

**MANAGING
TEAM
CONFLICT
WORKBOOK**

A BASIC BUSINESS VICTORY GUIDE

This book was developed by James H. Saylor

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FORWARD

This basic business workbook is part of the VICTORY series. For over 30 years, the pursuit of a simple, easy-to-use, proven, inexpensive management system for any organization has been my focus. MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ is this system. MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ system includes:

Visioning creates a common focus

Involving everyone establishes a superior organization

Continuously improving achieves excellence

Training, educating, coaching, facilitating, mentoring develops a learning culture

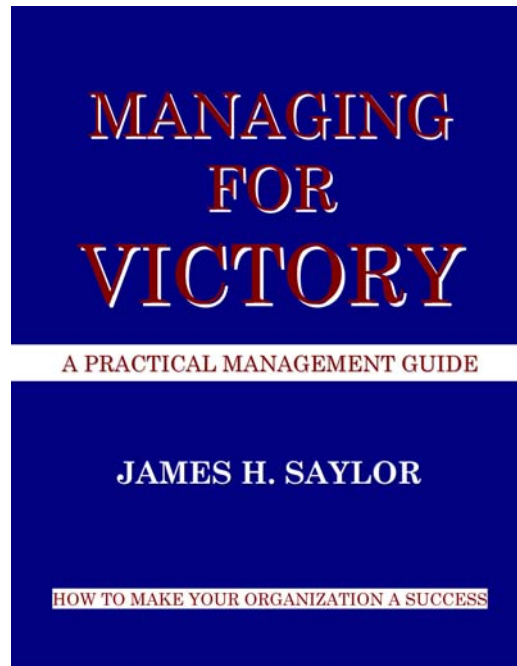
Owning the work fosters empowerment

Recognizing and rewarding builds high performance

Yearning ensures success

Customers drive VICTORY

Progressive Leaders guide VICTORY



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James H. Saylor is the founder of The Business Coach, an organization focusing on helping other organizations achieve their specific VICTORY. He has assisted many organizations in discovering, designing, developing and doing successful management systems. In addition, he has led, managed, coached, trained and facilitated many individuals and organizations in achieving their specific VICTORY. Jim has over 30 years experience in operations, organizational development, sales, marketing, training, project management, quality and logistics. He has prepared and presented many highly proclaimed training seminars and workshops globally. Jim is a widely recognized leading champion of Total Quality Management in the 1980s and 1990s. Jim is the author of the *TQM Simplified*, and co-author of *Customer-Driven Project Management* published by McGraw-Hill. Jim's latest book is MANAGING FOR VICTORY™. For further information about Jim's books, guides and workshops see websites: www.managingforvictory.com or www.thebusinesscoach.org or email coachjim@thebusinesscoach.org.

MANAGING TEAM CONFLICT

Conflict can exist whenever two or more people get together. Conflict and agreement can be both positive and negative. Conflict is positive when it causes a broadening of ideas, stimulates innovation and creativity, and leads to improved results. Conflict can be negative when it leads to tension, frustration, confusion, and less quality and productivity.

Differences exist in every organization, and those differences are an advantage to any organization that has learned to manage conflict. Managing conflict in a team environment involves maintaining teamwork. Conflict must be managed by the team.

Dysfunctional conflict will be minimized by realizing the following:

- Differences exist in every organization
- Conflict can be positive
- Agreement can be negative (groupthink)
- Conflict can be controlled

Managing Team Conflict Considerations

Make the most of individual differences

Act to discourage groupthink

Nurture “positive” conflict

Act to control conflict

Get the team to acknowledge conflict

Encourage open and honest discussion of conflict

Recognizing Conflict Symptoms

The first step in managing conflict is recognizing that conflict exists. Everyone on the team including the team leader, team members, and especially the team facilitator must be constantly alert to the symptoms of conflict and groupthink. Groupthink is the tendency of groups to agree even though it would have an adverse effect on the situation. Some of the symptoms of conflict and groupthink are:

Symptoms

- S**topping open communication
- Y**ielding to win/lose solutions
- M**aking little movement toward solution
- P**ressure to stop challenges
- T**aking sides (we/they)
- O**bserving a lack of building on suggestions
- M**embers silent
- S**topping any resistance

Do You Have Any Conflict Symptoms?

In the space below, describe the possible symptoms of conflict including groupthink on your team.

Taking Advantage of Differences

Differences exist in every organization. These differences are an advantage to any organization that can harness this vast resource. Diversity is one advantage of an organization's major strength. Teams must take advantage of their differences to be successful, and major benefits can be gained by paying attention to differences. For instance, an organization can use its people of different cultures and backgrounds to research a potential new market or product targeted toward a specific culture or background. Further, an organization can gain new ideas from a diverse work force, and the new ideas can lead to improved operations, decreased cost, and/or time savings. The following is a list of potential sources of conflict that can be beneficial to an organization.

Differences Exist In Every Organization

- C**ultures and backgrounds
- O**pinions
- N**eeds and expectations
- F**acts and perceptions
- L**evels, departments, and organizations
- I**nterests, personalities, and egos
- C**ompetencies, knowledge, and skill
- T**argets, missions, goals, and objectives

Look at the categories of differences, for each category determine the amount of differences on your team. Mark your rating in the boxes using the following rating scale for your evaluation.

| Same | | Mixed | | Different |
|------|---|-------|---|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

How Can Differences Benefit Your Team?

Instructions:

1. Brainstorm potential differences that exist in your team.
Write this list in the left column below.
2. Determine possible benefits of these differences.
Write this list in the right column below.

Goal: Take Advantages Of Team's Differences

| Team Differences | Potential Benefits |
|------------------|--------------------|
| | |

Conflict Can Be Positive

Conflict can be positive. Conflict leads to the pursuit of win/win solutions. It allows the team members to observe other team members point of view. Conflict displays the team working through open communication. It forces the team to take an organization-wide view. By focusing on mission, any conflict takes personalities out of issue. Conflict invites trust and involvement while viewing the entire issue. It provides the opportunity to examine different sides of an issue. All of this leads to effective consensus decision making, which establishes and maintains teamwork.

Positive Conflict

Pursues win/win situations

Observes other's point of view

Shows open communications

Instills an organization-wide view

Takes personalities out of the issue

Invites trust and involvement

Views entire issue

Examines different sides of an issue

What Is Your Experience?

In the space below, describe from your experience a situation where conflict was positive.

Agreement Can Be Negative

Agreement can be negative. This is commonly called groupthink. Groupthink is the tendency of the group to agree, and that may have an adverse effect on the effectiveness of the team to achieve the mission. Groupthink comes from many sources. Sometimes groupthink results from the good intention of maintaining the cohesiveness of the team. In other cases groupthink stems from fear. The team members may be afraid of losing their job, losing face, or offending the leader, management or other team members. Regardless of the source, groupthink must be identified and controlled.

The following are some specific actions to overcome groupthink:

Agree

Appoint a devil's advocate

Get open discussion on all issues

Recognize impact of status differences

Examine all agreement without resistance

Evaluate all views/sides of the issue

What Is Your Experience?

In the space below, describe from your experience where agreement was negative. What was the effect on the organization?

Conflict Can Be Controlled

Conflict can be controlled. Cooperate rather than compete. Orient toward the issue; not the person. Negotiate win/win solutions. Take an organization-wide perspective. Recognize conflict as natural. Observe empathy with other's views. Limit perceived status differences.

Control Conflict

Cooperate rather than compete

Orient toward the issue; not the person

Negotiate win/win solution(s)

Take an organization-wide perspective

Recognize conflict as natural

Observe empathy to other's views

Limit perceived status differences

What Is Your Experience?

In the space below, describe from your experience where you controlled conflict. What was the situation? What did you do to control the conflict?

Acting to Manage Conflict

Conflict can be managed during the day-to-day operations of the team. First, avoid any face saving situation. If honor and pride are at stake, people will defend their position even when they themselves realize they may not have the answer. Second, continuously self-examine attitudes. Sometimes a person may develop an attitude triggered by some emotional response. This may be detrimental to teamwork. Focus on the mission and maintain a positive attitude throughout all team activities. Third, target win/win solutions. This allows the team to avoid we or they situations. Fourth, involve everyone in all team activities. People do not agree with their own contributions. If all team members participate they will support the decision. Fifth, observe the limits of arguing. Arguing is useless. It does not lead to positive solutions. Sixth, nurture differences of opinion. Everyone is right in their own mind. There are no right or wrong answers. Differences of opinion can be used to stimulate other ideas. Seventh, support constructive relationships. Relationships are the key to all teamwork. Build long-term relationships on a foundation of honesty and trust. This allows open and free communication which is the real key to conflict management.

Conflict Management Actions

- A**void “face-saving” situations
- C**ontinuously self-examine attitudes
- T**arget win/win situations
- I**nvolve everyone
- O**bserve the limits of arguing
- N**urture differences of opinion
- S**upport constructive relationships

How to Deal With Conflict

Although managing conflict by maintaining and building teamwork is a constant challenge for the team, sometimes conflict needs to be dealt with directly. The action process for dealing with conflict is as follows:

1. Acknowledge the conflict.

Any person on the team suspecting conflict that is detrimental to the team must feel obliged to bring the conflict to the attention of the team. A common signal for possible conflict is calling a time out by making a sign of a “T” with two hands. This asks the team permission to stop all team activities to pursue the resolution of the conflict.

2. Make it a team issue.

State the specific behaviors that indicate conflict.

Get the team to take ownership for the conflict by outlining the possible impact of the conflict on the team.

3. Get the team to describe the conflict.

Ask everyone’s views of the situation.

4. Clarify the conflict requiring resolution.

Write the specific conflict on a flipchart or board. This ensures understanding of the conflict. Try to focus on the situation and not make it personal.

5. Find the common ground of agreement and disagreement.

The team needs to first recognize where there is agreement, before working on the areas of disagreement.

6. Agree on a plan to resolve the conflict.

Team members work together to develop an action plan to overcome the specific areas of disagreement or to move forward with the team’s mission.

Note

From time to time there are interpersonal conflicts on a team. This process can only resolve these interpersonal conflicts in relation to the effects on the team. Some interpersonal conflicts go beyond the boundaries of the team, they should be dealt with separate from this process.

Managing Conflict Worksheet

1. Acknowledge the conflict.

Any person on the team suspecting conflict that is detrimental to the team must feel obliged to bring the conflict to the attention of the team. A common signal for possible conflict is calling a time out by making a sign of a “T” with two hands. This asks the team permission to stop all team activities to pursue the resolution of the conflict.

Answer the following questions before deciding to intervene.

What is the symptom of the conflict? Be specific.

Is the conflict a team issue or an interpersonal issue?

Circle the answer you feel is most accurate.

Team Team and interpersonal Interpersonal

Is the conflict detrimental to the team?

Circle the answer you feel is most accurate.

Yes Maybe No

Is the conflict serious enough to require immediate attention?

Circle the answer you feel is most accurate.

Yes Maybe No

You should intervene immediately if all the answers in the left column are circled above. If you circled the middle column above, you may consider consulting the team leader for intervention. If you circled the right column, you may decide to do nothing or consider intervention outside the team environment.

Check the type of intervention appropriate for your situation:

- during the team meeting
- outside the meeting
- escalate to team leader
- notify other authority
- do nothing at all

You should intervene as soon as possible, if you can check any of the boxes below:

- affects team's task or team's relationships
- groupthink
- people are tense, frustrated or confused
- affects balance of participation and influence
- impacts open and honest communication
- slow down of team's pace
- unable to perform problem solving or decision making

2. **Make it a team issue.**

State the specific behaviors that indicate conflict.

List the specific behaviors or observable conduct

Get the team to take ownership for the conflict by outlining the possible impact of the conflict on the team.

Possible Impacts of Conflict on Team

3. Get the team to describe the conflict.

Ask everyone's views of the situation.

Views of the Conflict

4. **Clarify the conflict requiring resolution.**

Write the specific conflict on a flipchart or board. This ensures understanding of the conflict. Try to focus on the situation and not make it personal.

Description of the Conflict

5. **Find the common ground of agreement and disagreement.**

The team needs to first recognize where there is agreement, before working on the areas of disagreement.

Agreement

Disagreement

6. Agree on a plan to resolve the conflict.

Team members work together to develop an action plan to overcome the specific areas of disagreement or to move forward with the team's mission.

Dealing With Conflict Action Plan

| Action | Who | When | Status |
|--------|-----|------|--------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

