




Conflict Management

The Holy Grail for Board Effectiveness

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It May Seem Odd, But...

- Not all conflict is bad nor is the absence of conflict always good.
- Boards that get along all the time are not necessarily the most effective boards. Neither are boards that are embroiled in conflict.



What is Conflict?

- A Disagreement
- It Can be Constructive
 - It's Necessary for our Best Ideas
- It Can be Destructive
 - Too Little or Too Much can be Destructive
- aka Functional and Dysfunctional



Groupthink: Too Little Conflict

- Not Sharing Ideas to Avoid Conflict
- Abilene Paradox
 - “Are we going to Abilene?”



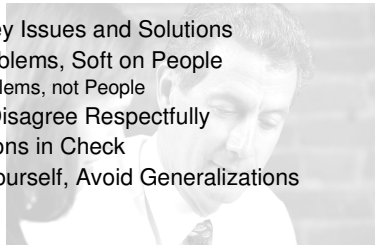
Functional Conflict

- Professional disagreements on policy and other official duties (substantive issues)
- Professional, not Personal
 - Attack Problems, Not People
- Being Open/Honest in Respectful Manner.
- A Key to Effective Teams



Functional Conflict Management

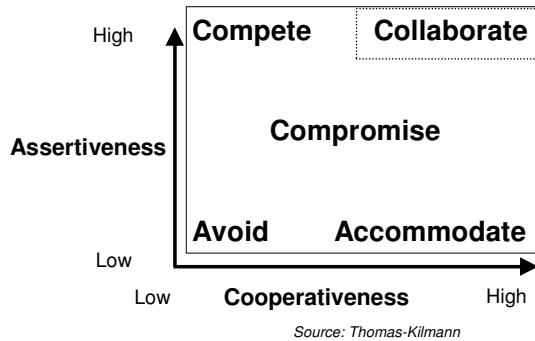
- An Ounce of Prevention ...
- Member Education & Ground Rules
- For Example:
 - Focus on Key Issues and Solutions
 - Hard on Problems, Soft on People
 - Attack Problems, not People
 - Listen and Disagree Respectfully
 - Keep Emotions in Check
 - Speak for Yourself, Avoid Generalizations



Dysfunctional Conflict

- **Too Little or Too Much Conflict**
- **Often Personal**
 - Anger, distrust, dislike, lack of respect, etc.
- **Can Be Professional (Substantive)**
 - Quarrel over tasks, goals, policies, etc.
- May stem from role uncertainty, not buying into the team, competing interests, or personal style (win-lose).

Conflict Styles



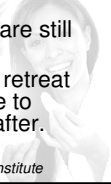
Styles for Dealing with Conflict

- **Avoid:** stay neutral at all costs.
- **Accommodate:** smooth over.
- **Compete:** one wins, one loses.
- **Compromise:** each wins and loses.
- **Collaborate:** not my way or your way, but a better way; problem solve and work through differences so all win. (Optimum)

Jack, Jill & the Orange

- **Avoid:** Jack does not like to argue with Jill so gives Jill the orange even though he wants it.
- **Accommodate:** Jack has bad day so Jill gives him the orange, even though she wants it.
- **Compete:** Jill takes the orange since she has been accommodating Jack far too long and now is in touch with her own needs.
- **Compromise:** they split the orange but are still hungry.
- **Collaborate:** After honest discussion at retreat about their need for oranges, they decide to plant an orange tree & live happily ever after.

Source: Iowa Peace Institute

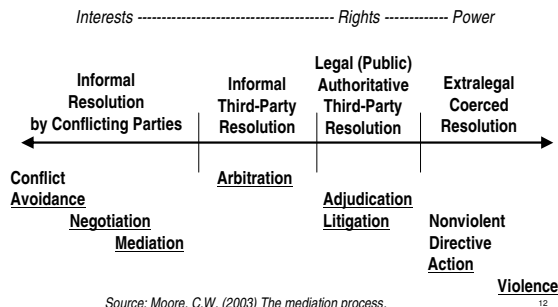


Ways Conflict is Resolved

- **Interests**
 - parties decide through mutual agreement using negotiation or assisted negotiation.
- **Rights**
 - third party decides within the legal system (adjudication, litigation).
- **Power**
 - one party uses force, threats, or commands.

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Continuum of Conflict Mgt Approaches



Private Resolution Options

- Voluntary and Private
- Negotiation – 2 Parties Handle It.
- Mediation – Third Party Facilitator. May Suggest but not Impose a Resolution.
- Arbitration – Third Party Imposes a Resolution.
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)



Public Resolution Options

- Public, Legal, Win-Lose
- Adjudication – Lawyers Argue in Front of a Judge Who Makes the Decision
- Litigation – Judge and Jury; Lawsuit.



- & Extralegal Coercion – Imposing a Resolution with Sanctions, Threats, or Force.

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Conflict Resolution

- **Decide if a Resolution is Actually Needed**
 - No Molehills but Posthaste for Potential Mountains.
- **Decide on Resolution Option (Negotiation, etc.)**
- **Use the Appropriate Style**
 - Collaboration is Optimum, but Others May Work.
- **Be Open About Problems, Focus on Solutions**
- **Focus on the Greater Good**
- **Think Improvement, not Perfection**
 - "Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." ... Saint Francis of Assisi

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Board Chair as Conflict Manager

- **Board Member Conflict**

- Encourage Resolution Outside Boardroom
- Private Meeting & Shuttle Diplomacy
- For Quorum of Members, all Invited
- Report back on resolution

- **Board and Staff Conflict**

- Follow Bylaws

- **Board and Executive Conflict**

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Your Experience and Wisdom

- Board Member Conflict
- Board and Staff Conflict
- Board and Executive Conflict



Summary
