The Circle of Conflict Adaptation

Based on Christopher W. Moore's Circle of Conflict© Jolie Bain Pillsbury

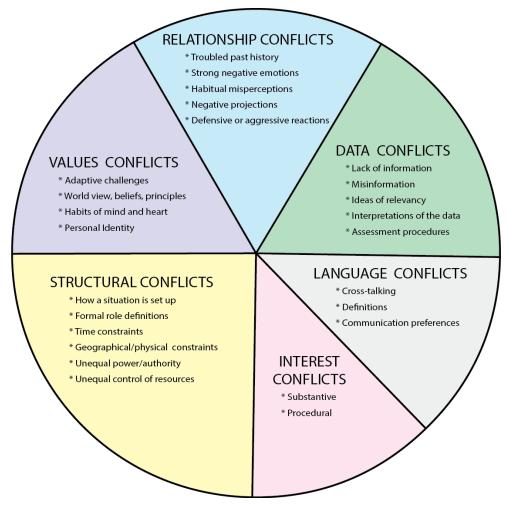
1. What is the Circle of Conflict?¹

Christopher Moore's Circle of Conflict identified five sources of conflict: values, relationships, data, interests and structure. The circle is adapted to include language as a source of conflicts and expands values conflicts to include adaptive challenges². The adapted circle depicts the six sources graphically. Understand that conflicts often have multiple sources. The size of each segment reflects the likelihood of that source by

Contents

- 1. What is the Circle
- 2. How to apply the Circle
- 3. Conflict Orientation

sources. The size of each segment reflects the likelihood of that source being present. Sources of conflict that are difficult to resolve tend to persist over time.



2. Applying the Circle of Conflict

- a) Observe what people are saying and doing,
- b) Identify and name one or more sources of conflict, and
- c) Take action where you can to address and resolve conflict.

¹ Moore, The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict; 2nd edition, 1996, pp. 60-61.

² Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 2002.

If you see or hear... You might... VALUES CONFLICTS • People leaving the room (flight). • Label the type of *values disagreement* (e.g., cultural, political, · Strong disagreements about what is right or religious, ideological) to illuminate potential cross talk. wrong (fight). Adopt group norms to overcome triggered reactions to values Avoidance of specific topics. conflicts, e.g., patient, non-judgmental listening. • Defensive or aggressive reactions that prevent Explore assumptions or experiences to identify the source of discussion of topics threatening to identity or differences in principles or competing commitments³. perceptions of "the way the world is." Use appreciative inquiry to illuminate worldviews and/or belief systems and to catalyze mutual acceptance of differences. RELATIONSHIP CONFLICTS • People choosing where to sit to avoid someone. • Explore *relationship barriers* by noticing when they occur and how · Awkward silences and meaningful glances in the tension shows up - between which people or groups. response to who is speaking. • Find ways for the people holding the tension to experience each other • Tension seemingly unrelated to the substantive in new ways. As mutual understanding develops, move to address the pain in the relationship though redress, acceptance or forgiveness. DATA CONFLICTS • Bring the data challenges explicitly into the conversation and name • Differences about data relevance. the differences in the use, definition and interpretation of data. • Different interpretations of the same data. · Different ways of collecting data. • Encourage the use of the "best available data" and work together to develop "better data." • Using different criteria for developing data. LANGUAGE CONFLICTS • Same words meaning different things. • Identify the *language differences* and invite a focus on the meaning • People unaware that they are not in the same underlying the words, rather than the words themselves. • Model and encourage common language with common definitions. • People "listening for" different things. • Explore MBTI⁴ communication preferences. INTEREST CONFLICTS • Zero sum mentality. • Illuminate the *competing interests* underlying people's positions and • People holding a position. use Interest Based Negotiation⁵ to achieve a "win-win" solution by: 1) separating the "people from the problem," 2) building relationships, • People not exploring each other's interests or articulating their own. and 3) adopting criteria to choose options BEFORE making decisions. STRUCTURAL CONFLICTS • People looking to other group members for • Name the *structural factors* influencing behavior. "permission" to speak. • Catalyze conversations about the structural factors and how they • Fear or anger about the "way things are." impact people's roles and authority. • Assumption of hierarchical authority in • Name the "unspoken" systemic or organizational frameworks collaborative settings. influencing assumptions about who has power and who does not⁶. • An "inner circle" assuming disproportionate • Develop strategies to:

3. Conflict Orientation

influence on decision-making.

to another.

• Speech and/or behavior inferring that one

gender, race, class or culture are "subordinate"

Everyone has an orientation towards conflict. Take time to reflect on yours and that of others⁷. Find opportunities to practice the following that supports movement from talk to action:

group move to action, and

For structural factors within the authority or influence of the

For structural factors not within the influence of the group,

identify who does have influence and engage them.

- a) Conflict is normal and necessary to the work of achieving results, and
- b) It is possible to address and resolve conflicts.

Circle of Conflict Adaptation

RBL-APPS.COM

³ Kegan and Leahy, "The Real Reason People Won't Change," Harvard Business Review, November, 2001.

⁴ Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Consulting Psychological Press.

⁵ Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes*, 1981.

⁶ Cameron and Quinn, Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture Based on the Competing Values Framework, 2011.

⁷ Pillsbury, Results Based Facilitation: How to Move from Talk to Action, V5.61.