



**Carl Vinson
Institute of Government**
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

From Conflict to Collaboration: Handle with Care

Eric M. Robinson

Session Objectives

- Examine your personal reaction to conflict
- Accurately diagnose types and sources of conflict
- Identify the styles of handling conflict and the advantages and disadvantages of each
- Discover the value of using conflict to increase your team's effectiveness



Four major battles facing Congress in 2023

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is headed for another era of divided government in the new year, as Republicans are poised to claim control of the House of Representatives on Jan. 3. Democrats will wield an expanded 51-seat Senate majority and control the presidency.

- Quote from *Four major battles facing Congress in 2023* – January 3, 2023 NBC News Article by Sahil Kapur and Scott Wong



Interpreting Conflict

How do you interpret conflict?



Conflict is not always Bad

- Conflict is the lifeblood of vibrant, progressive, stimulating organizations.
- It sparks creativity, stimulates innovation, and encourages personal improvement.

-David Whetten and Kim Cameron, Developing Management Skills



Mixed Feelings about Conflict

- Managers agree that conflict is necessary in a free-enterprise system.
- Managers' actions demonstrate a personal preference for avoiding conflicts whenever possible.

-David Whetten and Kim Cameron, Developing Management Skills

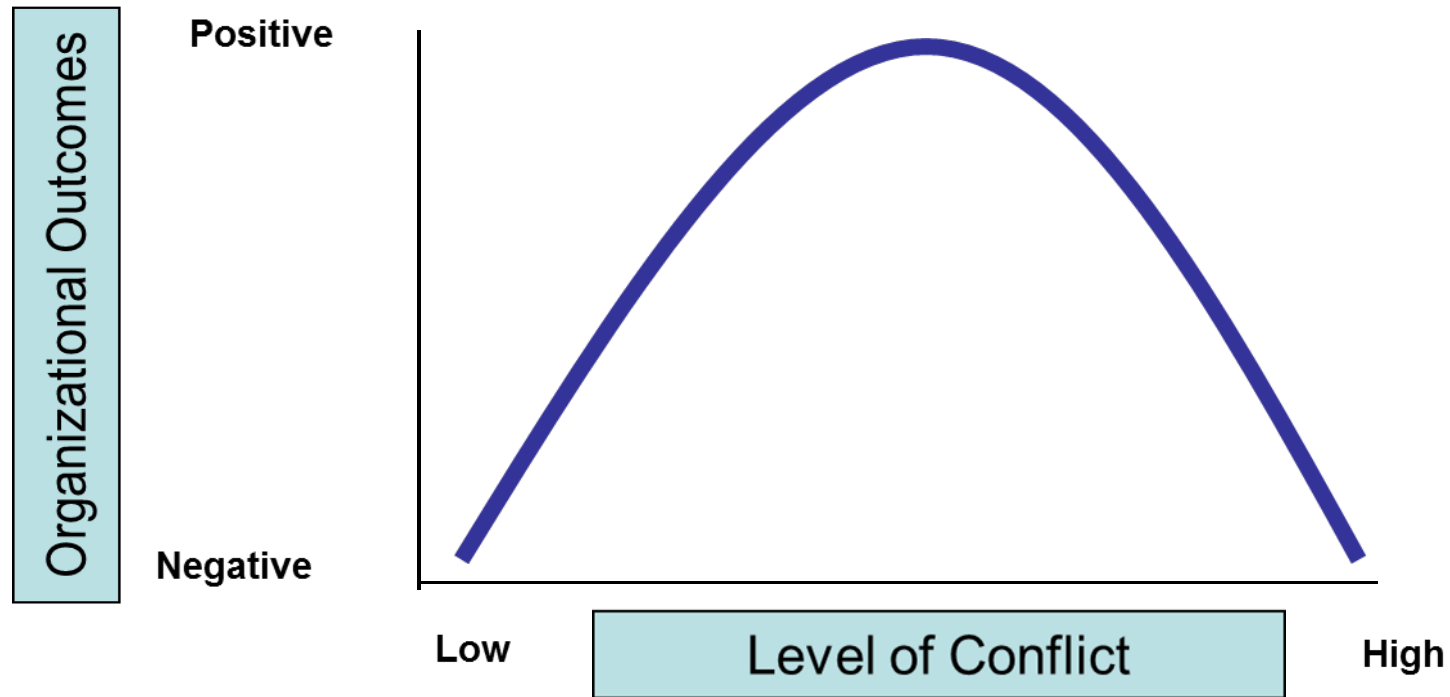


“One of the leading causes of business failure among major corporations is too much agreement among top management.”

-David Whetten and Kim Cameron, *Developing Management Skills*



Balancing Conflict



-David Whetten and Kim Cameron, *Developing Management Skills*



The Challenge

- The challenge becomes promoting a healthy amount of conflict among teams without destroying their ability to work together.

-David Whetten and Kim Cameron, Developing Management Skills



Interpreting Conflict

- Conflict is not always bad
- Conflict is not always a contest
- Conflict can be beneficial
- Conflict is necessary to be successful



Conflict Management Skills

- Accurately diagnosing the types of conflict
- Select appropriate management strategy
- Settle the interpersonal disputes effectively so that underlying problems are resolved and the relationship between disputants is not damaged

-David Whetten and Kim Cameron, *Developing Management Skills*



Types of Conflict

- Substantive (task-related) conflict
 - Goals, priorities, task accomplishment

- Interpersonal conflict
 - Personality clashes, arguments, enemies

-David Whetten and Kim Cameron, Developing Management Skills



Sources of Conflict

- Personal differences
 - Perceptions and expectations
- Informational deficiencies
 - Misinformation and misrepresentation
- Role incompatibility
 - Goals and responsibilities
- Environmentally induced stress
 - Resource scarcity and uncertainty

-Denhardt, Denhardt and Aristigueta, Managing Human Behavior in Public and Nonprofit Organizations



Typical Responses to Conflict

Five Conflict Management Styles

- Competing/Forcing
- Avoiding
- Compromising
- Accommodating
- Collaborating

-David Whetten and Kim Cameron, *Developing Management Skills*



Competing Approach

| Objective | Your posture | Supporting rationale | Likely outcome |
|---------------|---|---|--|
| Get your way. | “I know what is right. Do not question my judgment or authority.” | It is better to risk causing a few hard feelings than to abandon an issue you are committed to. | You feel vindicated, but other party feels defeated and probably humiliated. |



Avoiding Approach

| Objective | Your posture | Supporting rationale | Likely outcome |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Avoid having to deal with conflict. | “I’m neutral on that issue.” “Let me think about it.” “That’s someone else’s problem.” | Disagreement is inherently bad because it creates tension. | Interpersonal problems don’t get resolved, causing long-term frustration manifested in a variety of ways. |



Compromising Approach

| Objective | Your posture | Supporting rationale | Likely outcome |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|
| Reach an agreement quickly. | “Let’s search for a solution we can both live with so we can get on with our work.” | Prolonged conflicts distract people from their work and engender bitter feelings. | Participants become conditioned to seek expedient, rather than effective, solutions. |



Accommodating Approach

| Objective | Your posture | Supporting rationale | Likely outcome |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Don't upset the other person. | "How can I help you feel good about this encounter?" "My position isn't <i>that</i> important..." | Maintaining harmonious relationships should be the top priority. | Other person is likely to take advantage of you. |



Collaborating Approach

| Objective | Your posture | Supporting rationale | Likely outcome |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Solve the problem together. | “This is my position, what’s yours?” “I’m committed to finding the best possible solution.” “What do you suggest?” | Both parties’ positions are equally important. Equal emphasis should be placed on both to reach the best solution. | The problem will probably be solved. Both parties are likely to be satisfied with the solution. |



Selecting the “Best” Strategy

- No one best strategy for managing conflict
- Things to consider
 - Issue importance
 - Relationship importance
 - Relative power
 - Time constraints



| | Force | Accommodate | Avoid | Compromise | Collaborate |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Issue Importance | <i>Hi</i> | <i>Lo</i> | <i>Lo</i> | <i>Med</i> | <i>Hi</i> |
| Relationship importance | <i>Lo</i> | <i>Hi</i> | <i>Lo</i> | <i>Med</i> | <i>Hi</i> |
| Relative power | <i>Hi</i> | <i>Lo</i> | <i>Equal-Hi</i> | <i>Equal-Hi</i> | <i>Lo-Hi</i> |
| Time constraints | <i>Med-Hi</i> | <i>Med-Hi</i> | <i>Med-Hi</i> | <i>Lo</i> | <i>Lo</i> |





**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**

**Carl Vinson
Institute of Government**

Since 1927, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government has been an integral part of the University of Georgia. A public service and outreach unit of the university, the Institute of Government is the largest and most comprehensive university based organization serving governments in the United States through research services, customized assistance, training and development, and the application of technology.

Connect With Us!



**facebook.com
/VinsonInstitute**



**Carl Vinson
Institute of Government**



@CVIOG_UGA



www.cviog.uga.edu