



## Managing Relationship

### Learning Outcomes

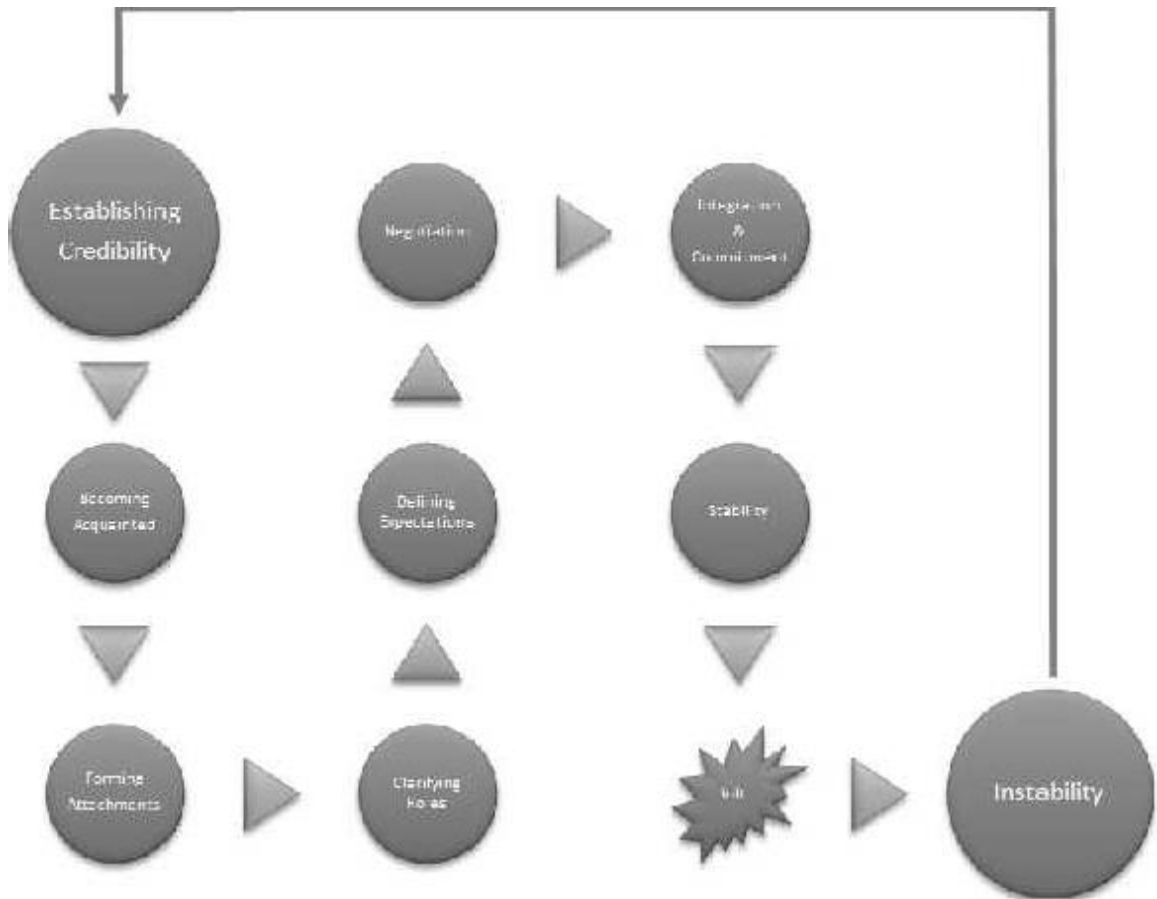
**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Discuss conflict management techniques.

# Managing Relationship

## The Relationship Cycle

Look at the illustration below. You can see how relationships develop, function, and in some cases disintegrate. Unsuccessful relationships usually come about because of unresolved conflict.



Successful relationships are those in which conflicts are confronted and resolved so that the productive functions of the relationship are maintained. At the jolt point in the relationship, there is an eroding commitment. If the partners don't resolve these jolts as they occur, tension mounts and intensifies over time and could lead to the disintegration of the relationship, usually with a great deal of resentment and hostility.

## Coaching Through Conflict

One of our roles as a leader is to help others. The ability to help others improve their skills and attitudes is both rare and important.

What is coaching? It's that one-on-one mentoring that helps people develop their skills, set goals, and understand your company's success. Coaching is a way of telling the truth, confronting tough issues, and using language to inspire.

The secrets of successful coaching? Build on the positive, be diplomatic with the negative, and never, ever yell.

When you are helping your team deal with the inevitable conflicts that come up in the workplace, help them to build their listening skills. This includes the ability to:

- Make eye contact
- Use supportive body language
- Acknowledge what the other person is saying or feeling
- Use open-ended questions

When you are working with your employees, help each of them tell their side of the story without interruptions. It can be difficult to coach other people on dealing with conflict if we feel we aren't able to deal with it very well ourselves.

When people become engaged in a conflict, there are two major concerns that they have to take into account:

- **Achieving your personal goals or objectives:** You are in conflict because you have a goal that conflicts with another person's goal. Your goal may be of importance to you, or it may be of little importance.
- **Keeping a good relationship with the other person:** You may need to interact effectively with the other person in the future. The relationship may be very important to you, or it may be of little importance.

How important your goals are to you and how important the relationship is to you also affects how you act in a conflict.

Given these two concerns, five styles of managing conflict can be identified. They may go by different names, but if you do any additional reading on conflict, these styles will surface. We'll reference work done by David W. Johnson in *Human Relations and Your Career* to discuss styles called The Turtle, The Shark, The Teddy Bear, The Fox, and The Owl.

As you read about each style, decide whether this style is one you use often or not. Try to pick the one you think is most like you.

### **The Turtle (Withdrawing, avoiding)**

Turtles withdraw into their shells to avoid conflicts. They give up their goals and personal relationships. They stay away from the issues over which the conflict is taking place, and from the people they are in conflict with. Turtles believe it is hopeless to try and resolve conflicts. They feel helpless. They believe that it is easier to withdraw (physically and psychologically) from a conflict than to face it.

### **The Shark (Aggressive, forcing)**

The shark tries to overpower opponents by forcing them to accept their solution to the conflict. Their goals are highly important to them and the relationship is of minor importance. They seek to achieve their goals at all costs. They are not concerned with the needs of other people. They do not care if other people like or accept them. Sharks assume that conflicts are settled by one person winning and one person losing. They want to be the winner. Winning gives sharks a sense of pride and achievement. Losing gives them a sense of weakness, inadequacy, and failure. They try to win by attacking, overpowering, overwhelming, and intimidating other people.

### **The Teddy Bear (Smoothing, cooperating)**

To teddy bears, the relationship is of great importance, while their own goals are of little importance. Teddy bears want to be liked and accepted by other people. They think that conflict should be avoided in favor of harmony, and believe that conflict cannot be discussed without damaging relationships. They are afraid that if the conflict continues, someone will get hurt, and that would ruin the relationship. Teddy bears say, "I'll give up my goals and let you have what you want in order for you to like me." Teddy bears try to smooth over the conflict so as not to harm the relationship.

### **The Fox (Compromising)**

Foxes are moderately concerned with their own goals and about their relationships with other people. Foxes seek a compromise. They give up part of their goals and persuade the other person in a conflict to give up part of his goals. They seek a solution to conflict where both sides gain something—the middle ground between two extreme positions. They are willing to sacrifice part of their goals and relationships in order to find agreement for the common good.

### **The Owl (Confronting or problem-solving)**

Owls highly value their own goals and relationships. They view conflicts as problems to be solved and seek a relationship that achieves both their goals and the goals of the other person in the conflict. Owls see conflict as improving relationships by reducing tension between two people. They try to begin a discussion that identifies the conflicts as a problem. By seeking solutions that satisfy both themselves and the other person, owls maintain the relationship. Owls are not satisfied until a solution is found that achieves their goals and the other person's goals. And they are not satisfied until the tensions and negative feelings have been fully resolved.

## Preparing for Conflict

Each of us has had some experience with conflict, so now that you know a little bit more about conflict styles, how can you prepare for conflict situations? How or where do you get information about how the other person might be thinking or feeling? What are your hot buttons; the issues and behaviors that make you react or get angry?

The most important part of preparation is **attitude**. Reminding ourselves of our conflict management skills can help us deal with our fears. We can also adopt the attitude that there is more than one way to cut up the pie, and quite likely more than one way to satisfy concerns.

Good preparation can also mean the difference between success and failure. It is the most critical element in achieving your objectives. **Know the issues involved**; know what you and your organization want to achieve. Look at the situation from the other person's perspective. Plan your strategy.

**Do your homework** so you really know what's fair. Find out what is common practice. Look at the situation through the other person's eyes. Brainstorm some options with your colleagues.

**Know your hot buttons**. What makes you feel angry, defensive, fearful, or guilty? These are your stressors. What are the long-term effects of feeling stressed or fearful? (Examples: Fatigue, high blood pressure, heart disease, insomnia, absenteeism.) Life isn't fun any longer.

As long as there are negative emotions, what will happen to the conflict situation?

During our preparation, we should have already **dealt with our own emotions**. To overcome our fear, we will face it and just keep going in spite of it. To overcome our anger, we have to recognize it isn't going to get us what we want.

Can you think of a time when you responded to a sales clerk or waiter or gas pump attendant with anger and got even worse service that you were originally complaining about?

**Pour oil on the troubled waters**. Try helping the other party regain their control and mental balance, and get them to listen.

Sometimes **past habits** can get in our way, or in the way of the other party. Do you have any examples you can think of? Have you ever tried to discuss issues with anybody who just won't discuss or negotiate, who responds, "Whatever you decide is all right with me?" We can carry past desires to give in, to please, or to respond with aggression and anger, into our conflict situations.

Have you ever encountered **skepticism** when you were trying to win people to your way of thinking? For example, when you are from a government agency, skepticism is apt to be high, perhaps based on past experiences or just the general perception about government as a bureaucracy.

**Change the game and bridge the gap**. Engage the other person in mutual problem solving.

**Power** is another challenge. Most of us tend to rate our own power as too low. Power is whatever you think it is. If you think you have no bargaining chips, you don't. You have to help both yourself and the other party understand there might be a win/win resolution to an issue if both parties are willing to look for them.

Make it easy for the other party to **say yes**. Make it hard to say no.

The final and most difficult challenge is to **remain calm** in the face of all these challenges. Once we start getting emotional too, the ball game is almost over. No matter what the situation, two angry, frustrated, and/or overwrought individuals will seldom be able to think through a solution that works, or that people feel good about.

## Managing Stress

One of the hardest parts of learning how to manage conflict is managing your own emotions.

Provocative situation	What I expect from the other person	How I can take responsibility and control



## **The Positive Effect**

What can you do as an individual to make the positive effect work for you? Try these recommendations:

- Keep yourself in a positive mood.
- Induce positive effect in others.
- Find everyday uppers.
- Offer help whenever you can.
- Be kind.

## **Fifteen Steps for Dealing with Upset People**

- 1) Be glad when a person shares their feelings of discontent with you. It implies that the person still has confidence in your interest in the problem and your ability to do something about it.
- 2) Think of the situation as an opportunity to shine.
- 3) Don't take it personally or become defensive.
- 4) Show genuine care and concern.
- 5) Listen.
- 6) Let the complaining person vent. Don't interrupt with defensiveness.
- 7) Politely interrupt the upset person and offer guidance.
- 8) Apologize assertively when you have made a mistake.
- 9) Express empathy, if it is genuine.
- 10) Take notes about the situation.
- 11) Tell the upset person what you can do.
- 12) Try to find a solution you can both agree on.
- 13) Thank the person for sharing his or her concern.
- 14) Follow up later, when appropriate.
- 15) Phrase your comments positively.

## **Five Tips for Dealing with Difficult People**

- Maintain a friendly and professional attitude.
- Acknowledge that a difficult situation exists.
- Calm the person by questioning and verifying that you understand.
- Focus the person on the problem.
- Handle the problem.

## **Six Steps for Dealing with Angry People**

- 1) Listen closely so you will understand the problem.

- 2) Ask questions.
- 3) Apologize.
- 4) Stay calm and don't take their anger personally.
- 5) Remain courteous.
- 6) Propose an action plan and then follow through!

## A Simple Problem Solving Process

### Systematic Problem Solving

There are many systematic ways to tackle the problems of planning to achieve objectives. It is probably more important that everyone in the team understands and follows the process, rather than having a complicated procedure that only a few use.

The process below is widely used.



Let's look at each step in detail.

### Establish Context

- Explore the background of the objectives
- Link the work of the team to the wider organizational purpose and business background
- Examine individual values and different viewpoints, skills, and abilities
- Ensure everyone knows why they, in particular, are part of the team

## **Set Goals**

- State goals clearly and briefly
- Identify essential, "must have" goals and "would be nice to achieve" goals
- Prioritize goals
- Get agreement on goals

## **Analyze factors**

- Get the team to analyze all factors affecting it
- Use visual analysis such as graphs, fishbone technique
- Clearly define resources available to the team and the constraints imposed

## **Evaluate Options**

- Consider as many options as possible
- Be innovative
- Select courses of action according to clear criteria
- Get agreement on courses of action

## **Plan**

- Allocate tasks to individuals
- Set sequences, timing and deadlines
- Publish plans
- Have flexibility

## **Communicate**

- Ensure all members of the team understand what is happening
- Use conflicts constructively

## **Implement**

- Act effectively and efficiently to meet agreed targets
- Communicate results of actions

## **Monitor and Review**

- Praise and reward team members for their actions
- Carry out performance reviews
- Look for better ways of doing things

**Personal Problems**

**My Problem**

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**The Situation**

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**How I Did/Will Handle It**

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**Group Suggestions**

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## My Action Plan

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### Further Reading:

- ✓ *Managing Strategic Relationships: The Key to Business Success,(2001),By Leonard Greenhalgh*
- ✓ *Customer Relationship Management,(2004),By Francis Buttle*