

## Conflict Management

**Abstract** This chapter discusses the different methods, processes, and styles of conflict management, based on the different types of conflict discussed in the first chapter which are related to the stage the conflict is in. It examines the importance of communication in such cases. Moreover, this chapter deliberates the different approaches to managing organizational conflict, including competition, avoidance, compromise, collaboration, and accommodation.

**Keywords** Avoidance · Negotiation · Mediation · Arbitration  
Adjudication · Non-violent directive action · Violence

It is not possible to avoid conflict in an organizational communication. Conflicts occur normally in any organization as people have different views and thoughts, and among them, there are people who cannot admit other people's different perceptions (Spaho et al. [2013](#)).

A conflict is solved by fortifying the representation of appropriate task features (Egner and Hirsch [2005](#)) and by obstructing the representation of inappropriate task features (Stürmer et al. [2002](#)), as participants tend to prefer easier tasks, thus leading to frequent conflicts.

Is it always suitable to eliminate conflict? There is a difference between **conflict management** and **conflict resolution**. Conflict resolution deals with the elimination or reduction in conflict, while on the other hand, conflict management deals with the elimination, reduction,

**Table 2.1** Conflict diagnostic model

| <i>Dimension</i>                   | <i>Difficult to resolve</i>                      | <i>Easy to resolve</i>                       |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Issue in question                  | Matter of principle                              | Divisible issue                              |
| Size of stakes                     | Large  | Small  |
| Interdependence of the parties     | Zero sum   | Positive sum                                 |
| Continuity of interaction          | Single transaction                               | Long-term relationship                       |
| Structure of the parties           | Amorphous or fractionalize, with weak leadership | Cohesive, with strong leadership             |
| Involvement of third parties       | No neutral third party available                 | Trusted, powerful, prestigious, and neutral  |
| Perceived progress of the conflict | Unbalanced: one party feeling the more harmed    | Parties having done equal harm to each other |

*Source* Greenhalgh (1986: 47)

or increase in conflict (Eunson 2012). Therefore, conflict resolution is part of conflict management that also includes the encouragement of conflict in some cases.

Research has shown that groups that enhance or sustain performance over time share the following conflict resolution tendencies: emphasizing on the content of interpersonal interactions instead of the delivery style, explicitly discussing causes behind any decisions reached in accepting and allocating work assignments, and assigning work to members who have the appropriate task expertise rather than allocating by other common methods such as volunteering, default, or convenience (Behfar et al. 2008). In addition, teams that are successful over time tend to be both proactive in foreseeing the need for conflict resolution and pluralistic in formulating conflict resolution strategies that apply to all team members. Methods in which a team controls its conflicts are highly important for anticipating team viability and performance over time.

Conflict is similar to illness; in order to properly manage it, it should be properly diagnosed.

According to Greenhalgh’s (1986) model of conflict diagnosis shown below in Table 2.1, one has to look for the different dimensions of the issue at hand in order to properly diagnose it for adequate management. These dimensions cover the issue in question, whether it is divisible or a matter of principle, the size of stakes, the interdependence of the parties, the continuity of interaction, the structure of the parties,

**Table 2.2** Strategies for getting off the conflict spiral

| <i>Spiral phase</i>         | <i>Critical reaction</i>   |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Covert resistance           | Challenge the development of gossip, noncooperation, theft, and sabotage   |
| Overt resistance            | Challenge nagging, whining, complaining, anger, and arguments  |
| Critical incidents          | Challenge the unthinkingly negative interpretation of events and words   |
| Selective perception        | Challenge filtering or distorting perceptions of events and words  |
| Enlisting support of others | Resist being recruited to an unthinking in-group; challenge those who wish to recruit  |
| Issue linkage               | Challenge whether issues really are linked   |
| Ritual or hot-button words  | Challenge the unthinking use of words and labels   |
| Threats                     | Challenge the use of intimidation, pressure, and bullying  |
| Action                      | Encourage healthy structured actions; monitor to ensure transparency and effectiveness   |
| Provocation                 | Challenge interpretation of events and words; resist or ignore incitement, hassling, needling, and goading   |
| Retaliation                 | Refuse to retaliate; or retaliate at a less intense level than might be otherwise expected; and counsel others to do the same  |
| Violence                    | Refuse to be violent toward self or self-interests; deflect or arrest violence of others by bringing in authorized third parties, such as respected elders, friends, or police |

Source Eunson (2012: 454)

the involvement of third parties, and the perceived progress of the conflict. Each of these dimensions has options that are easy to resolve, and some that are difficult to resolve. So the strategy of conflict management depends on the combination of the number of dimensions that are easy to resolve and those that are not. Taking extreme cases, if all the dimensions are easy to resolve, then the conflict management strategy should be easy, while if all the dimensions are difficult to resolve, then the conflict at hand would need special management tools and strategies to be properly managed.

An interesting table of actions is suggested by (Eunson 2012) to challenge the conflict spiral shown in Chap. 1. This is shown in Table 2.2 below.

Several academics have claimed that conflict management, and specifically conflict resolution, is a vital determinant of the group and/or

dyadic conflict–performance relationship (Jehn and Bendersky 2003; Marks et al. 2001; Mathieu and Schulze 2006; Williams and O'Reilly 1988). In theorizing about this main role of conflict management, previous studies suggest that a procedure for managing conflict would allow the mitigation of the negative effects of all types of conflict by restoring fairness, process efficiency, resource efficacy, working relationships, and satisfaction of parties (Thomas 1992). Robbins (1974) described some basic conflict resolution techniques to be: *Problem solving* in which open discussion takes place between parties in conflict through face-to-face meetings in order to identify the problem and try to resolve it; *super ordinate goals* where a shared goal is created for conflicting parties so that this goal cannot be reached without the collaboration of these parties; *expansion of resources* whenever there is a scarcity of resources causing the conflict, here the supply of lacking resources acts to solve the conflict as it solves its original cause; *avoidance* whenever avoiding the conflict may cause its diminishing, and this usually happens whenever a conflict is not major and does not highly affect performance; *smoothing* through studying differences while searching for common interests between parties in conflict; *compromising* where each party offers something of value to the other party in order to meet on common interests; *authoritative command* where authority is the major factor used, forcing resolutions through informing the parties about procedures to be implemented; *altering the human variable* where the human behavior and personal relations are focused upon through training to change attitudes causing conflicts; and *altering structural variables* through changes in the hierarchy and internal structures of organizations in order to alter the form of interactions, thus preventing the corresponding type of conflict.

The way in which members deal with one another while resolving problems influences the expectations for the team's interaction, for member satisfaction with the team (Lind and Tyler 1988), and for the members' will to keep on contributing to the team proactively (Jehn 1997a, b). In addition, one important key to understand team performance depends on better understanding the choices that the groups make in selecting conflict resolution strategies to solve conflicts.

If teams make conflict resolution choices that do not help in solving the conflict efficiently, they are likely to be disposed to continuous, intensifying conflicts since members spend time responding to challenging conflict behaviors of other team individuals instead of focusing on the current task at hand. Teams that can adapt their processes

appropriately, however, are more likely to create teams where members are satisfied and performance is enhanced.

According to Hackman and Morris (1975), there are three criteria for team viability: The team should meet the expectancies of those who receive their work (performance); the team should satisfy the individual needs of members in the group experience (individual member satisfaction); and the procedure the team adopts (e.g., conflict management tactics) should improve its capability to work together in the future. In all, how well conflict resolution strategies address a team-level balance between task and influence management is what leads to team viability. An imbalance of one type or the other is related to a threat to viability.

It is worth noting that conflict constitutes a natural part of the team environment. In fact, teams can improve the quality of decision making and stimulate a cooperative, goal-oriented culture. However, to be effective, teams must be capable to control that conflict and the way they do so brings out the best or the worst of employee participation (Amason et al. 1995). Particularly, we emphasize on two types of conflict that teams must manage to improve their value to the firm. Teams can both enhance an organization's culture and at the same time can be a source of problems that obstruct or even block the organization's growth. Nevertheless, the successful teams use conflict to allow discussion and encourage creative thinking, whereas the less successful ones fail in controlling their differences; the thing that leads to poor decisions. In other words, efficient teams know how to benefit from the conflict in reaching effective results, and less effective teams either avoid conflict or allow it to contribute to negative results.

While disagreements among team members are unavoidable, as long as they emphasize on fundamental issue-related differences of opinion, they enhance team efficacy. This type of conflict is called C-type conflict (C stands for *cognitive*), which is helpful because it necessitates teams to be involved in activities that are crucial to a team's efficiency (Amason et al. 1995).

By encouraging frank communication, C-type conflict stimulates innovative thinking and fosters creative solutions to different problems, hence, enhancing the quality of the decision taken.

Disagreements over personalized, individually leaning issues are highly harmful to team performance. Such type of conflict is called A-type conflict (A stands for *affective*) that threatens team efficiency by irritating

hostility and distrust among the members of the group (Amason et al. 1995).

Leaders of effective teams seek to help incorporate all team members by pursuing opinions of those who are less active and struggling to moderate the influence of those members who dominate the discussion; i.e., integration is highly essential to acquire a commitment to the decisions taken.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has an important role in conflict management as constructive solutions necessitate the compromise which requires a capability to identify and control the emotions. Defined, EI is the individual's "ability to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulses and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope" (Goleman 1995: 34). Moreover, EI has a significant positive workplace outcomes in terms of company rank and higher remuneration (Seibert et al. 2001), the overall performance of the business (Lopes et al. 2006), and a constructive conflict management (Bodtker and Jameson 2001). Accordingly, several studies have shown that leaders with higher levels of EI are more likely, or more capable, to be involved in functional confrontation with employees and groups, a concept called "constructive conflict management" (Jordan and Troth 2002a, b). Besides, higher levels of EI may enable cooperative and problem-solving behavior, where emotions are both controlled and generated to create new solutions that satisfy both parties' requirements. On the other hand, individuals with lower levels of EI are more likely to be involved in the higher use of forcefulness and avoidance, which leads to a destructive management (Goleman 1995). The obligation to solve conflicts in businesses is mainly given to leaders since leaders can reframe an organization's positive value orientation (Weider-Hatfield and Hatfield 1995), have more opportunities to be trained on how to solve critical issues about conflict management and group dynamics, and since conflict management skills of leaders develop as they become experts in dealing with conflicts.

Furthermore, the constructive management skills are more critical for non-leaders since it is the followers who formulate the strategies and vision of the leader and the company. Therefore, the form and strength of the relationship between leaders and non-leaders are critical components of a successful conflict management.

As for the effect of age, older adults are involved in strategies that boost positive social experiences by avoiding conflict (Luong et al. 2010); i.e., they are not confronted with the same daily difficulties that their younger and middle-aged counterparts face due to the fact that they are generally treated more positively and excused more easily (Luong et al. 2010).

## 2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

According to Hener (2010), below are the types of organizational conflicts:

- **Vertical conflicts** which happen when the supervisor is always informing an employee what to do and tries to “micro-manage”, while at the same time allowing the employee to execute his job.
- **Horizontal conflicts** which happen among employees on the same hierarchical level as a result of the different interests in relation to allocation of resources.
- **Line staff conflicts** which occur between support staff and line employees.
- **Role conflicts** resulting from a mistaken understanding of the task given to an employee at a particular period of time.

Conflict can have both positive and negative consequences on the organization. The positive consequences involve important social changes, developing creative ideas and innovations, offering quality decisions for solving important problems, and developing solidarity and team unity, whereas the negative consequences are similar to bad collaboration, as they waste time that can be consumed in a more efficient way.

Conflict is a dynamic procedure that does not occur suddenly, but needs some time to develop and passes across different stages. There are different approaches to the conflict stages, and as per Louis R. Pondy’s (1967) approach, he identifies five stages of the conflict procedure:

- **Latent conflict stage** in which conflict is unknown, although there are conditions for starting it. The reasons can be related to

competing for insufficient resources, differences in objectives and orientation toward organizational independence.

- **Conflict perception stage** where all parties are aware of the latent conflict, there are many situations in conflict perception. Sometimes, conflict is apparent although it does not exist or when latent conflict exists, but actors do not identify it. The latter can be explained by emphasizing on other conflicts in the organization, while some conflicts remain unnoticed.
- **Stage in which conflict is personalized** in which both sides of the conflict feel pressures and experience anxiety and other difficult feelings.
- **Manifested conflict stage** where low spirits between actors in conflict are identified. The conflict behavior is represented in different ways: from thorough apathy to open hostility, opposing with the rules and guidelines of the organization.
- **Consequence stage** where the result of clear conflict is either solved, or the solution is not satisfied and the conflict goes back to the latent conflict stage.

Conflict resolution is based on understanding destructive human conflicts. Positions are reframed between parties in conflict. The needs and interests of the parties should be clarified for proper repositioning or reframing of positions (Ramsbotham et al. 2011).

As stated previously, many conflicts have positive consequences on the efficiency of organizations. Therefore, in contemporary organization, there is a need for conflict management rather than conflict resolution. Conflict management is the employment of strategies for the correction of perceived differences in a positive manner. It does not necessarily involve avoidance, reduction, or termination of conflict, but it involves the design of effective strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and the enhancement of the constructive functions of conflict in order to enhance learning and effectiveness of an organization (Rahim 2002). It also sometimes involves conflict resolution through the elimination or termination of the forms and types of conflict. When people talk about conflict resolution, they tend to use terms like negotiation, bargaining, mediation, or arbitration.

Certain types of conflicts, which may have negative effects on individual and group performance, may have to be reduced. These conflicts, known as affective conflicts, are in general caused by the negative



reactions of organizational members. Relationship conflicts interfere with the tasks as members focus on diminishing threats, expanding power, and attempting to build union rather than working on the task (Staw and Sutton 2000).

Conflict management's main role is to minimize the negative consequences of conflicts and endorses its positive outcomes. Conflict management also aims to minimize affective conflicts, while maintaining a moderate amount of substantive conflict (Rahim 2002).

Conflict management and decision making in management should satisfy the following criteria in order to be effective: Conflict management should be capable of improving innovative thinking in order for managers of conflict to properly diagnose and intervene the conflict to be managed. Whenever multiple parties are involved in a conflict, these parties should be involved in the conflict management process as this will lead to collective learning and to an increase in organizational performance and effectiveness. Ethics also takes a major part of handling conflicts. Without ethics, decision taken to solve a conflict may not be adequate for certain situations, sometimes even causing bigger conflicts when neglecting the basic needs of a party.

Conflict managers can choose from a number of different procedural options for managing conflicts. They must carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of each possible procedure before choosing the best approach to the resolution. There is no common approach that works for all situations. Each case should be dealt with individually.

Some of the primary approaches to conflict management used by managers or leaders in order to handle and resolve conflicts include:

First, employees should be protected by being removed from conflict situation whenever conflict negatively affects the performance. Many times, for example, a party loses temper during a certain situation like in a conversation. This party itself should be taken out of the situation in order for it to be protected and in order to protect other parties from exaggerated reactions. After the situation calms down, comes the time when the causes for conflict should be discussed, searching for the appropriate conflict management strategy.

In some cases, a primary approach is removing a disruptive member from their position. In certain personality clashes, it is very difficult to resolve a situation easily. The best resolution techniques in such cases may be moving the person causing the conflict to a different job or team where he may be more suitable in, thus reducing the constant tension

he is causing. Here, the individual is tested for improvement, and if after several trials he/she does not improve, then disciplinary processes should be considered on his behalf, and in the worst situations, their firing may be considered.

## 2.2 PROCESSES, STRATEGIES, AND STYLES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

We have discussed the stages and types of conflicts and how conflicts take place. However, several kinds of literature discuss some processes, strategies, and styles to manage conflict appropriately.

Processes of conflict management are described as follows:

### **Diagnosis:**

The most important part in conflict management is the problem identification. Once the right problem is identified, an efficient intervention may take place. In this phase, it is mandatory to find out the number of conflicts in the business and to discover the relationship between affective and fundamental conflicts and formulate strategies adopted by managers and employees in resolving these conflicts.

### **Intervention:**

The intervention is especially required in case there were too many affective conflicts and too little substantive conflicts. There are two types of intervention: the process approach and the structural approach. The process approach is where managers tend to match the styles of handling conflicts to different situations, while the structural approach is where conflict is managed by changing the perceptions of the intensity of conflict at different levels.

**Conflict:**

Conflicts have two extents: One consisting of disagreements in relation to task issues, and the other involving emotional and interpersonal issues which contribute to conflict.

**Learning and effectiveness:**

One of the main purposes of controlling conflict in a contemporary organization is to improve organizational learning which includes knowledge acquirement and spreading, information analysis, and maintaining organizational memory. Individual learning is obligatory, but it does not constitute an appropriate condition for organizational learning.

When there is a conflict, the management can handle the problem and find appropriate solutions to solve it. Referring to Klein et al. (2011), team leadership moderates the effects of values diversity on team conflict, whereby there is a significant relationship between relationship-oriented leadership and solution-based conflict management.

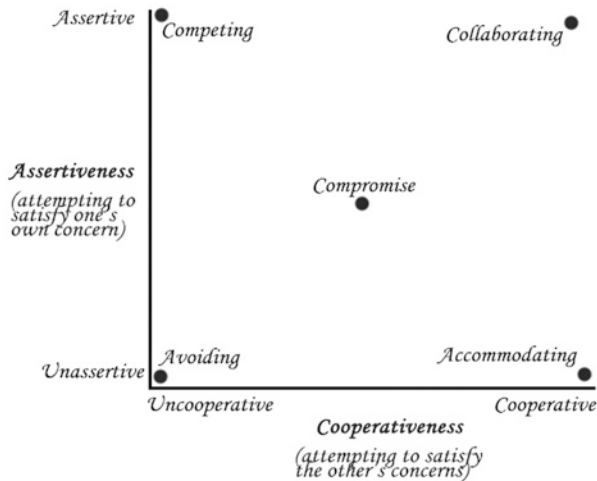
Managers can use the following three major strategies to solve conflicts:

1. **Strategy of negotiation:** This is the most common strategy to solve conflict, and it is efficient when the interests of contradictory parties are partly mutual and partly different. Negotiation is essential in most conflict management cases, aiding in conflict prevention or in resolving the existing conflict. As stated in Neale and Bazerman (1992: 42), negotiation is “a decision making process among interdependent parties who do not share identical preferences.” Two main types of negotiation are commonly known (Walton and McKersie 1965): the *distributive negotiation* and the *integrative negotiation*. Distributive negotiation assumes a case in which a fixed amount of assets are divided between parties (Johns and Sacks 2005). Referring to Fig. 2.1 shown later during this chapter, this type of negotiation is on the axis between competition and accommodation. Usually, there is a tendency toward the center of this axis known as compromise style

of conflict management. On the other hand, integrative negotiation assumes a win-win situation where the common problem solving involves enlarging the assets that will be divided between parties. Referring to Fig. 4.1, integrative negotiation is found to be on the axis between avoiding and collaborating, ideally tending to be toward the collaborating style of conflict management.

The negotiation is a procedure in which different tactics can be implemented. Negotiation involves the following subcategories:

- **Face-to-face tactic:** Mutual confidence as a basis for negotiation can be developed using this method.
  - **Persuading tactic:** It is based on using different approaches and conducts to win over partners and to attain a better negotiating position.
  - **Deceitfulness tactic:** It is based on presenting false data and arguments, and its success is related to how well the negotiating parties recognize each other and if deceitfulness is successful.
  - **Threat tactic:** It is based on the fact of discouragement from the side having a higher position or more authority. The stronger side presents significances to the weaker, if it does not admit the suggested solution.
  - **Promise tactic:** This tactic is also based on having a better position and more power, with the stronger side persuading the weaker that it will keep its promises.
  - **Concession tactic:** This is the most important tactic in the negotiation strategy. It is based on making concession but in a normal way, not to make too many concessions, whereby an atmosphere of goodwill and readiness for solving the problem can be developed.
2. **Strategy of a superior goal:** One of the best ways to solve conflict is to define a high objective. This is sometimes referred to as *super ordinate goals* where a shared goal is created for conflicting parties so that this goal cannot be reached without the collaboration of these parties.
  3. **Strategy of the third-party intervention:** In case a negotiation strategy does not lead to results, it is better to implement the strategy of the third-party intervention, whereby an external consultant, usually known as a mediator, is appointed to solve the problem.



**Fig. 2.1** Approaches to managing organizational conflict. *Source* Thomas (1992) and Robbins and Judge (2007)

Based on conflict, intensity, and care for other people, managers can adopt five styles of conflict management. As described by Thomas (1992), managing conflict is function of how *assertive* a party is in satisfying his/her own group or self-concern, and how *cooperative* it is in satisfying those of the other party.

Figure 2.1 shows a simple graph where each style of conflict management is placed according to how much assertive and cooperative it is.

The *avoiding* style of conflict management has both the lowest cooperation with other parties and lowest assertiveness of a party's own interests. On the graph above, it is situated on the lower left side. This style is often used to hide away from the situation and to avoid stress. Moreover, it does not improve the situation. Its main advantage is in the cooling down of the situation whenever no efficient act may be done in certain circumstances. It is based on distancing from problems and hiding them. It is adequate for small problems and for difficult and escalating problems since it cannot solve the core of the problem.

The *accommodating* style takes place whenever there is total cooperation with the other party while not asserting to satisfy one's own concerns. In the graph of Fig. 2.1, it can be seen on the lower right side

of the graph. Accommodation is not a sign of weakness. It may be the best and most suitable style of management in certain situations, especially when the party accommodating is aware that it is wrong or when it wants to prove a goodwill to the other party in the conflict.

The *compromising* style fits in the center of the graph, with intermediate levels of cooperation and assertiveness. Therefore, as described by Johns and Sacks (2005), it is a compromise between pure competition and pure accommodation. It is based on accomplishing a balance between personal and common interests. In this approach, a strategy is used where all concerned parties are to be satisfied somehow through implementing needed compromises. This approach is labeled as “distributed conflict management” because no one here gets exactly what they want but rather a portion of everyone’s goals is accomplished (Sorenson 1999). However, it has been shown that this is not the best conflict management strategy because it does not really solve the disputes but rather finds a way around them (Murningham and Conlon 1991). These disputes persist more so when they are related to personal relationships. Moreover, if a family does no compromising, it is more likely to have bad relationships than one that compromises. In other words, while it might not solve existing problems, it can prevent new ones from emerging. But its excessive use can result in negative effects; decisions will be viewed with less respect and seriousness (Sorenson 1999). So to fully benefit from this approach, it must be used moderately and only when absolutely needed. In this style, all participants must change some attitudes through interventions, negotiations, and voting. It results in democratic solution, but may prevent reaching a creative solution of the problem. This style of management is not to be used when the conflict is based on power asymmetry because in this case, extreme acts of conflict management are required.

The *competing* style, also known as contending style, is when specific individuals try to force their will, wishes, and perspectives on others, creating competition between family members (De Dreu and Van Vianen 2001). Contending blocks people from achieving their goals and brings up feelings of anger, stress, and distrust which leads to misunderstandings and potentially harmful relationships (Jehn 1997b). It has the characteristics of maximum assertiveness for one’s own concerns and a minimum cooperativeness with other’s concerns. It can be seen on the upper left of the graph above. In this case, the priority is only given to one’s own goals and aims. Its results will be extreme, either win or lose,

no compensations take place. In other words, using a system that forces and harasses people to perform, and the use of dramatic measures such as threats to accomplish certain goals is a very bad method that is unlikely to yield any positive outcomes and might actually lead to the destruction of the firm. The best use of this style of conflict management is when one has lots of power and is sure of his position, or wants to take a risk in order to make control of the situation.

The last style of conflict management is the *collaborating* style. This style occurs when a mutually acceptable situation that pleases all concerned parties is worked out by individuals (De Dreu and Van Vianen 2001; Sorenson 1999). This increases team effectiveness, leads to solutions that satisfy everyone, and reduces the chance that conflicts will arise in the workplace (Pruitt and Rubin 1986; Tjosvold 1997). In this style, both the assertiveness to satisfy one's own concerns and the cooperativeness to satisfy the other party's concerns are maximized. It can be seen on the upper right of the graph above. The result of such style is the satisfaction of the interests of both parties involved in the conflict, a situation described as a win-win situation. Therefore, the use of the collaboration style of conflict management transforms the conflict from a negative situation into a positive one, producing better condition to both parties. Even though research has shown that this is not the best method to go for in normal firms, family firm research has shown that it is the most effective way to go for in this type of firms because it eases understanding and increases the level of positive relationships (Sorenson 1999). Though it is not easy to implement, it has many prerequisites such as open communication, trust, and mutual support. In other words, this style is tailored to be used by family firms (Seymour 1993). According to Johnson et al. (1981), the ideal cases for the use of this style are when the conflict is not intense and when each party owns information that is useful to the other party involved in the conflict.

From another and somehow similar point of view, Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiated the five conflict handling styles based on two different dimensions: self-concern and concern for others. The concern for self explains the degree to which an individual attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns, while the concern for others explains the degree to which he/she attempts to satisfy the concerns of others in a conflict.

Figure 2.2 shows a visual diagram of the "dual concern model of the styles of handling interpersonal conflict."

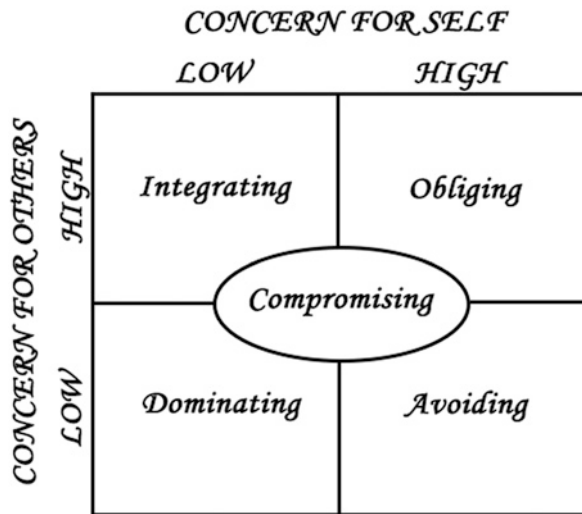


Fig. 2.2 Dual concern model of the styles of handling interpersonal conflict.  
Source Rahim (2002: 217)

In Rahim's (2002) model, three terms differ from Thomas's (1992) model shown above. The term *obliging* replaces the term *accommodating* in Thomas's model. Obliging focuses on reducing differences and emphasizing on common interests. It stimulates cooperation, but it does not solve the reason of the problem; it is not appropriate for escalating problems. The term *integrating* replaces the term *collaborating* in Thomas's model. Integrating is suitable for difficult problems, which are not always clearly understood; in the long run, this style is efficient, but not adequate for conflicts arising from different values. And finally, the term *dominating* replaces the term *competing* in Thomas's model. This style is common for people who are more emphasized on personal than on mutual interests. Through adopting this style, managers oblige employees to obey, it is suitable when unpopular working solutions must be applied, when the deadline is tight, as well as in case of minor issues. It does not require much time to be executed, but it is related to disapproval and resistance of employees. Although the replacing terms differ in their meaning and concepts, they tend to show the same position toward the concerns of self versus the concerns toward others.



In all, the most important aspect for selecting the conflict management style is the nature of the goal, i.e., beating the opposite side or finding a solution appropriate to all. For managers, the choice depends on the goal, i.e., demonstrating power, creating a compromise, or developing a positive image. Besides, conflicts must be solved by first-line managers, or, if the conflict is substantial, it must be solved by the middle level of management. It is not adequate to leave conflict solving to top management, since it shows that managers at lower levels are not able to deal with conflicts and employees in general. More importantly, experience has also revealed that solving conflicts on higher levels negatively affects organizational efficacy as top managers have other major tasks in their job.

The emergence of conflict can be gradual or steady. It can also develop very rapidly after certain events. At first, most conflicts start without being public. As the differences intensify, the conflict becomes more obvious and public. In this stage, the avoidance of the public aspect of the conflict cannot be done anymore. Here, groups that the parties are members in are also affected both directly and indirectly. As incompatibilities become more prominent, conflicting parties start defining themselves based on the cleavage in terms of “us versus them” basing new relationships on a conceptual cause. If the conflict was not solved on time with one of the regular procedures, it may sometimes lead to violence which often produces counter violence. While the other mentioned styles revolve around the conflicted parties to solve their own problems, third parties often are necessary to intervene when these conflicted parties fail to fix their own mess and need a neutral opinion to settle the matter (Wall and Callister 1995). There are many ways to go about this style. Mediators can be used because they improve communication and help individuals recognize how they have been contributing to the conflict (Haynes and Usdin 1997; Kaye 1991). Arbitrators, who do the similar actions as mediators, have the power to dictate solutions (Wall and Callister 1995). However, the most common method of action is using the intervention of third-party conciliation and consultation. It is important to keep in mind that these methods of action do not require the family business to hand the control over to them (Gersick et al. 1997; Harvey and Evans 1994). It only requires their consent to take part, which by itself increases the chance of resolving the conflict. The third-party intervention method is most efficient when the conflicts are rooted in personal family conflict.

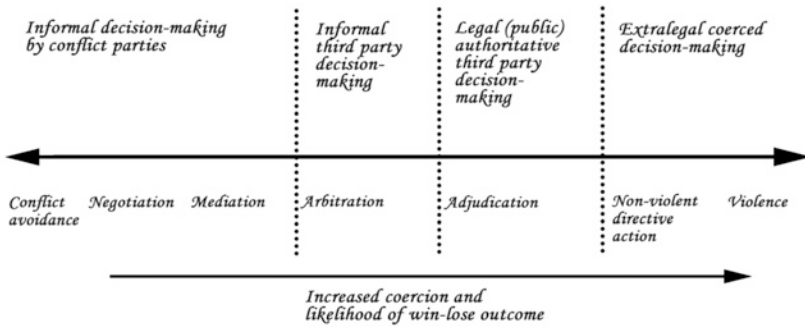


Fig. 2.3 Continuum of conflict management approaches. *Source* Moore (2003)

Figure 2.3 shows a range of conflict management approaches where third-party intervention has a major role. These range from conflict avoidance on one extreme to physical violence at the other. Between these extremes are several approaches for conflict management through third-party intervention. These approaches increase progressively in coercion, and the influence of parties in conflict on the overall outcome of conflict management decreases as we move to the right.

## 2.3 AVOIDANCE

The easiest choice whenever a conflict begins is the avoidance. Parties tend to avoid each other if the conflict type permits. This is when management decides to ignore the problem at hand, they recognize the devastating impact digging into it might have on the business and thus decide not to deal with it and keep postponing it (Murningham and Conlon 1991). This is primary due to the fact that discomfort accompanies any conflict. Sometimes conflict avoidance also comes from parties considering the conflict as unessential or unimportant, and sometimes they consider that the situation cannot be improved with or without conflict. Sometimes avoidance comes as a strategy of waiting for the right moment to act or respond to the causes of the conflict itself. The intensity of the conflict increases as the avoidance is no longer possible. Here, different approaches to solving the problem causing the conflict are used. This method has proven to be successful for some businesses but it fails to account for the unique properties of the family business when there

is frequent contact between the family members and their lockdown to the business. The more the conflict is ignored and postponed, the more serious and harmful it gets. It can even lead to dissatisfaction in work, immense rivalries between siblings and lower level of trust in the organization.

The most common way to reach a mutually acceptable agreement is through informal decision making, which can involve negotiation and/or mediation.

## 2.4 NEGOTIATION

Negotiation is a voluntary bargaining relationship among the opposing parties. In negotiation, all the involved parties take the others' interests and needs into consideration. Sometimes assistance from a third party is needed for a negotiation to begin due to two main reasons: the difficulty to start a negotiation between conflicting parties and the lack of knowledge and negotiation skills. In negotiation, parties in conflict settle the differences through an aim to reach agreement or compromise and avoid arguments. Whenever a conflict is present, parties aim to achieve the outcome closest to their position, and hence the negotiation's difficulty. For successful outcomes of negotiation, mutual benefits and retaining the relationship between the parties in conflict are a must. Different forms of negotiation are implemented in different situations. However, negotiation skills that frequently use interpersonal skills should be learned in order to be adequately applied for proper conflict resolution.

Proper negotiation has to follow general stages or steps. The main steps are preparation, discussion, clarification of goals, negotiation toward a win-win situation, agreement, and finally the implementation of a course action.

In the preparation stage, after the decision to negotiate is done, the location, time, persons attending, and duration of negotiation meeting should be set. This stage may also include checking policies of the organization where conflict took place, whenever policies are available, reconsideration of the causes of the conflict, and thinking of probable solutions to be discussed during the negotiation process. Sometimes specifying the duration of the negotiation meeting is important for preventing long disagreements. This preparation phase helps avoid unnecessary disagreements during the negotiation meeting.

In the discussion stage, each of the parties in conflict describes the case as they see it. Then questioning and clarifications take place. Notes are sometimes taken during this stage in order to record and compare the visions of each of the parties. Each party must be given equal opportunities to express their vision of the problem(s) causing the conflict.

In the clarifying goals stage, each of the parties has to clarify their goals, interests, and vision of the disagreement as a whole and has to explain their expectations of the outcomes of the meeting. A list of priorities should be noted. As a result of the clarification process, common grounds may be established, aiding in solving the conflict more easily.

In the negotiation for a win-win outcome stage, a focus is done aiming to make solutions where both parties reach their aims and interests without having to sacrifice much of their expectations. The best win-win outcomes are a match of a maximum amount of cooperativeness where a party attempts to satisfy the other party's concerns, and a maximum amount of assertiveness where a party attempts to satisfy its own concerns. In this stage, both parties feel that they have gained positive results of the negotiation meeting, while knowing that their point of view has been taken into consideration. Although the win-win outcome is the best outcome, it is not always the result of a negotiation meeting. Whenever a win-win situation cannot be reached, alternatives must be suggested, aiming to reach the most possible benefit for both parties in conflict.

In the agreement stage, after the viewpoints of both parties have been considered, an agreement has to take place as a method of achieving a solution for the problems causing the conflict. This agreement has to be clear, and sometimes noted and reported, in order to prevent one party from disobeying what was agreed on.

The final stage in the negotiation process is the implementation of a course of action. In this stage, all what was agreed on should be exactly implemented in all its details.

Whenever there is a failure to agree through negotiation, a second meeting is suggested in this case. This helps avoid heated discussions and arguments outside the meetings that seek solutions. Then, if after several other negotiations are done and the conflict has not been properly solved, other methods of conflict resolution like mediation and arbitration should be used.

## 2.5 MEDIATION

“Mediation is the process whereby an acceptable third party who has limited or no authoritative decision-making power assists the principle parties in a conflict to resolve their dispute through promoting conciliation and facilitating negotiations” (*Negotiation and mediation techniques for natural resource management* 2005: 2.2). As with negotiation, parties in conflict make the final decisions concerning the conflicts they are facing.

Mediation is clear in its definition. It deals with dispute resolution aiming to reach conciliation. For the mediators’ intervention to be efficient and ethical, they should respect certain deontological principles. Mediation empowers, through confidential interviews, the establishment and reestablishment of bonds for the resolution of conflicts.

As the case of ordinary firms, mediation also has its major importance in conflict resolution in family businesses. Good mediators have to have general knowledge of the organizations for which they are mediating and be aware of general principles and mediation skills in order to be able to deal with the difficulties of solving conflicts of both the family and business aspects when dealing with family businesses.

Firm is a system. Family is also a system. Family business is composed of an intricate of two systems, the family and the firm. Any conflict or heavy misunderstanding in one system may induce a dysfunction in the other. Family conflicts happen for a huge amount of reasons. Some common examples of conflict in family businesses are the following: Conflict between family members on the management after the death of the founder; family-related disagreements and conflicts like conflicting decisions on the medical conditions of the elderly parents are directly reflected on the performance and on business disagreements in the family business.

During the mediation process, an impression is sometimes felt that the conflict can be easily solved in a plain rational way. Each participant uses juridical or technical argument. Mediator promotes the exchange of the hidden reasons. The “obvious” conflict reasons do not seem that “obvious.” The mediator has to be able to discover the hidden aspects of the situation, the conflict situation.

One of the best methods that the mediator may use during the mediation process is the Socratic “maieutic” frame method defined as “the structure of the kind of talk that occurs when discussants use intellectual

dialogue to collaborate to make meaning out of sophisticated text, by responding to open-ended questions” (Orellana 2008). It is a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue between individuals, based on the stimulation of critical thinking and drawing out hidden ideas through responding to questions. Through this method, the mediator will help discover where the real conflict or plain misunderstanding lies.

In spite of the common values that the members of the family have, intercultural conflict may easily occur. These different cultures are acquired through the professional course of each individual professional course. So, when a family reaches the phase where decisions are to be taken, each member will view the situation from his professional background’s culture. The role of the mediator here is to join the different cultures and understand the different points of view in order to reach common grounds where these different cultures meet. He/she proceeds in questioning that stimulate creativity in searching all together a solution. This way, blind spots are exposed, leading to probable solutions of problems whose causes were in part vague. Mediation develops social intelligence as both family and enterprise are considered to be parts of the society. Because of its confidentiality, family and business reputations are preserved and sustained. It strengthens links between participants, enhancing capacity to go on living and working together.

A subcategory of mediation is the social mediation defined as the process of creation and restoration of social bonds and of daily life conflict management within which an impartial and independent third party attempts, through the organization of talks between persons or institutions, to help the latter to improve a relationship or to manage a conflict that opposes them.

Mediation in families, particularly in family businesses, is known as “family mediation.” It is defined as “a process of building or rebuilding family bounds, directed towards the autonomy and the responsibility of the persons affected by situations of break ups or separations within which an impartial, independent and qualified third party, without any decision making power: the family mediator, favors through the organization of confidential meetings, their communication and the management of their conflict in the diverse and evolutionary realm of family” (Guillaume-Hofnung 2009: 24). Broader than an alternative method, its function is to build or rebuild social bounds. At the same time, it is very precise, distinguishing mediation from the paralegal realm through the third party and the process’ criteria. That process is not just an

alternative procedure. The characteristics that third parties must present to be qualified as mediators distinguish them well from conciliators (who can happen to not be a third party or depend on an institution but who essentially have to bring an amicable agreement, the conciliation).

A good worker can be judged by his tool. At the risk of sounding paradoxical, if mediators know how to respect their tool, they will avoid being manipulated. Indeed, mediation is not an instrument, it is the great social and ethical adventure of the twenty-first century. Without it, social intelligence will not develop. That is one more reason to not confuse mediation and arbitration.

## 2.6 ARBITRATION

Whenever mediation does not work, the normal procedure suggests the choice of arbitration. Arbitration is a voluntary process, whereby the conflicting parties agree on a third party to make the decision for them. Any outcome achieved by a mediator can be also achieved by an arbitrator. Mediation is described as a process similar to arbitration, but the mediator's decision is not binding and the parties in conflict are free to disobey it (Goltsman et al. 2009). Arbitration dominates mediation because the arbitrator is the final decision maker. Unlike adjudication, arbitration is an informal form of judging with usually unverifiable arguments. It is described as a private procedure. The mutually chosen person to render a final decision in the arbitration is called the arbitrator. A signed agreement is done between the two parties in conflict and the arbitrator, including a major point assuring that the decision taken by the arbitrator will be implemented and crucial, thus giving the required importance of the arbitration process and reassuring both parties in conflict that the aim of the arbitration will be fulfilled. This makes the arbitrator's decision as a binding decision, allowing courts or military action to enforce it against other decision makers. Goltsman et al. (2009) concluded that arbitration always performs better than negotiation and mediation.

## 2.7 ADJUDICATION

Many conflicting parties skip the arbitration process and go directly to adjudication. In adjudication, the resolution process is done through public domain. In this process, disputants usually hire lawyers that act as their advocates. Lawyers study the case of their hirer in details in order

to describe their case according to set norms to the judge at the court of justice. Lawyers defend the position of their hirer. The result of the adjudication process is a judgment taken by the judge (sometimes several judges) or other officials from provincial authorities representing public law and based on the laws, norms, and values of the country where the adjudication is being performed.

As the coercion and likelihood of winning or losing the outcome increases, conflict management tends to move outside the law. Here, extralegal decision making starts to be observed. Out of these extralegal decisions and acts are the non-violent directive actions and violence, actions that are not socially acceptable. Here, processes of coercion may take place, aiming to persuade and/or force the other party in conflict to abide and comply.

## 2.8 NON-VIOLENT DIRECTIVE ACTION

Non-violent directive action takes place whenever one party tries to force the other party in conflict to obey its orders or directions. This action which includes implying orders and threatening is also the case when the first party refuses to cooperate with the second party.

## 2.9 VIOLENCE

Violence, also known as physical coercion, also involves threatening of one party to the other party in conflict. This may in many cases include physical violence and sometimes torture as one extreme case of the use of violence. Violence is an implementation or use of force in order to impose a party's will on the other party. Here in many cases, coercion defined by the forced acceptance of a party to the outcome imposed by the other party takes place.

## 2.10 ALTERNATIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Since the traditional conflict management techniques usually produce winners and losers, alternative conflict management methods (known as the ACM methods) were introduced. These methods are mainly based on collaboration of the conflicting parties in solving a conflict. They aim to produce win-win solutions due to joint decision making and voluntary agreements, thus preventing the power-based or judicial regulations



of the traditional conflict management techniques (Fisher 2000). Parties' willingness to fulfill what was agreed upon is essential in choosing the alternative conflict management techniques. Third parties may be helpful in these methods but they are not essential to their success and may not force any opinions on the disputants. These types of collaborative conflict management methods are best used between stakeholders who have equal power in an organization (Warner 2001).

As all methods, ACM methods have their strengths and limitations. Their strengths lie in aiding in overcoming the obstacles present in the traditional conflict management methods, including judicial, legislative, and administrative approaches, focusing on shared interests, discovering common agreement points, and involving flexible and low-cost agreements. On the other hand, their limitations lie in their failure to show structural inequalities and their potential of intensifying power imbalances; difficulty of getting all involved stakeholders to the bargaining table; due to power imbalances, power differences among stakeholders may cause certain parties with low power to be marginalized in decision making; decisions that are not legally binding; and difficulty to make appropriate use of methods previously used in different circumstances.

What we talked about earlier shows that the measures taken by work groups and normal firms cannot be fully applied to family firms because this type of firm is unique. In contrast to all other firms, family firm members work together on average way more than other firms' employees do, and their interaction is not limited to the workplace, which needs to be taken into consideration when investigating the existing conflicts. Family firms' workforce persists through generations by succession, which is why avoidance is not the best approach here. As mentioned before, third-party intervention is the way to go for family business although there is not enough research around the subject of making the best decision about what subsection of this style to take. The existing research suggests taking into consideration the family's background and the origin of the problem before making a decision on which strategy to choose.

## 2.11 HOW BAD IS CONFLICT?

Whenever mentioned, the word "conflict" tends to have a negative connotation, because frustration is in its basic definition. Through recent research, there appears to be a new approach to conflict, exposing its positive aspects and benefits of organizational survival (Robbins 1974).

The functionality of conflict tends to be focused on the fact that it encourages and sometimes forces organizational change.

For any organization to survive, it must adapt to its environment. In natural sciences, this is referred to as Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory which is described as the "Survival of the fittest" (Darwin 1872). In organizations, changes in strategy that are stimulated by conflicts cause adaptation and hence cause the survival of the organizations (Robbins 1974). New ideas are brought to the frontline because of conflict. Without conflict, these same ideas may not have appeared, and no adaptation would have been done.

Conflict also might force change because whenever it is present, different parties in conflict monitor the performance of each other more carefully in order to try to highlight any bad behaviors, thus being a step forward from the other party. Power redistribution also results from conflict. This sometimes stimulates the concept of *conflict stimulation* in organizations which is a strategy of forcing conflict for the purpose of motivating change. Currently, many managers are using this strategy which appears to be fruitful whenever used moderately and under good control. Conflict stimulating techniques include the use of ambiguous or threatening messages including members whose culture, background, attitudes, and values differ; realigning groups and members, modifying rules and regulations, and encouraging interdependence in order to alter the status quo in the organization; appointing a "devil's advocate" through designating critics that argue with the flow of events and ideas in groups (Robbins 1974).

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