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**Key  
Topic****Conflict Resolution**

Conflict in a project is not a matter of *if* it will happen, but rather *when* it will happen. Common sources of conflict include resource scarcity, scheduling issues, and work style. When conflicts occur, the project manager is responsible for working with team members and stakeholders to resolve the issue, regardless of its source.

Conflict-resolution techniques include smoothing, forcing, compromising, confronting, avoiding, and negotiating. The following sections discuss these techniques in detail.

**Smoothing**

*Smoothing*, also known as *accommodating*, emphasizes areas of agreement rather than differences. With this technique, the project manager helps team members to accommodate the concerns of other people. Smoothing may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- When temporary relief from the conflict or buying time is important
- When the issue is more important to one person than to another
- When one of the parties is wrong
- When continued conflict would be detrimental to the project

In some cases, the project manager may choose smoothing in order to protect interests that are more important, while giving up on some interests that are less important. Smoothing gives team members an opportunity to reassess the situation from a different angle.

Use smoothing only when needed; it should not be the go-to solution for all conflict. Parties in the conflict may try to take advantage of smoothing, and some team members may not like the use of smoothing for conflict resolution. In addition, smoothing may have a negative effect on the team's confidence in the project manager's ability to respond to aggressive conflict situations. Finally, smoothing makes it more difficult to transition to a future *win-win* solution, in which the chosen solution is the one that best satisfies the concerns of both parties.

**Forcing**

*Forcing*, also known as *directing* or *competing*, pursues one viewpoint despite the existence of other viewpoints on the team. It often involves resisting another team member's actions. Forcing may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- When less forceful methods do not work or are ineffective

- When the team is receiving pressure to pursue a particular viewpoint that the project manager feels is wrong
- When a quick resolution is required and using force is justified
- As a last resort to resolve a long-lasting conflict

Project managers sometimes use forcing to provide a quick resolution to a conflict. Forcing increases respect when firm resistance is a response to aggression or hostility.

Forcing may negatively affect the project manager's relationship with the opponent. In addition, it may cause the opponent to react in the same manner. With this method, the strong points of the other side's position are ignored. Taking this approach requires a lot of energy.

### Compromising

With *compromising*, also known as *reconciling*, the team searches for a solution that will bring satisfaction to all parties by partially resolving the conflict. Compromising may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- When goals are only moderately important and not worth the use of other approaches
- To reach temporary resolution on complex issues
- To reach expedient solutions on important issues
- When the involved parties do not have a high level of mutual trust
- When collaboration or forcing do not work

Compromising is faster than other conflict-resolution techniques and may be practical when time is a factor. It can provide a temporary solution until a win-win solution can be found. Compromising lowers tension levels and stress in conflict situations.

In a *lose-lose* situation, the compromise does not satisfy either party. Unfortunately, compromising does not contribute to building trust and may require monitoring to ensure that agreements made during the compromise are met.

### Confronting

With *confronting*, also known as *problem solving*, the team uses multiple viewpoints to lead to consensus. With this method, the team attempts to work together to find a win-win solution to the problem in hand. The goal of this approach is to

find a mutually beneficial result. Confronting may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- When consensus and commitment are important
- When in a collaborative environment
- When multiple stakeholders' interests need to be addressed
- When a high level of trust is present
- When a long-term relationship is important
- When animosity is involved
- When the team needs to share responsibility

Confronting usually leads to solving the actual problem while reinforcing mutual trust and respect. It also builds a foundation to help bring about effective collaboration in the future. Project managers who use this technique are often seen as good negotiators. This method of conflict resolution usually results in less stress than with most of the other methods.

When confronting a conflict, all parties must be committed to finding a mutually acceptable solution; therefore, this method of conflict resolution requires more effort and time than other methods. Confronting is not practical if time is crucial, because a win-win solution may not be evident. If trust within the team is ever damaged, this method cannot be used until trust is reestablished.

## Avoiding

*Avoiding*, also known as *withdrawing*, postpones the issue until the project manager can be better prepared or other parties can resolve the issue. This technique often involves sidestepping the issue. Avoiding may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- When the issue is trivial
- When dealing with the issue directly is impractical because time is limited
- When more information is needed to make a decision
- When it is not the right time or place to address the issue
- When unreasonable effort would be required to resolve the issue
- When the discussion could lead to hostility
- When another party needs to be involved

Avoiding is often used to postpone the decision until more favorable circumstances allow for pushing back from the opposing viewpoint. When the conflict is short-term, withdrawing is a low-stress approach. It gives the team time to focus on more important issues, and it allows the team to collect information before taking action.

Avoiding an issue may weaken relationships with the project team or any parties that expect immediate action. Avoiding also requires skill and experience to prevent negative effects in the project manager's position.

## Negotiating

*Negotiating* brings two viewpoints together to discuss issues and reach a solution. Negotiation skills include setting goals and limits, controlling emotions, listening, verbal communication, and understanding when to close the negotiation.

Project managers use two categories of negotiation:

- **Competitive negotiation:** Concerned with getting the best deal, competitive negotiation is mostly used in contractual negotiations with third parties. Avoid this type of negotiation if possible.
- **Collaborative negotiation:** Seeks a win-win situation, as with confronting. Collaborative negotiation works to build relationships while minimizing conflict.

Negotiation is helpful when the project manager does not have full project authority, such as when the organization has a functional or matrix structure.

**NOTE** For more on project team structure (projectized, matrix, or functional), see Chapter 2.

Negotiation includes planning, discussing issues, proposing solutions, bargaining for trade-offs, agreeing to a solution, and reviewing the resolution. But watch for these issues with negotiation:

- Failing to prepare properly
- Making an unreasonable offer
- Neglecting to take time-outs in protracted negotiations
- Rushing negotiations
- Failing to walk away
- Failing to remain calm

Project managers may need training in negotiation skills. They must be able to spell out the guidelines to any team members involved in the negotiations.

**Key  
Topic**

## Resource Management

*Resource management* ensures that all the supplies needed to complete a project are identified and managed appropriately. During the Planning phase of a project, the project manager must identify all the required resources. If the organization does not own all the necessary resources, any missing resources must be purchased or arranged as part of procurement management. Resources owned by the organization must be scheduled at the appropriate times for use as project resources. Procurements must be managed from planning, conducting, and controlling the procurements through to closing the procurements when the resources are obtained and ready for use. A resource calendar should be developed to show all resources needed by the project and when they will be used.

**NOTE** In some project management articles, the term *project resources* includes personnel resources such as team members. For all the resource issues discussed in this section, keep in mind that the topic can also apply to personnel resources, but this discussion focuses on non-personnel resources.

Resources vary by project. To compile a comprehensive list of needed resources, the project manager may need to consult with subject matter experts.

**EXAMPLE:** For a construction project, resources might include equipment and supplies such as heavy machinery, tools, concrete, lumber, paint, and so on. For a project that adds a new subnet to a network, resources could include network devices, wiring, software, etc. No matter what type of project the organization contemplates, determining all the necessary resources in advance is important.

The project manager must have the appropriate skills to manage shared and dedicated resources, including allocating, monitoring, and controlling resources to prevent resource shortages or overallocation; establishing procedures for handling low-quality resources; and documenting benched resources. Finally, the project manager should document interproject dependencies and any resource contention.

### Shared Versus Dedicated Resources

When allocating resources to a project, the project manager must understand the difference between shared and dedicated resources:

- **Shared resource:** Used jointly between multiple projects. When using shared resources, the project manager will need to negotiate with department

managers or other project managers for resource availability. This negotiation may also involve the PMO if one exists. Keep in mind that the type of organization and project team structure (projectized, matrix, or functional) affect resource negotiation.

- **Dedicated resource:** Allocated to a single project. When using dedicated resources, the project manager has full access to the resource for the project.

**NOTE** Organizational types and project team structures are discussed in Chapter 2.

**EXAMPLE:** A construction company has two dump trucks to share among three projects. To meet the needs of all three projects, the project manager needs to work with resource managers to schedule the dump trucks. A lower-priority project may have to wait until after a higher-priority project is finished using the equipment. If enough financial resources are available, the organization might rent or purchase additional trucks. The project managers will have to work together to avoid or at least anticipate scheduling conflicts and make other arrangements.

**EXAMPLE:** An IT project requires access to a lab environment that is shared with another department. It may be possible to grant both the project team and the department personnel concurrent access to the lab environment without causing resource contention. However, if a conflict arises, the project manager will need to work with the department supervisor to adjust schedules to give both the project team and the department personnel time in the lab.

These examples show that projects impacted by resource availability may affect project schedules. For this reason, it is important to identify these resources and document the resource calendar prior to creating the baseline project schedule.

## Resource Allocation

With all the necessary resources identified for a project, the project manager needs to list those resources in the resource calendar, showing the availability of each resource to the project. For resources that will be purchased, the project manager must also create the procurement management plan (part of the project management plan) and then monitor all procurements to ensure that they are received as planned.

**NOTE** Chapter 1, “Project Properties and Phases,” describes the procurement management plan and the other parts of the project management plan.