Conflict Management as a Core Competency for Leaders

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The 21st-century Organization: A Holding Pen for Conflict

1. Work is increasingly done by teams.
2. Teams are global, culturally diverse, asynchronous, cross-functional.
3. Organizations are matrixed: Leaders must influence without having authority.
4. Competitive advantage is fleeting: There’s increased pressure to perform.
5. Business is conducted “at the speed of thought”: Time is of the essence.
The Consequences of Unmanaged Conflict

Unresolved conflict, especially among senior executives, can have dire consequences, including:

- Unproductive activity (*a tactical vs strategic focus*)
- Delayed decision making
- Misdirected anger and hostility
- Increased absenteeism and turnover
- Reduced productivity
- Modeling a dysfunctional picture to the organization

*Conflict can’t be eliminated, but it can be managed by the organization’s leaders.*
Roles of Leaders in Conflict Management

1. Assess the skills of senior-team leaders and players:
   ✓ Skills of an Effective Executive
   ✓ Key Conflict Management Skills

2. Align senior teams for high performance:
   ✓ Five key areas
   ✓ Attributes of a high-performing team

3. Drive/monitor accountability.

4. Be a coach and/or provide coaches.

5. Role-model effective conflict management.
Assess conflict management mindset/skills/behavior of senior teams.
Skills of an Effective Executive

REQUIRED SKILL USAGE

Senior Management
Middle Management
First-Line Supervisors

TECHNICAL SKILLS
LEADERSHIP/INTERPERSONAL SKILLS
STRATEGIC SKILLS

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Types</th>
<th>Players:</th>
<th>Vacationers:</th>
<th>Prisoners:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Risk Takers</td>
<td>Play It Safe</td>
<td>Underground</td>
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# Methods for Dealing with Conflict

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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Confront</strong></td>
<td>Address issue openly/candidly/objectively</td>
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<td><strong>2. Change Self</strong></td>
<td>Let it go</td>
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<td><strong>3. Leave</strong></td>
<td>Physically remove self from involvement</td>
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<td><strong>4. Play Victim</strong></td>
<td>Pretend and resent – act powerless and complain</td>
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Assertion Continuum

Non-Assertive  Assertive  Aggressive

BEHAVIOR
Assertion Dynamics

GUILT

Non-Assertive  Assertive  Aggressive
Pretend and resent  Protect one’s space  Impact others  Mount Vesuvius

The straw that broke the camel’s back
Key Conflict Management Skills

Core Skills Requirement:

Influencing without Positional Authority

- Listening: Mirror / Get to the Core Issues
- Assertion: Confront Effectively / Establish Boundaries
- Conflict Management: 4 C Model
  - Connect
  - Clarify
  - Confirm
  - Contract
- The Key is Authenticity
Align Senior Teams for High Performance
Key Alignment Factors

- Strategy
- Goals / Business Priorities / Focus
- Individual Roles / Accountabilities
- Protocols / Rules of Engagement
- Business Relationships / Mutual Expectations
## Attributes of the High-Performing Team

1. The mission, goals, and business priorities of the team are clear to all team members.

2. The team is comprised of the right players.

3. The roles/points of intersection/turf are clear to all team members regarding every player on the team.

4. Team members are committed to the team “winning” (achieving the business goal) over their own parochial/functional self-interest.

5. The decision-making/leadership mechanism that the team employs is understood and accepted by all team members.

6. Every team member feels a sense of ownership/accountability for the business results that the team creates.
Attributes of the High-Performing Team

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8. The team has a willingness to periodically self-assess its progress as a group.
Team Development Wheel

Moving to Stages 3 and 4 Requires Intervention

Stages 1 and 2 Evolve Naturally
Drive/monitor accountability
ORGANIZATION Levels of Accountability

1. For Yourself
2. For Your Direct Reports
3. For Your Peers (HPT)
4. For Your Leader’s Success
5. For the Organization

Low Control
High Control
Be a coach and/or provide coaches.
Coaching Guidelines for Leaders

• Monitor progress of team members and note when coaching is needed.

• Serve as a coach whenever possible:
  ✓ Call individuals on unacceptable behavior
  ✓ Provide constructive, depersonalized feedback.
  ✓ Ask questions, don’t give answers: What do you intend to do? What will be the consequences? What could you do instead?
  ✓ Focus on process as well as content.
  ✓ Hold people accountable for resolving conflict and reporting back to you.

• Assign a professional coach—when the situation warrants.

• Monitor individuals’ progress—or lack of progress—and act accordingly.
Role-model effective conflict management.
• Be open, honest, and candid—especially when delivering bad news.
• Depersonalize when delivering—and receiving—feedback.
• Be assertive, not non-assertive or aggressive, in your business relationships.
• Learn to listen/mirror.
• Honor your contracts.
• Don’t play Solomon—and don’t play favorites.
• Observe team protocols:
  ✓ Don’t be drawn into triangulation.
  ✓ Say no to “hands from the grave.”
  ✓ Resolve it or let it go.
• Check your ego at the door, model an enterprise view.
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   - Key Conflict Management Skills

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   - Attributes of a high-performing team

3. Drive/monitor accountability.

4. Be a coach and/or provide coaches.

5. Role-model effective conflict management.
Howard M. Guttman, Biography

Howard M. Guttman is principal of Guttman Development Strategies, Inc. (GDS), a Mount Arlington, NJ-based management consulting firm specializing in building high-performance teams, executive coaching, and strategic and operational alignment. GDS has been selected as one of the 20 best U.S. consulting firms in leadership development by Leadership Excellence magazine.

GDS focuses on aligning senior management teams, developing the strategy and implementation of "horizontal" organizations (brand teams, matrix structures, global teams), and executive development. Mr. Guttman and his staff of 18 consultants are known for creating programs and processes that are pragmatic, results oriented, and produce observable change. His style is direct, and he enables clients to clearly see the distinction between symptoms and core organization issues.

Among GDS's U.S. and international corporate clients are Chico's FAS, Inc.; Colgate-Palmolive; John Hancock; Johnson & Johnson; Liz Claiborne; L'Oréal USA; Mars Inc.; Novartis; Philip Morris USA; and Schering-Plough. Mr. Guttman has also consulted with numerous universities and non-profit organizations around the world.

Mr. Guttman’s corporate experience includes Johnson & Johnson and Automatic Data Processing. At J&J, his last position was director of human resources. Previously, at J&J, he served as national manager of human resources development and general manager of headquarters personnel. At ADP, Mr. Guttman was senior organization development consultant responsible for internal consulting and executive training.

Mr. Guttman holds an M.S. from Case Western Reserve University's School of Applied Social Sciences. He has been a professor of organization behavior and management consulting at the Graduate School of Management of Rutgers University and an adjunct professor of behavioral consulting at Fairleigh Dickinson University’s Graduate School of Psychology.


Mr. Guttman has appeared on MSNBC, New Jersey News 12, WMAQ Chicago, and Comcast Network's “One on One.” He is a frequent contributor to professional journals such as Harvard B-School Working Knowledge, Harvard Management Update, Human Resource Executive, The Journal of Business Strategy, Leader to Leader, Management Review, and Pharmaceutical Executive. He is a contributing editor to Leadership Excellence.

Articles by Mr. Guttman have also appeared and he has been quoted in broad-interest newspapers and magazines such as American Airlines’ American Way, Amtrak’s Arrive, Business News New Jersey, Investors Business Daily, The Washington Post, The Newark Star Ledger, U.S. News and World Report, and U.S.A. Today.

Mr. Guttman frequently addresses academic and corporate audiences on such topics as “Executive Development,” “Consulting at the Board Level,” “Accelerating Organizational Development,” “Strategic Training Initiatives,” “High-Performance Team Development,” and “Conflict Management as a Core Leadership Competency.”

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