Group Work

Managing Conflict

The main types of conflict that you might face when working in groups include:

1. **Goal Conflict –** This type of conflict occurs, when certain members want to achieve just a passing grade whereas, others want to achieve the highest grade in the assignment.
2. **Task Conflict –** these conflicts are either disagreements among members of your group regarding ideas and opinions about the tasks going to be performed or disagreements regarding the outline of the assignment (Weingart & Jehn 2009).
3. **Intragroup relationship conflicts –** are disagreements or incompatibilities among group members about personal issues that are not assignment related (Weingart & Jehn 2009).

STEPS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT ISSUES

1. **First you need to acknowledge that a conflict exists** – having this conversation is a very honest and transparent approach in the resolution process.
2. **Go around the group and seek the members individual thoughts –** Before any kind of problem solving these emotions and thoughts should be expressed and acknowledged.
3. **Define the conflict –** What is the disagreement about? While it is best for one person to initiate these conversations, in a university group allow time for members to speak up and take the initiative of problem solving
4. **Find common areas of agreement –** While discussing in the group, establish areas of agreement. Such as, agreement of the existence of a conflict, agreement on the purpose of resolving the conflict (generally it is to complete the assignment and get a high grade). Agreement on accountability - means if everyone understands that they are accountable to contribute equally in the assignment
5. **Identify probable solutions** – Collaboratively create a list of solutions that might result in a win-win situation for everyone. The win-win situation in a university group is ideally when everyone prioritises the importance of the assignment and establishes that "if I invest 2 hrs everyday in the assignment, the outcome is going to be phenomenal" or if all members take responsibility of their tasks and delivers it on time the outcome is going to be great. The group must collaboratively discuss these solutions. By asking questions such as
   a. If we follow "X" method of working, what will be the outcome?
   b. If we continue the current method of working in the group, what will be the outcome? Will it be a bad grade? Will group relationships be affected? Will there be trust amongst members?
6. **Agree upon one solution –** Everybody should seek confirmation and agreement on the set plan of action to follow. A long awkward silence, is a sign of resistance to the solution. As a result, we must go around the group individually to seek confirmation or any alternative solutions. And finally, as a group you all must establish confirmation on a said plan of action.
7. **Determine a Follow-Up procedure –** As a group, one member of the group must either volunteer or be selected to take the responsibility of following up with individual members on their respective tasks personally and help to advocate any problems that arise in the group by initiating a conversation for a meeting.

A functional and efficient group is based on the factor of trust, responsibility and accountability. The whole process above is a problem solving and collaborative approach to conflict resolution.

For more information explore the [12 principles of a problem solving approach to conflict resolution](#).