Beyond Conflict

Doug Dunston
doug.dunston@nmt.edu

Except where otherwise noted, the content of this presentation is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.
Avoiding and dealing with conflict

- Generating buy-in to process and avoiding false consensus in groups
- Reframing problems and complaints
- Navigating the built-in dynamics of asking for or offering help (trying to ensure that help is helpful)
- Bridging across different conflict styles
- Finding what else to do when a process isn’t working
- Reducing and suspending judgement
Workshop overview

❖ Why is the conflict (still) there?
❖ Knowing what’s available – the processes
❖ Tools and techniques
Why is the conflict still there?
Ongoing conflict is a system

THE ICEBERG
A Tool for Guiding Systemic Thinking

EVENTS
What just happened?

PATTERNS/TRENDS
What trends have there been over time?

UNDERLYING STRUCTURES
What has influenced the patterns?
What are the relationships between the parts?

MENTAL MODELS
What assumptions, beliefs and values do people hold about the system? What beliefs keep the system in place?

“Two heads will only be better than one if their contents differ.” Scott E. Page

Cognitive diversity

“The art of conversation is the art of hearing as well as of being heard.”

—William Hazlitt
Systems thinking again

Culture <-> Behaviors

Experiences
Who to convince?

“Disputes” involve negotiable interests, while “conflicts” are concerned with issues that are not negotiable, issues that relate to ontological human needs that cannot be compromised.

John Burton, “Conflict resolution as a political philosophy”
Continuum of Conflict Management and Resolution Approaches and Procedures

Private decision making by parties

Conflict avoidance

Informal discussion and problem solving

Private third-party decision making

Negotiation

Mediation

Administrative decision

Arbitration

Legal (public), authoritative third-party decision making

Judicial decision

Legislative decision

Extralegal, coerced decision making

Nonviolent direct action

Violence

Increased coercion, increased likelihood of win-lose outcome

Resilience and capacity building
# Participatory decision-making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core values: Participatory decision making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full participation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• all members encouraged to speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• no one is allowed to dominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• diversity of opinion leads to better decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mutual understanding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• need to understand and accept legitimacy of one another’s goals and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• basic acceptance and understanding is crucial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• diversity of opinion leads to better decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusive solutions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• group is wiser than individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quakers say “Everybody has a piece of the truth”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared responsibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• members feel a strong sense of shared responsibility for decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• feel responsibility for helping to implement decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• diversity of opinion leads to better decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Four types of listening

❖ Downloading – listening for what you already know
❖ Factual listening – for what surprises you
❖ Empathic listening – with empathy for the other's experience
❖ Generative listening – from a deeper source that seems to embrace your truth and theirs

What’s the difference here?

“Yes, and…”

“Yes, but…”
Tools and Techniques
Guidelines for participation

Think about how we conduct ourselves and the quality of our participation:

❖ focus on and listen to the speaker
❖ minimize distractions
❖ reflect: why am I talking? not talking?
❖ participate fully — if I don’t agree, now is the time to speak
❖ differ respectfully
❖ all comments are valuable, so allow space for others to speak
❖ stay open to others’ input
❖ don’t take myself too seriously
We move in the direction of our conversations
Conditional language

The helping relationship

- Helping is a social process
- Status and vulnerability
- Teamwork can be viewed as ongoing, reciprocal helping
- Balcony and dance floor
Possible traps for the helper

❖ Dispensing wisdom prematurely
❖ Meeting defensiveness with more pressure
❖ Accepting the problem and over-reacting to the dependence
❖ Resisting taking on the helper role

What to do when “it” isn’t working

BATNA
Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement

Reducing and suspending judgment

D – Describe

I – Interpret…Now, imagine another interpretation

E – Evaluate
Cultural conflict styles framework

Cultural conflict styles framework

Cultural conflict styles framework

Four-step bridging process

1. Bring your own behavior into awareness
2. Bring the other’s behavior into awareness
3. Suspend judgment
4. Adapt your behavior
Summing up
Identifying scope

Dispute

Conflict

Four approaches

Avoid

Recognize

Cope

Recover
Tools and methods

Bypass soreheads
(Bell curve)

Use conditional language
(Langer’s Mindfulness)

Conversations, problem solving
(Left side of process continuum)

Develop BATNA
(Getting to Yes)

Listen at a higher level
(Scharmer’s Theory U)

Know the processes that are available
(e.g. Mediation)

Develop participation capacity
(Kaner, guidelines, thumbs up)

Be mindful of communication styles
(Hammer’s conflict styles framework)

Reframe along appreciative lines
(Strategic Doing)

Suspend judgment in practical ways
(D-I-E and 4-part bridging technique)
One more...

Invite feedback
Thank you

Doug Dunston – doug.dunston@nmt.edu

Recommended resources:

❖ Strategic Doing – strategicdoing.net