



Conflict Resolution

Many times within an organization or even a group of friends, one conflict can disrupt how everything and everyone functions. It is crucial to know how to respond when a conflict arises. Whether the conflict is the result of one person, a faction of the organization, or even the leadership, it is important to know processes and communication tactics that will help you navigate the problem. Knowing the history and present status of your group's dynamics is also a vital piece to prepare yourself for approaching the solution process. Here are steps for resolving conflict, reaching consensus and evaluating your organization's current state of affairs.

Resolving the Conflict Process

Follow these steps in a small or large group when a conflict has risen to the surface

Step 1: Announce the situation/problem to the group. Lay out as many facts and as much data as is necessary to prepare the group to make a decision.

Step 2: Lead a discussion to find out where people stand on the issue. What do they think is the conflict? What do they think is the solution? Try to draw everyone out. Ask people not to get into discussions at this time but simply to state their opinions and ideas.

Step 3: Break into groups based on view point and have groups feed back to one another what they have heard the "opposing" sides say. It is a good idea to have the ideas written out on a flip chart for everyone to see as they present back to the larger group. Ask these groups not to berate the reasons of the other side, but to show they heard and understood the other side's point of view, even if they do not agree.

Step 4: Allow the groups to give feedback to the presenters, letting them know whether they presented their opinions accurately and whether any were left out. If any were left out, the presenting group should write these down in the words of the person(s) whose opinion it is. During this step, it is important that all sides have their ideas written out or heard accurately.

Step 5: Form small groups that are comprised of individuals representing each side of the conflict. Each group should come up with what it thinks is the common goal of all sides of the issue. Each small group will then present its goal to the larger group.

Step 6: Once a goal has been agreed on, the entire group brainstorms solutions to reach that goal.

Step 7: Clarify the brainstormed ideas, eliminate any that are unworkable, and discuss the merits of the remaining ideas.

Step 8: Find a few top ideas that are most appealing to the group and evaluate their potential effectiveness.

Step 9: Decide as a group on which idea is the best, combining more than one idea or reflecting on all ideas and looking for a better one.

Step 10: Decide how the group members will hold each other responsible for making sure the goal is achieved.

Questions to Ponder....

Think about the group you are working with and the conflict that is currently happening within that group. Before heading into the conflict resolution process, consider the following questions. Thinking about your answers will help you be better prepared for the group dynamic with which you will be working.

Is this conflict between individuals in the organization or has the organization as a whole divided up into "sides"? How do you know this? Are you neutral or part of a side?

How many view points will you be facing as a mediator?

Are there any historical or past tensions between individuals or factions of the group?

Has this present conflict fallen along those same lines historically?

What means of communication have worked best for your organization in the past?

Are you prepared to be an impartial or at least fair mediator of this conflict? How will you accomplish this?

Do you need to involve a neutral party because you are part of this conflict?

What are the pros and cons of bringing in an outside source to mediate this conflict? How will the group respond to such a decision?

"Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional."
--Max Lucado



Quick Tips

For Reaching Consensus

- Members should avoid arguing in an attempt simply to win as individuals. In most cases, the needs of the group should take precedence.
- Disagreement about ideas, solutions, predictions, etc., should be viewed as helping rather than hindering consensus as long as it is discussed in a constructive manner.
- Problems are solved best when individual group members accept responsibility for both listening and contributing, so that everyone is included in the decision.
- Be prepared to take a break from the conversation if it has become stagnant. Sometimes returning to a conversation after a break brings refreshed minds and thoughts.
- Each member of the group should take responsibility for holding themselves and others accountable to the standards set by the group.
- It is essential that consensus is reached on both an intellectual and emotional level.
- The facilitator should work hard to motivate and encourage the group through this difficult process.

Pieces of Leadership
brochures are available on
the following topics:

Budgeting
Communication
Conflict Resolution
Delegation
Facilitation
Goal Setting
Group Dynamics
Ice Breakers/Team Builders
Mission Statements
Motivation
Officer Transition
Peer Supervision
Program Planning
Qualities of a Good Leader
Running a Good Meeting
Stress Management
Time Management
Wellness

*The information provided in this brochure
was adapted from:*

Gordon, Jack. "The Pfeiffer Handbook of
Structured Experiences". 2004.

&

Rees, Fran. "25 Activities for Developing
Team Leaders." 2005.

For more information on the topics
listed above or to access the
resources in our
Leadership Library,
please visit the

Office of Student Activities and
Leadership Development

Located on the
First Floor of the
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*Building your Leadership
one piece at a time...*