

GUIDELINES FOR NEGOTIATION & CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. Definition of Conflict:

- Conflict is “an expresses struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.” (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998)
- Conflicts exist whenever incompatible activities occur. (McGraw-Hill, 2001)
- A moderate level of conflict across tasks within a group resulted in increased group performance while conflict among personalities resulted in lower group performance. (Peterson & Behfar, 2003)

2. Recognizing conflict is the first step toward addressing it. Conflict can occur in several levels within partnership:

- Between the coalition and its members over issues such as expectations and priorities
- Between the coalition members themselves around the turf, funds, or credit
- Between the coalition representatives and their own organizations

3. Type of conflict in partnership:

- Power
- Autonomy and accountability
- Unity and diversity
- Mixed loyalty
- Viewing the coalition as a mean or as a model
- Goals and strategies

- Division of labor
- Interpersonal conflict
- Underlying causes of conflict

4. Typical type of negotiation in partnership

- Between the coalition members themselves around the turf, funds or credit
- Between the coalition representatives and their own organizations
 - Around commitments, resources utilization, and authority

5. Guidelines for conflict management

- Always define the issue as shared.
 - For example, say “we do not agree about the division of labour and don’t say “Azmi refuses to do his share of the work”
- Don’t polarize the conflicting positions by posting conflict in terms of mutually exclusive positions.
 - For example, say “we need to figure out how to reach the most people in the shortest time” not “Azman wants to go door to door, but Ali thinks doing a mailing will be better”
- Allow time to resolve conflict. If normal meeting discussion doesn’t seem sufficient to work out a conflict, set up a special, structured process for dealing with it.
- Points to remember:
 - Preserve the dignity and self-respect of all stakeholders
 - Listen with empathy
 - Disagree with ideas, not with people. Don’t accuse or blame. No personal attack

6. General approaches to dealing with conflict

- There are several general strategies that can help resolve conflicts:

- Using gripe boards, special feedback meetings, or retreat to help people vent feelings, raise questions and clarify issues.
- Finding areas of agreement and opportunities for cooperation and collaboration
- Focusing on common ground and playing down differences
- Arranging opportunities for the organizations involved to talk about their differences, remove misunderstanding, exchange information, and build relationships
- Helping members to recognize the conflict and to express the reasoning behind conflicting opinions and alternatives
- Deciding in advance on criteria for decisions, and using this criteria as a basis for conflict resolution
- Discussing acceptable and unacceptable aspects of each position or solution
- Breaking down broader conflicts into manageable elements and obtaining agreement incrementally
- Working with facilitators or third party mediators who help create a safe environment, provide information, suggest processes for resolving conflicts, make sure each side is formally resolve issues themselves

7. The conflict resolution process

- Diagnose
 - Clarify critical issues
 - Identify stakeholders and their approaches to conflict
 - Assess likely sources of disagreement
- Plan/strategize
 - Put together your information
 - Recognize the conflict behavior
 - Practice

- Implement the process
 - Set the tone
 - Encourage dialogue
 - Reach agreement
 - Document agreements
- Evaluate the outcome
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen solution
 - Follow up

8. Condition that should exist before problem solving

- The issue or conflict must be perceived/presented as a shared problem. All parties should recognize their common interests and need for cooperation. There should be an understanding that everyone involved is part of the problem and there is no right or wrong perspective
- People should know something about the problem solving process, with its consensus decision-making approach. Make sure they want to go through the process, and agree to abide by the decision or solutions reached
- All participants should enter the process with equal power, information, and support. This process does not work if one party is a scapegoat, or someone holds all the power to influence the outcome.
- Despite differences of opinion, there should be trust and good faith between the parties. Participants should agree to talk honestly about the problem and take process seriously.
- Develop the ground rules, agenda, and process that will be used.
- Allow enough time to go through the whole process. Do some pre-meeting planning, or start the process by giving participants questions or tasks in advance.

- Key points
 - Conflict is inherent in partnerships
 - It is useful to recognize different types of conflict and conflict behavior
 - Expression and negotiation of conflicts is healthy coalition behavior
 - There are various approaches to prevent, minimize and resolve conflict

9. The art of Professional communication

- Effects of poor communication skills – Walton et al 1980 –
 - Missed/wrong diagnosis
 - Rejected/wrong treatment & advice
 - Patient dissatisfaction
 - Complain/litigation
 - Economic cost
 - Patient seek alternative medicine
 - Human cost misery/death
- Three important exchanges in human communication
 - An exchange of information
 - Listening
 - The art of listening
 - L → Lead, don't follow – anticipate what's going to be said
 - I → Ideas, find them
 - S → Signals, watch for them
 - T → Tuned in (focus) and do not wander
 - E → Empathized activeness, not passive involvement
 - N → Notes, take them – organize
 - Techniques for good listening

- Maintain good eye contact
- Signals that you are listening by nodding
- Avoids raising irrelevant issues
- Restates the speaker's remarks from time to time
- Asks relevant questions to encourage the speaker
- Uses positive facial expression & body language
- Avoids interrupting when the speaker pauses for thought
- Interaction
 - Interaction helps in creating bonds between members
 - When we understand people, we open the doors for creative solutions and third alternatives. Our differences are no longer stumbling blocks for communication and progress. Instead they become the stepping stones for teamwork.
- Communication skills
 - In working life, you will have to interact with a large number of people on daily basis. To interact well, you will need to develop good communication skills
 - A good communicator speaks and listens well. He is sensitive to different situations, is able to understand and is always polite and respectful.
- Techniques for good speaking
 - Maintains good eye contact with the listener
 - Makes clear, precise and well organized arguments
 - Listens carefully to questions and answers them positively
 - Uses appropriate language and avoids jargon
 - Uses appropriate non-verbal behaviors

- Clarifies and summaries arguments as the discussion progresses
 - Is assertive and positive but no aggressive
- Observing
- Questioning/responding
 - Information retrieval/questioning
 - Limit amount of information asked
 - Start with the important facts first
 - Stress the importance of the information sought to student's needs
 - Avoid Jargon
 - Relate questions clearly to the topic at hand
 - Use repetition/paraphrase for emphasis
 - Make instructions specific, behavioral and measurable
 - Tolerate silence to a certain extent
- An exchange of emotion
 - Empathy
 - Respect
 - Warmth
 - Concreteness
 - Genuineness
 - Self disclosure
 - Commitment
- An exchange of meaning
 - Understanding of experiences
 - Discussing current expectations
 - Respect differences in viewpoints
 - Qualities of a good feedback provider
 - Pleasant
 - Confident

- Relaxed
- Patient
- Knowledgeable
- Encouraging
- Non-judgmental
- Empathic
- Trustworthy
- Genuine
- Ground rules on providing feedback
 - DO's
 - Give immediate and frequent feedback
 - Allow student to evaluate him/herself prior to your own feedback
 - Focus on the positive followed by negative points
 - Be specific, succinct, objective and clear on point of fault for improvement (use checklists, likert-scales, etc)
 - Always be supportive and sincere
 - DON'Ts
 - Be judgmental
 - Put down student in front of others
 - Preach or demoralized student on mistakes made
 - Over talk and under listen
 - Use feedback to your own advantage e.g. faculty votes, etc
 - Make use of formative feedback as basis for formal exams, scores