**Summary FEEDBACK on Conflict Discussion**

Jeffrey Barker. Provided a good example of role incompatibility and hit the nail on the head regarding communication. I liked how you integrated this with your own experience having to manage role incompatibility and how you stratified your communication strategies to manage this. I would have liked to have seen a bit more on the role of the CEO in this conflict though? What role do they have here? Gisella Rupe raised an excellent comment about ‘feeling’ when being audited? What about the application of emotional intelligence and self talk in situations of audit/conflict? Tom Cleghorn raised an important point in the Zack case, that emotions were a significant part of the conflict. How many of us look at the facts of a negotiation and try to resolve it, when it clearly requires ALSO considering the emotional impacts that the conflict is having on individuals. How do we manage the ‘F’ side of conflict?

It was good that you (Gisella) added to the debate the issue of incompatible goals as this was clearly in operation, and neither party could see the ‘bigger picture’ goal. Gisella Rupe, Kathy Brass and Sam Bartholomaeus also raised an important point here in that this situation offered a real learning opportunity to tidy up the reporting and audit functions in the organisation and to get people focussed on why this occurs (organisational learning). This is the positive view of conflict – which is important to note here, and Gillian Loh actually provides a good explanation of those times where she has found conflict to be really useful in building cohesion, promoting learning and growth. I guess a question for you Gisella and others who have admitted to an avoidance preference, is how does an avoiding or even a compromising approach help to resolve problems, and possibly other situations? Is this a good approach? Clearly this was quite a popular discussion in the rooms as there were many posts about collaboration versus compromising, and did we sometimes, at Chris Gardner pointed out, think we are collaborating when in fact we are compromising. I think as leaders sometimes we think we have collaborated on a solution with our subordinates, but we fail to realise the impact of our status and power, and in reality, all we have done is compromised or coerced covertly people to our side.

Kathy Brass’s shift from avoiding to collaborative in her example really showed the benefits of fronting up to a conflict. I guess all of us sometimes get caught up in faulty thinking about conflicts ‘should’ not happen? Or many of the other faulty thought processes that block us from being more collaborative (eg. Catastrophizing, generalising etc…). This is where the self talk concepts I find really connect. For many that engage with conflict management as a facilitator skill to develop, they often realise that self talk is an important part of the development plan that needs to be addressed as well.

Pauline provided a very good example of why a shift in her preferred conflict style from accommodating to collaborative could have improved a situation. I also liked your critique of the Guttman comment that HR would normally handle such a role. As you state, they are normally transactional and it was good that you pointed out a more seasoned mediator or facilitator could have brought the group together more effectively, particularly if the more senior executives of the organisation do not feel they have skill to bring their teams together. You wove theory, answered the question and integrated your experience nicely. You also provided an excellent response on SILOs and the challenges you face in your organisation. A great case study that was designed to fuel some conversation further in the discussion room.

Sam Bartholomaeus and Chris Gardner provided a particularly integrative answer which brought a lot of the module’s content and external resources, in to the analysis and application of this discussion topic, including scholarly material. For example, in terms of module content, communication skills,
assertive communication and perceptual positioning. Chris also mapped out the conflict on a great template using earlier information from OB 550 (now you know why it is a pre-requisite for ME 571 😊) These contributions really illustrated well how a lot of what is covered in the unit in separate modules, is in fact, highly related and interwoven as we consider many of the managerial functions.

In terms of FEEDBACK to the entire class I did not feel that these two questions were widely answered amongst the cohort.

What was your first instinct in managing this conflict? Reflect back on the self-assessment questionnaire you completed for this module. Does it have any validity? Did you actually manage the case using your preferred conflict management style? While I felt individuals did talk about conflict style, there was not a lot of discussion as to whether they felt it was valid and if they would have used their preferred style in the case.

Does this conflict resonate with any other conflict situations you have had to manage in your working life? How was this 'real life' conflict situation sorted? Would you have managed it differently now that you have a greater understanding of conflict management? Comment about the perceptual positions practical activity in this module as well? How useful was it for addressing a current 'conflict' you are having at work? Again, while people shared stories of conflict in their workplace and some discussion on how the situation should have been managed, very few people commented on the perceptual position exercise, and for example how it could have been applied here and more importantly how they found it helped them in their own conflict situations.

I found Gillian Loh’s contribution particularly interesting, specifically, her reference

“I have displayed attributes of a typical Asian way of non-confrontational styles (Carlopio and Andrewartha 2008).”

It is an interesting comment because it introduces the whole manner of managing conflict within an international global and cross cultural context? How does one manage conflict in situations where you have a high context culture and a social code of conflict avoidance because of the need to maintain harmony and demonstrate respect? Food for thought.

There were lots of other great postings and if I have missed you here I hope I acknowledged your contributions through an individual posting on the site. For further FEEDBACK on some overall excellent postings, I would encourage you to read, if you haven’t already, read the posts of Christopher Gardner, Samuel Bartholomaeus, Gillian Loh, Nathan Jessup, Pauline Sullivan, Joel Plavecky.

Great work class.

Rick Ladyshewsky