

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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Conflict Management

Introduction

If there is one word that can perfectly describe the nature of the human population in its entirety, it is “diversity”. We live in a world full of people from all walks of life. Some of the areas that people differ in include religion, geographical location, ethnicity, race, sexuality, intelligence, language, and culture, among others. However, despite their differences, it is imperative to note that we are all under the dome of humanity and it is our sole responsibility to live as a family. The differences are there to make us unique and diverse but never to separate humanity and be a source of discrimination or segregation. Many are the times we have heard of stories of people being treated differently because they come from a different race, sex, religion, and any of the factors above.

Unfortunately, such discriminated people will sulk and suffer silently because more often than not, they are the minority and this brings us to the issue of the tyranny of numbers. They remain voiceless among those who do not appreciate diversity and feel misplaced (Fryer and Loury, 2013). If people viewed diversity as a means of appreciating one another’s uniqueness and not about how we differ, a lot of unnecessary conflicts would be avoided, and the world would be a better place. In coming up with a diverse team at the workplace, a lot of factors need to be considered. Such factors include possible conflicts and how to deal with them, how to achieve a win-win in cases of conflicts and most importantly, the aspect of compromise is of ultimate importance.

Conflict Management and Diversity

The value of a diverse team is its capacity to challenge the norm or groupthink. A diverse team boosts organizational performance as well as improves the decision-making abilities. It is said that two heads are better than one and for that reason, teamwork has for a long time been known to conceive some of the greatest ideas. However, a diverse team also faces challenges. Where two or more people meet, there are bound to arise conflicts and disagreement. The first and most common source of conflict is ideological differences. Conflicts arising from ideological differences are perhaps the worst of their kind because not only is everyone entitled to their decision but also people have a tendency to think that they are right. Very few people are always willing to back down from arguments and see things from others' perspective. It is for that reason that a team leader should be good in handling such conflicts. Taking, for instance, a marketing team, people will differ in ideas about what is the best marketing method, target consumers, marketing plan, budget, and role assignment.

The second cause of conflict in a diverse team is the difference in values and personalities. Different people have certain values that they hold dear in their life that may or may not be necessarily similar to others. Some people are introverts and silent in nature, and this may be confused with being dumb or proud by others. Similarly, in a diverse team, some people tend to be more vocal and expressive, which might be mistaken for being loud or being an attention-seeker. The difference in personalities in a diverse team is a real problem, and it is critical to find a leader who is capable of dealing with employee conflict promptly to promote a healthy working environment. A good manager should take action whenever necessary and in the minimum time possible. It is very wrong just to think that a conflict will simply disappear if given enough time because it is such conflicts that grow into major problems (Gross, 2010).

Some of the antecedent conditions that will play a role in the conflict process include job position, previous experiences, and competition. More often than not, team members with a superior post feel more entitled to their opinion and tend towards wanting things to go their way. Such members highly disregard other member's opinion and think they are always right. When such members come across another opinionated member in the diverse team, it is highly unlikely that they will get along. It is the job of the leader to remind the team that everyone is equal and discourage superiority complex. Another antecedent factor is competition which has been known to tear many teams apart. Where two or more people compete, they are reluctant to support one another in developing the team, and this affects performance. Therefore, they lose the whole sense of teamwork and become rivals whose goal is to outshine the other (Gross, 2010).

When resolving a conflict among members of a diverse team, it is important to remain unbiased and level-headed. The decision made should be more objective than subjective because the latter might end up aggravating the conflict situation.

Conclusion

Diversity should be embraced as it functions to bring people together in the event of learning other people's way of life. It is through diversity that the virtues of individuality and cultural exchange are made possible. A wise saying goes that no man is an island and therefore, a population that does not embrace diversity lags behind in more ways than one. Such a community will lead a very segregated life and miss out on the fun, adventures, and interesting cultures of others.

References

Fryer, R. and Loury, G. (2013). Valuing diversity. *Journal of Political Economy*, 121(4), pp.747-774.

Gross, M. (2010). Conflict coaching: Conflict management strategies and skills for the individual. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 21(3), pp.356-360.