

Conflict Resolution at Work

A Summary Review of Conflict Resolution



References:

- John G. Oetzel and Stella Ting-Toomey, *"The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Communication"* (California State University, Fullerton: SAGE Publications, 2006)
- Diane L. Katz, PhD, *"Win at Work!"* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010)
- Jim Putman, *"Church Is a Team Sport"* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2008)

Conflict Resolution at Work Overview

- Group Exercise
- Ten Principles of Intergroup Conflict
- The Importance of Teamwork
- The Two Types of Conflict
- The Working Circle (with a work example)
- Questions

Conflict Resolution at Work

- **Group Exercise** (estimated time 5 minutes)
 - Everyone should pick a shape from a pile of multi-colored pieces of construction paper.
 - Next, each attendee should pin it on their chest.
 - Having no other information, attendees should form groups

– NOTE: _____

Conflict Resolution at Work

Ten Principles of Intergroup Conflict

1. Human minds normally sort people and things into categories or groups.
2. Each of are classified by others into different groups
3. All have a need to belong. Groups we identify with our “ingroups” Others are seen as the “outgroups”
4. Many organizations distribute resources/authority based on those ranks
5. Groups ranked high are privileged, groups ranked low are disadvantaged

6. When conflict is with a member of the outgroup, we perceive ourselves as right, moral and good while the other is assumed to be misguided at best, wrong or evil at worst.
7. If your group is discriminated against, you will likely respond to the bias. If you are stuck in your group, you will either see yourself as a victim, try to increase your group status or change the “rules of the game”
8. As a member of a privileged group, you are likely to hold unjustified negative stereotypes of the disadvantaged group, be unaware of your privilege attitude as well as the “uneven playing field” for members of the disadvantaged group.

9. Whether you are a target of discrimination or privileged, because of the inherent unfairness in a system, you will have strong emotions which should be dealt with to protect your self esteem. The advantaged may have to cope with feelings of guilt and the fear of retaliation. The disadvantaged may have to cope with feelings such as shame, humiliation, rage and depression. Not knowing and addressing these emotions can cause long lasting negative effectives to the ministry.
10. Relations in intergroups sometimes take destructive course in a competitive (for power, control, etc.) context. By contrast, in a cooperative environment, diversity rather than a source of anxiety, tension and conflict can be the source of personal and societal growth.

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Conflict Resolution at Work The Importance of Teamwork –

“an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure”.

“I thought it would be easy to coach God’s team. I mean, God had built His team to win, hadn’t He? I was working with Spirit-filled Christians, not the hardheaded athletes I had dealt with in my past. There was no Bible class to teach me what I would find and to say the I was surprised would be an understatement. It must have looked much worst to a non-Christian wanting to find blemishes on the outside” – Jim Putman.



The Importance of Teamwork –

“an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure”.

1. Church is a team Sport – create a culture of teamwork

- Pastor – must set the goal for the mission of the church
- Each believer – has a function that is essential to the success of the mission
- Leaders and staff – must be unified to win
 - ✓ Must accept the mission of the team
 - ✓ Must agree to be a team player on the team
 - ✓ Must fulfill your role on the team
 - ✓ Must be willing to sacrifice dreams for the cause of the team
 - ✓ Must be able to replace pride with humility on the team
 - ✓ Must learn to stay focus on the mission of the team
 - ✓ Must be willing to pass the ball

The Importance of Teamwork –

“an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure”.

2. Church is a team Sport – create a culture of teamwork

- Pastor/coach – must lead in the way which he wants the team to follow. The coach must set the guidelines for team practices and establish procedures for the team to follow. There must be consistency for all players.
- Pastor/coach – must create an environment and an expectation of forgiveness, humility, and cooperation. A vision of what could be must be promoted by making sure the church is what it should be.
 - ✓ The right Team players will obey the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:23 by going to their sisters and brothers and making it right.
 - ✓ Without doing so, the offering of team players are not accepted by God
 - ✓ From the top down, the team must adapt to a principle of forgiveness
 - ✓ The objective of the team must never place task over people.

The Importance of Teamwork –

“an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure”.

- Staff & Leadership positions
 - ✓ Have a responsibility to model relationships so emerging disciples can see it. It takes more than a pithy language to create a team culture.
 - ✓ Need to be encouraged and trained to encourage others; remember that we are in a spiritual fight.
 - ✓ Help instead of judge, mentor instead of judge, teach instead of judge...

The Importance of Teamwork –

“an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure”.

3. Church is a team Sport – things from observing the team

- Fight each other rather than the enemy
- Meanwhile unsaved neighbors are hurting and even dying.
- We fight. They watch. We lose. They lose more.
- The Reformers (Luther, Zwingli and Calvin) taught that the Scripture should be accepted as authoritative
- The Reformers taught that “we should just do it” long before Nike.

The Importance of Teamwork –

“an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure”.

Summary Points:

1. The goal of the team is to reach the lost and equip them to do the same
2. Remember – One Team, one message, glorifying God by obeying Him working together.
3. Not with individual goals but supporting the mission goals.

Conflict Resolution at Work

Two Types of Conflict

1. C_____ Conflict – generates creativity, problem-solving behaviors, improvements and innovation. Must be a T _ _ _ effort. Staff and leaders must know the ministry goals, be willing to work hard to accomplish them and be supportive of each other.
2. D_____ Conflict – promotes fear, anger, resentment, hesitation, particularly when the consequences might affect our ability to success at our tasks.

Conflict Resolution at Work

Two Types of Conflict

Destructive Conflict Comes from

1. Poorly designed jobs – overlapping responsibilities and ill-defined accountabilities which leaves workers competing needlessly
2. Unrealistic orientations – the absence of training or equipping team members with what they need to be successful and how they fit on the team
3. Win-lose compensation plan – not so much a problem in our churches. This is mostly an issue when large compensation packages are given to leaders especially in the secular world.

Conflict Resolution at Work

Two Types of Conflict

Destructive Conflict Comes from

4. Good willed leaders – mean will but don't know how to manage conflict
5. Absence of training
6. Noncash reward systems that reward combativeness – allowing the whiners or loudest screamers to get the attention or continue their behavior
7. Frustrated leaders – who do not know how to handle their anger (loosing your cool with others)

Conflict Resolution at Work

Two Types of Conflict

Destructive Conflict Comes from

6. Culture that does not encourage truthfulness – The example of lazy employees at a company. When asked why they were still there, they replied that no one had the heart (or guts) to fire them. They will not go away on their own!
7. Blaming behavior and responsibility avoidance – passing the blame on to someone else and refusing to take responsibility for actions
8. Just plan pains in the _____ (stay godly) – people who cause trouble no matter where they go. You need to immunize against them.

Conflict Resolution at Work

Two Types of Conflict

Point: Understanding where conflict comes from can help you better deal with it.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle

- When conflict needs to be resolved, decisions have to be made. Logic is a cornerstone of decision making; just as important is that ephemeral quality, *intuition*. The Working Circle incorporates both approaches, to help professionals at any level arrive at balanced decisions with confidence.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle

• Naturally, we will begin with Question 1. As we progress around the circle, we can go back and forth, as needed. Notice in the diagram of The Working Circle that Question 1 begins on the right-hand, or east, side. The east is where the sun rises. With the rising sun comes the emergence of perspectives, creativity, and questions. Directionally, the east is the place of beginnings and *orientation*. When you begin a new job, you may be given an orientation



7. What transformations will the game plan bring?

8. Will these changes ultimately be positive?

1. What's the situation?

2. What's negotiable?

3. What's nonnegotiable?

4. What have I learned from previous experiences?

5. How do I feel about the situation?

6. What's my game plan?

The Working Circle

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 1

Urges you to focus on the facts. What exactly is going on? To do this, first, put all your emotions and opinions aside and consider the facts only. Think of yourself as a camera, moving to all angles in turn and snapping the facts as images of the situation. You'll record only the people, places, and things involved. Emotions, opinions, judgments, points of view are out of the picture; only hard facts prevail at this point.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 1

Queries you to help answer Question 1:

- When did the situation begin?
- Who is involved?
- Who would be affected by the decisions made?
- What impact has the situation had on others?
- How has the situation affected you?
- What were the events leading up to the current situation?
- What happened that made the situation escalate?
- What brought about the need for change and/or resolution?
- Are there any time frames/deadlines involved that require a decision by a certain date?
- Who needs to be involved in the decision-making process?

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 1 Example (Camera perspective)

Kim was a senior associate at a consulting firm. She loved her work, and especially loved the travel involved. Her colleague, Tony, (also a senior associate) with whom she often traveled, tended to intimidate her. When they sat together at client meetings, she would slowly shut down and let Tony take the lead. Tony gladly allowed this to take place, and eventually left Kim out of the discussion entirely. She'd sit there mutely as Tony ran with the project, wondering why she was even there. In time the situation deteriorated further. Tony would delegate tasks to Kim that she found particularly demeaning. Finally, Kim decided that she had to do something about the situation and, putting her emotions aside, she began to examine the facts of the situation:

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The Working Circle – Question 1 Example (Camera perspective)

- Kim and Tony had been working together for one year.
- Tony had been at the firm one year longer than Kim.
- Tony was more analytical than Kim, but Kim had a greater capacity for problem solving with clients.
- Kim knew that if she did not address the situation, she would continue sending Tony the message that he was more skilled than she. He would then assume even more of a leadership role.
- Their manager, Brett, didn't meet with them often, and really didn't want to hear about any issues or problems they were having.

Without emotions, Kim has answered question 1.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 2

Asking “what’s negotiable?” is another way of saying, “I realize that not everything is critical to produce a successful result. The questions to ask yourself, in order to answer what is negotiable, are:

- In this conflict, which aspects or items could I leave behind?
- Which contentious items am I willing to discuss and modify through negotiations?
- If pressed, which items am I willing to let go of or change?
- How much of certain aspects of the conflict am I willing to settle for?

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 2 Example

When Kim asked herself “what’s negotiable?” she came up with this list of items:

- She was willing to share the lead with Tony in working with clients, as long as it ended up being 50/50.
- She agreed that either of them could take “credit” with their manager, again as long as the end result was a 50/50 split.
- She might not necessarily want to work with Tony as a partner. At the end of the fiscal year, when new assignments were made, she might ask to work with another peer.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 2 Example

Typically, when we first come face to face with crucial decisions, everything seems important. The situation seems to be the most important one we have ever been confronted with, and the options can be overwhelming.

Asking “what’s negotiable?” allows us to examine everything associated with the situation and determine what is and isn’t crucial.

When Kim made a list of what was negotiable, she felt less overwhelmed. Once she knew what she could give up, she could move on to Question 3.

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The Working Circle – Question 3

On the other side of the equation, we need to also look at which items or aspects of the conflict are immutable. By asking ourselves what's nonnegotiable, we decide where we are not willing to budge, where we will stand fast and say, "No." It may be drawing a line at how we are being treated; it could be a dollar amount; it could be any item involved in the conflict. Whatever it is, we make a choice *not* to concede this item.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 3 Example

Let's continue with our friend, Kim, who is now ready to ask herself, "What's nonnegotiable?" Here's what she came up with:

- She needed to be the leader with clients half the time, and to have Tony take a back seat at those times.
- She refused to allow Tony take credit for her work.
- She wanted to share the workload, rather than have Tony delegate to her.
- She was willing to share some of the more odious tasks, as opposed to taking on all of them and, thus, freeing Tony from them.
- She wanted her clients, her manager, and Tony to regard, and treat, her and Tony as a team.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 3 Example

Kim vacillated between what was negotiable and what was nonnegotiable until she felt that she had a balanced-enough list to move to the next question. Going back and forth between Question 3 allows for the development of more comprehensive answers to each.

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The Working Circle – Question 4

Using your past experiences as lessons to learn from, so that you can make better decisions in the present and future should always be applied. Keep in mind that it is counterproductive to be negative when problem solving. This is because:

- Past experience, even if unpleasant, can provide information for future growth.
- Past experience is valuable as long as it is communicated in a way that will advance the problem-solving process.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 4

Example

Kim remembered that when she was 16 years old, three girls in her gym class bullied her. Consequently, she began to dread attending gym class, and spent long hours fretting over what to do about it. One day, she noticed that one of the bullies was standing alone. The other two girls were somewhere else, and the one remaining was bending down, apparently searching for something. “Did you lose something?” Kim asked helpfully. Surprised, her nemesis looked up and said, “I lost my bracelet.”

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 4 Example

Kim sank down onto the floor and helped the girl search for her lost bracelet. “Here it is,” she said a few minutes later, holding it up. She handed it to the other girl.

“Thanks,” she said very quietly to Kim. After that incident, the three girls didn’t bother Kim again.

Now, sitting at her desk at work, Kim realized that she had learned a valuable lesson: to treat bullies as equals, rather than avoid them and give them the upper hand. She also learned the importance of behaving as a considerate human being, rather than emulating the bad behavior of the bullies.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 5

How Do I Feel about the Situation allows us a moment to stop and ask ourselves how we feel. Our answer will revolve around the following issues:

- How we feel about the players in the situation
- How we feel about our ability to make up a game plan (the next step in the process)
- How we feel about the information that we have gathered-is it adequate?
- How we feel about our ability to proceed
- Whether or not we might benefit (and/or the ministry) from the outcome.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 5

Like Kim, we must deal with our feelings, sometimes past experiences can help such that your decision making process is not determined by your feelings, but that you can properly address your feelings and put them in check.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 6

What's My Game Plan?

This is probably the question you are most familiar with: What are you going to do? Answering it is the linear part of the process. The more complex a dilemma, the more complex the plans. Kim has decided that on her next business trip with Tony discuss what has been a conflict for her. She:

- Is determined not to confront Tony, but instead to maintain a friendly demeanor.
- Commits to standing firm until Tony understands that she considers them equals and work partners.
- Intends to clarify what she is uncomfortable discussing in front of clients, and which discussions she believes should take place in private.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 6

- Does not try to anticipate what Tony will say. Instead, she plans what she wants to say and when she will say it.
- Decides she will use an upcoming project to discuss these issues, rather than rehashing the past, which could lead to defensiveness on Tony's part and ill will between them.
- Commits to be firm and professional, to maintain eye contact, and not accuse Tony of anything. She just wants to speak assertively on her own behalf.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 7

Question 7: What Transformations Will the Game Plan Bring?

Your planning process will be more likely to succeed if you project the consequences of your plan. That's the purpose of Question 7. It encourages you to begin living your plan. What are the positive benefits your plan might bring you? How would you like to be transformed as a result? Does this plan assure you of a positive transformation?

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 7

Question 7 is at the core of what is called *Transformational Conflict Resolution*. Not only do you want to resolve the issue, you want to learn from it as well, and implement change. This is critical if you don't want to keep repeating negative situations over and over again.

The different ways of approaching Question 7 are:

- How will you be changed by the outcome?
- How could your relationship with the other person(s) be changed?
- How could this impact your future?
- How could this improve your self-esteem?
- How could you alter your ability to deal with future conflict?

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 7 Example

Let's see how Kim handled this step:

After she completed her game plan, she sat back and reflected. If she was clear, assertive, and professional in her discussion with Tony, she could accomplish her goal of working with him as an equal. This would give her new self-confidence, enable her to be more relaxed with their clients, and bring her more respect from Tony, her other teammates, and her manager. Was that something she wanted? Absolutely! But first, she has one final question to tackle.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 8

Question 8: Will These Changes Ultimately Be Positive?

Question 8 provides you with that all-important final check before you actually initiate your plan. If you have been diligent in answering the first seven questions, you should be able to move rather briskly through this question. Let's see how Kim handles it.

She looks at the notes she has written while answering the first seven questions comprising The Working Circle. Would this new assertiveness be good for her future? Without doubt! She can see herself leaving meetings without feeling bad because she had not stood up for herself. She also imagines how much more comfortable she will become with her superiors at work. This increased comfort level could, she knows, leads to greater achievements for her and the team.

Conflict Resolution at Work

The Working Circle – Question 8

If you put your *intention* where you want to go, your *attention* will follow. If you focus on the changes you would like to see take place as a result of your efforts, they're far more likely to occur.

Question 8 will motivate you to look at the future. Of course, none of us can predict the future, but we certainly can be better prepared for it by focusing on potential results and consequences, both positive and negative.