



# EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

## Managing Conflict Across Different Teams

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### Overview

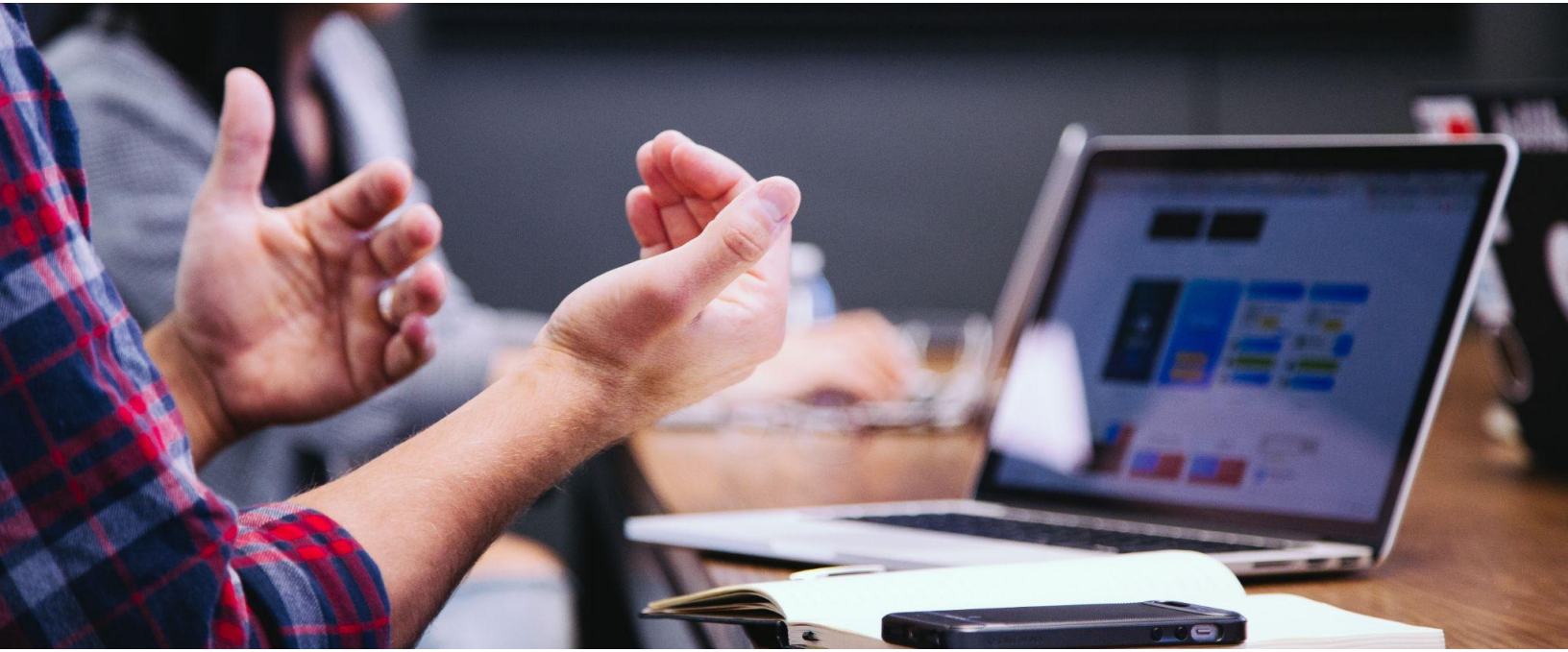
Conflict is an inevitable part of working in teams. When individuals with different backgrounds, perspectives, and work styles come together, conflicts can arise due to differing opinions, priorities, or approaches. In a team setting, conflict refers to a clash or disagreement between team members that hinders collaboration and undermines team performance.

Managing conflict effectively is crucial for maintaining a healthy and productive team environment. Instead of avoiding or suppressing conflicts, leaders should recognize them as opportunities for growth and improvement. By addressing conflicts proactively and finding constructive solutions, teams can foster stronger relationships, enhance creativity and innovation, and achieve better outcomes.

In the following White Paper, we will explore the nature of team conflict, strategies for preventing and resolving conflicts, and techniques for building a positive team culture that embraces and manages conflict in a constructive manner. By the end of this paper, you will have valuable insights and practical tools to navigate and manage conflicts across different teams.

### In This White Paper

- Understanding the Nature of Team Conflict
- Strategies for Preventing Conflict
- Resolving Conflict within Teams
- Managing Conflict Between Different Teams
- Building a Positive and Collaborative Team Culture



## Understanding the Nature of Team Conflict

### A. Types and causes of conflict in teams

Conflict in teams can arise from various sources and manifest in different ways. It's essential to understand the common types and causes of conflict to effectively address and manage them. Here are a few types of conflicts commonly observed in teams:

- 1. Task-related conflict:** This type of conflict emerges from differences in goals, priorities, or approaches to completing tasks or projects. It often stems from varying work styles, perspectives, or expectations.
- 2. Relationship conflict:** Relationship conflicts are personal conflicts that arise from interpersonal dynamics, differing personalities, or clashes in values or communication styles. It can hinder effective collaboration and create tension within the team.
- 3. Process conflict:** Process conflicts occur when team members disagree on the procedures, rules, or decision-making processes within the team. It often involves disputes about roles, responsibilities, or resource allocation.
- 4. Cultural or diversity conflict:** In diverse teams, conflicts may arise due to cultural differences, varying perspectives, or biases. These conflicts require sensitivity and cultural understanding to navigate effectively.

While the causes of conflicts can be diverse, some common factors include miscommunication, differing goals or expectations, competition for resources or recognition, and unresolved past issues. Understanding the specific types and causes of conflict in your team can help you tailor your conflict management strategies accordingly.

### B. Impact of unmanaged conflict on team performance

Unmanaged conflict can have detrimental effects on team performance and overall productivity. Here are some potential consequences of unresolved conflicts:

**1. Decreased productivity:** Conflict can divert team members' focus and energy away from their tasks, resulting in reduced productivity and efficiency. It can lead to delays, missed deadlines, and decreased overall output.

**2. Poor collaboration and communication:** Unresolved conflict can create barriers to effective collaboration and communication within the team. It can erode trust, hinder information sharing, and impede teamwork.

**3. Increased stress and employee dissatisfaction:** Prolonged conflicts can create a stressful work environment, leading to decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover. It can negatively impact morale and employee well-being.

**4. Negative team dynamics:** Unmanaged conflict can foster a toxic team culture characterized by animosity, cliques, and a lack of cohesion. It can fracture relationships and create divisions within the team.

### SUMMARY

Recognizing the potential impact of unmanaged conflict underscores the importance of proactive conflict management strategies. By addressing conflicts early, promoting open communication, and fostering a positive team culture, leaders can mitigate the negative consequences and harness conflict for constructive outcomes.

## Strategies for Preventing Conflict

### A. Establishing clear expectations and team norms

One of the key ways to prevent conflict within teams is to establish clear expectations and team norms from the outset. When team members have a shared understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations, it minimizes the potential for misunderstandings and conflicts. Here are some strategies for establishing clear expectations:

**1. Define roles and responsibilities:** Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each team member to avoid overlapping tasks or confusion about who is accountable for what. This clarity helps set clear boundaries and prevents conflicts arising from ambiguity.

**2. Set team goals and objectives:** Collaboratively establish team goals and objectives to align everyone's efforts towards a common purpose. Clear goals provide a sense of direction and focus, reducing potential conflicts stemming from conflicting priorities.

**3. Establish team norms and values:** Work together with the team to define a set of shared values and behavioral norms that guide how team members interact with one another. These norms can include principles like respect, open communication, and collaboration, fostering a positive team environment.

### B. Encouraging open and effective communication

Open and effective communication is vital for preventing conflicts and resolving any issues that may arise. Here are some strategies to encourage healthy communication within your team:

**1. Foster a culture of open dialogue:** Create a safe and supportive environment where team members feel comfortable expressing their opinions, concerns, and ideas. Encourage active listening and open-mindedness to promote effective communication.

**2. Promote regular team meetings:** Schedule regular team meetings to provide a platform for open discussions, updates, and feedback. These meetings allow team members to address any issues early on and maintain alignment.

**3. Encourage constructive feedback:** Encourage team members to provide constructive feedback to one another, focusing on specific behaviors or situations rather than personal attacks. Constructive feedback helps address potential conflicts before they escalate.

**4. Utilize technology for communication:** Leverage technology tools such as project management platforms, instant messaging apps, or video conferencing tools to facilitate communication, especially in remote or distributed teams. These tools enable real-time collaboration and help bridge communication gaps.

## SUMMARY

By establishing clear expectations and team norms, and fostering open and effective communication, leaders can lay the groundwork for preventing conflicts. These proactive strategies create a supportive team environment where conflicts are minimized, and issues are addressed in a timely and constructive manner.

## Resolving Conflict within Teams

### A. Techniques for addressing conflicts between team members

Conflict is inevitable within teams, but it's essential to address and resolve conflicts promptly to maintain a healthy team dynamic. Here are some techniques for addressing conflicts between team members:

- 1. Encourage open dialogue:** Create a safe space for team members to openly express their concerns and perspectives. Encourage active listening and promote a non-judgmental atmosphere where everyone's opinions are valued.
- 2. Foster empathy and understanding:** Encourage team members to put themselves in each other's shoes and consider different viewpoints. This empathy helps build understanding and promotes constructive problem-solving rather than escalating conflicts.
- 3. Practice effective communication:** Encourage team members to communicate their concerns using "I" statements and focus on the specific issue at hand. This approach helps prevent blaming or accusing language, fostering a more constructive discussion.
- 4. Seek common ground:** Identify shared goals or interests among conflicting parties and emphasize those points of agreement. Finding common ground helps shift the focus from differences to areas where collaboration is possible.

### B. Mediation and conflict resolution strategies

In some cases, conflicts may require external intervention or a mediator to facilitate the resolution process. Here are some conflict resolution strategies to consider:

- 1. Mediation:** Engage a neutral third party, such as a trained mediator, to facilitate a discussion between conflicting parties. The mediator helps guide the conversation and assists in finding mutually acceptable solutions.
- 2. Negotiation:** Encourage conflicting parties to engage in negotiations to find a compromise that satisfies everyone's interests. This approach requires active listening, flexibility, and a willingness to explore alternative solutions.
- 3. Collaborative problem-solving:** Encourage conflicting parties to work together to identify the root causes of the conflict and collaboratively find solutions. This approach promotes teamwork and fosters a sense of ownership and accountability.
- 4. Establish conflict resolution processes:** Implement a formal conflict resolution process within the team or organization. This process can include clear guidelines on how conflicts should be reported, assessed, and resolved, ensuring consistency and fairness.

## SUMMARY

By addressing conflicts directly and implementing appropriate conflict resolution techniques, leaders can foster a culture of open communication and collaboration within their teams. Resolving conflicts in a timely and effective manner helps maintain a positive team dynamic, improves productivity, and strengthens relationships among team members.

## Managing Conflict Between Different Teams

### A. Approaches for handling conflicts between different teams or departments

Conflict between different teams or departments can arise due to differences in goals, priorities, or communication breakdowns. Here are some approaches for effectively managing conflicts between different teams:

- 1. Foster a culture of collaboration:** Encourage teams to work together towards a common organizational goal. Promote the understanding that success is interconnected and that collaboration and cooperation are vital for overall success.
- 2. Establish clear communication channels:** Ensure there are clear communication channels in place between teams to facilitate effective information sharing and coordination. Encourage open and transparent communication to prevent misunderstandings and address issues promptly.
- 3. Encourage cross-functional collaboration:** Create opportunities for teams from different departments to collaborate on projects or initiatives. This fosters understanding, empathy, and a shared sense of purpose, reducing the likelihood of conflicts.
- 4. Facilitate regular team meetings:** Schedule regular meetings involving representatives from different teams or departments. These meetings provide a platform for sharing updates, discussing challenges, and addressing any conflicts or concerns that may arise.

### B. Collaboration and coordination strategies

To effectively manage conflicts between different teams, it's crucial to promote collaboration and coordination. Here are some strategies to enhance collaboration and coordination between teams:

- 1. Clearly define roles and responsibilities:** Ensure that each team has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Clarify how teams interact and rely on each other to achieve common goals, reducing the potential for conflicts caused by ambiguity or overlaps.
- 2. Encourage cross-team problem-solving:** When conflicts arise, encourage representatives from each team to come together and collaboratively identify the underlying issues and possible solutions. This approach allows for diverse perspectives and promotes collective problem-solving.
- 3. Implement shared performance metrics:** Establish shared performance metrics that encourage interdependence and collaboration between teams. When teams are evaluated based on collective goals and outcomes, it fosters a sense of shared accountability and reduces conflicts rooted in individualistic thinking.
- 4. Provide mediation and facilitation support:** If conflicts between teams escalate or become challenging to resolve, consider bringing in a neutral mediator or facilitator to help navigate the discussions. This external perspective can assist in finding common ground and facilitating productive dialogue.

## SUMMARY

By adopting these approaches and strategies, leaders can effectively manage conflicts between different teams or departments. Encouraging collaboration, establishing clear communication channels, and promoting a sense of shared purpose are key to resolving conflicts and fostering a harmonious working environment.

## Building a Positive and Collaborative Team Culture

### A. Promoting trust and psychological safety

**1. Lead by example:** As a leader, demonstrate trustworthiness and integrity in your actions and decisions. This sets the tone for a culture of trust within the team. Be transparent, communicate openly, and follow through on commitments.

**2. Encourage open communication:** Create an environment where team members feel safe to express their opinions and concerns without fear of judgment or reprisal. Actively listen to their ideas, provide constructive feedback, and value diverse perspectives.

**3. Foster collaboration over competition:** Encourage a collaborative mindset rather than a competitive one. Emphasize that the team's success is everyone's success and promote a supportive and cooperative work environment.

### B. Strengthening relationships and fostering empathy

**1. Promote team-building activities:** Organize team-building activities that allow team members to connect on a personal level and build stronger relationships. This could include team lunches, off-site retreats, or social events where colleagues can interact in a relaxed and informal setting.

**2. Foster empathy and understanding:** Encourage team members to develop empathy and understanding towards each other. This involves actively listening to others' perspectives, considering different viewpoints, and appreciating the diverse backgrounds and experiences within the team.

**3. Encourage peer support and recognition:** Create opportunities for team members to support and recognize each other's contributions. Encouraging a culture of peer recognition boosts morale, strengthens relationships, and reinforces a sense of unity within the team.

**4. Provide professional development opportunities:** Invest in the growth and development of team members by offering training programs, workshops, or coaching sessions. This not only enhances their skills but also demonstrates your commitment to their professional growth, fostering a positive and collaborative culture.

## SUMMARY

By prioritizing trust, psychological safety, and empathy within the team, leaders can build a positive and collaborative team culture. When team members feel supported, valued, and connected, they are more likely to work together effectively, resolve conflicts constructively, and achieve shared goals. Remember, a strong team culture is the foundation for successful conflict management and overall team performance.

## How to Prioritize Effectively as a Leader Conclusion

Managing conflict across different teams is a critical aspect of effective leadership. By understanding the nature of team conflict, implementing strategies for prevention, and resolving conflicts constructively, leaders can foster a positive and collaborative team culture. Building trust, promoting open communication, and strengthening relationships are key elements in managing conflicts within and between teams.

Conflict, when managed effectively, can lead to growth, innovation, and improved team dynamics. It provides an opportunity for teams to learn, adapt, and find creative solutions. By promoting a culture of trust, psychological safety, and empathy, leaders create an environment where team members feel supported and valued. This enables them to navigate conflicts with respect and understanding, resulting in stronger relationships and increased productivity.

Successful conflict management also requires collaboration and coordination between different teams or departments. By encouraging collaboration, breaking down silos, and fostering a shared sense of purpose, leaders can minimize conflicts that arise due to inter-team dynamics. Effective communication, joint problem-solving, and a focus on the bigger organizational goals are crucial in managing conflicts between teams.

Ultimately, a positive and collaborative team culture not only enhances conflict management but also contributes to overall team performance and organizational success. It is the responsibility of leaders to create an environment where team members can thrive, contribute their best, and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner. By investing in building a strong team culture, leaders pave the way for successful conflict resolution, improved collaboration, and sustained growth.

In conclusion, managing conflict across different teams requires proactive leadership, effective communication, and a commitment to building a positive team culture. By understanding the nature of conflict, implementing preventive strategies, resolving conflicts constructively, and fostering collaboration, leaders can navigate conflicts successfully and create an environment where teams can thrive and achieve their fullest potential.





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