

Managing for Maximum Performance
UCSD Extension Business & Technology
Chapter 16 – Managing Conflict and Stress – Spring 07



MANAGING CONFLICT:
Theories and Best Practices at UCSD

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Managing for Maximum Performance
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“

All humans are caught in an
inescapable network of
mutuality, tied in a single
garment of destiny.
Whatever affects one
directly, affects all indirectly.

”

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Letter from Birmingham jail

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“ In its most basic sense,
conflict is inevitable,
the source of all growth and
an absolute necessity if one
is to be alive. ... Adults don't
seem to know how to enter it
with integrity and respect
and some degree of
confidence and hope.

— Jean Baker-Miller
Toward a New Psychology for Women

Conflict, defined:

- What happens when the needs, wants, or goals of one person or group are perceived to be incompatible with or different from the needs, wants, or goals of another person or group.
- *Text:* Overt behavior that results when an individual or group thinks a perceived need or needs have been or are about to be blocked.

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Conflict Is Normal.

- Members of an organization (or employees in a workplace) have different, often opposing goals.
- Differences stimulate creativity, promote innovation, and bring about change.
- Organizations that are devoid of conflict would become apathetic, stagnant, and unresponsive to change.

Managed vs. Out-of-Control Conflict

Managed

- Strengthens relationships and builds teamwork.
- Encourages open communication and cooperative problem-solving.
- Resolves disagreements quickly and increases productivity.
- Deals with real issues and concentrates on win-win resolutions.
- Makes allies, defuses anger.

Out-of-Control

- Damages relationships and discourages cooperation.
- Results in differences and hidden agendas.
- Wastes time, money, and human resources.
- Focuses on fault-finding and blaming.
- Creates enemies, hard feelings, and stress.

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Supervisor's Role

- Employees' first line of recourse when conflict occurs
- Must be perceived to be someone who can be approached and trusted
- Employees are expected to resolve conflict informally using departmental resources, including his or her supervisor, when possible.

What Supervisors Need

To respond to conflict effectively, a supervisor should cultivate the following:

- Fairness
- Active listening skills
- Ability to give objective behavioral feedback
- Commitment to a civil workplace
- Respect for individual differences
- Knowledge of resources available
- Strategies for resolving conflict

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Supervisor's Responsibilities

- Deal evenhandedly with all employees.
- Grant each employee respect and consideration of their needs for a civil and supportive work environment.
- Contribute to a climate of trust and support.
- Avoid creating policies and systems that may cause conflict.

Conflict Management Options

- **Conflict Prevention:** The principals in the conflict, supervisors, or managers take steps to prevent conflict from occurring or recurring.
- **Conflict Control:** The principals in the conflict, with or without the help of a third party, try to decrease the conflict or modify behaviors, even if opposition or differences remain.

Continued ...

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Conflict Management Options, *cont'd*

- **Conflict Resolution:** The principals in the conflict, with or without the help of a third party, eliminate the underlying differences — not each other.
- **Conflict Transcendence:** The principals develop a mind-set to support tolerance.
 - They are empowered by increasing their ability to be effective in a conflict situation.
 - They improve their ability to accept the other person and his or her point of view.

Informal Conflict Resolution

- The University expects supervisors and employees to resolve conflict informally if possible.
- A supervisor must facilitate a dialogue to ...
 - Clear the air
 - Create understanding
 - Restore the working relationship.
- What is possible depends upon the readiness of employees to talk with their supervisor or with one another.

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Are They Ready?

Commitment

- Do those involved have the willingness to talk about the conflict?
- Do they have the confidence that they can be effective in the discussions? Do I?

Competence:

- Do those involved know how to have a constructive dialogue?
- Do they have the skills to be open, direct and honest? Do I?

General Guidelines

- Discuss the issues together or individually.
- Focus on issues, not personalities.
- Encourage employees to speak for themselves.
- Encourage employees to focus on behavior and results.
- Develop an action plan and follow up.
- Maintain objectivity.
- Manage your own emotional state.
- Actively listen.

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Campus Employee Support Services

- Employee Relations
- Faculty and Staff Assistance Program
- Staff Affirmative Action
- Accommodation Counseling & Consulting Services
- Labor Relations
- Office of Sexual Harassment Prevention and Policy
- Worker Compensation
- Policy Development and Quality of Work/Life

Formal Conflict Resolution

When differences cannot be resolved informally, the University provides for a formal review procedure.

If other attempts have failed, it is the right and responsibility of an individual to seek formal resolution without being subjected to reprisal for participating in the grievance and administrative review process.

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