



Class: BSc Sem 4

Subject : Business communication

Subject Code:

Chapter: Unit 4 Chp 1

Chapter Name: Communication during conflict

Today's Agenda

1. What is a conflict?
 1. Conflict in organisations
 2. Causes of conflict at workplace
2. The Conflict process
3. Managing interpersonal conflict in organisations
4. Modes of conflict resolution
5. Constructive ways to approach a conflict
6. Communication strategies for conflict management
7. Benefits of dealing with conflict

1 What is a conflict?



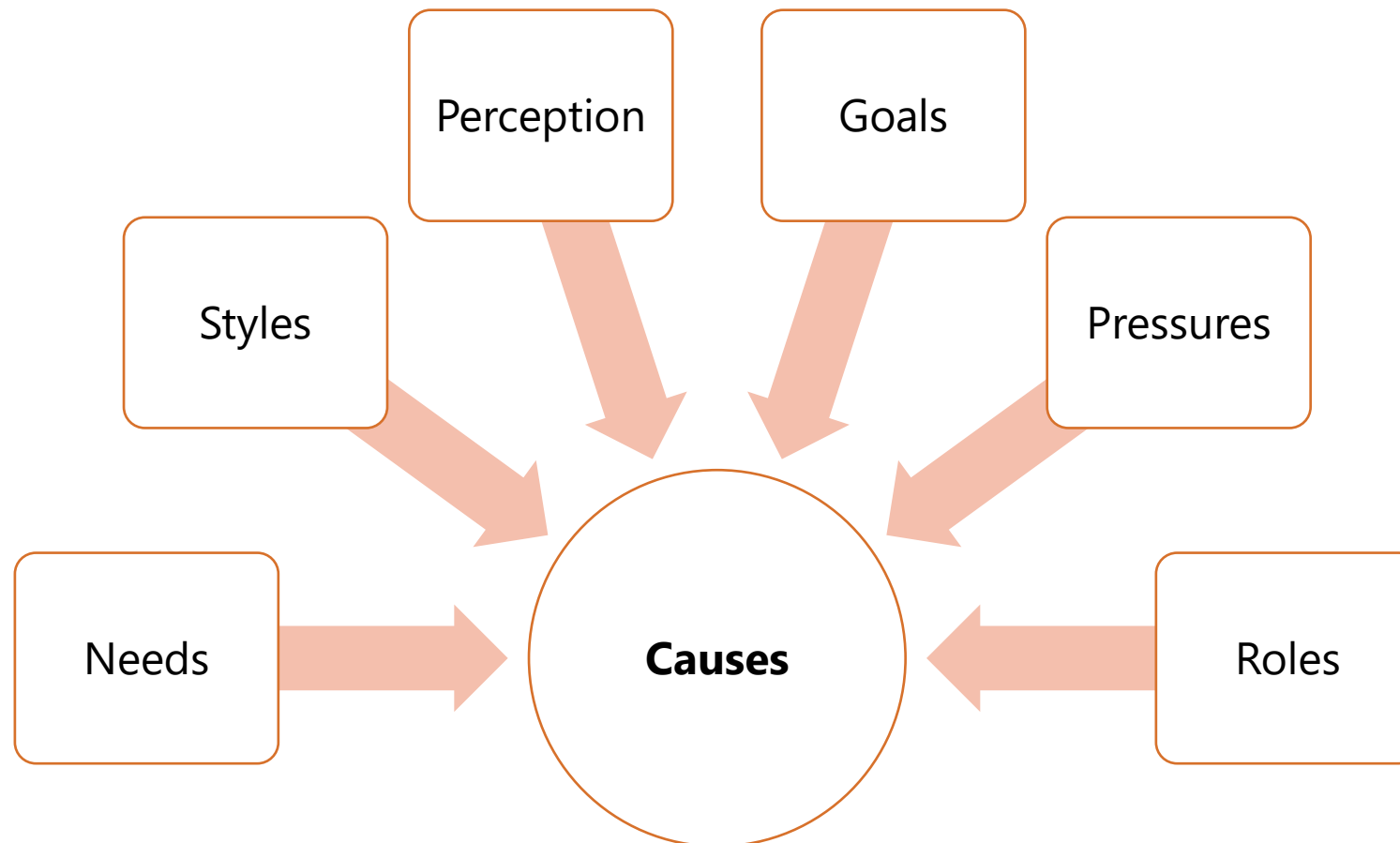
Conflict is when two people or groups disagree, and the disagreement causes friction.



1.1 Conflict in organizations

- Every organisation has a staff with a diverse set of personalities, backgrounds and experiences. Conflict is inevitable in organisational settings when people who are extremely different work together on a daily basis.
- Conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals.
- Conflict results because of miscommunication between people over incompatibility of goals, differences over interpretation of facts and common signs or conflict are disagreements on behavioural expectations, lack of motivation.
- A more recent viewpoint propounded by interactionist school encourages conflict on the grounds that a peaceful and cooperative group devoid of any conflict will degenerate into a static mass, non responsive to growth and change.

1.2 Causes of conflict at workplace



1.2 Causes of conflict at workplace

1. Needs

People in organisations, either large or small, often engage in confrontation over resources that are either scarce or dwindling. Conflict arises when employees compete over resources for recognition and power in the company's 'pecking order.'

2. Styles

Individuals are individuals they differ in the way they approach people and problems. Managers need to understand their own style and learn how to accept conflicting styles.

3. Perception

Just a two or more workers can have conflicting styles, they can also have conflicting perceptions. They may view the same incident in dramatically different ways.

4. Goals

Problems in the workplace can occur when associates are responsible for different duties in achieving the same goal and there is a lack of coordination between two or more areas.

1.2 Causes of conflict at workplace

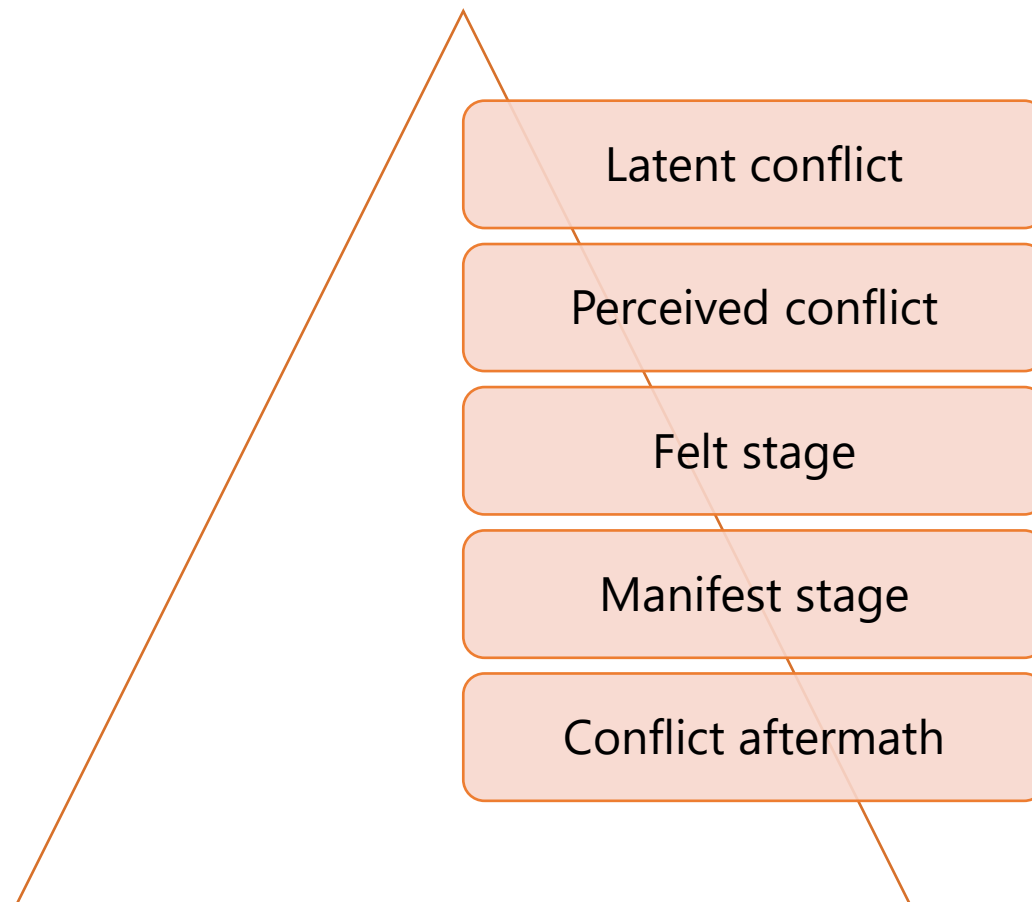
5. Pressures

Conflicting pressures can occur when two or more associates or departments are responsible for separate actions with the same deadline. The extent to which we depend on each other to complete our work can contribute greatly to conflict.

6. Roles

Conflict may result from differences between formal position descriptions and informal expectations from the job. The absence of clear policies or policies that are constantly changing and environment of uncertainty and distrust.

2 The conflict process



2 The conflict process

1. Latent conflict

There is no apparent symptom of an open conflict at this stage. It can only be suspected, this being the brewing stage where there are differences in perceptions or goals. This may also stem from the aftermath of a preceding conflict.

2. Perceived Conflict

The differences at this stage may become apparent. If the problem is ignored at this stage, conflict may escalate and even take a dysfunctional situation. However, any initiative to resolve conflict may stand a good chance to iron out differences and reduce tensions.

3. Felt Stage

Parties are not only aware of the differences, they also feel anxious and stressed. Conflict may be resolved if both the parties get a chance to vent out their anger and frustration with or without a third-party intervention.

2 The conflict process

4. Manifest Stage

At this stage, there is an open refusal to resolve conflict. Both the parties may go to the extent of openly making attempts to frustrate and harm each other. This stage may therefore be characterized by verbal abuses or physical attack. Constant efforts by a mediator may work best for resolution of the conflict.

5. Conflict Aftermath

Any unresolved conflict may pose a serious threat to the environment and functioning of the organisation. However, even if resolved, this stage is very sensitive and must be handled properly in order to avoid any hostility later.

3 Managing interpersonal conflict in organizations

Since interpersonal communication deals with managing perceptions of different people, there is a greater chance for conflicts to occur. When conflict occurs, the relationship may be weakened or strengthened. Managing conflict, then, is important for the relationships to be strong and rewarding. Hence, conflict management involves communication between two parties so that perception of incompatibility between one another's ideas, goals or opinions may be removed.

The following response styles, which are often adopted in conflict situations, are best avoided.

- Avoiding the existence of conflict is common but damaging in the long run.
- Blaming the other person extends beyond the issue at hand and results in criticism of behaviour, character and values as well.
- Using power and influence to win at the other's expense is a win-lose situation and does not result in effective resolution of conflict.

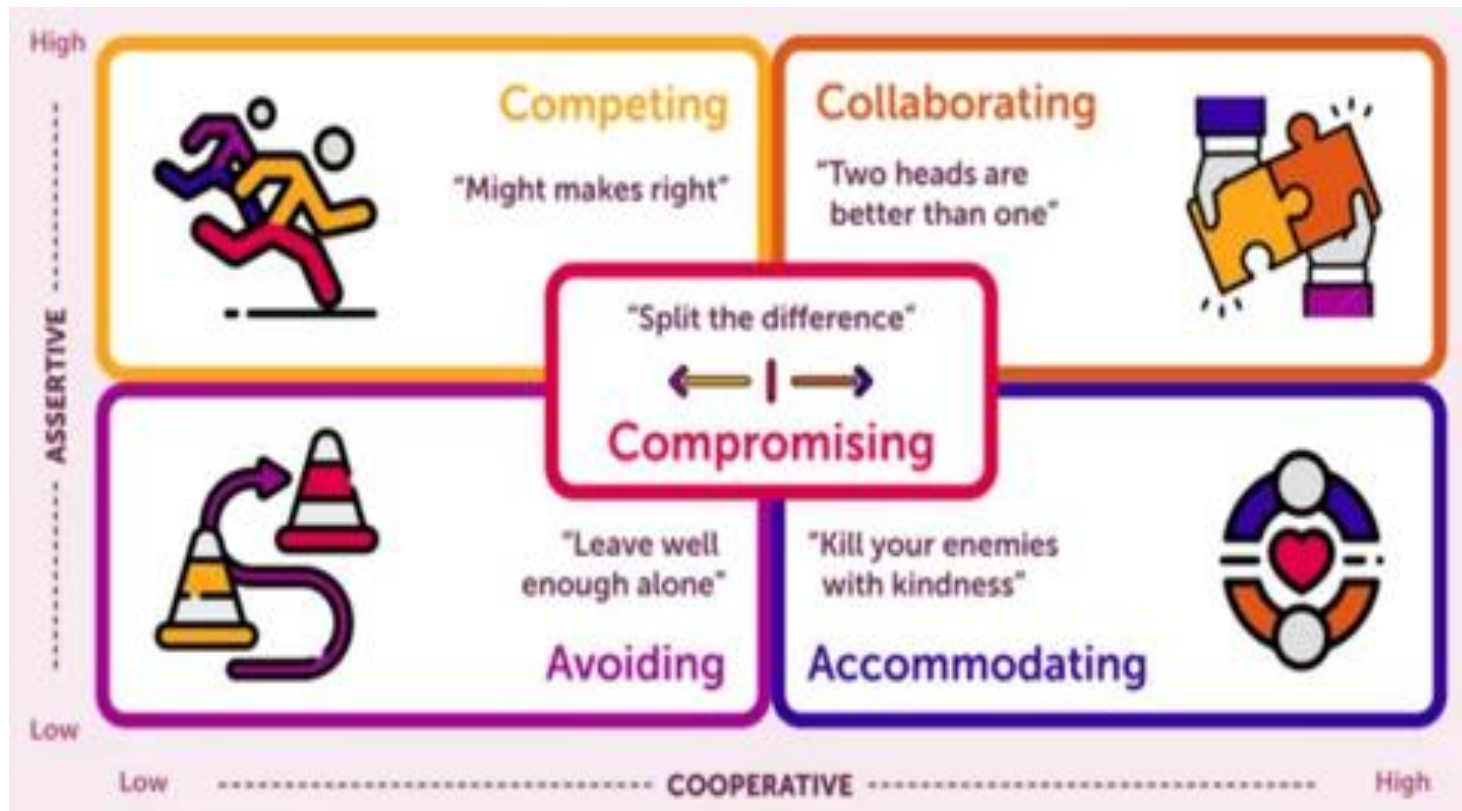
3 Managing interpersonal conflict in organizations

In fact, all these responses build a defensive climate characterised by the qualities of evaluating and criticising other group members

- exercising control or domination over others
- working on undisclosed agendas
- demonstrating a hostile attitude toward others
- working with a lack of commitment toward the organisation.

4 Modes of conflict resolution

Thomas Kilmann five models of Conflict resolution



4 Modes of conflict resolution

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) 4 is a widely used assessment tool for determining conflict modes. In the 1970s, Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identified five main styles of dealing with conflict that vary in their degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness.

There are five modes of conflict resolution:

- Avoiding,
- Competing,
- Compromising,
- Accommodating
- Collaborating

Understanding these modes may help us identify our predominant individual mode for conflict management. Kilman says that there is no right or wrong mode. There are right and wrong times to use each mode.

Each of these modes can be characterised by two scales:

- Assertiveness
- Cooperation.

4 Modes of conflict resolution

Avoidance

Avoidance is a lose-lose approach to conflict management. The avoiding mode is low on assertiveness and low on cooperation. Many times, people avoid conflicts out of fear of engaging in a conflict or because of lack of confidence in their conflict management skills.

However, avoiding mode is appropriate when:

- the issue is not significant
- there is need to reduce tensions
- one has to buy some time
- one is not powerful enough



4 Modes of conflict resolution

Competition

It represents a win-lose mode and involves approaching conflicts with a dominating mindset. The competing conflict mode is high on assertiveness and low on cooperation.

Competition mode is appropriate when:

- other approaches have failed
- quick action needs to be taken
- unpopular issues, decisions or changes need to be implemented
- vital issues must be handled
- one is protecting self-interests



4 Modes of conflict resolution

Accommodation

Accommodation is a lose-win mode and involves approaching conflict management with a more yielding mindset. The accommodating mode is low on assertiveness and high on cooperation.

Accommodating mode is appropriate:

- to show reasonableness
- to improve performance
- to create goodwill to protect a relationship

Some people use the accommodating mode when the issue or outcome is of low importance to them.



4 Modes of conflict resolution

Compromise

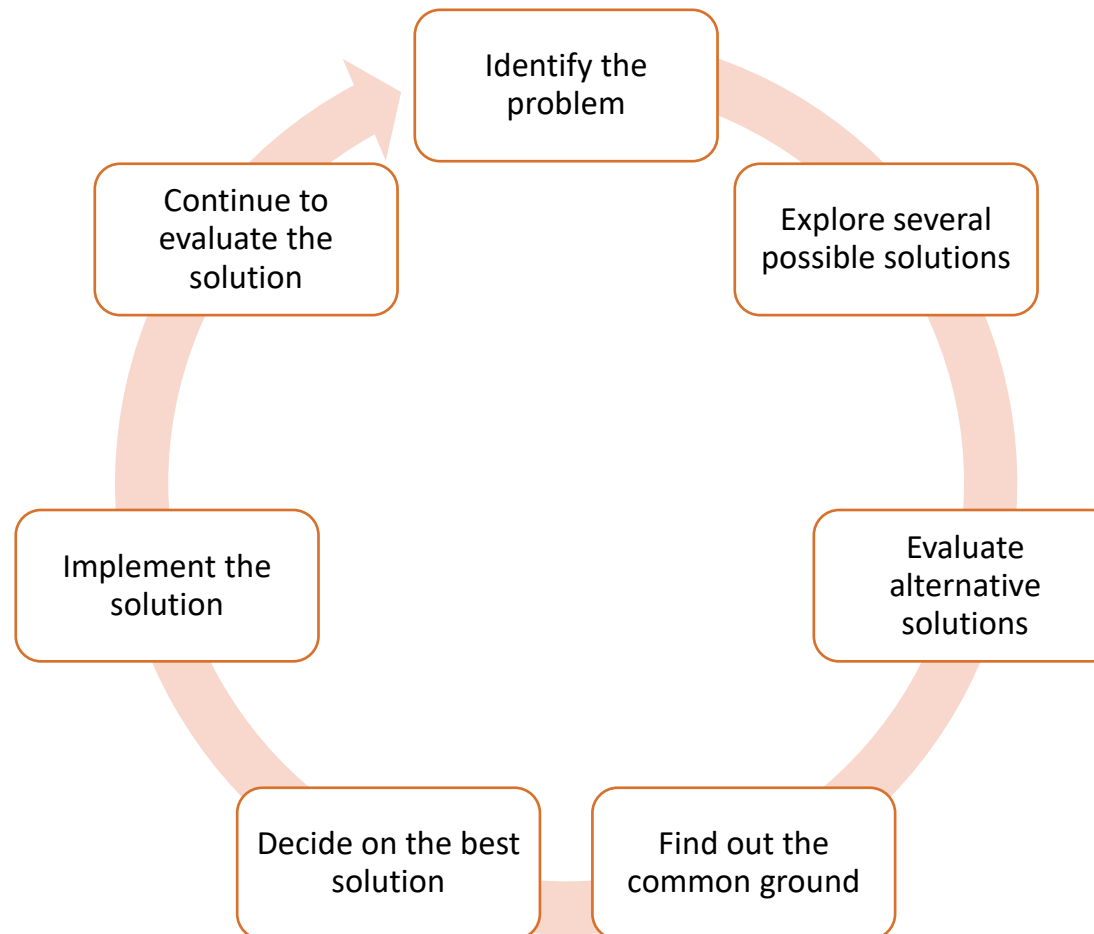
This mode is effective when both the parties are willing to give and take, in order to manage the conflicts. The compromising mode is moderate on assertiveness and moderate on cooperation. Some people define compromise as 'giving up more than you want', while others see compromise as both parties winning.

Compromising mode is appropriate when:

- issue is of moderate importance
- common ground can be found and power is not an issue
- when a difficult situation must have a conclusion
- there is a strong commitment for resolution
- the personal relationships need to be maintained



5 Constructive ways to approach a conflict



5 Constructive ways to approach a conflict

1. Identify the Problem

The first step is to have a dialogue with the other party. This helps understand both the perspectives. It is important to identify what one expects and to listen to what the other person wants.

2. Explore Several Possible Solutions

This is the brainstorming phase. Ask gentle, probing questions about what the other person is thinking and feeling. Encourage the other to talk fully about what is there in the person's mind. Draw the shared goals and generate a list of as many ideas as possible for solving the problem.

3. Evaluate Alternative Solutions

Now go through the list of alternative solutions to the problem, one by one. Consider the pros and cons of the remaining solutions until the list is narrowed down to one or two of the best ways of handling the problem.

5 Constructive ways to approach a conflict

4. Find out the Common Ground

If people have a common ground, working together to reach it can be less troublesome. Determine what is really expected and try to determine what the other person is looking for. Use this information to align the desired outcome with theirs.

5. Decide on the Best Solution

Select the solution that seems mutually acceptable, even if it is not perfect for either party.

6. Implement the Solution

It is important to agree on the details of what each party must do, who is responsible for implementing various parts of the agreement and what to do in case the agreement starts breaking down.

7. Continue to Evaluate the solution

Try to review from time to time how things are going. One's decisions should be seen as open to revision, as long as the revisions are agreed upon mutually.

6 Communication strategies for conflict management

Avoid verbal aggression

Be clear about what needs to be achieved

Use diffusion technique and gather information

Be open

Avoid playing the blame game

Empathise with the person

Involve a third party

7 Benefits of dealing with conflicts

Once we accept that conflict is unavoidable, it no longer is a problem. Dealing professionally with conflict in the workplace benefits not only the individual but also the entire organisation. Those benefits may include the following.

- Development of a stronger relationship among employees as they work in a collaborative manner
- When the conflict is channelised in a positive direction, it prevents the blame game of any sort and helps in improving efficiency and effectiveness
- Conflicts provide an opportunity to think creatively and improve the process of work

The cooperation and interaction of two or more organisations or employees help in achieving better result in comparison to individual works, therefore, conflict helps in developing synergy

By encouraging people to share and learn from their mistakes, the organisation will reap benefits of creative thinking, and this will dramatically improve learning curve of the employees.