Workplace Conflict & Diverse Communities

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Fun Facts about Culture / MN / Me

- Worked for West, a Thomson Reuters business (formerly Thomson West) from 2007-2011 in Eagan & visited regularly
- Been to The Great Minnesota Get-Together (Largest State Fair in the USA!) and know what a Butter Sculpture is
- Visited the Mall of America many times
- Flew in the same day 'When LUV Comes to Town' (Southwest Airlines inaugural service to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport) AND rode in a hotel shuttle with one of the first crews that flew to MN
- A lot of bridges – I was here the day after the devastating 2007 bridge collapse in Minneapolis and visited the site
- Visited Minneapolis Central Library
- Life is Short, Stay Awake for it: I already got my coffee fix – bought my Caribou Coffee downstairs to take home!
- and I’ve been to Prior Lake before!
Think of one diverse population in your workplace that presents a cultural challenge or conflict for you.

How does this impact the service you provide to them?

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Think about one cultural challenge or conflict your diverse population may face.

How does this impact their information needs and information seeking behaviors?
Minnesota Diversity
What’s your culture?

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Gender identity
- Generation
- Religion
- Socio-economic status
- Sexual orientation
- Ability status

- Level of importance to you (1=not at all; 5=extremely)

- Relevant in your organization? (Yes; No; Sometimes)

Adapted from Cultural Intelligence Center CQ Teaching Exercises
Which part of your cultural identity is most important to you at work?

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Gender identity
- Generation
- Religion
- Socio-economic status
- Sexual orientation
- Ability status
Which part of your cultural identity is **least** important to you at work?

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Gender identity
- Generation
- Religion
- Socio-economic status
- Sexual orientation
- Ability status
HAVE YOU EVER HAD CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE?
Dealing with Difficult Customers?

Having a Disagreement with Co-Worker?

Turn the Other Cheek

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything.

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread
Functions of Conflict

1. Makes organizational members more aware and able to cope with problems through discussion
2. Promises organizational change and adaptation
3. Strengthens relationships and heightens morale
4. Promotes awareness of self and others
5. Enhances personal development
6. Encourages psychological development—it helps people become more accurate and realistic in their self-appraisals
7. Can be stimulating and fun
8. Does not always have to be negative
9. New ideas are generated and fostered
10. Conflict will ALWAYS exist
Understand the Conflict

- POSITIONS
- INTERESTS
- POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
- LEGITIMACY
- THEIR INTERESTS

From “Training for Conflict Resolution,” The Community Toolbox
Healthy vs. Damaging Conflict
Cultural Characteristics

Race
Socio-economic status
Generational
Gender identity
Age
Education
Ability status
Causes of Conflict

- **Relationship Conflicts**
  - Miscommunication
  - Strong emotions
  - Stereotyping
  - Repetitive negative behavior

- **Value Conflicts**
  1. Different ways of life, ideology, worldview, etc.
  2. Different criteria for evaluating ideas.

- **Structural Conflicts**
  1. Unequal authority
  2. Unequal control of resources
  3. Time constraints

- **Data Conflicts**
  1. Lack of information
  2. Misinformation
  3. Differing views on data's relevance
  4. Different interpretations of data

- **Interest Conflicts**
  1. Perceived or actual competition over interests
  2. Procedural interests
  3. Psychological interests
### Cultural Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>Emphasis on individual goals and individual rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>Emphasis on group goals and personal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Power Distance</td>
<td>Emphasis on equality; shared decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Power Distance</td>
<td>Emphasis on differences in status; superiors make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>Emphasis on flexibility and adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>Emphasis on planning and predictability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>Emphasis on collaboration, nurturing, and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Emphasis on competition, assertiveness, and achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>Emphasis on immediate outcomes (success now)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term</td>
<td>Emphasis on long term planning (success later)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Cultural Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Context / Direct</th>
<th>Emphasis on explicit communication (words)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Context / Indirect</td>
<td>Emphasis on indirect communication (tone, context)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Being</th>
<th>Emphasis on quality of life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doing</td>
<td>Emphasis on being busy and meeting goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universalism</th>
<th>Emphasis on rules; standards that apply to everyone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Particularism</td>
<td>Emphasis on specifics; unique standards based on relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutral / Non-Expressive</th>
<th>Emphasis on non-emotional communication; hiding feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective / Expressive</td>
<td>Emphasis on expressive communication; sharing feelings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monochronic / Linear</th>
<th>Emphasis on one thing at a time; punctuality; work and personal life separate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polychronic / Non-Linear</td>
<td>Emphasis on multitasking; interruptions ok; work and personal combined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implicit Bias
Implicit Bias

Unintended, subtle and unconscious thought that happens to most people much of the time

Attitudes and stereotypes we develop based on characteristics such as race, age, ethnicity, religion or appearance that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner
Implicit Bias

- Are pervasive and permeate the workplace at all levels because we all have prejudices
- Hinder diversity, recruiting and retention efforts, and unknowingly shape an organization’s culture
- Do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs
- Are malleable
Implicit Bias
Increased awareness helps prevent unfair judgments and actions

Cultural Intelligence
Changes behaviors and improves intercultural effectiveness
Common Contributors to Conflict at Work

- Assumptions and expectations
- Core values not being met
- Differing personal lenses and filters through which people interpret the world
- Emotions hijacking conversations
- Miscommunication or vague language

From “Conflict Resolution at Work” by Vivian Scott
Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is the ability to recognize the significance of culture in one’s own life and in the lives of others; and to come to know and respect diverse cultural backgrounds and characteristics through interaction with individuals from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups; and to fully integrate the culture of diverse groups into services, work, and institutions in order to enhance the lives of both those being served by the library profession and those engaged in service. (p. 189-190)

How to Manage Conflict

1. **Be candid.** Be willing to discuss issues when they surface.
2. **Be receptive.** Discuss all competing points of view.
3. **Depersonalize.** Look at issues as a “business-case” rather than a personal attack.
4. **Be clear** in your communication.
5. **Learn to listen.**
6. **Accept responsibility** for the challenges that are yours or that you have created.

Source: “The Leader’s Role in Managing Conflict” by Howard M. Guttman
Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Handling

Modes/Styles

COMPETING

COLLABORATING

COMPROMISING

AVOIDING

ACCOMMODATING

UNCOOPERATIVE

COOPERATIVENESS

UNASSERTIVE

ASSERTIVENESS

ASSERTIVE
Do and Don’t of Resolving Conflict

Do…
  o Understand that conflicts are inevitable.
  o Resolve to address conflict quickly.
  o Focus on the problem.
  o Be open to solutions.
  o Acknowledge how your customer is feeling.
  o Listen actively.

Don’t…
  o Focus on personality traits that cannot be changed.
  o Interrupt.
  o Attack.
  o Disregard the feelings of the customer.
  o Avoid the conflict.
  o Allow emotions to take over the conversation.
  o Impose personal values or beliefs.
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