Conflict Management skills at Workplace

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Abstract:

This paper examined work place conflict management strategies and how they affect organizational performance. The study was largely conceptual which is based solely on insights drawn from the analysis of the existing literature of different studies, periodicals and books related to the topic of study. It was thus concluded that it is very imperative for management of organization to understand their organization and know the strategy or method of conflict resolution to use as to blend with the particular conflict situation.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict management, Workplace conflict Management skills.

INTRODUCTION:

Conflicts are inevitable when number of people will be working together. Conflict is defined as "difference in opinion or some kind of disagreement between two or more parties". Conflicts need to be resolved effectively. It is not only important to resolve the conflict, but also is equally important to ensure that the parties involved in conflict do not unnecessarily end up being in any kind of emotional stress during the resolution process of the conflict. Striking a balance between resolving the conflict to find the decision and maintaining the emotional wellbeing of people involved will be critical to successful conflict management.

Hence it is important to understand clearly, what is a conflict, why conflict occurs, challenges in resolving conflicts and various methods for resolving conflicts. There are two views on conflicts or the so called differences in opinion between people. The traditional view says "conflicts are bad and should be totally discouraged", and the new modern view says" conflicts can be constructive and good and different ways of thinking should be encouraged to get multiple ideas and solutions to problems in hand". Let us approach conflict management with the idea that conflicts can be good for the team. So for effective conflict management, there is a need for creating a right atmosphere which empowers people to think originally and encourages them to put forth their suggestions and opinions without fear. And the members are encouraged to resolve conflicts among themselves with a very open and collaborative mind. People need to rise above their personal emotions while resolving conflicts and they need to think about the final goals of the project or work in hand. A manager should intervene in resolving a conflict when the involved team members will not be able to resolve on their own.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Overton, A. R. and Lowry, A. C. (2013) He studied on Conflict manage met : Difficult conversation with difficult people. His findings are conflict occurs frequently in any workplace; health care is not an exception. The negative consequences include dysfunctional team work, decreased patient satisfaction, and increased employee turnover. Research demonstrates that training in conflict resolution skills can result in improved teamwork, productivity, and patient and employee satisfaction. Strategies to address a disruptive physician, a particularly difficult conflict situation in healthcare, are addressed.

Chilala, Osman,(2021) Evaluation of the Impact of Workplace Conflict Management on the Performance of Employees in Ghana's Tertiary Institutions, The findings revealed that Communication ranked as the highest workplace conflict factor fellows by rewards, resources, and management practices. The result further revealed that there is a significant relationship between employee performance and workplace conflict (scarce resources, management practices, & rewards) and also confirmed that staff performance would increase by 49.8% if there is a 100% improvement in third-party strategies within the organization. The study concludes that there are varieties of issues that influence staff performance within the institution. Whereas most of these factors affect employees of the Bolgatanga Technical University to improve performance, others did not motivate them to perform well on the job.

Howell, S. E. (2014) Conflict Management: A Literature Review and Study, This study did not show education to have a significant effect on the type of conflict management style used by radiologic technologists; however, being educated in the different conflict management styles can only benefit individuals. Learning the different conflict management styles will enable individuals to be flexible in their response to the conflict situation.7 Learning the different conflict management strategies will enable others to understand the value and recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each style. There is always a correct conflict management style in different conflict situations.

Tamunomiebi, M. D., Nsirimovu, and Alechi, E.(2020) Workplace Conflict Management Strategies and Orgnaizational Performance, It was thus concluded that it is very imperative for management of organization to understand their organization and know the strategy or method of conflict resolution to use as to blend with the particular conflict situation

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILLS:

Understand the situation: Few situations are exactly as they seem or as presented to you by others. Before you try to settle the conflict insure you have investigated both sides of the issue.

Acknowledge the problem: I remember an exchange between two board members. One member was frustrated with the direction the organization was taking. He told the other, "Just don't worry about it. It isn't that important." Keep in mind what appears to be a small issue to you can be a major issue with another. Acknowledging the frustration and concerns is an important step in resolving the conflict.

Be patient and take your time: The old adage, "Haste makes waste," has more truth in it than we sometimes realize. Take time to evaluate all information. A too-quick decision does more harm than good when it turns out to be the wrong decision and further alienating the individual involved.

Keep the communication open: The ultimate goal in conflict resolution is for both parties to resolve the issue between themselves. Allow both parties to express their viewpoint, but also share your perspective. Attempt to facilitate the meeting and help them pinpoint the real issue causing conflict.

Clarify what is the source of conflict: The first step in resolving conflict is clarifying its source. Defining the cause of the conflict will enable you to understand how the issue came to grow in the first place. Additionally, you will be able to get both parties to consent to what the disagreement is. And to do so, you need to discuss the needs which are not being met on both sides of the issues. Also, you need to warranty mutual understanding. Ensure you obtain as much information as possible on each side's outlook. Continue asking questions until you are confident that all the conflicting parties understand the issue.

Find a safe and private place to talk: Many people often wonder and ask, "What is an approach to solving problems peacefully?" To have a constructive conversation, you need to find an environment that is

safe for you to talk to. Such a place also enables you to take the necessary risks for honest communication regarding the issues at hand.

Listen actively and let everyone have their say: After getting both parties to meet in a secure and private place, let each of them have the opportunity to air out their views and perceptions regarding the issue at hand. Give each party equal time to express their thoughts and concerns without favoring the other. Embrace a positive and assertive approach while in the meeting. If necessary, set ground rules. Taking this approach will encourage both these parties to articulate their thoughts in an open and honest manner as well as comprehend the causes of the conflict and identify solutions.

Name Your Emotions Before Meeting: We're humans; imperfect, and often irrational. Taking a step back to figure out how we're really feeling is one of the best things one can do early on when handling conflict. It's one of the simplest conflict resolution techniques in that you can accomplish this step on your own, though it may not hurt to talk to a friend removed from the situation.

Collaborate With The Other Party On How To Handle Conflict: Many workplace conflicts are borne of misunderstandings due to different communication styles – you may say one thing and a coworker may interpret it differently than you intended. This is inevitable, as the digital world means that we're constantly messaging on slack, working remotely, and potentially haven't met many of our team members in person. This can exacerbate the pitfalls of interpersonal and *especially* team conflict resolution, where there are more diverse personalities, communication preferences, and thus more opportunities for communication breakdown and conflict.

Keep Your Conversation Goal-Oriented: Keeping things goal-oriented is second nature to many PMs as its inherent to our jobs. Unfortunately, it is frequently overlooked when translating an often technically-focused and directly measurable framework into something as emotional and messy as dealing with conflict at work.

Understand the background. Fear is at the heart of polarity and conflict and contributes to people staying firm in their original viewpoint. It is important to uncover the context, history and the personal story of the individuals themselves. Understanding from where the conflict and beliefs are coming can be key to resolution.

Define the source. Gain as much information as possible in order to distinguish exactly what the cause of the conflict is. Without clarity and transparency, there is no way to ensure effective resolution and a healthy workplace culture.

Be an active listener. Truly listen to and understand all arguments in order to establish the common problem. Ask questions for further clarity and reiterate key points back to both parties to ensure you understood them correctly.

Create safety to feel comfortable to disagree. To start working with conflict we first need to feel safe enough to disagree to promote the chances of a healthy dialogue. We also need to feel resourced and supported – and both of these are not easy things to get if we are living in isolation, and especially when people are already marginalized for other reasons.

Be detached and create a calm zone. Often times when people are upset, their language can be inflammatory and exaggerated. Sometimes we amplify our thinking and then the other side amplifies theirs. Create a space to reflect, this may require you to step outside your own views and take a different or more distant perspective on the problem.

Find a common goal. It is worth exploring polarities when we work with conflict and to see if both parties can find a common goal. In our ambition to find balance, we may start to swing and adapt a little and then be able to find a better resting point.

Understand that not all conflicts can be resolved and people can take different viewpoints very personally. Looking at the bigger picture and purpose of their working relationship may enable some stability so that differences can be put to one side for a greater good. On some occasions preserving our own self-worth and identity may be more important.

Many organizational leaders can use the following ingredients to create a strong employee relations strategy:

- **Interactive communication.** Communication that is clear and two-way can help build trust between employees and their managers.
- **Trust.** The absence of trust among employees and managers can compromise communication in either or both directions.
- **Ethics.** If employees do not perceive their manager as having good business ethics, they will indirectly question the manager's motives, which may cause stress and reduce performance.
- **Fairness.** All employees should be treated in a consistent manner under the same circumstances. Superior performance, however, should still be recognized and rewarded.
- **Empathy.** Managers need to be alert and sensitive to their employees' feelings, and showing empathy and awareness is central to establishing a trusting relationship with employees.
- **Perceptions and beliefs.** Perceptions can be essential in employee relations. Employees respond positively when they believe the organization's policies and practices are fair and its communication is truthful. Frequent, honest communication helps ensure that employees' beliefs and perceptions are consistent with reality in the workplace.
- **Clear expectations.** Employees need to know what to expect from their managers. No one likes to be surprised with new or conflicting requirements, which can cause stress and distract employees from the job at hand.
- **Conflict resolution.** Although conflicts arise in every organization, the methods to handle them vary. Employers must deal with issues head-on and resolve disputes fairly and quickly.

Conclusion: The main findings different conflict management styles will enable individuals to be flexible in their response to the conflict situation. Conflicts need to be resolved effectively. It is not only important to resolve the conflict, but also is equally important to ensure that the parties involved in conflict do not unnecessarily end up being in any kind of emotional stress during the resolution process of the conflict.

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