



O-CITY PROJECT

MODULE IV.1 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



Erasmus+

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1. Lesson Document

Lesson 4 Topic 6 Collaborate with others

Conflict resolution

Introduction

A good collaboration, where all members share the same sense of responsibility, participate, and contribute to the common objectives defined for the team, is the best way of preventing conflicts.

However, and despite those efforts, conflict cannot be avoided. A conflict arises when there is an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles ([Cambridge Dictionary](#)). The disagreement may be emotional or personal, methodological, cultural, political, or even financial. In any case, when a dispute arises, an action is needed to resolve it.

Once this lesson is completed and approved, learners will be able to:

1. Identify the reasons of the conflict.
2. Research solutions to resolve the conflict.
3. Handle the conflict.

In this lesson, we will learn about different strategies for conflict resolution as well as the different steps to resolve a conflict.

1. **Origins of the conflict**

Conflicts occur when people disagree, creating a situation in which one or both parties perceive a threat (real or not). It can be individual or involve groups of opposite interests, among co-workers, students / teachers, supervisors / subordinates, providers/customers, different departments of the same organisation, or even in a sentimental relationship, youth / elders, etc.

The causes of conflict can be multiple, the conflict is generally motivated by a difference over values, perceptions, motivations, ideas or even desires. Also, it is good to identify the cause of the conflict, as a basis for its resolution. A generic “I

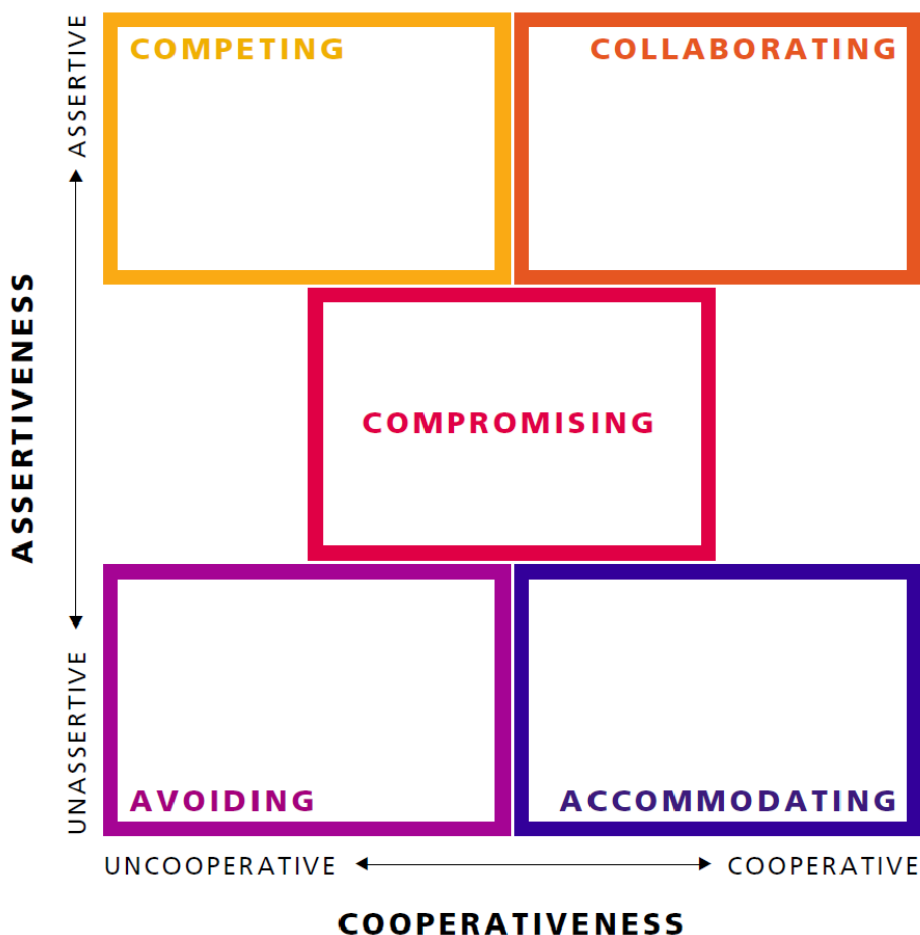
don't like this person/group" won't help in finding a solution, and might result in a broken dialogue, end of a collaboration, decreased profit, for both parts.

The conflict starts with a recognition by the parties involved that there is a disagreement creating a conflictual situation to be solved.

The conflict resolution starts when there is a desire from the parties involved to address the issue faced and find a solution to end it.

2. Our preliminary approach of a conflict: the five conflict-Handling Modes

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) shows the main behaviours that people tend to have while facing a conflict, according to 2 basic dimensions: the level of assertiveness and the level of cooperativeness, referring to the priority given to own concerns or other person's concerns, respectively.



Source: https://kilmanniagnostics.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/TKI_Sample_Report.pdf

- Competing

This is a power-oriented mode. People put their own concerns above the common interest. It means that one stands for his rights or beliefs and tries to win.

- Collaborating

Collaborating is an attempt to work with others to find a solution that will fully satisfy both concerns.

- Compromising

The compromise is an intermediate solution, which will be acceptable for both parties, by splitting differences and making concessions for a middle-ground position.

- Avoiding

Avoiding the conflict means not addressing it, just ignoring that it exists, postponing the solution.

- Accommodating

When someone accommodates a conflict, it means that he accepts a situation, in a kind of self-sacrifice, that goes against his concerns.

What is important to know is that we tend to respond to a conflict based on our perceptions of the situation, which is not necessarily objective, but rather influenced by emotions and life experiences, culture, and background. While looking for a solution, we will thus need to work with emotional intelligence skills (topic 3) that will help us to better understand the situation and seek a suitable answer.

3. Step by step conflict resolution

We already mentioned the first step toward conflict resolution: the identification of a conflict. Conflict resolution can be presented as a process which can be divided in a logical sequence of actions to be followed step by step until we reach a solution.

- Recognition of the problem

Conflict resolution necessarily involves 2 or more parties. Also, all parties involved in the conflict must recognise the conflict before it is possible to engage in a resolution process. For instance, if one party avoids the conflict, it will make it more difficult to find a solution.

- Willingness to address the conflict

The disagreement also needs a mutual agreement from the parties about the need to be addressed to find a solution. Again, if one party accommodates the conflict, then, the conflict resolution process cannot apply.

- Mutual understanding of the problem

Then, the different parties involved should express the problem from their perspective and make an effort to understand the problem seen from the perspective of others, with their own concerns and patterns that differ from their own.

- Identify the triggers

While making this effort of conceptualisation and description of the conflict, it is important to detect the triggers to the episodes of conflict and the deeper reason behind it, elements on which the solution should focus.

- Search for solution

Then, the parties involved, eventually supported by a third party, should seek for solutions. This includes the identification of possible changes in attitudes and behaviours from both sides, but can also include practical / technical elements or solutions, for instance increasing resources for a project, acquisition of material, etc.

- Agreement on a plan

The conflict will not be solved unless the solution is implemented. Also, while negotiating the solutions, parties should make sure to agree on a plan for its implementation, with deadlines and follow-up measures.

- Monitoring the impact

A good practice is to perform a regular follow-up of the conflict ended through the conflict resolution process, to avoid reminiscences and new arising conflicts.



Source: <https://unsplash.com/photos/xy0JBTQIRuY>

4. Some tools to be used for conflict resolution.

In the following section, we will list some tools that can be used for conflict resolution, especially for the steps of analyse of the situation, searching for solution and implementation of action.

- Activating active listening and emotional intelligence skills

The most basic and efficient tool for conflict resolution process success will be the use by parties engaged of their soft skills that better the mutual understanding, starting with active listening, but also empathy and assertiveness. Activating those skills will enable a better dialogue and enhance the emergence of solutions.

- Facilitation

Facilitators are tools that will help people in the process of discussion and finding agreements. It can be the creation of specific working groups that will intend to find a solution to the issue, or implementation of tools aimed at fostering dialogue such as focus groups, brainstorming session, team building activities, etc.

- Mediation

In cases where the conflict gets stuck and parties are not able to find agreements, a solution might be asking for a mediator. Mediation consists in requesting a third party, considered as neutral by both parties engaged in the conflict, to act as referee. This referee will thus have the duty to find a compromise that both sides will commit to apply.

- Creative problem solving

Conflict resolution can go through creative problem-solving methods, which are particularly adapted for this kind of exercise. For this, we invite you to refer to our course on creativity (Course IV.2)

Conclusions

Conflicts, when effectively managed, are an opportunity for growth. It will enable people to build long-term relationships based on trust, in a context where individuals feel secure because they know that the relationship will survive eventual new disagreements or challenges.

Bibliography

TKI conflict resolution modes: <https://kilmanndiagnostics.com/>
Template: https://kilmanndiagnostics.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/TKI_Sample_Report.pdf