Conflict Management
Skills Workshop
College of Engineering & Applied Science
Administrative Council
August 6, 2012
Agenda

• Introduction
• Personalized Profiles, Group Profile
• Overview of five conflict management styles
• Break
• Solution Building & Finding Common Ground
Why do you care?

- Conflict is a part of life
- Leaders deal with conflict everyday
- Skillful and creative conflict managers foster innovation and greater productivity
I’ve always felt that a person’s intelligence is directly reflected by the number of conflicting points of view he can entertain simultaneously on the same topic.

Abigail Adams, 1744-1818
Workshop Objectives

• Become more aware of conflict styles
• Recognize best uses of each conflict style
• Build skills for reaching effective solutions
Exercise

• What was your favorite class as an undergraduate? Why?
Conflict is . . .

Any situation in which your concerns or desires differ from those of another person.
Understanding Conflict Modes

Two basic aspects of all Conflict-handling modes

Your Conflict Mode = Skill + Situation

The 5 Conflict-Handling Modes
Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

Admin. Council Group Profile

HIGHEST MODE

LOWEST MODE

Total Group TKI Mode Preferences
Competing
“my way or the highway”

Proceed with caution

• When quick, decisive action is required
• When unpopular decisions are needed
• When you are under attack
• When consensus fails
• When people are too considerate
• When you know you’re right
Competing

- **Behavioral Skills Used**
  - Being persuasive
  - Fighting fair
  - Using warnings instead of threats
  - Imposing a decision
  - Using tough love to enforce standards

- **Overuse**
  - Lack of feedback
  - Reduced learning
  - Low empowerment
  - Surrounded by “yes” people

- **Underuse**
  - Influence is restricted
  - Indecision
  - Delayed action
  - Withhold your contributions
Collaborating
“two heads are better than one”

For important issues

- Reconciling interests through win-win solutions
- Learning and merging insights for richer understanding
- When organization needs commitment to a decision
Collaborating

• Behavioral Skills Used
  o Setting the right tone when raising issue
  o Identifying all underlying concerns
  o Brainstorming solutions & picking best
  o Being firm when necessary
  o Collaborating in groups

• Overuse
  o Too much time on trivial matters
  o Diffused responsibility
  o People who take advantage
  o Work overload

• Underuse
  o Lack of commitment
  o Low empowerment
  o Loss of innovation
Compromising
“let’s make a deal & meet halfway”

Pragmatic

- Resolve issues less important, but not vital
- Taking turns bearing small costs
- Back-up when competing or collaborating are not practical
Compromising

• Behavioral Skills Used
  o Principled compromise
  o Making partial concessions
  o Assessing value

• Overuse
  o Loss of big-picture perspective
  o Lack of trust
  o Cynical climate

• Underuse
  o Unnecessary confrontations
  o Frequent power struggles
  o Ineffective negotiating
Avoiding
“I’ll think about it tomorrow”

Try not to avoid people

- Avoid issues where little can be gained
- Know when to postpone an issue
- Avoid emotional conflicts
- Know your limitations
- Allow others ownership
Avoiding

• Behavioral Skills Used
  o Deciding what is important
  o Avoiding without being evasive
  o Breaking the anger cycle
  o Ability to leave things unresolved

• Overuse
  o Lack of your input
  o Decisions by default
  o Festering issues
  o Climate of caution

• Underuse
  o Hostility/hurt feelings
  o Work overload
  o Lack of prioritization/delegation
Accommodating

“It would be my pleasure”

Don’t be a serial appeaser

- Yield to a better position
- Concede when you are overruled or losing
- Make a small sacrifice when it’s important to others
- Accommodate to clean up hard feelings
Accommodating

• Behavioral Skills Used
  o Conceding gracefully
  o Forgoing your desires
  o Planting seeds
  o Satisfying a complaint

• Overuse
  o Overlooked ideas
  o Decisions by default
  o Festering issues
  o Climate of caution
  o Restricted influence
  o Anarchy

• Underuse
  o Hostility/hurt feelings
  o Work overload
  o Lack of prioritization/delegation
Exercise

• Generate list of skills/qualities that demonstrate skillful conflict management

• Rank top 3
The belief that one’s own view of reality is the only reality is the most dangerous of all delusions.

Paul Watzlawick, psychologist and philosopher, 1921-2007
Categories Where Conflicts Arise

• Facts  
  *Easiest, most objective*

• Methods

• Goals

• Values  
  *Hardest, least objective*
Tactics of Conflict-Skilled Organizations

• A strong culture organized around clear purpose
• Work with more information & debate on facts
• Develop multiple solutions to raise level of debate
• Inject humor into decision-making
• Maintain a balance of power
• Use a fallback instead of true consensus

Solution Building & Finding Common Ground

- Create an effective atmosphere
- Separate the person from the problem
  - Work from respect
  - Avoid defensive statements
  - Don’t judge
- Create mutual understanding
  - What do I want?
  - What do you want?
  - What do we want?
- Use objective criteria for evaluation
- Generate options
  - Generate, don’t evaluate
  - Create multiple options
  - Dig deeper into your options
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