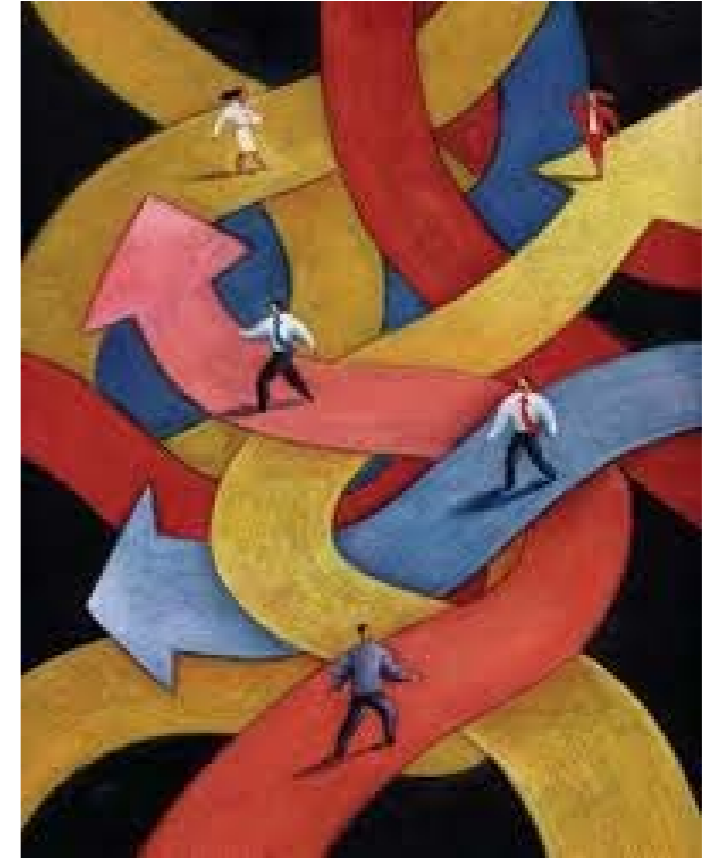
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Differences In Information And Perception

People at different levels and in different departments possess different information and see things differently

Ambiguity Over Responsibility or Authority

- Who is responsible for what?
- Who has authority over who?



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Consequences of Conflict

Productive attributes

- challenges the status quo - force behind creativity and innovation
- prevents stagnation
- stimulates interests and curiosity and encourages their solution



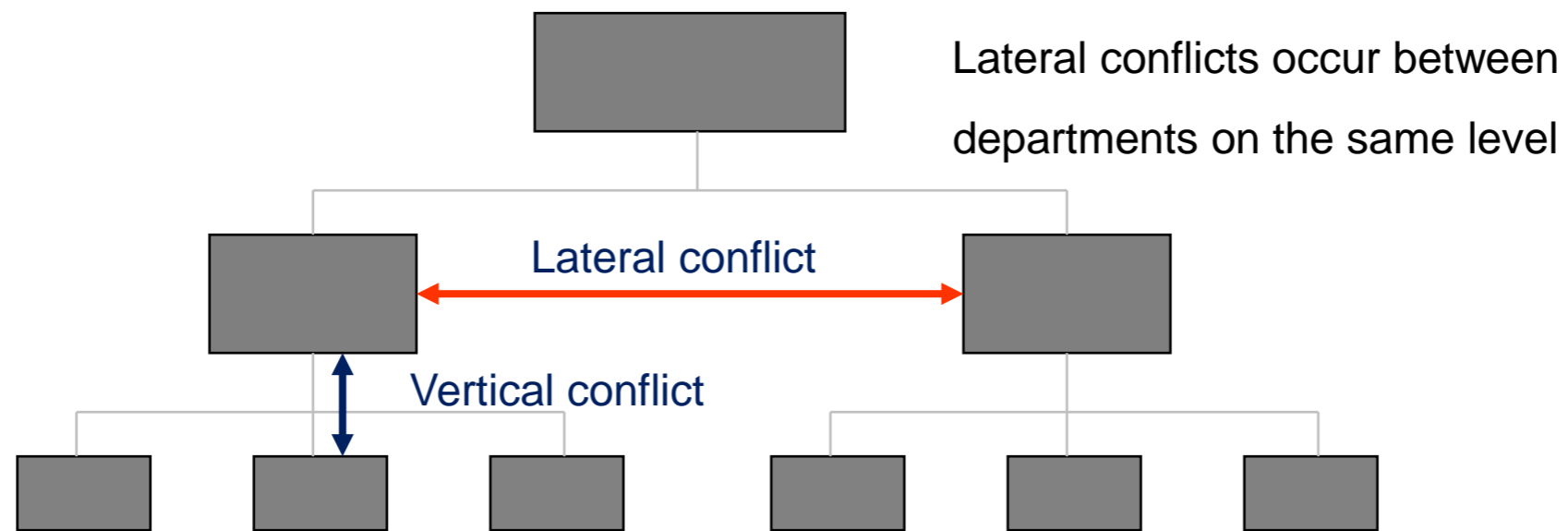
Destructive attributes

- reduces cooperation and teamwork
- produces violence and hostility
- destroys the status quo
- leads to death and destruction



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Vertical And Lateral Conflicts



Lateral conflicts occur between departments on the same level

Lateral conflict

Vertical conflict

Vertical conflicts occur between levels

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Vertical Conflicts

Conflicts with supervisors: work assignments, hours, work conditions, work itself

Arises primarily because of conflict between individual needs for autonomy and the organization's need for control

Ways of resolving vertical conflicts



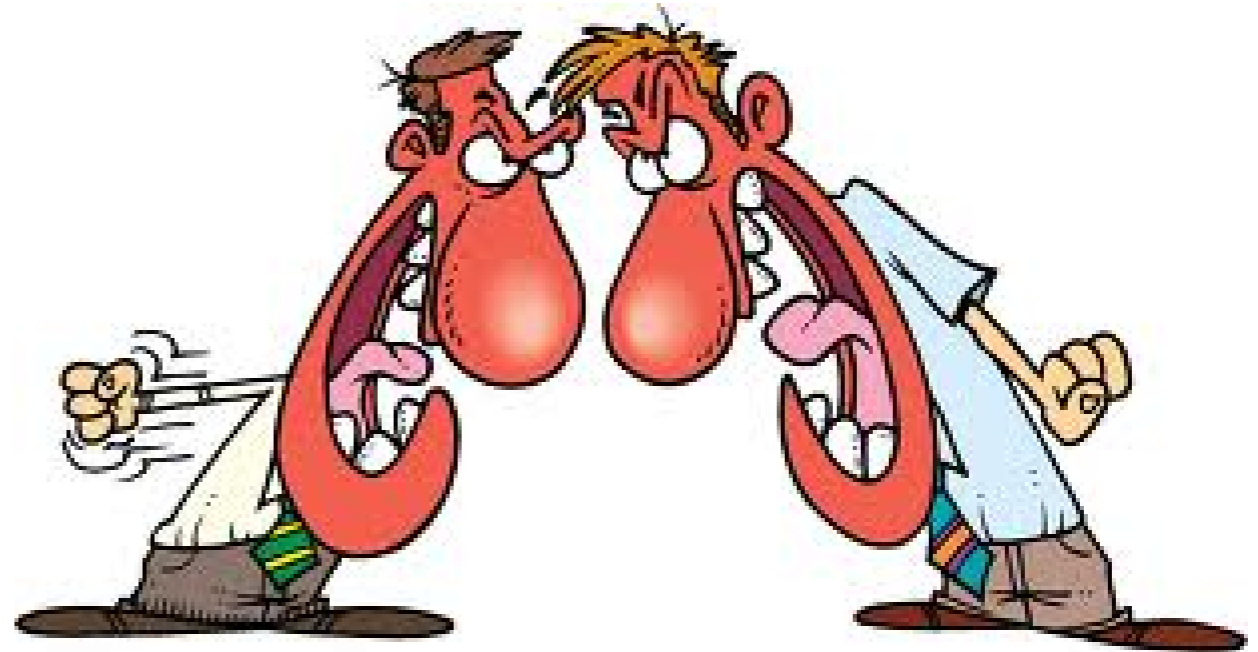
I jumped in when it reached a Category 5 but then Shamus hit Fergus with the chair and it escalated to a Category 6.

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Lateral Conflicts

Caused by the difficulty of coordinating sub-units in a complex organization

People tend to think of their own department first



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Major Conflict Source & Recommendations

Project Life Cycle Phase

Conflict Source

Recommendations

Project formation

Priorities

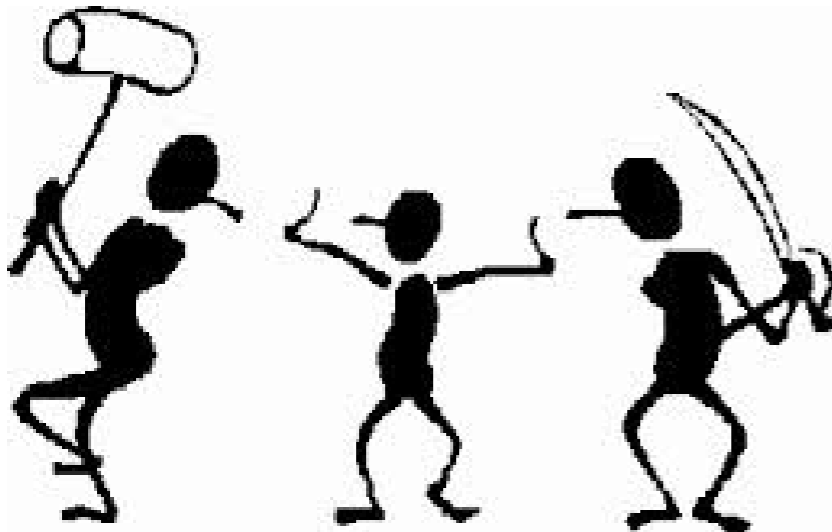
Clear defined plans from joint consultations

Procedures

Develop detailed administrative operating procedures

Schedules

Develop schedule commitments in advance of actual project commencement. Forecast departmental priorities and impact on project.



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Major Conflict Source & Recommendations

Project Life Cycle Phase

Buildup phase

Conflict Source

Priorities

Schedules

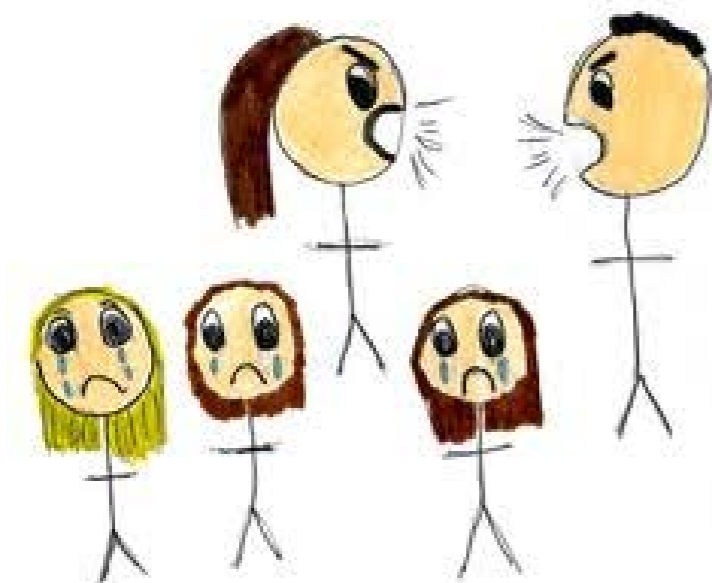
Procedures

Recommendations

Support project plans and needs.

Schedule work breakdown packages in cooperation with functional groups.

Contingency planning on key administrative issues.



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Major Conflict Source & Recommendations

Project Life Cycle Phase

Conflict Source

Recommendations

Main program

Schedules

Continually monitor work. Communicate results to affected parties.

Technical

Early resolution of technical problems. Communication of schedule and budget restraints to tech. personnel.

Manpower

Forecast and establish requirements & priorities with functional and staff groups.



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Major Conflict Source & Recommendations

Project Life Cycle Phase

Conflict Source

Recommendations

Phase-out

Schedules

Consider reallocation of available manpower to critical project areas prone to schedule slippages. Prompt resolution of outstanding issues.

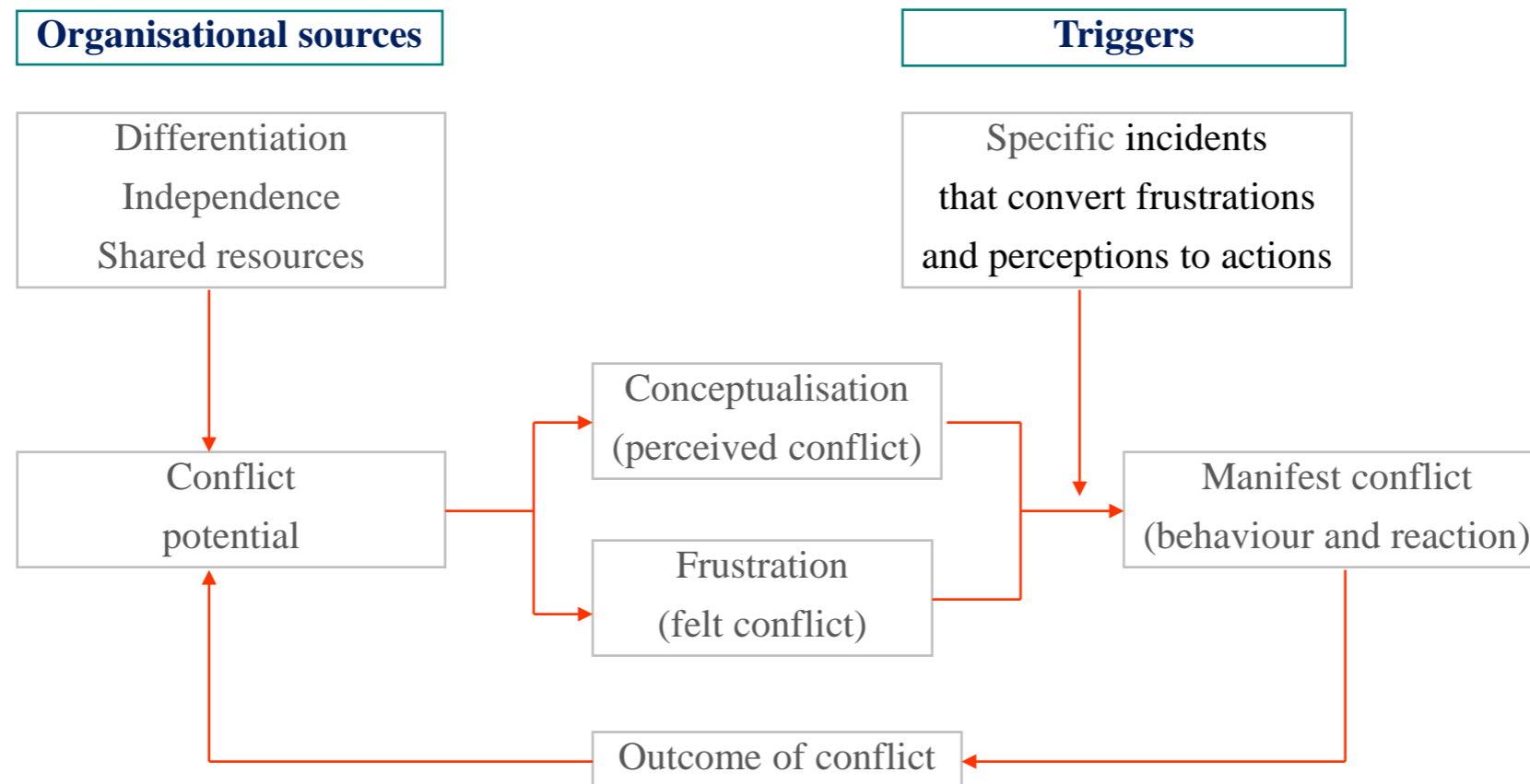
Personality and Manpower

Develop plans for reallocation of manpower upon project completion. Maintain harmonious working relationships.



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Conflict as a Dynamic Process



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Conflict Resolution

Company-wide resolution policies & procedures

- not all conflicts can be handled in the same way
- individuality and seniority

Establish conflict resolution procedures early

- responsibility charts, policies, rules, procedures



Use of hierarchical referral

- suitable for lateral conflicts
- bad image to conflicting parties

Face-to-face

- does not always work
- crude



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The Management of Conflict

Good Project Managers accept that conflicts are inevitable.

- Study problem, collect all available information (fact finding)
- Develop a situational approach or methodology
- Setting the appropriate atmosphere or climate



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Twelve Steps for Reducing Conflicts

1. Communicate with precision
2. Listen and consider attentively
3. Think before speaking
4. Take time to build relationships
5. Be honest in your dealings with others
6. Do not dispute trivial matters



Managing Conflicts

Twelve Steps for Reducing Conflicts

7. Look for common ground
8. Recognize and avoid prejudice
9. Express your understanding
10. Control your emotions
11. Apologize gracefully, if you are wrong
12. Accept apologies gracefully, if others are in the wrong



Whitfield, 1994

Managing Conflicts

Controlling Conflict v. Managing Fire Control

Prevention

When we design the building we use as many non-combustible and flameproof materials as possible to reduce the risk of fire.

Precautions

We do not sit and hope there are no fires. We take sensible precautions: no smoking, proper storage of flammable materials and the provision of sprinklers and hose reels

Symptoms

If it looks as though a combustible material is at risk of overheating and, therefore, liable to burst into flames, we cool down the material and take the heat out of the situation.

Alarms

We install alarm systems to tell us that a fire has broken out and we ensure that the system is capable of identifying where the fire is. If we are notified early we can avoid significant losses.



Managing Conflicts

Controlling Conflict v. Managing Fire Control

Starve the fire

A fire needs heat, fuel and oxygen to burn, so we ensure that we starve the fire of the elements it needs to thrive. Halon gasses are often used to flood the area, eliminating oxygen and curbing the fire.

Prevent it from spreading

We implement measures to prevent the fire from spreading to other areas, causing widespread damage. We use fire curtains and fireproof doors for this very purpose.

Address the fire

Once controlled and contained, we can fight the fire ourselves by using hose reels and fire extinguishers.

Call the Fire Brigade

We are sensible enough to recognize when the fire is too much for us to handle and so we call in the fire brigade - we call in the professionals.

