

Unit 506: Managing Stress and Conflict in the Organisation

- 1.1 Evaluate the effectiveness of the organisation in recognising workplace stress and conflict and providing the necessary support mechanisms

- 2.1 Plan improvements to the identification and approach to dealing with workplace stress and conflict in own area of responsibility

- 2.2 Implement improvements to the identification and approach to dealing with workplace stress and conflict in own area of responsibility

- 2.3 Critically evaluate own ability to identify and deal with workplace stress and conflict effectively in own area of responsibility



**ILM Level 5 Certificate in
Leadership and Management**

Unit 506 - Managing Stress and Conflict in the Organisation

Task

The purpose of this unit is to develop understanding and ability to be able to manage stress and conflict in own organisation, as required by a practising or potential middle manager.

It is recommended that you discuss the assignment with your line manager as this task provides an opportunity to relate your learning directly to your current organisation (as well as evidencing your learning as part of completing your ILM qualification).

The nominal word count for this assignment is 2500 words: The suggested range is between 2000 and 3000 words, however individuals have different writing styles, and there is no penalty if the word-count range is exceeded.

Guidance

This resource pack is designed to support you in writing your assignment and contains a structured response to the theory, research, tools and techniques you need to know about to successfully complete the Unit.

You can copy and paste text from this resource pack, as long as you reference this resource and provide the section or page number it came from.

You can also search the internet for more materials if you wish to expand your thinking and learning, however, keep this to a minimum to ensure you don't spend too much time in the research and not enough time in the writing!

You are also expected to provide your own personal examples and experiences from your project implementation to the questions this Unit poses to demonstrate and evidence your own understanding of what the theory means. Therefore, you are combining both the theory and practice to the responses required.

Please use the structure of the assignment format in the assignment template to populate your responses to each of the question this Unit asks you to undertake.

It is also essential you read the assessment criteria as this often goes beyond what is expected in the question itself. Make sure all your responses meet the assessment guidance in the assignment template. They are also highlighted in this resource pack to reinforce what is expected of you to pass this Unit.

Assignment 506 questions

The resource pack deals with stress and conflict in 2 separate parts to support your learning.

- **Part 1** explores how the organisation and you can effectively measure and make judgements about approaches to managing stress and employee well-being
- **Part 2** explores managing conflict in the workplace.
- When you answer the questions in the assignment 506, it asks you to evaluate, plan and make improvements in both areas of stress and conflict in the workplace.

Context for question 506/ 1.1.

- *To respond to this question, a team leader needs to understand the requirements for the effective management of stress and well-being in the workplace as well as it approaches to dealing with and handling workplace conflict.*
- *There is employment legislation and requirements placed on the employer and of leaders to adhere to employment law standards and guidelines, as well as require leaders to be effective in leading people and teams to promote well-being in the workplace to reduce stress and conflict.*
- *This resource pack directs you to professional guidance and practices for managing stress and conflict in the workplace as well as providing you with practical tools to develop your own leadership capability in managing stress and conflict with your people and teams.*
- *We will look at some of the generic principles in this resource pack and then we encourage you to read the articles and guidance and explore what your own organisations approach is to measure its effectiveness in these areas.*

Professional Guides to support this Unit 506 are available to download on the DP LZ

- MIND Mental Health at work commitment guide 2021
- ACAS Coronavirus covid19 and mental health at work
- ACAS Guide Supporting mental health at work
- ACAS Guide Using occupational health at work
- HSE stress indicator tool (to support 1.1)
- HSE example action plan (to support 2.1)
- CIPD Line manager guide on conflict
- ACAS Guide Handling a bullying harassment or discrimination complaint at work



ACAS provide free and impartial advice to employers, employees and their representatives on: employment rights; best practice and policies

HSE is the UK Health and Safety Executive

CIPD is the professional body for experts in people at work like HR and Organisational Development

Let's begin with some generic context and background...

What is stress?

- A feeling of emotional or physical tension.
- An event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous.
- Your body's reaction to a challenge or demand.
- In short bursts, stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline

What are the main causes of stress?

- Long hours
- Heavy workload
- Changes within the organisation
- Tight deadlines
- Changes to duties
- Job insecurity
- Lack of autonomy
- Boring work

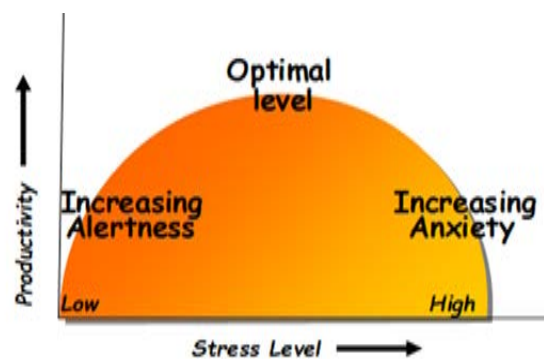


What are the common signs of stress?

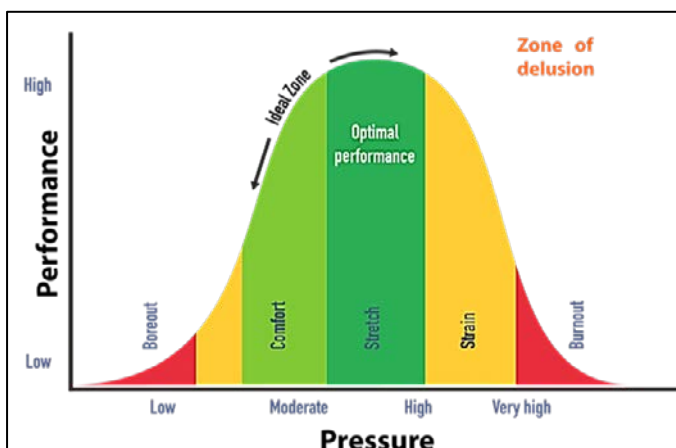
- feeling overwhelmed
- having racing thoughts or difficulty concentrating
- being irritable
- feeling constantly worried, anxious or scared
- feeling a lack of self-confidence
- having trouble sleeping or feel tired all the time
- avoiding things or people you are having problems with
- Eating, drinking or smoking more or less than usual

The stress threshold is unique to each of us

- It is dynamic, as a situation we can handle one day can prove demanding and annoying the next.
- It is our reaction to this condition that transforms it into a positive or negative force.
- Stress results from the effect of too much or too little pressure.
- The right amount and right sort of pressure is essential to proper functioning."



Yerkes - Dodson's Law (2009) known as the 'stress curve'



The Yerkes-Dodson law is a model of the relationship between stress and task performance.

According to what is known as "The Yerkes-Dodson law," performance increases with physiological or mental arousal (stress) but only up to a point. When the level of stress becomes too high, performance decreases. There's more: The shape of the curve varies based on the complexity and familiarity of the task.

There's a subtle relationship between pressure and performance. When people experience the right amount of pressure, they often perform brilliantly. However, if there's too much or too little pressure, performance can suffer.

Our roles as managers is to ensure we understand our staff to know their individual and optimum performance versus pressure point as everyone is different - that is why the leader needs to know their staff to gauge where is optimal performance and work with them to ensure this is achieved to ensure staff satisfaction, performance engagement and well-being

Dealing with stress at work

Ideally employers should approach stress management proactively, focusing on prevention and early intervention, and not just responding when a problem becomes significant or when someone goes on sick leave.

Developing an organisational framework

The *Mental Health at Work Commitment* (2021) is a simple framework developed by MIND. It has 6 standards which provide a roadmap to achieving better mental health outcomes for employees:

1. Prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity.
2. Proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes.
3. Promote an open culture around mental health.
4. Increase organisational confidence and capability
5. Provide mental health tools and support.
6. Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting

The Guide is available on the DP Learning Zone bookshelf or from MIND

The UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE)'s Management Standards lists 6 areas of work design which can affect stress levels, which need to be managed properly:

1. **Demands:** for example, workload and the working environment.
2. **Control:** for example. how much say someone has over their job.
3. **Support:** for example, level of supervision and resources available to do the job.
4. **Relationships:** for example. promoting positive working to help prevent conflict.
5. **Role:** for example, making sure people understand their role and how it fits in the organisation.
6. **Change:** for example, how organisational change is managed and communicated.

506/1.1 How effective is your organisation in addressing stress at work?

Mechanisms that should be in place are:

1. **Employee assistance programme**
2. **Staff surveys** and/or focus groups to identify causes
3. **Flexible working options**/improved work–life balance
4. **Risk assessments/stress audits**
5. **Training** aimed at building personal resilience (such as coping techniques, mindfulness)
6. **Training** for line managers to manage stress
7. Involvement of **occupational health specialists**
8. Written **stress policy/guidance**
9. **Stress management training** for the whole workforce

What services does your organisation offer?

AFRS offer

- Health & Wellbeing Advisors in Service and a Service Chaplain provides support (mainly to crews) & holds weekly meditation sessions
- Trained Blue Light Champions for staff to talk to regarding mental health issues
- Active Wellbeing Workplace Group and staff have been able to attend various talks by guest speakers on mental health and wellbeing
- AFRS have a contract with Red Poppy to offer staff up to 6 counselling sessions. Staff book these direct with Red Poppy
- AFRS currently deliver a 2-day Mental Health First Aid course, run by MIND. All managers are being invited to attend.
- H&S dept conduct stress risk assessments and wellness assessments
- H&S dept manage all these areas and there is info on all of the above on the AFRS intranet pages

GFRS offer

- Employee assistance programme (EAP) Gloucestershire County Council
- Occupational Health – Gloucestershire County Council
- Firefighters Charity – Service Rep, Station rep or Direct contact with the Charity
- MIND mental health wellbeing pledge
- Time to Talk days – Days in Service where staff are encouraged to stop, have a cup of tea and talk
- :1's with line managers
- Defusing trained officers for traumatic incident stress
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion group

To support your responses to 506 1.1

This template is available for the DP Learning Zone bookshelf to download as a WORD document. You may use it to adapt and build an evaluation of your organisations effectiveness in supporting workplace stress and conflict

My organisation:	Rating scale: 1=ineffective /2=effective in parts/ =effective / 4 =highly effective 3	
Evaluation criteria questions	Rating	My judgements to support my rating and examples to support my rationale
How well does your organisation share its overall strategy and policies to support well-being at work?		
What support mechanisms/procedures are in place to support well-being and support staff with stress?		
What demands in work contribute to individuals experiencing stress?		
How well do managers view how to deal with stress at work?		
What training is offered to managers to support individuals with stress?		
What training is offered to individuals to help them to better cope with stress and stressful situations?		
How effective is your organisation in identifying and managing potential conflict situations?		
How well do leaders and managers deal with conflict in the workplace?		
What training is offered to support managers with dealing with conflict and difficult conversations?		
What are your initial conclusions about stress and conflict from the above analysis?		
What are your initial recommendations for any improvements about coping with stress and dealing with conflict?		

Make sure that you conduct a systematic approach to your analysis of your organisation's effectiveness in recognising workplace stress and conflict, to produce conclusions and/or recommendations on what they do well and what could be improved.

2.1 Plan improvements to the identification and approach to dealing with workplace stress and conflict in own area of responsibility (24 marks)

Assessment criteria: Detailed improvements to dealing with workplace stress in own area of responsibility and detailed improvements to dealing with conflict in own area of responsibility are both fully and comprehensively planned with no further work required for full implementation.

To support your responses to 2.1 there are 2 templates for your use:

Template 1: Manager Quiz: How well do I manage workplace stress and conflict?

MANAGER QUIZ				
Approach and actions				
Step 1: Answer the quiz Step 2: Reflect and get feedback from manager and team members Step 3: Identify your strengths Step 4: Identify areas you can develop further/ do more of		Step 5: Plan the action you will take Step 6: Identify any barriers and develop strategies to overcome them Step 7: Take action! Step 8: Review, celebrate and take further action		
Question	Mostly agree	To some extent	Not sure	My Initial observations
I take a positive, respectful and open approach to managing my team				
My team see me as calm, consistent, fair and kind				
I am comfortable managing conflict and dealing with people management issues				
I am clear with my team what is expected of them and how they are doing				
My team know they can rely on me to give advice and take responsibility				
I build and sustain good relationships with all the people in my team				
I support people in my team to develop in their careers				

Template 2: Produce a personal development plan to improve stress and conflict in the workplace

My personal development plan to improve stress and conflict in the workplace				
	Activity	Resources	Support required	Planned improvements will mean that...
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

To help your responses to 2.1 here are some tips to consider...

7 Manager Tips to Reduce Employee Stress at Work

Here are 7 areas you may want to consider as a manager in how you can help reduce or ease the stress levels of your employees.

These are ideas for you to review in how you can make improvements to help reduce areas of stress or conflict at work which is what the 2.1 question is asking you to do.

1. Alleviate heavy workloads

Employees have too many tasks, responsibilities, and pressures, and not enough time in their workday to get it all done. They may feel like they need to work long hours to keep up, so it's important for managers to help set expectations and model behaviour. Here are a few ways managers can be better role models.

- **Remove Obstacles and Clarify Priorities:** schedule time to meet with your employees regularly to give them clear direction on the highest priorities and what can wait
- **Set a Good Example:** If you make a habit of not overworking yourself, your employees might follow your lead.

2. Boost employee career happiness

When employees have to work, they feel they can't spend time with their family, travel, get a puppy, meet up with friends, or pursue their dreams. Managers can use these tips to uncover these feelings and help motivate their employees to continue achieving their personal and professional goals.

- **Spot Emotions and provide an outlet for expression:** Emotions at certain points in an employee's tenure can provide insights into how to improve the employee experience and mitigate talent-risk.
- **Coach Toward a Fulfilling Career:** Continuously challenging employees helps keep the doors open for new opportunities to engage them. Use a variety of mediums — like one-on-ones, or performance reviews — to collect ongoing, real-time feedback about their career goals.
- **Develop and Grow Employee Skills and Strengths:** Making sure each employee can leverage their strengths will help maximise their individual happiness and your overall team potential. Give employees the opportunity to grow their skill sets through job shadowing, mentoring, or professional development.



3. Improve team relationships

Stress levels can run high when you don't like, get along with, trust, or respect the people you're working with each and every day. Poor relationships with teammates can have multiple negative effects — such as anxiety, misalignment, distractions, distrust, and jealousy. Managers can help build better relationships among their teams where honesty and integrity are abundant.

- **Create an open culture with your team and approach conflict head on:** Make sure employees feel comfortable being open and honest within your team. Conflict among team members will likely happen from time to time. Make sure you handle it immediately, professionally, and transparently.
- **Provide an Outlet to Give and Receive Feedback:** Feedback is a great way to gather important information from your team, as well as improve connection among teams. Allow employees to exchange feedback to boost accountability, reliability, and trust among your team. You can provide constructive feedback when necessary, but being a role model teammate to your peers and direct reports means you are listening to their feedback too.
- **Facilitate Non-Work Team Events:** Your employees spend a lot of time together... working. If you want to improve your team relationships, enable employees to bond and get to know each other outside of work. Give your team opportunities to work and play together.

4. Improve relationships with employees.

Having a poor relationship with a manager can be a huge cause of employee stress at work. When employees disrespect or distrust their managers (or vice versa), they're more likely to be unhappy in their careers, let work negatively affect their personal lives, and ultimately leave your organisation.

When asked to describe a time they felt an especially negative emotion at work, more than 25% of employees surveyed included the words manager, management, supervisor, boss, or leader.

Negative emotions at work can snowball quickly, resulting in even worse behaviours and a toxic environment. Managers can use these tips to reflect and develop the skills needed to handle their employees more professionally.

- **Ask for Continuous Feedback to Develop Your Leadership Skills:** Gather opinions from your employees and leaders on how you can be a better manager. And take those suggestions to heart and make an effort to act on the feedback.
- **Conduct Recurring One-on-Ones:** Meet with employees regularly to show your employees that they're worth your time and attention. Ask what you can start or stop doing to improve your relationship with them. The number one rule for conducting one-on-one meetings is to make them a top priority. These are opportunities for you to learn about your employees' career goals, personal goals, concerns or issues, and valuable feedback.
- **Learn from Leaders Your Team Respects:** Find out which leaders your team admires most and try to emulate some of their tactics and methods. Go one step further and find a leader you respect to help coach and develop your leadership skills. Odds are they'll want to help and might provide tactics that you could start implementing right away.



5. Communicate employee future fit.

Uncertainty at work is a breeding ground for employee stress. When employees are unsure of what they'll be doing within your organisation, this can create unnecessary worry, anxiety, and stress.

- **Pinpoint Areas of Uncertainty and Clarity:** Attempt to uncover where uncertainties are within your team and try to understand why. You'll also want to find out what gives your team members a sense of certainty or clarity. These are quick wins that you can immediately deliver on.
- **Conduct Career and Performance Conversations:** Meet with employees to discuss career aspirations and make sure all employees understand whether they're exceeding or falling short of your expectations.
- **Be Transparent:** Clearly communicate organisational and team strategies, as well as any changes that occur. Create goals that align your organisation from the bottom to the top. Every employee should have a clear understanding of how their work personally impacts the team and organisation as a whole. Employees who see how their puzzle piece fits into the larger picture will be more driven, engaged, and seemingly less stressed.

6. Improve work environments

Employees can become stressed when their work environment influences unhealthy behaviours, such as bad eating habits, short or infrequent breaks, or poor work-life balance. A healthy workplace will support and motivate healthy employee habits.

- **Promote Work-Life Balance:** Create a team culture that supports life outside of work and be sure to lead by example. Be a positive role model when it comes to healthy habits and be mindful of where you spend your time and energy.
- **Implement Walking Meetings:** Have your team disconnect and do an activity together. Try out a walking or standing meeting.

7. Help employees manage long hours

For some shift jobs, working long hours is the norm. For others, increased workload or inadequate staffing may result in more hours spent working. Long work hours tend to be more stressful and lead to physical, mental, and emotional distress. This leaves employees feeling fatigued, less productive, and less likely to make healthy lifestyle choices.

- **Keep Employees Motivated:** Showing appreciation is a great way to encourage and motivate your employees. Find opportunities to recognise employees for their effort and goal achievements. Depending on your area of work, your employees' time might be spent in long, tiring shifts — which can be disengaging when they see their manager putting in a fraction of the time. Show them you're just as dedicated by arriving early, chipping in where you can, and sticking it out to help them get the job done.
- **Allow for Breaks:** Regular breaks are necessary for your physical and mental health and can improve employee productivity.
- **Re-Assess Workload:** If working long hours becomes habitual, especially when it shouldn't be or doesn't need to be, consider removing or reprioritising tasks.



506 question 2.2 is asking you to *evidence your progress and implementation* of your actions to support your responses from 2.1

Assessment criteria: Comprehensive evidence is provided that improvements to dealing with workplace stress in own area of responsibility and improvements to dealing with conflict in own area of responsibility are both implemented, or both are being implemented

To do this... consider:

- What are your actual plans to support individuals and teams in reducing stress and conflict in the workplace
- What actions have you taken?
- What is working?
- How have individuals or your team responded to your actions?
- What improvements are you observing as a result of your actions?
- From your actions what is happening - both good and not so good?
- What actions are within your own control?
- What actions are up to the organisation to support and manage?
- How are you feeding back to your line manager and to the organisation the improvements that are working?

You can also capture examples and the shared learning and progress made by others from the action learning session you attend to support this assignment.

Make sure you make notes either during or after the action learning event to provide evidence of your progress in implementing the actions identified in the 2.1 Development Plan.



506/2.3 Evaluation of my ability to deal with workplace stress and conflict

There is a template to support your responses to 2.3 – see below.

Assessment criteria: Own ability to identify and deal with workplace stress and conflict effectively in own area of responsibility are both critically evaluated using a wide and objective evidence base to provide a detailed and supported judgement for the level of ability claimed.

Complete the evaluation and then ensure you also describe your overall observations and conclusions with work-based examples to support your honest and objective evidence of your abilities to improve and manage work-related stress and conflict.

My organisation and name:	Rating scale: 1=ineffective /2=effective in parts/ 3 =effective / 4 =highly effective	
Evaluation criteria questions	Rating	My judgements to support my rating and examples to support my rationale
How well do I share my organisation's overall strategy and policies to support well-being at work?		
What support mechanisms/procedures am I aware of and put in place to support well-being and support staff with stress?		
What demands in work do I try to reduce that may contribute to individuals experiencing stress?		
How well do I as a manager deal with stress at work?		
What specific training have I undertaken to support individuals with stress?		
What training have I offered to individuals to help them to better cope with stress and stressful situations?		
How effective am I in identifying and managing potential conflict situations?		
How well do I as a leader deal with conflict in the workplace?		
How effective am I in managing difficult conversations?		
What are my initial conclusions about how well I manage stress and conflict from the above analysis?		
What are my initial recommendations for any improvements about how I can better deal with stress and in dealing with conflict?		

To support your responses to this assignment we have explored stress – however below are additional factors to support how you can manage conflict in the workplace.

Identifying and dealing with conflict at work

Conflict is inevitable in any situation where people spend extended periods of time together, such as in the workplace. In a small business where roles are often highly interdependent, your ability to manage conflict and keep everybody working together is essential to your success. Awareness of possible reasons for conflict can help you limit conflict in your workplace.



There are so many possibilities for conflict to occur in the workplace it is impossible to list them all; you probably have a longer list of situations you could quote. Here are just a small number of examples that can lead to conflict in the workplace.

Poor Management	Unclear Job Role / Expectations
Unfair Treatment	Poor Communication
Poor Relationship Skills	Inadequate Information
Poor Training	Poor (Toxic) Work Environment
Management Style	Differences in Personality
Having trouble dealing with change	Poor Work Habits
Sharing Resources	

Poor Management

- Lack of knowledge – (“I don’t know how.”): Accountability without training, without understanding that the role is as much about people management as it is task management. Most managers want to do a good job but are not given the relevant knowledge and training.
- Lack of belief (“I don’t believe in engagement.”): Managers who are unsure of the importance of engagement need the value of staff engagement demonstrated for them.
- Lack of people skills (“I just cannot work with people.”): Some managers simply do not have the skills to manage people.
- Systemic barriers (“It’s outside of my control.”): But even if systemic barriers are removed, some managers may not be able to engage their team members because they lack the knowledge, skills, belief or talent to optimise the performance of their employees.

Unfair Treatment - What constitutes unfair treatment?

It is illegal to harass or discriminate against someone because of so-called age, disability, pregnancy, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, colour, nationality and sex. It is illegal to engage in behaviour that is harassing or discriminatory, which might create a hostile work environment, making it difficult for an employee to perform his or her job duties.

Here are just a few examples of unfair treatment at work:

- Spreading rumours about an employee
- Passing up someone for a training opportunity or promotion because of someone's race, colour, gender or other protected characteristics.
- Creating offensive comments, emails or social media posts about an employee.
- Demoting, transferring or dismissing an employee without a fair, disciplinary process.

Poor Relationship Skills

Some people just seem to have difficulty getting along with others. People may simply possess prickly personalities that stop them from working well with others.

Poor Training

Inadequate training can result in a worker having difficulty in adapting to the work environment as well as making mistakes. This often leads to conflict with other employees.

Management Style

A poor management style can cause conflict with employees. Being reprimanded or criticised in front of others and can lead to resentment. Favouritism (real or perceived) is another potential source of conflict between the employees or between you and the employee.

Having trouble dealing with change

Change is a big part of the modern business environment; employees may have difficulty adjusting to changes in the work environment: e.g. the need to learn a new system or process. People who do not adapt well to change may fear being left behind and may cause resentment.

Sharing Resources

Limited resources can cause conflict in the workplace, sharing space, having to wait to use equipment can cause friction. Constantly working to tight deadlines adds to tension.

Unclear Job Role / Expectations

A job description with an overview of responsibilities always comes with a new position. But it's extremely difficult for team members to become top performer without training and coaching. Every position has a learning curve that plays a big role in the future success of the employee. Some people stay at their jobs for years trying to guess what their manager's expectations are. Many just quit and move on.

Poor Communication

Communicating is involved in almost every activity that we do in the workplace. Everyone thinks they are a great communicator, yet so many conflicts happen because of poor communication.

Let us look at the process of communicating:

- "Sender" decides to convey a message
- "Sender" codes the message
- "Receiver" decodes the message
- "Receiver" interprets the message and makes assumptions

There is so much room for misunderstanding at every stage of this process, which makes for many opportunities for a conflict to arise.

Inadequate Information

Inadequate information may lead to conflict between employees as well as between an employee and you. In today's world it is not just inadequate information – but too much information, much of which can be irrelevant to the role. This may lead to situations where employees do not do what you expect of them, resulting in conflict.

Poor (Toxic) Work Environment

The way people feel about themselves and others in the workplace greatly affects their productivity. Loving a job does not just mean enjoying everyday tasks, but also involves being a part of a happy work community.

Differences in Personality

Any workplace unites people with different backgrounds, temperaments, experiences, and preferences. We do not become friends with everyone we meet – so we shouldn't expect all team members to get along perfectly either. Although it is not necessary for all co-workers to be friends, a level of mutual respect is crucial for a healthy workplace culture.

Poor Work Habits

Many habits that people demonstrate at work are harmless and even helpful for their personal work performance. However, certain habits can affect the whole team, cause irritation, and spark conflict – e.g.:

- A team member is regularly late to work or distracted while at work.
- A team member expresses negativity, anger or gossips about others.
- A team member is disorganized and misses deadlines, reflecting on the team's overall performance and image.

How to deal with and handle conflict at work

Managers need to be skilled in handling conflict. Knowing the options to de-escalate conflict if it becomes dysfunctional is essential.

Effects of individual conflict on performance

- Anger can make it difficult for individuals to continue to work together.
- Resentment can make it difficult for employees to accept other people as managers/ team leaders.
- Unresolved conflict creates an unproductive work environment for the individual and for those working around them.
- Ongoing and unresolved conflict can distort the reality of the situation and make it worse if not addressed.
- Unresolved conflict makes it difficult to focus and concentrate on their jobs which can lead to safety issues and mistakes on the job.
- Unresolved conflicts can reduce motivation and engagement to perform the role in a productive and positive way.

Effects of team conflict on performance

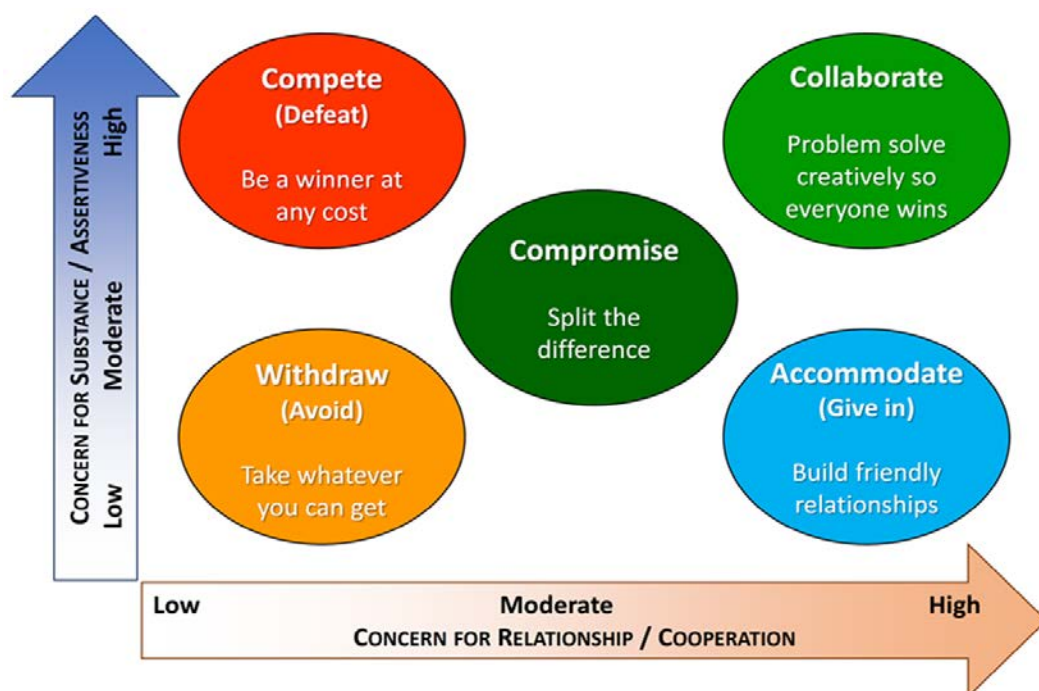
- When people work together, the team must have some level of cooperation for the team to accomplish its objectives.
- Hostile relationships among team members can lead to conflict, which disrupts the team's efforts to achieve specific goals.
- Team member conflict can lead to tension and confusion about team roles.
- Conflict may also increase employee anxiety, decrease job satisfaction and damage relationships.
- In addition, team tension may also lead to complaints by those with whom the team interacts.
- In turn, supportive relationships lead to collaboration and compromise and the greater likelihood that team members will manage their conflicts and accomplish their goals.

All managers should make every effort to avoid “win-lose” situations and to ensure productive resolution of conflict. Effectively working through conflict results in stronger working relationships and encourages creative solutions - while handling conflict inappropriately results in damaged relationships and inhibits the expression of valuable opinions.

Here is an effective technique to minimise conflict as it identifies and addresses 5 different types of conflict and explains how to manage them.

Thomas Kilmann conflict mode instrument

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes assess an individual's behaviour in conflict situations. "Conflict Situations" are situations in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible. In such situations we can describe a person's behaviour along two basic dimensions¹: (1) assertiveness, the extent to which the individual attempt to satisfy his own concerns, and (2) cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns. These two basic dimensions of behaviour can be used to define five specific methods of dealing with conflicts. These five "conflict-handling modes" are shown below.



The Thomas-Kilmann identified 5 modes of conflict is helpful for determining your conflict resolution style. The Modes identify five typical ways of handling conflict; by reviewing the 5 mode descriptors you may be able to identify your default mode and then determine how you can develop the flexibility to use the other modes when more appropriate. For example, your natural preference might be an Avoiding style (Leave well enough alone) when a Compromising approach would yield more benefits (Split the Difference).

Competing: is assertive and uncooperative.

An individual pursues his own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-oriented mode, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win one's own position - one's ability to argue, one's rank, economic sanctions. Competing might mean "standing up for your rights", defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.

¹ This two dimensional model of conflict handling behaviour is adapted from "Conflict and Conflict Management" by Kenneth Thomas in Volume II of "The Handbook of Industrial and Organisational Psychology", edited by Marvin Dunnette (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1975). Another valuable contribution in this field is the work of Robert Blake and Jane Mouton in "The Managerial Grid" (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1964).

Accommodating: is unassertive and cooperative - the opposite of competing.

When accommodating, an individual neglects his own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.

Avoiding: is unassertive and uncooperative.

The individual does not immediately pursue his own concerns or those of the other person. He does not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

Collaborating: is both assertive and cooperative - the opposite of avoiding.

Collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. It means digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative which meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, concluding to resolve some condition which would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

Compromising: is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness.

The object is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties. It falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating. Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding, but doesn't explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

Consider situations in which you find your wishes differing from those of another person.

How do you usually respond to such situations?

Each of us is capable of using all five conflict-handling modes: none of us can be characterised as having a single, rigid style of dealing with conflict. However, any given individual is more comfortable using certain modes than others and therefore, tends to rely upon those modes more heavily than others, whether because of temperament or practice.

The conflict behaviours which an individual uses are therefore a result of both his/her personal predispositions and the requirements of the situations in which he finds himself. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes are designed to assess this mix of conflict-handling modes.

Continues overleaf /

Competing

Uses:

1. When quick, decisive action is vital e.g. emergencies.
2. On important issues where unpopular courses of action need implementing – e.g. cost cutting, enforcing unpopular rules, discipline.
3. On issues vital to company welfare when you know you're right.
4. To protect yourself against people who take advantage of non-competitive behaviour.

If you think you are high on this preference:

- Are you surrounded by “yes” men? (If so, perhaps it's because they have learned that it's unwise to disagree with you or have given up trying to influence you. This closes you off from information).
- Are subordinates afraid to admit ignorance and uncertainties to you?
- (In competitive climates, one must fight for influence and respect - which means acting more certain and confident than one feels. The upshot is that people are less able to ask for information and opinions - they are less able to learn).

If you think you are low on this preference:

- Do you often feel powerless in situations?
- (It may be because you are unaware of the power you do have, unskilled in its use, or uncomfortable with the idea of using it. This may hinder your effectiveness by restricting your influence).
- Do you have trouble taking a firm stand, even when you see the need?
- (Sometimes concerns for others' feelings or anxieties about the use of power cause us to vacillate, which may mean postponing the decision and adding to the suffering and/or resentment of others).

Collaborating

Uses:

1. To find an integrative solution when concerns are too important to be compromised.
2. When your objective is to learn e.g. testing your own assumptions, understanding the view of others.
3. To merge insights from people with different perspectives on a problem.
4. To gain commitment by incorporating other's concerns into a consensual decision.
5. To work through strong feelings which do not interfere with the interpersonal relationship.

If you think you are high on this preference:

- Do you spend time discussing issues in depth that do not seem to deserve it? (Collaboration takes time and energy - perhaps the scarcest organisational resources, Trivial problems don't require optimal solutions, and not all personal differences need to be thrashed out. The overuse of collaboration and consensual decision making sometimes represents a desire to minimise risk - by diffusing responsibility for a decision or by postponing action).
- Does your collaborative behaviour fail to elicit collaborative responses from others? (The exploratory and tentative nature of some collaborative behaviours may make it easy for others to disregard collaborative overtures; or the trust and openness may be taken advantage of. You may be missing some cues which would indicate the presence of defensiveness, strong feelings, impatience, competitiveness, or conflicting interest).

If you think you are low on this preference:

- Is it hard for you to see differences as opportunities for joint gain?
- (Although there are often threatening or unproductive aspects of conflict, indiscriminate pessimism can prevent you from seeing collaborative possibilities and thus deprive you of the mutual gains and satisfactions which accompany successful collaboration).
- Are subordinates uncommitted to your decisions or policies?
(Perhaps their own concerns are not being incorporated into those decisions or policies).

Collaborating

Uses:

6. To find an integrative solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised.
7. When your objective is to learn – e.g. testing your own assumptions, understanding the view of others.
8. To merge insights from people with different perspectives on a problem.
9. To gain commitment by incorporating other's concerns into a consensual decision.
10. To work through hard-felt feelings which do not interfere with the interpersonal relationship.

If you think you are high on this preference:

- Do you spend time discussing issues in depth that do not seem to deserve it?
(Collaboration takes time and energy - perhaps the scarcest organisational resources, Trivial problems don't require optimal solutions, and not all personal differences need to be thrashed out. The overuse of collaboration and consensual decision making sometimes represents a desire to minimise risk - by diffusing responsibility for a decision or by postponing action).
- Does your collaborative behaviour fail to elicit collaborative responses from others?
(The exploratory and tentative nature of some collaborative behaviours may make it easy for others to disregard collaborative overtures; or the trust and openness may be taken advantage of. You may be missing some cues which would indicate the presence of defensiveness, strong feelings, impatience, competitiveness, or conflicting interest).

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- Are subordinates uncommitted to your decisions or policies?
(Perhaps their own concerns are not being incorporated into those decisions or policies).

Compromising

Uses:

1. When goals are moderately important, but not worth the effort or potential disruption
2. When two opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals.
3. To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues.
4. To arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure.
5. As a backup mode when collaboration or competition fails to be successful.

If you think you are high on this preference:

- Do you concentrate so heavily upon the practicalities and tactics of compromise that you sometimes lose sight of larger issues - principles, values, long-term objectives, company welfare?
- Does an emphasis on negotiating and trading create a cynical climate of gamesmanship? (Such a climate might undermine interpersonal trust and deflect attention away from the merits of the issues discussed).

If you think you are low on this preference:

- Do you find yourself too sensitive or embarrassed to be effective in negotiation situations?
- Do you find it hard to make concessions?
(Without this safety valve, you may have trouble getting gracefully out of mutually destructive arguments, power struggles, etc.).

Avoiding

Uses:

1. When an issue is trivial, of only passing importance.
2. When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns - eg when you have low power or you are frustrated by something which would be very difficult to change.
3. When the potential damage of confronting a conflict outweighs the benefits of its resolution.
4. To let people cool down, reduce tensions to a productive level and regain perspective.
5. When gathering more information outweighs the advantages of an immediate decision.
6. When others can resolve the conflict more effectively.

If you think you are high on this preference:

- Does your coordination suffer because people have trouble getting your inputs on issues?
- Does it often appear that people are “walking on egg-shells”?
(Sometimes a dysfunctional amount of energy can be devoted to caution and the avoiding of issues, indication that issues need to be faced and resolved).
- Are decisions on important issues made by default?

If you think you are low on this preference:

- Do you find yourself hurting people’s feelings or stirring up hostilities?
(You may need to exercise more discretion in confronting issues or more tact in framing issues in non-threatening ways. Tact is partially the art of avoiding potentially disruptive aspects).
- Do you often feel harried or overwhelmed by a number of issues?
(You may need to devote more time to setting priorities - deciding which issues are relatively unimportant and perhaps delegating them to others).

Accommodating

Uses:

1. When you realise that you are wrong - to allow a better position to be heard, to learn from others, and to show that you are reasonable.
2. When the issue is much more important to the other person than to yourself - to satisfy the needs of others, and as a goodwill gesture to help maintain a cooperative relationship.
3. To build up social credits for later issues which are important to you.
4. When continued competition would only damage your cause and you're outmatched and losing.
5. When preserving harmony and avoiding disruption are especially important.
6. To aid in the managerial development of subordinates by allowing them to experiment and learn from their own mistakes.

If you think you are high on this preference:

- Do you feel that your own ideas and concerns are not getting the attention they deserve? (Deferring too much to the concerns of others can deprive you of influence, respect, and recognition. It also deprives the organisation of your potential contributions).

If you think you are low on this preference:

- Do you have trouble building goodwill with others? (Accommodation on minor issues which are important to others are gestures of goodwill).
- Do others often seem to regard you as unreasonable?
- Do you have trouble admitting it when you are wrong?
- Do you recognise legitimate exceptions to rules?
- Do you know when to give up?



Conflict-Handling Skills: Ways to get into the conversation using the 5 modes

Mode	Common Phrases
Accommodating (smoothing)	I concede that point..... I agree with you there..... I am prepared to accept that..... I will do as you say..... I don't want to offend you..... What is your preferred outcome..... You have convinced me..... I am glad we agree on this.....
Competing (forcing)	I'm not prepared to change my position..... I must make my position quite clear..... My view is clearly the most rational..... I am sure mine is the best way..... If you don't do this I'll..... I know best, you'd better..... Do as you're told!.....
Avoiding (withdrawal)	I can't take responsibility for this decision..... I'd prefer not to discuss that now..... Let's talk about that later..... That is outside my brief..... I won't be drawn on that..... I'm not in a position to discuss..... I don't want to talk about..... I don't see your point.....
Collaborating (problem solving)	Let's work together on this..... What is mutually acceptable..... What do we disagree about..... Let's find some common ground..... Let's investigate the problem..... My position is..... what's yours Where do we differ How can we solve this.....
Compromising (sharing)	Let's find a quick solution..... I'll give you....., if you give me..... Let's split the difference..... I suggest we meet half way..... We can't both win, but let's not both lose..... Let's be satisfied with I'm prepared to....., if you..... Let's both come away from this with something.....

How can a manager could promote a positive atmosphere in order to minimise the adverse effects of conflict

Handling conflict in a positive way can build trust, consensus, inclusiveness and honesty among team members.

If you gain an understanding of the motivations of team members and company policies, you can diminish the frequency of disagreements between group members. For example, understanding a company's policy regarding employee promotions can reduce the likelihood an employee will take offense at the promotion of a co-worker -- or missing out on a promotion themselves.

It's also critical to avoid ethnic humour, sarcasm and sexist remarks. It is equally important to express appreciation for another person's work and include others in discussions. To counter personality conflicts, team members should learn good team communication, decision-making and how to provide feedback.

When a team manager handles conflicts appropriately, the team members' understanding grows, communications become more open, and individuals are more accepting of personal differences. As positive team behaviour becomes an accepted practice, the team members become more effective working as a team than as individuals.

By the manager addressing conflict in a positive way, such as playing down differences or asking a third party to mediate, this reduces the antagonism that may exist and the morale of team members may improve. In addition, through the managers early identification and management of an individual or team conflict situation, the team members become more committed to reaching their work goals.

Key steps to resolve conflict:

1. Listen to understand

- Meet with each person on their own to understand what their issues are. Ask about and listen to their story about how the conflict started and how it has escalated. Talk to them about what they have done to manage the conflict. Discuss how they think the conflict could be resolved.
- Importantly, ask questions and listen to the response. Really listen. Most often it is something more emotional. Get to the core of the problem.

2. Meet to discuss the key issues

Organise a meeting of yourself and the two people in a neutral and confidential environment. Facilitate a meeting to raise the key issues and reach an acceptable outcome. Key steps of the meeting should include:

- Agree on the key problems that need to be addressed and ask each party to give their perspective around the three key problems.
- Allocate time for each person to speak and ensure that the other person listens carefully and does not interrupt.
- Allow opportunity for questions of each other and seek common ground in what is being said.
- Based on what has been said, identify and proposed solutions to each of the key problems.
- Be very clear on what the agreed solutions are between the parties.
- Document the solutions for each so sign and agree on a review period.



3. Hold follow-up review meetings

- Post the meeting and after each person has had time to digest what happened, meet with each of them. Check how they are feeling most the meeting and how satisfied they are with the agreed solutions.
- Most importantly, keep them accountable to the agreed solutions and each you follow through on the review. And not just one review, continue to have review meetings with both people to ensure they conflict is fully resolved and all remedial action is carried out.

In summary

Conflict is inevitable. Conflict is difficult to manage but with this clear 3-step conflict resolution process to follow it will help you achieve the best possible outcome.

- Listen to understand the problems.
- Explore and agree solutions for the problems.
- Review how both people are feeling post the conflict resolution meeting.

As the leader, you need to be the ultimate conflict resolution expert to ensure a situation does not escalate and cause safety and ongoing performance issues.

Guidelines in completing 2.1/2.2/2.3

Make sure you add what you are doing to address conflict in the workplace to your plans, actions, progress and observations on your abilities to do this, to support your responses to assignment questions 2.1; 2.2 and 2.3.

You can also capture examples and the shared learning and progress made by others from the action learning session you attend to support this assignment.

Make sure you make notes either during or after the action learning event to provide evidence of your progress in implementing the actions identified in the 2.1 Development Plan. This will provide richer evidence to support your conclusions to your evaluation for 2.3- see the template below:

My organisation:		Rating scale: 1=ineffective / 2=effective in parts / 3 =effective / 4 =highly effective	
Evaluation criteria questions	Rating	My judgements to support my rating and examples to support my rationale	
How well do I share my organisation's overall strategy and policies to support well-being at work?			
What support mechanisms/procedures am I aware of and put in place with my team to support well-being and support staff with stress?			
What demands in work do I try to reduce that may contribute to individuals experiencing stress?			
How well do I as a manager deal with stress at work?			
What training have I undertaken to support individuals with stress?			
What training have I offered to individuals to help them to better cope with stress and stressful situations?			
How effective am I in identifying and managing potential conflict situations?			
How well do I as a leader deal with conflict in the workplace?			
How effective am I in managing difficult conversations?			
What are my initial conclusions about how well I manage stress and conflict from the above analysis?			
What are my initial recommendations for any improvements about how I can better deal with stress and dealing with conflict in my team?			

End of ILM Unit 506 Resources