Review of "methods of resolving interpersonal conflict"

Review of " Methods of Resolving Interpersonal Conflict" Mark R. Long Morris Graduate School of Management Review of " Methods of Resolving Interpersonal Conflict" The article (Burke 1969) describes a number of methods for negotiating and handling conflicts. In this article the author describes both effective and ineffective methods ranging from force to withdrawal. Each method is defined by a number of examples. The most effective technique, Confrontation Problem Solving, is identified and described in terms of its characteristics.

The second best resolution technique defined in Table 1 is Forcing while the worst technique was also Forcing. Forcing was the second best resolution technique under the Effective Resolution column at 24. 5%, following the best technique at 58. 5% Confrontation Problem Solving. Forcing also was the worst resolution technique at 79. 2% under the Ineffective Resolution column. Forcing was seen to be effective by the " winners" of a win-lose conflict. It was seen by " losers" of a win-lose conflict to be ineffective.

Forcing is perceived as an effective method of resolving conflict by the victor, but not by the vanquished. From the first four examples in the text (Burke 1969) the best example is number 4. This example highlighted the fact that through problem solving both parties can benefit. Working through their differences they reached a solution that was optimal to both of them. This created a win-win scenario. With neither side feeling the " victim", a better resolution was discovered. They can now build on this success to resolve the next problem without any carryover of negative history between the parties.

From the remaining examples in the text (Burke 1969) the worst examples are numbers 5, 6, 7. All three illustrated Forcing as a method of conflict resolution. A win-lose situation is created. In each of the cases the superior prevails over the subordinate. This creates a win-lose situation where only one side perceives the outcome as positive. Win-lose outcomes are less likely to be accepted voluntarily. One person gets what they want and feels vindicated, while the other person loses out and feels cheated or afailure.

The outcome is that future conflict resolution will be prejudiced and may not lead to an optimal resolution. To summarize the thirteen characteristics of Confrontation as a conflict-resolving you first need to recognize that Confrontation is a conscious and systematic attempt to maximize thegoalsof both parties through collaborative problem solving. The conflict is seen as a problem to be solved rather than a war to be won. The important distinction is to view this as both parties versus the problem, rather than one party versus the other party.

This method focuses on the needs and constraints of both parties rather than emphasizing strategies designed to conquer. Full problem definition, analysis and development of alternatives precede consensus decisions on mutually agreeable solutions. The parties work toward common and super-ordinate goals. These goals can only be attained by both parties pulling together. There is an emphasis on the quality of the long term relationships between the parties, rather than short term accommodations. Communicationis open and direct rather than secretive and calculating.

Threat and coercion are proscribed. The assumption is made that integrative agreements are possible given the full range of resources existing in the relationship. Attitudes and behaviors are directed toward an increase of trust and acceptance rather than an escalation of suspicion and hostility. The Confrontational approach requires a very high degree of patience and skill in human relations and problem solving. The article concludes that conflict is not a bad thing in contrast to the text (Meredith and Mantel 2009) concerning the win-win approach to negotiation.

The article suggests that a more realistic approach to conflict views conflict as necessary. That conflict can be used to define a problem more accurately and used to seek the best alternative for resolution of the problem. Without conflict there is no change. Change implies conflict because vested interests are challenged. Win-win outcomes occur when each side of a problem feels they have won. Since both sides benefit from such a scenario, any resolutions to the conflict are likely to be accepted voluntarily.

The process of integrative bargaining aims to achieve, through cooperation, win-win outcomes. Conflict is an inevitable fact of human existence. If we work to understand and manage it effectively, we can improve both the satisfaction and productivity of our social relationships. Effective conflict management is indispensable if coordinated efforts and productive results are to be achieved. Since conflict may have functional as well as dysfunctional consequences, it is essential that individuals explore various methods and techniques of conflict management.

Individuals that can increase their use of problem-solving in interpersonal conflict can create a better working experience and achieve more constructive consequences.

References Burke, R. J. 1969, Methods of Resolving Interpersonal Conflict, PM Network, Personal Administration, July-August 1969, International Personnel Management Association. Meredith, J. and Mantel, S. 2009, Project Management: A Managerial Approach, (7th Edition), John Wiley and Sons