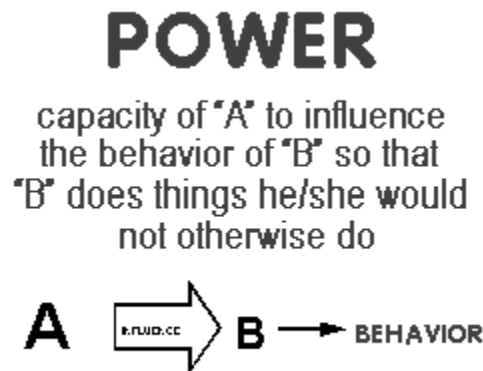


POWER AND ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

During discussions of leadership, the question often arises: "Why or how are leaders able to get followers to follow?" We have already discussed the notion that followers follow if they perceive the leader to be in a position to satisfy their needs. However, our discussion also included frequent reference to the concept of "power". We are now in a position to take a closer look at power.

Definitions of power abound. German sociologist, Max Weber defined power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance." Along similar lines, Emerson suggests that "The power of actor A over actor B is the amount of resistance on the part of B which can be potentially overcome by A." Power appears to involve one person changing the behavior of one or more other individuals -- particularly if that behavior would not have taken place otherwise.



power refers to A's ability to influence B, not A's right to do so; no right is implied in the concept of power...

At this point it is useful to point out that power refers to A's ability to influence B, not A's right to do so; no right is implied in the concept of power. A related concept is authority. Authority does represent the right to expect or secure compliance; authority is backed by legitimacy. For purposes of differentiating between power and authority, let us examine the relationship between the manager of a sawmill and her subordinates. Presumably, the manager has the authority -- the right -- to request that the sawyer cut lumber to certain specifications. On the other hand, the manager would not have the right to request that the sawyer wash her car. However, that sawyer may well accede to her request that he wash her car. Why? It is possible

that the sawyer responds to the power that the manager has over him -- the ability to influence his behavior.

Classification of power : Etzioni has made the classification of power as follows:

COERCIVE POWER : Involves forcing someone to comply with one's wishes. A prison would be an example of a coercive organization.

UTILITARIAN POWER: Is power based on a system of rewards or punishments. Businesses, which use pay raises, promotions, or threats of dismissal, are essentially utilitarian organizations.

NORMATIVE POWER : Is power which rests on the beliefs of the members that the organization has a right to govern their behavior. A religious order would be an example of a utilitarian organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

To help us understand organizations, we might consider them as political systems. The political metaphor helps us understand power relationships in day-to-day organizational relationships. If we accept that power relations exist in organizations, then politics and politicking are an essential part of organizational life.

Politics is a means of recognizing and, ultimately, **reconciling competing interests** within the organization. Competing interests can be reconciled by any number of means. For example, resorting to "rule by the manager" might be seen as an example of totalitarian rule. On the other hand, politics may be a means of creating a noncoercive, or a democratic work environment.

...organizations need mechanisms whereby they reconcile conflicting interests...

Systems of rule... each represent a political orientation with respect to how power is... distributed throughout the organization.

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As mentioned, organizations need mechanisms whereby they reconcile conflicting interests. Hence, organizations, like governments, tend to "rule" by some sort of "system". This "system" is employed to create and maintain "order" among the organization's members.

Systems of rule within organizations range from autocratic to democratic at the extremes. Between these extremes we find bureaucratic and technocratic systems. Whatever the system, each represents a political orientation with respect to how power is applied and distributed

throughout the organization. Each type of organizational "rule" simply draws on different principles of legitimacy.

...politics stems from a diversity of interests...

Organizational actors seek to satisfy not only organizational interests, but also their own... needs; driven by self-interest...

According to Aristotle, politics stems from a diversity of interests. To fully understand the politics of the organization, it is necessary to explore the processes by which people engage in politics. Consistent with Aristotle's conceptualization, it is a given that, within the organization, all employees bring their own interests, wants, desires, and needs to the workplace.

Organizational decision-making and problem-solving, while seemingly a rational process, is also a political process. Organizational actors seek to satisfy not only organizational interests, but also their own wants and needs; driven by self-interest.

Members of a corporation are at one and the same time cooperators... and rivals for the... rewards of successful competition. Rational models of organizational behavior only explain a portion of the behavior observed (Farrell and Peterson, 1982):

Members of a corporation are at one and the same time cooperators in a common enterprise and rivals for the material and intangible rewards of successful competition with each other. (Farrell and Peterson, 1982)

Political behavior has been defined as :

the non-rational influence on decision making

...the successful practice of organizational politics is perceived to lead to a higher level of power... Regardless of the degree to which employees may be committed to the organization's objectives, there can be little doubt that, at least occasionally, personal interests will be incongruent with those of the organization. Organizational politics arises when people think differently and want to act differently.

The tension created by this diversity can be resolved by political means. In an autocratic organization, resolution comes through the directive: "We'll do it my way!". The democratic organization seeks to resolve this diversity of interests by asking: "How shall we do it?" By whatever means an organization resolves this diversity, alternative approaches generally hinge on the power relations between the actors involved.

According to Farrell and Peterson (Farrell and Peterson, 1982), the successful practice of organizational politics is perceived to lead to a higher level of power, and once a higher level of power is attained, there is more opportunity to engage in political behavior

One thing does appear to be clear: the political element of the management process is non-rational. Organizations cannot pretend to engage in rational decision-making processes so long as political influences play a role -- and they always will!

For purposes of understanding organizational political behavior, Farrell and Peterson (1982) proposed a three-dimensional typology. The dimensions are:

where the political activity takes place -- inside or outside the organization,

the direction of the attempted influence -- vertically or laterally in the organization, and

the legitimacy of the political action.

- 1) Functional Vs Dysfunctional Conflict,
- 2) Sources And Types Of Conflict: Individual, Group, And Organisational;
- 3) The Process And Approaches To Conflict Resolution

CONFLICT IN ORGANIZATIONS

What happens when people in an organization disagree about the desired outcomes of that organization?

What happens when peoples' values, attitudes or motives differ?

What happens when I suspect that you disagree with me?

In each case, the answer is that we have conflict; tension manifests itself as conflict.

Conflict is frequently characterized by:

- ❖ opposition
- ❖ scarcity
- ❖ blockage

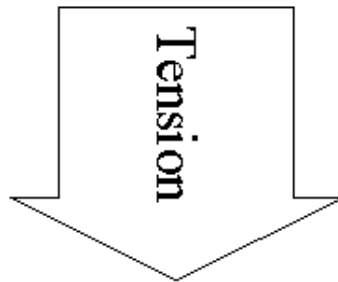
Specifically, we define intergroup conflict as a process of opposition and confrontation; when one group obstructs the progress of another.

Scarcity of resources can bring about conflict as each department within the organization seeks to secure for itself the scarce resources it requires for its survival; each department acts out of self interest. In order to secure these scarce resources, a department may block another department's access to the resources -- this too contributes to the level of conflict. Furthermore, one party's opposition to the proposals or action of a second party may also result in conflict.

It is also useful to distinguish between conflict and competition. Competition takes place within a structure of rules. Conflict, on the other hand, generally involves some interference by one party with the other party's pursuit of its goals.

PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF CONFLICT IDENTIFIED:

- ◆ communication failure
- ◆ personality conflict
- ◆ value differences
- ◆ goal differences
- ◆ methodological differences
- ◆ substandard performance
- ◆ lack of cooperation
- ◆ differences regarding authority
- ◆ differences regarding responsibility
- ◆ competition over resources
- ◆ non-compliance with rules



Conflict

Levels of Conflict

Conflict can occur within an employee, between individuals or groups, and across organizations as they compete. Chapter 4 examines role conflict (different role expectations) and role ambiguity (lack of clarity over how to act) .

INTRAPERSONAL CONFLICT

Although most role conflict occurs when an employee's supervisor or peers send conflicting expectations to him or her, it is possible for intrapersonal role conflict to emerge . from within ~ an individual, as a result of competing roles taken. For example, Sabrina may see herself as both the manager of a team responsible for ~protecting and enlarging its resources and as a member of the executive staff ' charged with the task of reducing operating costs. .

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Interpersonal conflicts are a serious problem to many people because they deeply affect a person's emotions. There is a need to protect one's self image and self esteem from damage by others: When self-concept is threatened, serious upset occurs and relationships deteriorate. Sometimes the temperaments of two persons are incompatible and their personalities clash. In other instances, conflicts develop from failures of communication or differences in perception.

An office employee was upset by a conflict with another employee in a different department. It seemed to the first employee that there was no way to resolve the conflict. However, when a counselor explained the different organizational roles of the two employees as seen from the whole organization's point of view, the first employee's perceptions changed and the conflict vanished.

INTERGROUP CONFLICT

Intergroup conflicts, for example, between different departments, also cause problems. On a major scale such conflicts are something like the wars between juvenile gangs. Each group sets out to undermine the other, gain power, and improve its image. Conflicts arise from such causes as different viewpoints, group loyalties, and competition for resources. Resources are limited in any organization and are increasingly tight as organizations struggle to be competitive. Since most groups feel that they need more than they can secure; the seeds of intergroup conflict exist wherever there are limited resources. For example, the production department may want new and more efficient machinery while, at the same time, the sales department wants to expand its sales force, but there are only enough resources to supply the needs of one group.

We noted earlier that some conflict can be constructive, and this is certainly true at the intergroup level. Here, conflict may provide a clue that a critical problem between two departments needs to be resolved rather than allowed to smolder. Unless issues are brought into the open, they cannot be fully understood or explored. Once intergroup conflict emerges, it creates a motivating force encouraging the two groups to resolve the conflict so as to move the relationship to a new equilibrium. Viewed this way, intergroup conflict is sometimes escalated-intentionally stimulated in organizations because of its constructive consequences. On other occasions it may be desirable to de-escalate it-intentionally decrease it because of its potentially destructive consequences. The managerial challenge is to keep conflict at a moderate level (where it is most likely to stimulate creative thought but not interfere with performance). Conflict should not become so intense that individual parties either hide it or escalate it to destructive levels.

Sources of Conflict

Interpersonal conflict arises from a variety of sources.

Organizational change.

People hold differing views over the direction to go, the routes to take and their likely success, the resources to be used, and the probable outcomes. With the pace of technological, political, and social change increasing and the marketplace hurtling toward a global economy, organizational changes will be ever-present.

Personality clashes.

We point out in Chapter 1 that the concept of individual differences is fundamental to organizational behavior. Not everyone thinks, feels, looks, or acts alike. Some people simply "rub us the wrong way," and we cannot necessarily explain why. Although personality differences can cause conflict, they are also a rich resource for creative problem solving. Employees need to accept, respect, and learn how to use these differences when they arise.

Different sets of values.

People also hold different beliefs and adhere to different value systems. Their philosophies may diverge, or their ethical values may lead them in different directions. The resulting disputes can be difficult to resolve, since they are less objective than disagreements over alternative products, inventory levels, or promotional campaigns.

Threats to status.

The social rank of a person in a group, is very important to many individuals. When one's status is threatened, face saving becomes a powerful driving force as a person struggles to maintain a desired image. Conflict may arise between the defensive person and whoever created a threat to status.

Contrasting perceptions.

People perceive things differently as a result of their prior experiences and expectations. Since their perceptions are very real to them (and they feel that these perceptions must be equally apparent to others), they sometimes fail to realize that others may hold contrasting perceptions of the same object or event. Conflict may arise unless employees learn to see things as others see them and help others do the same.

Lack of trust.

Every continuing relationship requires some degree of trust—the capacity to depend on each other's word and actions. Trust opens up boundaries, provides opportunities in which to act, and enriches the entire social fabric of an organization. It takes time to build, but it can be destroyed in an

instant. When someone has a real or perceived reason not to trust another, the potential for conflict rises.

grow among people who need to coordinate their efforts. At the individual level some people may feel defeated, while the self image of others will decline, and personal stress levels (discussed in Chapter 16) will rise. Predictably, the motivation level of some employees will be reduced. It is important, then, for managers to be aware of the potential for interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, to anticipate their likely outcomes, and to use appropriate conflict resolution strategies.

SOME PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF CONFLICT IDENTIFIED:

- communication failure
- personality conflict
- value differences
- goal differences
- methodological differences
- substandard performance
- lack of cooperation
- differences regarding authority
- differences regarding responsibility
- competition over resources
- non-compliance with rules

...three general causes of conflict:

1. COMMUNICATION
2. ORGANIZATIONAL
3. PERSONAL

For purposes of analysis of the causes of conflict, it may be useful to identify three general categories:

COMMUNICATION

1. semantic difficulties
2. Words do not mean the same things to everyone who hears or uses them.
3. If one person were to ask another to "level out the gravel" on a construction site, the words "level out" could mean different things to both party's. The differences in perceived meaning are due to semantics.
4. If the communication is related to an activity that is critical to the organization, a semantic misunderstanding can easily lead to conflict.
5. misunderstandings
6. "noise"
7. "Noise" in the communications process can take a number of forms. Most obviously, noise is physical -- the parties in the organization cannot "hear" one another because too

many people are talking at once, there is a radio blaring in the background, or the construction workers on the street are using a jackhammer.

8. Noise also comes in the form of distorted signals -- the fax message is misunderstood because poor quality fax paper makes it difficult to read the letters on the page.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

group interdependence

The greater the degree of interdependence, the greater is the likelihood of communication difficulties (see above).

Greater interdependence also increases the possibility that the parties need to share resources. If these resources are scarce, the probability of conflict is increased.

At a college, the lives of students and instructors are impacted by the Timetabling Department. The academic departments must submit their timetabling requests to the Timetabling Department. In turn, the Timetabling Department completes timetables which govern the lives of instructors and students. Neither the Timetabling Department nor the academic departments can do their jobs effectively without the highest degree of cooperation.

This interdependence can become the cause of interdepartmental conflict. If either end of this interdependent relationship does not provide the other with adequate information, poor performance results. In this case, the department initiating the poor performance becomes the recipient of the other's poor performance -- conflict escalates.

1. task specialization
2. reward systems
3. authority relationships
4. group or organizational size

PERSONAL VARIABLES

personality types

value systems

RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

- CONFRONTATION
demanding apologies and redress
Confrontation may be...
Positive: may be necessary when quick decisions are required
Negative: may suppress or intimidate

- AVOIDANCE

refusing to acknowledge that a problem exists
reducing interaction

Avoidance may be..

positive: when conflict is minor or when there is little chance of winning

negative: failure to address important issues

- ACCOMMODATION

apologizing and conceding the issue to the other party

Accommodation may be..

positive: useful when the outcome is more useful to the other party or when harmony is important

negative: may lead to lack of influence or recognition

- COMPROMISE

bargaining until a decision or solution is reached

Compromise may be

positive: may be practical if both parties have equal power or strength

negative: expediency may favor short-term solutions

- COLLABORATION

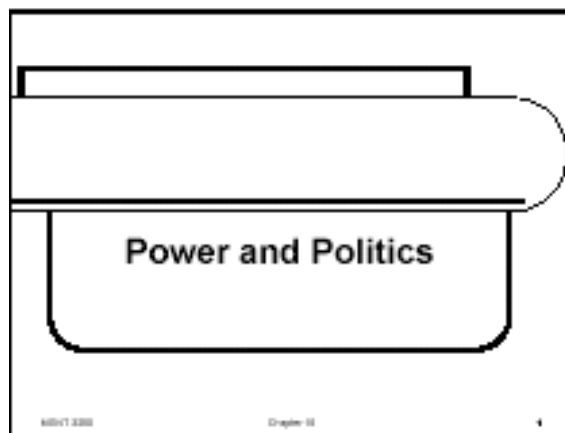
treats the need to repair or maintain the relationship as a problem both parties should be involved in

Collaboration may be

requires parties to recast the conflict as a problem-solving situation

the dilemma is "depersonalized" as the focus becomes one of solving the problem as opposed to defeating the other person(s)

Points to Remember



What is power?

- Power is the ability to ...
 - Get someone to do something you want done.
 - Make things happen in the way you want.
- Influence is ...
 - What you have when you exercise power.
 - Expressed by others' behavioral response to your exercise of power.

MGAT 200

Chapter 10

3

Position Power

- Derives from organizational sources.
- Types of position power.
 - Reward power.
 - Coercive power.
 - Legitimate power.
 - Process power.
 - Information power.
 - Representative power.



MGAT 200

Chapter 10

4

Personal Power

- Derives from individual sources.
- Types of personal power.
 - Expert power.
 - Rational persuasion.
 - Referent power.



MGAT 200

Chapter 10

5

Directions of Influence

- Three dimensions of managerial power and influence.
 - Downward.
 - Upward.
 - Lateral.
- Effective managers build and maintain position power and personal power to exercise downward, upward, and lateral influence.



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Chapter 10

4

Influence Strategies

- Reason.
- Friendliness.
- Coalition.
- Bargaining.
- Assertiveness.
- Higher authority.
- Sanctions.



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Chapter 10

4

Empowerment

- The process by which managers help others to acquire and use the power needed to make decisions affecting themselves and their work.
- Considers power to be something that can be shared by everyone working in flatter and more collegial organizations.
- Provides the foundation for self-managing work teams and other employee involvement groups.

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Chapter 10

3

What are organizational politics?

- Machiavellian tradition of organizational politics.
 - Emphasizes self-interest and the use of nonsanctioned means.
 - Organizational politics is defined as the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through nonsanctioned influence means.

What is conflict?

Conflict occurs whenever:

- Disagreements exist in a social situation over issues of substance.
- Emotional antagonisms cause frictions between individuals or groups.



Types of Conflict

- ① **Substantive conflict.**
 - A fundamental disagreement over ends or goals to be pursued and the means for their accomplishment.
- ② **Emotional conflict.**
 - Interpersonal difficulties that arise over feelings of anger, mistrust, dislike, fear, resentment, etc.



Levels of Conflict

- ⊗ Intrapersonal conflicts.
- ⊗ Interpersonal conflicts.
- ⊗ Intergroup conflicts.
- ⊗ Interorganizational conflicts.



Functional vs. Dysfunctional Conflicts

Functional (or constructive) conflict.

- ⊗ Results in positive benefits to individuals, the group, or the organization.

Dysfunctional (or destructive) conflict.

- ⊗ Works to the disadvantage of individuals, the group, or the organization.




Stages of Conflict

- ⊗ **Conflict antecedents .**
 - ⊗ Set the conditions for conflict.
- ⊗ **Perceived conflict.**
 - ⊗ Substantive or emotional differences are sensed.
- ⊗ **Felt conflict.**
 - ⊗ Tension creates motivation to act.
- ⊗ **Manifest conflict.**
 - ⊗ Conflict resolution or suppression.
 - ⊗ Conflict aftermath.

Causes of Conflict

- ⊗ Vertical conflicts.
- ⊗ Horizontal conflicts.
- ⊗ Line-staff conflicts.
- ⊗ Role Conflicts.
- ⊗ Work-flow Interdependencies
- ⊗ Domain Ambiguities
- ⊗ Resource Scarcity
- ⊗ Power or Value Asymmetries



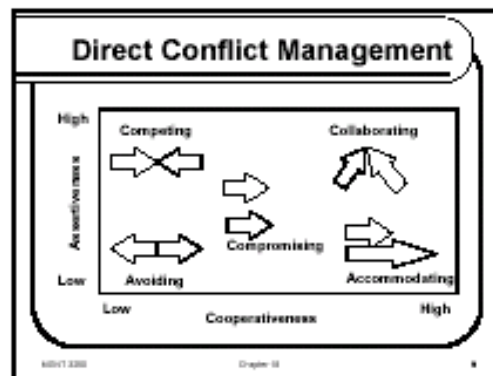
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Indirect Conflict Management

- ⊗ Reduced interdependence
- ⊗ Appeals to common goals
- ⊗ Hierarchical referral.
- ⊗ Alterations in the use of mythology and scripts.



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Who Wins?

- Lose-lose conflict.
- Win-lose conflict.
- Win-Win conflict.

