

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a natural part of life, it can arise anywhere. If conflict occurs in your organization don't panic! Conflicts may arise between students, the university, the advisor(s), etc. It is important for the organization leadership to have a firm grasp on how to efficiently manage conflicts when they arise.

Styles of conflict management –

- Competing – Individual pursues his/her interests at another's expense
- Accommodating – Individual neglects his/her own interests to satisfy another
- Avoiding – Individual does not deal with conflict
- Compromising – Individual seeks to find expedient, mutually acceptable solution which somewhat satisfies both parties' needs.
- Collaboration – Individual seeks to find solution which fully satisfies both parties. This is the type of conflict management that is suggested for student organizations to use.

Helpful hints for conflict management –

- Don't take sides.
- Employ a win-win strategy when possible so that each person can walk away feeling understood and feeling as if they won part of the conflict.
- Help assure that each person's personal integrity is maintained and that individuals do not feel humiliated or put down.
- Get the conflicts out in the open where they can be discussed among the individuals.
- Be aware of barriers to conflict resolution (i.e. defensiveness, judgmental reactions, etc.).
- Don't heighten the conflict by bringing in more people than necessary.

Seven steps to conflict management

- Step One – Initiate Contact. Understandably, first you must make contact with the person to be confronted in an appropriate setting. It is best to pick a private place where both individuals do not feel threatened. Also, it is advisable to not "gang-up" on the individual during the initial confrontation.
- Step Two – Establish Rapport. This means the creation of a sense of mutual trust - a sense that both people present really care about each other. Attempts to create an artificial rapport will fail as people are usually more sensitive than we might believe.
- Step Three – Identify Issue/Problem. Working with the person, identify the issue or problem that prompted you to seek him or her out. He/she must agree that there is a problem. If not, you must return to Step Two.
- Step Four – Problem is Agreed Upon. The individual being confronted must agree that a problem does, in fact, exist. Otherwise, the person will not buy-in to the following steps.
- Step Five: Obtain Attainable Commitment. After the person agrees that a problem exists, you must mutually agree upon a realistic commitment on his/her part. It must be a commitment which the person has the potential to fulfill.
- Step Six – Keep Commitment. On a mutually predetermined date and time, get together again with the individual to determine whether or not he/she has been able to keep the commitment. If so, move to Step Seven. If not, return to Step Five and re-determine what an attainable commitment from the person is.
- Step Seven – Praise Success. When a success is realized, offer praise and positive feedback.

Adapted from Adrian College

http://www.adrian.edu/student_life/student_organizations/resource_documents/conflict_resolution.pdf
and from the University of Kansas

http://www.silc.ku.edu/leaderbits/conflict_resolution.pdf