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GLOBAL
EDITION

Human Relations

Interpersonal Job-Oriented Skills

TWELFTH EDITION

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ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON

Resolving Conflicts with Others

Karen was one of five members of a group of workers who repaired and installed desktop and laptop computers for individuals and small businesses. Her company, Elite Computers, also installed new software and repaired virus damage. Karen enjoyed the technical challenges in her work, as well as the opportunity to work directly with a variety of clients and provide them valuable assistance.

A major challenge facing Karen and her teammates was that some of the on-site repair work had to be done on Saturdays and Sundays to accommodate clients who worked on weekends as well as weekdays. When their computer is down, some clients could not wait until Monday for an Elite technician to begin the repairs.

One of Karen's teammates, Charlie, seemed to often have an excuse for not making a weekend client visit when it was his turn. Several times Charlie sent Karen an urgent text message saying that he or a family member was sick, and that he needed Karen to take the service call for him. Each time, Charlie ended his message with "Please help. I'll return the favor later."

One Friday at 8 a.m. Karen received a voice message from Charlie that read, "One of our biggest clients, Silver Motor Sales, has a system breakdown, and needs help this morning. It could be a virus attack. I have to take my brother to the emergency room. Please go to Silver Motors for me, ASAP."

Karen thought, "This dependency of Charlie on me has gotten out of hand. I don't know if he is lying. But if our team screws up with Silver Motors, we will all look bad. Maybe I should call Fred (the team leader). I think Charlie is taking advantage of me. I've got to work on my problem with him."



LEARNING Objectives

After reading and studying this chapter and doing the exercises, you should be able to

1. Specify why so much interpersonal conflict exists in organizations.
2. Recognize your typical method of resolving conflict.
3. Identify the five styles of handling conflict.
4. Acquire effective techniques for resolving conflict and negotiating.
5. Understand how to combat sexual harassment in the workplace.

The situation of computer repair technicians Karen and Charlie illustrates how so often it becomes imperative to resolve conflicts with a coworker to fix an intolerable problem. This chapter will help you improve your ability to resolve conflicts with people at work. The same techniques are also useful in personal life. To improve your understanding of how to resolve conflict, this chapter will present specific techniques and also explain why so much conflict exists. To get you started relating the topic of conflict to you, take Self-Assessment Quiz 9-1.

SOURCES OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT IN ORGANIZATIONS

A conflict is a situation in which two or more goals, values, or events are incompatible or mutually exclusive. A conflict is also a strife, quarrel, or battle, such as would be the case if computer repair technician Karen told Charlie he was a lazy jerk, and he replied that she was callous and unfeeling about his problems.

Conflict between and among people has many sources, or causes. In this section, I describe six of the leading sources. A seventh category, workplace violence, is both a cause and a consequence of conflict. If you understand the cause of a conflict, it can help you resolve the conflict and help prevent a similar recurrence. For example, if you learn that much conflict on the job is caused by people being uncivil toward each other, you might remind yourself to behave civilly. You can also learn how to deal with uncivil coworkers so that they treat you less rudely. Although specific sources of conflict can be identified, keep in mind an important fact—all conflict includes the underlying theme of incompatibility between your goals, values, or events and those of another person.

Competition for Limited Resources

An underlying source of job conflict is that few people can get all the resources they want. These resources include money, material, and human resources. Conflicts arise when two or more people squabble over who should get the resources. Even in a prosperous organization, resources have to be divided in such a manner that not everybody gets what he or she wants.

Assume that you believe you need to have a document scanner immediately accessible the full workday. Yet the company has decided that 10 people must share one scanner. As a result, you are likely to enter into conflict with the coworkers sharing the scanner. The conflict will be intense if several of your coworkers also think they need full-time access to a scanner.

In recent years, news magazines have been able to resolve the competition for limited resources that had taken place among reporters. In the past, reporters would squabble about getting their share of space for their stories in the magazines. *Newsweek* writer Jonathan Alter said, "The old fight over space is different than it was. If there's no room in the magazine for something, you can just do it online."^[1]

Role Conflict

A major source of conflict (and stress) on the job relates to being placed in a predicament. Role conflict stems from having to choose between two competing demands or expectations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1

conflict

A situation in which two or more goals, values, or events are incompatible or mutually exclusive.

role conflict

The situation that occurs when a person has to choose between two competing demands or expectations.

Collaborative versus Competitive Styles of Conflict Management

Answer on a 1-to-5 scale how well you agree with each of the following statements: Disagree strongly; disagree; neutral; agree; agree strongly.

| | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Agree Strongly |
|---|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| 1. I like to see the other side squirm when I resolve a dispute. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Winning is everything when it comes to settling conflict. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. After I have successfully negotiated a price, I like to see the seller smile. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I have a "smash-mouth" attitude toward resolving conflict. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. In most conflict situations, one side is clearly right, and the other side is clearly wrong. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I think there are effective alternatives to strikes for settling union versus management disputes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. The winner should take all. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Conflict on the job is like a prize fight: The idea is to knock out the opponent. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. I like the idea of tournaments in which first-round losers receive another opportunity to play. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Nice guys and gals usually finish first. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Scoring and Interpretation: Add the point value of your scores to obtain your total. Scores of 40 and higher suggest that you prefer a *collaborative*, or *win-win*, approach to resolving conflict. You tend to be concerned about finding long-term solutions to conflict that will provide benefits to both sides. Scores of 39 and lower suggest that you prefer a *competitive* approach to resolving conflict. You want to maximize gain for yourself, with little concern about the welfare of the other side.

If you comply with one aspect of a role, compliance with the other is difficult or impossible. An important example would be receiving contradictory orders from two people above you in your company. If you comply with the wishes of one person, you will antagonize the other. A higher-ranking manager might encourage as many employees as possible to work from home a few days per week. In contrast, your own manager demands that you be on the work premises full time.

Role conflict can take various forms. You might be asked to accomplish two objectives that are in apparent conflict. If your boss asks you to hurry up and finish your work but also decrease your mistakes, you would experience the conflict of incompatible demands (plus perhaps a headache!). Another problem is when two or more people give you incompatible directions. Your immediate supervisor may want you to complete a crash project on time, but company policy temporarily prohibits authorizing overtime payments to clerical help or hiring office temporaries.

Role conflict also results when two different roles that you play are in conflict. Your company may expect you to travel 50 percent of the time, whereas your spouse threatens a divorce if you travel over 25 percent of the time. To complete the picture, *role-person conflict* takes place when the role(s) your organization expects you to occupy is in conflict with your basic values. Your company may ask you to fire the bottom 10 percent of performers, but this could be in conflict with your humanistic values.

Competing Work and Family Demands

Balancing the demands of career and family life has become a major role conflict facing today's workforce. Caring about work and family responsibilities is more likely to intensify work-family conflict. The challenge is particularly intense for employees who are part of

a two-wage-earner family. **Work-family conflict** occurs when an individual's roles of worker and active participant in social and family life compete with one another. This type of conflict is frequent because the multiple roles are often incompatible. Imagine having planned to attend your child's solo recital and then being ordered at the last minute to be present at an after-hours meeting. Work-family conflict can lead to interpersonal conflict because your boss or coworkers might think that you are asking them to cover for you while you attend to personal matters.

work-family conflict

A state that occurs when an individual's roles of worker and active participant in social and family life compete with each other.

Work-to-Family and Family-to-Work Conflict. Work-family conflict can be viewed from two perspectives, with both leading to conflict and stress. A person's work can interfere with family responsibilities, or family responsibilities can interfere with work. In the above example, the person might say, "This is terrible. The meeting called for at the last minute will block me from attending my child's solo recital." Or, the same person might say, "This is terrible. My child's solo recital is going to block me from attending an important last-minute meeting."

An analysis of many scientific studies on the subject found that work demands can create some stress and low satisfaction at home, and that personal demands can create some stress and low satisfaction on the job.^[2] Have you ever noticed that problems at work or school can negatively influence personal life? Have you also noticed that problems in personal life can negatively influence work or school?

Another study investigated the effect of work-family conflict on the emotions of guilt and hostility among employed adults. The study also explored how work-family conflict, guilt, and hostility affected job satisfaction and marital satisfaction. It was found that work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict led to guilt and hostility at work and at home, respectively. A sidelight finding of interest to the study of human relations is that hostile people suffer even more conflict at home and on the job.^[3]

The Issue of Work-Life Choices. A continuing debate exists over whether a person can give equal balance between work and family life, and still advance far in his or her career. If getting far in your field requires 60 hours per week of hardwork, you might not be able to meet that demand and still be a full contributor to family life. Jack Welch, former GE chief executive and now business writer and educator, told participants at a human resources conference, "There are work-life choices, and you make them, and they have consequences."^[4]

Another issue related to work-life choices is that when managers perceive subordinates to be experiencing family-work conflict, there is a tendency for the bosses to think that the subordinate is not a good candidate for promotion. A study with supervisors in a large transportation company found that managers tended to categorize women as experiencing greater family-work conflict even when the women did not perceive themselves to have much family-work conflict. As a result, the managers downgraded their perception of the women supervisors fit for the job, as well as their promotability.^[5] Even if the managers' perceptions were biased, the supervisors still had to deal with these misperceptions.

Making a work-life (or work-family) choice can sometimes reduce conflict. It is helpful to develop a general guideline about how much time a person wants to invest in both work and family life, and then be satisfied with the compromise. Certain types of careers have to be excluded in order to spend most evenings and weekend in family and other personal activities. For example, to be a successful small business owner or a Wall Street financial analyst typically requires working between 60 and 70 hours per week. From the opposite standpoint, certain types of social activities have to be controlled to attain career success. An adult who wants to play video games and visit social networking sites for a combined nine hours per day will not succeed in most careers. After choices are made about type of work and type of personal life activities, work-family conflict will be minimized.

Company Initiatives to Reduce Work-Family Conflict. Companies can often avoid or minimize serious work-family conflict among employees by implementing equitable time-off policies. The underlying company attitude is that all employees need a work-life balance. Encouraging such an atmosphere of good will among coworkers can help prevent conflicts and resentments when one employee leaves early to take care of family responsibility.^[6]

Many companies offer flexible working hours to a majority of their employees. In this way, a worker might be able to meet family demands that take place during typical working hours. An example would be taking off the morning to care for an ill parent, and working later that same evening to make up the time. People who are exceptionally good at organizing their time and efforts will often experience less work-family conflict, by such behaviors as staying on top of work to minimize periods of time when they are completely work-centered.^[7]

During the Great Recession of 2008–2010, many companies reduced programs designed to reduce work-family conflict. A 2008 survey of human resource professionals found that only 20 percent of their organizations planned to implement policies aimed at encouraging a better work-family balance.^[8] Furthermore, many employees hesitated to make such demands as flexible working hours or working from home because they worried about being fired for being not committed enough to the job. Long vacations were also avoided out of fear that if the company can get by without you during your vacation, why keep you on the payroll?

Personality Clashes

Many workplace disagreements arise because people simply dislike each other. A personality clash is thus an antagonistic relationship between two people based on differences in personal attributes, preferences, interests, values, and styles. A personality clash reflects negative chemistry between two people, whereas personal differences are based more specifically on a value clash. According to the research of psychologist Judith Sills, the most commonly reported office problem is the personality conflict. One of the most frequent conflicts is between the sweeping big picture person and the cautious detail-oriented person.^[9] The big-picture concern manager might say, “Give me a general idea of ticket sales for the Dixie Chicks,” expecting a response like “Might even have a full house with luck.” Instead, the detail-oriented person says, “Last time I checked we had 37,431 tickets sold.”

People involved in a personality clash often have difficulty specifying why they dislike each other. The end result, however, is that they cannot maintain an amiable work relationship. A peculiarity about personality clashes is that people who get along well may begin to clash after working together for a number of years. A contributing factor is that as both people change and as the situation changes, the two people may no longer be compatible. An example of a personality clash in the executive suite took place a few years ago at Motorola Corp, as follows:

Paul Liska, the chief financial officer, came into a board meeting and heavily criticized the company’s ailing mobile phone unit. Liska’s pointed criticisms were seen as a stab against Sanjay Jha, the head of the mobile division who had been recently hired by Motorola. Liska had objected to his appointment. Shortly after his tirade, Liska was fired. The company claimed in a filing, “Mr. Liska developed what now appears to be a vendetta against Dr. Jha and the Mobile Devices business.” An attorney who has litigated similar cases said that Motorola would have a difficult time getting the jury to accept that Liska’s firing was for a legitimate cause. “Nine times out of 10, these terminations are for personality clashes,” said the attorney.^[10]

Bullies in the Workplace

Coworkers naturally disagree about topics, issues, and ideas. Yet some people convert disagreement into an attack that puts down other people and damages their self-esteem. As a result, conflict surfaces. Bullies are people who verbally, and sometimes physically, attack others frequently. Among the typical behaviors of bullies are interrupting others, ranting in a loud voice, and making threats. A typical attitude of a bullying boss is “My way or the highway,” sending the message that the employee’s suggestions are unwelcome. Bullied workers complain of a range of psychological and physical ailments, such as anxiety, sleeplessness, panic attacks, and low self-esteem. Recent research suggests that the most likely victims of supervisory bullying are those workers with less power,

personality clash

An antagonistic relationship between two people based on differences in personal attributes, preferences, interests, values, and styles.

especially those working in personal service roles, such as housekeepers, nannies, and personal service roles.^[11]

Online interviews with 7,740 adults conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute found that 60 percent of bullies are male, and 40 percent are female. An estimated 37 percent of American workers have been bullied on the job. Male bullies appear to choose men and women as targets in equal number. In contrast, women choose their targets as women 71 percent of the time.^[12] Gary Namie, research director at the Bullying Institute, says that one reason women often choose other women as targets "is probably some idea that they can find a less confrontational person or someone less likely to respond to aggression with aggression."^[13] Bullying women sometimes sabotage their competition through intimidation or by limiting access to important meetings and committees; withholding information, assignments, and promotions; or blocking the way to mentors and higher management.

Methods of dealing with bullies are described in the section in Chapter 12 about dealing with difficult people.

Incivility and Rudeness

A milder form of aggressiveness than bullying in the workplace is being rude or uncivil toward work associates. Incivility (or employees' lack of regard for one another) has gained attention as a cause of workplace conflict. What constitutes being uncivil or rude depends upon a person's perceptions and values.

Imagine two people having a business lunch together. One of them answers his cell phone during lunch, and while still eating engages the caller in conversation. To some people this everyday incident would be interpreted as double rudeness—interrupting lunch with a cell phone call and eating while talking. Another person might perceive the cell phone incident to be standard behavior in a multitasking world.

Rudeness also includes swearing at coworkers, a cubicle dweller shouting loudly on the phone while making a personal call, and performing other work at a meeting. Typical forms of "other work" are sorting through paper mail or surfing the Internet on a notebook computer.

A study conducted by Lisa Penney found that 69 percent of 300 workers she surveyed reported experiencing condescending behavior and put-downs in the workplace. Also, those who reported incivility on the job were more likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors, including bad-mouthing their company, missing deadlines, and being rude to customers or clients. "Even though civility may not seem like a very serious thing," says Penney, "it is related to behaviors that have more serious consequences that can affect profits."^[14]

A survey of workplace incivility was conducted with three different workplace groups, including university employees, attorneys, and federal court employees. Overall, employees subjected to incivility tended to feel frustrated, annoyed, and a little bit offended. Also, when employees are subjected to coworkers or managers who yell and swear, make them the object of mean jokes, or intentionally exclude them from friendship-building activities, their morale and performance often suffers.^[15] (Does this finding surprise you?)

To place rudeness and incivility in perspective, it may simply be part of modern life where self-expression counts for everything and manners nothing. Rudeness in the workplace is therefore just a natural extension of rudeness occurring in everyday life.^[16] Yet, a person who has good manners and behaves civilly can capitalize on these behaviors in his or her career.

Cross-Generational Conflict

As explained in Chapter 2, differences in values across generations lead to differences in behavior. And these value-based differences in behavior can lead to conflict, such as disputes about Gen Y workers wanting members of Gen X and baby boomers to be continuously logged on to instant messaging (IM). The following list presents three examples of

incivility

In human relations, employees' lack of regard for each other.

potential work-related conflict across generations. The illustrations presented are stereotypes that apply to a *typical* member of each generation.

- **Preferred approach to communication.** Gen X members prefer to send text messages, use cell phones, and IM. Gen Y members prefer e-mail, IM, and cell phones. Some Gen Y members prefer abbreviated conversation rather than fully explaining what they mean. Baby boomers prefer e-mail, cell phones, and face-to-face communication.
- **Approach to problem solving.** Gen X members prefer to form a team to brainstorm a solution, as well as use the Web and social networking for research. Gen Y members prefer to think up a list of solutions on their own, then call a meeting to discuss the alternative solutions. Baby boomers like to think about what has worked in the past and how it can be replicated. Then they call a meeting to discuss possible alternatives. Traditionalists (born 1922–1945) tend to be thorough and detail oriented. Gen Y (millennials) will often multitask while solving a problem. Often they want to move quickly to another problem because of a short attention span, whereas traditionalists and baby boomers may want to drag out a problem.
- **Requirement for being respected.** Gen X members want to have their ideas valued by coworkers. Gen Y members want to have their professionalism and growing knowledge valued. Baby boomers want to have their decades of work experience and input still valued.^[17]

Although cross-generational conflict is mild in nature, it can still lead to miscommunication and hard feelings that disrupt work.

Workplace Violence (A Cause and Effect of Conflict)

Aggressiveness in the workplace can take extreme forms, such as the shooting or knifing of a former boss or colleague by a mentally unstable worker recently dismissed from the company. Workplace violence is a cause of conflict in the sense that being the subject of violence, witnessing violence, or worrying about violence creates two opposing needs—the worker wants a peaceful environment yet is forced to experience chaos. Conflict is also created by any physical altercation between the perpetrator and the victim. Workplace violence is an effect of conflict because as an extreme response to conflict, such as being fired, some workers strike back at their employer through physical aggression directed at the former boss and coworkers.

Violence has become so widespread that homicide is the fourth leading cause of workplace deaths, with about 600 workers murdered each year in the United States. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Census of Fatal Occupations, homicides account for about 10 percent of all fatal workplace injuries.^[18] Most workplace deaths result from a robbery or commercial crime. Many of these killings, however, are perpetrated by a disgruntled worker or fired employee harboring an unresolved conflict. As companies have continued to reduce their workforce despite being profitable, these incidents have increased in frequency.

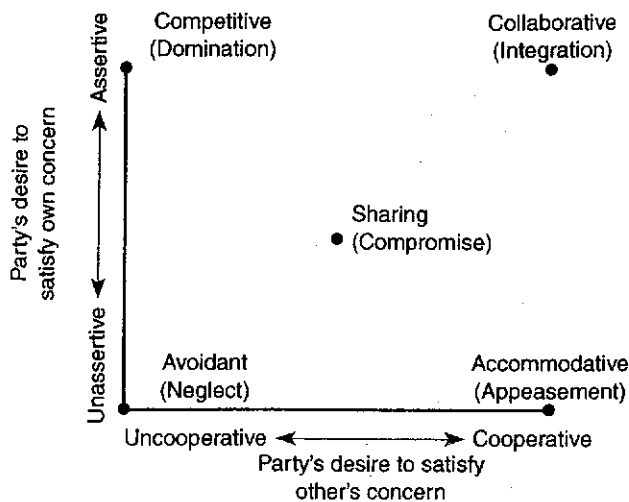
Workplace violence is often predictable, with the worker who may erupt into violence, showing early signals, according to Lynne McClure, a specialist in managing high-risk employees.^[19] Predictors of workplace violence include the following employee behaviors and verbal expressions: talk about weaponry, paranoid (highly suspicious) or antisocial behavior, reference to not being heard by management, expression of extreme desperation, history of violence, and being a loner who does not fit into the group. Multiple behaviors such as those just described might be reported to the manager or human resource professional. Yet, you need to be careful about not referring a coworker who displays just one predictor of violent behavior.

CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT STYLES

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3

The information presented so far is designed to help you understand the nature of conflict. Such background information is useful for resolving conflict because it helps you understand what is happening in a conflict situation. The next two sections offer more

FIGURE 9-1 Conflict-Handling Styles According to Degree of Cooperation and Assertiveness



specific information about managing and resolving conflict. Before describing specific methods of resolving conflict, it is useful to present more details about five general styles, or modes, of handling conflict. You received preliminary information on two of these five styles when you completed Self-Assessment Quiz 9-1.

As shown in Figure 9-1, Kenneth Thomas identified five major styles of conflict management. Each style is based on a combination of satisfying one's own concerns (assertiveness) and satisfying the concerns of others (cooperativeness).^[20]

Competitive Style

The competitive style is a desire to win one's own concerns at the expense of the other party, or to dominate. A person with a competitive orientation is likely to engage in power struggles in which one side wins and the other loses (an approach referred to as win-lose). "My way or the highway" is a win-lose strategy. Workplace bullies prefer the competitive style of conflict management. The competitive style works best when quick, decisive action is essential, such as in an emergency.

Accommodative Style

The accommodative style favors appeasement, or satisfying the other's concerns without taking care of one's own. People with this orientation may be generous or self-sacrificing just to maintain a relationship. An irate customer might be accommodated with a full refund, just to calm down the person. The intent of such accommodation might also be to retain the customer's loyalty. Accommodation sounds harmless; but according to Sidney Simon, when it runs unchecked at the expense of what somebody really wants, it can lead to debilitating resentment, sickness, or even violence.^[21] The problem is that the suppressed feelings create inner conflict and stress.

Accommodation works best when you are wrong, or when the issues are more important to the other side. For example, an automobile sales associate might say "yes" to a last-minute demand for another \$50 concession, rather than continuing to haggle.

Sharing Style

The sharing style is halfway between domination and appeasement. Sharers prefer moderate but incomplete satisfaction for both parties, which results in a compromise. The phrase "splitting the difference" reflects this orientation and is commonly used in such activities as purchasing a house or car. The sharing (or compromising) style is well suited to a situation in which both sides have equal power, yet are committed to mutually exclusive goals such as the buyer and the seller of the house wanting to maximize financial gain.



Collaborative Style (Win-Win)

In contrast to the other styles, the collaborative style reflects a desire to fully satisfy the desires of both parties. It is based on an underlying philosophy of win-win, the belief that after conflict has been resolved, both sides should gain something of value. The use of a win-win approach is aimed at arriving at a settlement that meets the needs of both parties, or at least does not badly damage the welfare of the other side. The option chosen results in a mutual gain. When collaborative approaches to resolving conflict are used, the relationships among the parties are built on and improved. The following example uses a win-win approach to resolve conflict.

Bruce is an office assistant in a company that supplies food to restaurants, hospitals, and nursing homes. According to his budget analysis, Bruce needed a 5 percent salary increase to meet his monthly expenses. The company owner explained that there was no money in the budget for a salary increase. A cordial discussion about the issue led to an option for mutual gain. Bruce would receive the 5 percent salary increase as long as he increased his productivity enough to cover the increase. His target was to increase his productivity to the point that the company could decrease the hours worked by an office temporary. The amount of the decrease covered the 5 percent salary increase.

win-win

The belief that after conflict has been resolved both sides should gain something of value.

Mobile phone companies in search of antenna sites have led to win-win conflict resolution between companies and communities. Many of these companies have integrated antennas into church steeples, high-rise buildings, and other tall structures without defacing them. A mobile telephone company has sometimes constructed a new church steeple that harbors a giant antenna. The company wins by having an antenna to provide cell telephone service, and community groups do not object to the sight of a freestanding antenna. At the same time, the church wins by having a new steeple.

Collaborating is particularly important when both sides must be committed to the solution, such as the situation with the hidden cell antennae. Divorcing parents also need collaboration in their division of assets because they need to work together long term for the good of the children.

Finding win-win solutions to problems (or options for mutual gain) is one of the most important conflict-resolution skills. To obtain practice in this skill, do Skill-Building Exercise 9-1.

SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 9-1

Win-Win Conflict Resolution

The class organizes into small problem-solving groups. Each group spends about 10 minutes finding a win-win solution to one of the following conflict situations.

1. Two coworkers want you to work with them after hours in establishing an online marketing firm. You do not want to take time away from your primary career to get involved in a side business. However, you want to maintain cordial relations with these two coworkers.
2. William, an accountant, wants workmates to call him "William." Yet, several people in the office persist in calling him "Bill" or "Will."
3. You are offered a transfer within your company to an exciting job that you want strongly. Your manager says he cannot let you go because you are too valuable.
4. A group of workers at a small business would like a giant-screen, high-definition television set placed in the employee lounge to enhance their enjoyment of breaks. The business owner wants to keep employees satisfied but concludes that investing about \$4,000 in a television set for the lounge is too big an investment.

After the groups have found their solutions for mutual gains, specify carefully what gain each side attained. Share your solutions with other class members to obtain their feedback about the effectiveness of the mutual gains.

Avoidant Style

The avoider is a combination of a person who is uncooperative and unassertive. He or she is indifferent to the concerns of either party. The person may actually be withdrawing from the conflict to rely upon fate. Avoiding works well when an issue is trivial, or there are more pressing issues to worry about. For example, a supervisor might not bother reprimanding workers who are a few minutes late because the supervisor is flooded with other work.

In the following description of specific techniques for resolving conflict, attempt to relate most of them to these five key styles. For example, you will observe that the confrontation and problem-solving technique reflects the collaborative (win-win) style.

GUIDELINES AND TECHNIQUES FOR RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Interpersonal conflict in organizations is inevitable. A career-minded person must therefore learn effective ways of resolving conflict. This section describes methods of conflict resolution that you can use on your own. All are based somewhat on the underlying model of win-win, or integrating the interests of both parties. Integrating both interests focuses on resolving the underlying concerns of the parties in conflict. By dealing with these concerns, it is more worthwhile for both sides to resolve the conflict than it is to have no agreement.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4

Suppose a woman named Molly Coors wanted to open a beer brewery and name her beer Coors. The company lawyers from Coors-Molson, which own the rights to the brand name Coors, would attempt to block her from using the same brand name—even if her family name is Coors. Molly Coors would hire her own lawyer to fight back. Two key concerns must be addressed. Molly Coors' underlying concern is that she feels her civil liberties have been violated because she cannot name a business after herself. And Molly must deal with Coors-Molson's concern about a smaller company capitalizing on its well-known name (brand equity).

Later in the chapter, you will be asked to resolve the beer company conflict. The following paragraphs describe four methods of conflict resolution.

Confrontation and Problem Solving

The ideal approach to resolving any conflict is to confront the real issue and then solve the problem. **Confrontation** means taking a problem-solving approach to differences and identifying the underlying facts, logic, or emotions that account for them. When conflicts are resolved through confronting and understanding their causes, people feel responsible for finding the soundest answer.

Confrontation can proceed gently, in a way that preserves a good working relationship, as shown by this example. Assume that Mary, the person working at the desk next to you, loudly cracks chewing gum while she works. You find the gum chewing both distracting and nauseating. If you don't bring the problem to Mary's attention, it will probably grow in proportion with time. Yet, you are hesitant to enter into an argument about something that a person might regard as a civil liberty (the right to chew gum in public places).

A psychologically sound alternative is for you to approach her directly in this manner:

You: Mary, there is something bothering me that I would like to discuss with you.

She: Go ahead, I don't mind listening to other people's problems.

You: My problem concerns something you are doing that makes it difficult for me to concentrate on my work. When you chew gum, you make loud cracking noises that grate on my nerves. It may be my problem, but the noise does bother me.

She: I guess I could stop chewing gum when you're working next to me. It's probably just a nervous habit.

When resolving conflict through confrontation and problem solving, as well as other method of conflict resolution, it is helpful to bring closure by shaking hands, repeating your individual commitments, and then saying "thank you." Following through on your commitments is also essential for effective conflict resolution.^[22]

Karen needs to resolve her conflict with Charlie in a way that will still preserve their working relationship. Perhaps informing their boss of the problem is not the most effective approach from the standpoint of preserving the relationship. Instead, it would be constructive for Karen to meet with Charlie to use the technique of confrontation and problem solving. Karen should let Charlie know clearly how difficult it is to cover for him so frequently. A slightly

more aggressive approach would be for Karen to bring along a coworker who also has been inconvenienced by Charlie. The two-on-one approach can be powerful, so long as Charlie does feel "ganged-up" on. Karen acting alone, or accompanied by coworkers, should use a gentle, constructive approach.



Constructive Handling of Criticism

Learning to profit from criticism is an effective way of benefiting from conflict. People who benefit from criticism are able to stand outside themselves while being criticized. It is as if they are watching the criticism from a distance and looking for its possible merits. People who take criticism personally anguish when receiving negative feedback. Following are several specific suggestions for dealing with criticism, including two methods that will often get the other party on your side.^[23]

1. **See yourself at a distance.** Place an imaginary Plexiglas shield between you and the person giving the criticism. Attempt to be a detached observer looking for useful information.
2. **Ask for clarification and specifics.** Ask politely for more details about the negative behavior in question so that you can change if change is warranted. If your boss is criticizing you for being rude to customers, you might respond: "I certainly do not want to be rude. Can you give me a couple of examples of how I was rude? I need your help in working on this problem." After asking questions, you can better determine whether the criticism is valid.
3. **Decide on a response.** An important part of learning from criticism is to respond appropriately to the critic. Let the criticizer know what you agree with. Apologize for the undesirable behavior, such as saying, "I apologize for being rude to customers. I know what I can do differently now. I'll be more patient so as not to appear rude." Apology is a highly effective method of getting the criticizer on your side. Without an apology, the attack is likely to continue.
4. **Look for a pattern in terms of other criticism.** Is the criticism you are receiving something you have heard several times before from different people? The more times you have heard the same criticism, the more likely it is to be valid. If three different supervisors have told you that you do not follow through with your promises to get work done, the criticism is most likely valid.
5. **Disarm the opposition.** As an extension of point 3 is that you will often decide to agree with the criticizer because the person has a legitimate complaint about you. If you deny the reality of that person's complaint, he or she will continue to harp on that point and the issue will remain unresolved. By agreeing with the criticism of you, you may set the stage for a true resolution of the problem.

Agreeing with criticism made by a person with formal authority over you is effective because by doing so you are then in a position to ask for his or her help in improving the situation. Rational managers realize that it is their responsibility to help group members overcome problems, not merely to criticize them. Imagine that you have been chronically late with reports during the last six months. It is time for a performance evaluation, and you know that you will be reprimanded for your tardiness. You also hope that your manager will not downgrade all other aspects of your performance because of your tardy reports. Here is how disarming the opposition would work in this situation:

Your manager: Have a seat. It's time for your performance evaluation, and we have a lot to talk about. I'm concerned about some things.

You: So am I. It appears that I'm having a difficult time getting my reports in on time. I wonder if I'm being a perfectionist. Do you have any suggestions?

SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 9-2

Disarming the Opposition

In each of these two scenarios, one person plays the role of the person with more power in the situation. The other person plays the role of the individual attempting to disarm the criticizer.

1. A representative from a credit agency telephones you at work to inform you that you are 60 days behind schedule on your car payment. The agent wants a settlement as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the credit agent is correct. Run this happy scenario for about five minutes.
2. Your manager calls you into the office to discuss the 10-page report you just submitted. The boss says in a harsh tone, "Your

report is a piece of trash. I counted 25 word-use mistakes such as writing *whether* for *weather* and *seen* for *scene*. (Your spell checker couldn't catch these errors.) Besides that I can't follow many of your sentences, and you left out the table of statistics. I'm wondering if you are qualified for this job."

Observers of the role-play will judge how effective the person being criticized was in reducing some of the anger directed against him or her. Look also for any changes in attitude on the part of the criticizer.

Your manager: Well, I like your attitude. Maybe you are trying to make your reports too perfect before you turn them in. I think you can improve in getting your reports in on time. Try not to figure out everything to three decimal places. We need thoroughness around here, but we can't overdo it.

Disarming is effective because it takes the wind out of the other person's sails and has a calming effect. The other person is often waiting to clobber you if you deny guilt. If you admit guilt, you are more difficult to clobber. Skill-Building Exercise 9-2 gives you an opportunity to practice disarming the opposition.

Reframing

Another useful approach to resolving conflict is to reexamine or *reframe* the conflict situation by looking at it in a different light. Following are two practical approaches to reframing, one by searching for the positives in the situation, and the other by asking questions.

Reframing through Cognitive Restructuring. An indirect way of resolving interpersonal conflict is to lessen the conflicting elements in a situation by viewing them more positively. According to the technique of **cognitive restructuring**, you mentally convert negative aspects into positive ones by looking for the positive elements in a situation. How you frame or choose your thoughts can determine the outcome of a conflict situation. Your thoughts influence your actions. If you search for the beneficial elements in the situation, there will be less area for dispute. Although this technique might sound like a mind game to you, it can work effectively.

Imagine that a coworker of yours, Jeff, has been asking you repeated questions about how to carry out a work procedure. You are about ready to tell Jeff, "Go bother somebody else; I'm not paid to be a trainer." Instead, you look for the positive elements in the situation. You say to yourself, "Jeff has been asking me a lot of questions. This does take time, but answering these questions is valuable experience. If I want to become a manager, I will have to help group members with problems."

After having completed this cognitive restructuring, you can then deal with the conflict situation more positively. You might say to Jeff, "I welcome the opportunity to help you, but we need to find a mutually convenient time. In that way, I can better concentrate on my own work." To get started with cognitive restructuring, do Skill-Building Exercise 9-3.

Reframing by Asking Questions. Another way to use reframing is to ask step back, take a deep breath, and then ask the following questions about the conflict situation that arises within the work group:

- Do I fully understand the situation?
- Am I sure what my coworker is really saying?
- Is the person really angry with me or just worried and anxious?
- Have I missed something important?

cognitive restructuring

Mentally converting negative aspects into positive ones by looking for the positive elements in a situation.

SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 9-3

Reframing through Cognitive Restructuring

The following are examples of negative statements about others in the workplace. In the space provided, cognitively restructure (reframe) each comment in a positive way.

Negative: Nancy is getting on my nerves. It takes her two weeks longer than anyone else in the team to complete her input.

Positive:

Negative: Rob is so obsessed with sports that he is hurting my productivity. Where does it say in the employee handbook that I

have to spend 30 minutes on Monday listening to Rob's comments on his team's weekend performance? Doesn't he know that I have a job to do and that I just don't care about his team?

Positive:

Negative: My boss is driving me crazy. He is forever telling me what I did wrong and making suggestions for improvement. He makes me feel like I'm in elementary school.

Positive:

- Do I have all the facts?
- What is the real issue here?
- How do I want to react in this situation?
- How would I want to be treated if the situation were reversed?

By taking such an approach, you are more likely to communicate more effectively and constructively with each of your coworkers when conflict situations arise. You carefully talk through the issues rather than becoming explosive, defensive, and arguing. A useful scenario for reframing through questioning would be when a coworker accuses you of not carrying your fair share of the workload.^[24]

Negotiating and Bargaining

negotiating

Conferring with another person to resolve a problem.

Conflicts can be considered situations calling for **negotiating**, or conferring with another person to resolve a problem. When you are negotiating a fair salary for yourself, you are trying to resolve a conflict. At first the demands of the two parties may seem incompatible, but through negotiation, a salary figure may emerge that satisfies both.

Another perspective on negotiation is that people are not just negotiating for the economic value of the negotiation. They are also negotiating for intangibles, such as feeling good about the negotiation process, the other party, and themselves.^[25] For example, after the negotiation is complete, the individual might want to be perceived as an honest, sincere, professional, rather than as a dishonest person out to maximize gain.

Managers and staff specialists must negotiate both internally (e.g., with subordinates, managers, and team leaders) and externally (e.g., with customers, suppliers, and government agencies). Considerable negotiation also takes place among coworkers. Team members, for example, sometimes negotiate among themselves about work assignments. One might say to the other, "I'm willing to be notetaker this year if there is some way I can cut back on the amount of plant visits I make this year." Six useful negotiating tactics are presented here. Before studying them, do Self-Assessment Quiz 9-2.

The Negotiator Quiz

Directions: The following quiz is designed to give you tentative insight into your tendencies toward being an effective negotiator. Check whether each statement is mostly true or mostly false as it applies to you.

- | | Mostly true | Mostly false |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Settling differences of opinion is a lot of fun. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. I try to avoid conflict and confrontation with others as much as possible. | _____ | _____ |

(Continued)

3. I am self-conscious asking people for favors they have not offered me spontaneously. _____
4. I am generally unwilling to compromise. _____
5. How the other side feels about the results of our negotiation is of little consequence to me. _____
6. I think very well under pressure. _____
7. People say that I am tactful and diplomatic. _____
8. I have heard that I express my viewpoint clearly. _____
9. Very few things in life are not negotiable. _____
10. I always (or would always) accept whatever salary increase is offered to me. _____
11. A person's facial expression often reveals as much as what the person actually says. _____
12. I wouldn't mind taking a few short-term losses to win a long-term battle. _____
13. I'm willing to work long and hard to win a small advantage. _____
14. I'm usually too busy talking to do much listening. _____
15. It's fun to haggle over price when buying a car. _____
16. I almost always prepare in advance for a negotiating session. _____
17. When there is something I need from another person, I usually get it. _____
18. It would make me feel cheap if I offered somebody only two-thirds of his or her asking price. _____
19. People are usually paid what they are worth, so there's no use haggling over starting salaries. _____
20. I rarely take what people say at face value. _____
21. It's easy for me to smile when involved in a serious discussion. _____
22. For one side to win in negotiation, the other side has to lose. _____
23. Once you start making concessions, the other side is bound to get more than you. _____
24. A good negotiating session gets my competitive urges flowing. _____
25. When negotiations are completed, both sides should walk away with something valuable. _____

Total Score _____

Scoring and Interpretation: Score yourself 1 for each of your answers that agrees with the scoring key. The higher your score, the more likely it is that you currently have good negotiating skills, providing your self-assessment is accurate. It might prove useful to also have somebody who has observed you negotiate on several occasions to answer the Negotiator Quiz for you. Scores of 7 or lower and 20 or higher are probably the most indicative of weak or strong negotiating potential. Here is the scoring key:

- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mostly true | 8. Mostly true | 15. Mostly true | 22. Mostly false |
| 2. Mostly false | 9. Mostly true | 16. Mostly true | 23. Mostly false |
| 3. Mostly false | 10. Mostly false | 17. Mostly true | 24. Mostly true |
| 4. Mostly false | 11. Mostly true | 18. Mostly false | 25. Mostly true |
| 5. Mostly false | 12. Mostly true | 19. Mostly false | |
| 6. Mostly true | 13. Mostly true | 20. Mostly true | |
| 7. Mostly true | 14. Mostly false | 21. Mostly true | |

Understand the Other Party's Perspective

As in being a good listener, empathy can be an important part of negotiation. Deepak Malhotra and Max H. Bazerman observe that negotiators often channel too much effort into pushing their own position and too little into understanding the other side's perspective.^[26] To obtain a good deal, or sometimes any deal at all, negotiators have to dig for information about *why* the other side wants what it demands. Inaccurate assumptions

about the other side's motives can lead negotiators to propose solutions to the wrong problems, waste money, or kill a deal. How about a personal life example for dog lovers?

You have wanted a Great Dane puppy for a long time. You enter into negotiations with the owner of the puppy and his mother. The owner is asking \$900, and is adamant about her demands. If you are low on empathy, you will raise such negotiating points as how much the little Great Dane is costing the owner in food; that you will pay cash; and that the little fellow is ugly and therefore is only worth \$500. (You might get invited off the premises in a hurry.) In contrast, with high empathy and a detective-like mind, you recognize that the owner wants the puppy to go to a wonderful home. So, if she asks for a lot of money, the potential owner is likely to be really interested in finding someone who truly wants the dog, and would therefore probably take good care of the puppy.

With this negotiating point in mind, you point out what great care you will give the Great Dane, what a spacious yard you have, how you would take him jogging every day, and how he would be your dream dog. The owner is happy because one of her key motives is for the pup to have a wonderful home. She is touched and agrees to your offer of \$600.

Another key part of understanding the other party's perspective is that you look for common ground. Your talk of care and concern about the dog's health indicates that both you and the owner share a humanitarian attitude toward dogs.

To understand the other party's perspective, you often have to prepare in advance. Obtain as much information as you can about the other party's side before the negotiation session. A basic example is that many prospective car buyers first research the fair value of a vehicle before making an offer. Knowing how long the vehicle has been sitting on the lot or in the showroom is also useful advance information because dealers often borrow money to build inventory.

Focus on Interests, Not Positions. Rather than clinging to specific negotiating points, keep your overall interests in mind and try to satisfy them. Remember that the true object of negotiation is to satisfy the underlying interests on both sides, as in the case of Molly Coors. Part of focusing on interests is to carefully study the other side's comments for clues to the type of agreement that will satisfy both of you.

Careful listening will help you uncover the negotiating partner's specific interests and motivations. (This is another application of understanding the other party's perspective.) Here is how this strategy works:

You are considering accepting a job offer that will enable you to work on the type of problems you prefer and also develop your professional skills. You have a starting salary in mind that would make you very happy—10 percent higher than you are currently making. Your negotiating position is thus your present salary plus 10 percent. However, your true interests are probably to have more discretionary income than at present. (You want to make more purchases and invest more.) You will therefore be better off negotiating for a work situation that spreads your money further. You can now accept the offer by negotiating other points in addition to a 10 percent higher salary, including (1) working in a geographic area with a lower cost of living, (2) having a better opportunity for earning a bonus, or (3) receiving a generous expense account. During the negotiations, you may discover that the other party is looking for a talented employee at a salary and benefits the company can afford.

compromise

Settlement of differences by mutual concessions.

Compromise. The most widely used negotiating tactic is compromise, settlement of differences by mutual concessions. One party agrees to do something if the other party agrees to do something else. Compromise is a realistic approach to resolving conflict. Most labor-management disputes are settled by compromise. For instance, labor may agree to accept a smaller salary increase if management will subcontract less work to other countries.

Some people argue that compromise is not a win-win tactic. The problem is that the two parties may wind up with a solution that pacifies both but does not solve the problem.

One example would be purchasing for two team leaders half the new equipment each one needs. As a result, neither department really shows a productivity gain. Nevertheless, compromise is both inevitable and useful.

Begin with a Plausible Demand or Offer, Yet Allow Room for Negotiation. The commonsense approach to negotiation suggests that you begin with an extreme, almost fanciful demand or offer. The final compromise will therefore be closer to your true demand or offer than if you opened the negotiations more realistically. However, a plausible demand is useful because it shows you are bargaining in good faith. Also, if a third party has to resolve a conflict, a plausible demand or offer will receive more sympathy than an implausible one will. An example would be an arbitrator giving only a minimum settlement to an investor who wanted \$10 million in damages for having received bad advice from an investment broker. (The arbitrator thinks that a \$10 million settlement would be ridiculous.)

Although it is advisable to begin with a plausible demand, one must still allow room for negotiation. A basic strategy of negotiation is to begin with a demand that allows room for compromise and concession. If you think you need \$5,000 in new software for your department, you might begin negotiations by asking for a \$7,000 package. Your boss offers you \$4,000 as a starting point. After negotiation, you may wind up with the \$5,000 you need.

Make Small Concessions Gradually. Making steady concessions leads to more mutually satisfactory agreements in most situations. Gradually, you concede little things to the other side. The hard-line approach to bargaining is to make your concession early in the negotiation and then grant no further concession. The tactic of making small concessions is well-suited to purchasing a new car. In order to reach a price you consider acceptable, you might grant concessions such as agreeing to finance the car through the dealer or purchasing a service contract.

Know Your Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. The reason you would probably negotiate would be to produce something better than the result obtainable without negotiating. The goal of negotiating is thus not just to agree, but to obtain more valuable results than would otherwise have occurred. When you are aware of your best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA), it sets a floor to the agreement you are willing to accept. Your BATNA becomes the standard that can protect both parties from accepting terms that are too unfavorable. It also keeps you from walking away from terms that would be beneficial for you to accept.

What might a BATNA look like in practice? Suppose you are negotiating a starting salary for a full-time, professional position. The figure you have in mind is \$42,000 per year. Your BATNA is \$36,500 because this is the salary your future in-laws will pay you to enter the family business. You will therefore walk away from any offer of less than \$37,000—just taking salary into account.

Knowing the other side's BATNA is also important because it helps define the other participant's bargaining zone. Understanding each other's bargaining zones makes it possible to arrive at mutually profitable trade-offs. In the preceding salary negotiations, the company's BATNA might be to hire a less well-educated job candidate at \$30,500 and then upgrade his or her knowledge on the job.

An underlying advantage of knowing your BATNA is that it capitalizes on the power of a positive "no." Famous negotiator William Ury reasons that being able to say "no" to a demand places you in a strong position.^[27] During negotiations, a statement such as "I am not willing to make that big a concession" can bring you respect because you are standing up for your principles. For best effect "no" should be expressed in a friendly and firm manner.

Use Anger to Your Advantage. Master negotiators make selective use of anger a negotiating and bargaining tool. When a person becomes genuinely angry, the anger can energize him or her to be more resourceful and creative while bargaining. If you are angry about an issue or a negotiating point, the other side may be willing to submit to your demand rather than receive more of your anger. The director of a company wellness program

“ In ordinary life, we classify anger as an emotion—a catalytic and cathartic one that provokes comment, discussion and often backlash. At the bargaining table, however, anger is better viewed as nothing more than a tactic.”

—Marc Diener, a speaker and attorney in Los Angeles

might say with an angry look toward top management, “Why is there money in the budget for all kinds of frills like corporate jets, when a program that is preventing millions of dollars in lost productivity has to grovel for a decent budget?”

The downside of anger is that it can degenerate into incivility and personal insults. A touch of anger can be effective, but overdone it becomes self-defeating. You have to size up how far you can push people before damaging a work relationship—or being fired. To make effective use of anger during negotiation, it has to be used at the right time, with the right tone, and in the right amount.^[28] A person who is always angry will often not be taken seriously.

Allow for Face-Saving. We have saved one of the most important negotiating and conflict resolution strategies for last. Negotiating does not mean that you should try to squash the other side. You should try to create circumstances that will enable you to continue working with that person if it is necessary. People prefer to avoid looking weak, foolish, or incompetent during negotiation or when the process is completed. If you do not give your opponent an opportunity to save face, you will probably create a long-term enemy.

Face-saving could work in this way. A small-business owner winds up paying a higher starting salary for director of manufacturing than she wanted. The employment agency who placed the director of manufacturing says to the business owner, “I know that Derek costs more than you have budgeted. But don’t worry about it, you have made a great investment. Derek will increase your manufacturing productivity so much that his salary and benefits will be a bargain for you.”

Effective negotiation, as with any other form of conflict resolution, requires extensive practice and knowledge of basic principles and techniques. As a starting point, you might take one of the negotiating tactics just described and practice it where the stakes are not so high. You might attempt to negotiate the price of a consumer electronics device, or negotiate for getting a particular Friday afternoon off from work.

A major theme running through the various approaches to conflict resolution, including negotiating and bargaining, is that cooperating with the other side is usually preferable to competing. A study with 61 self-managing teams with 489 employees supports this idea of the superiority of cooperation over competition in successful conflict resolution. The style of conflict resolution was measured through questionnaires. For example, a statement geared toward cooperative behavior was “We seek a solution that will be good for the whole team.” Conflict efficacy was measured by a questionnaire indicating that the extent to which team members believed that they could successfully manage different conflict situations. Group effectiveness was measured by the ratings of supervisor and team leaders on productivity, quality, and cost savings—central reasons why self-directed teams are formed.

The study found that the cooperative approach to conflict was positively related to conflict efficacy. In contrast, the competitive approach to conflict was negatively related to conflict efficacy. Equally important, conflict efficacy was strongly associated with supervisory and team leader ratings of team effectiveness.^[29]

Skill-Building Exercise 9-4 provides you the opportunity to practice negotiating in a scenario that most people encounter at least once in their career.

COMBATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT: A SPECIAL TYPE OF CONFLICT

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5

sexual harassment

Unwanted sexually oriented behavior in the workplace that results in discomfort or interference with the job.

Many employees face conflict because a supervisor, coworker, or customer sexually harasses them. Sexual harassment is generally defined as unwanted sexually oriented behavior in the workplace that results in discomfort or interference with the job. It can include an action as violent as rape or as subtle as a sexually oriented comment about a person’s body or appearance. Harassment creates conflict because the harassed person has to make a choice between two incompatible motives. One motive is to get ahead, keep the job, or have an unthreatening work environment. But to satisfy this motive, the person is forced to sacrifice the motive of holding on to his or her moral value or preferences. Here we will focus on the types and frequency of sexual harassment, the effects of harassment, and guidelines for dealing with the problem.

SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 9-4

Negotiating a Starting Salary

A scenario for negotiation for many people is asking for a starting salary. In large organizations with many written rules and regulations, there is less opportunity for negotiating compensation (except for high-level executive positions) than in smaller firms. In the negotiating scenarios listed below, assume that you are applying for work with a small-size or medium-size firm. Assume also that you (a) have about three years of experience in the position in question, (b) have a good reputation including high job performance and a clean record, and (c) strongly want the position. Five positions are listed below along with a plausible starting salary that you are seeking. The sixth position allows for your unique situation.

1. Accountant, \$49,500
2. Computer support specialist, \$40,500
3. Telemarketer, \$19,000

4. Fitness trainer, \$30,500
5. Personal financial advisor, \$57,500
6. Your field, your salary demands

The other person involved in the role-play is the hiring manager who has a general idea of what he or she would like to pay as a starting salary. The hiring manager is impressed with you, yet still wants to economize on the starting salary. Do not simply start debating a starting salary. Both sides should use at least two of the negotiation tactics described in this chapter.

Several duos might try this negotiating activity in front of the class for approximately eight minutes. Observers should attempt to identify (a) how well the negotiation went, and (b) which specific negotiating tactics were used.

Types of Harassment

The courts recognize two types of sexual harassment. In *quid pro quo* sexual harassment, the individual suffers job loss, or threatened loss of a job benefit, as a result of his or her responses to a request for sexual favors. The demands of a harasser can be explicit or implied. An example of *quid pro quo* harassment would be a manager promising an employee a promotion in exchange for sexual favors and then not promoting the employee because the employee refused.

The other form of sexual harassment is *hostile environment*. It occurs when someone in the workplace creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. An employee who is subjected to sexually suggestive comments, lewd jokes, or advances is a victim of hostile environment harassment. No tangible loss has to be suffered in this form of sexual harassment.

Different Perceptions of Sexual Harassment. An analysis of many studies indicated that women perceive a broader range of social-sexual behaviors as harassing. The analysis also found that the female-male difference was larger for behaviors associated with hostile work environment harassment, derogatory attitudes toward women, dating pressure, or physical sexual contact. Men and women, however, agree closely that various types of sexual coercion, such as encounters that are made a condition of promotion, can be classified as *quid pro quo* harassment.^[30]

In attempting to understand what constitutes sexual harassment, research and common sense suggest that not all sexually oriented behaviors such as jokes about sex and a mild flirting are offensive or unwanted. Many workers perceived such behavior as enjoyable. Especially with e-mail, many men and women send each other sexually oriented jokes. Sexual behavior has to be *unwanted* to be classified as sexual harassment. A surprising aspect of the research in question is that even when employees enjoyed sexually oriented behavior at work, they still experienced negative effects. The negative effects were thinking about quitting and lower psychological well-being.^[31] More about the negative effects of sexual harassment is presented below.

Sexual Harassment as Power. Sexual harassment is also regarded as an expression of power by one individual over another because the harasser often has more formal power than the harassed. The coworker who harasses another coworker may be attempting to use personal rather than formal power. Similarly, customers and clients who sexually harass a worker may be attempting to exert power. The harasser, following this logic, is a power abuser as well as a legal offender.

Frequency and Setting of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is widespread in the U.S. workplace and in other countries as well. According to one large-scale study when conclusions are based on more scientific studies, 58 percent of women report having experienced potential harassment behaviors, and 24 percent report having experienced sexual harassment on the job.^[32] More recent data suggest that sexual harassment directed at professional women by clients and customers is more frequent than harassment within the company. Sexist hostility, such as putting a person down because of his or her sex, was the most frequently noted type of harassment.^[33]

Women in nontraditional jobs (such as welder or pressroom supervisor) are especially likely to be harassed. Similarly, a study found that women in male-dominated manufacturing plants are harassed more than women in female-dominated community service centers.^[34] A possible reason is that in a male-dominated organization men may feel that they have more power over women. An earlier study in the same organizations just mentioned indicated that minority women are the most likely to be harassed, perhaps because of sex and race discrimination.^[35]

Although women in nontraditional jobs run a high risk of being sexually harassed, harassment takes place in many other settings as well, and at all levels in an organization. An example of a seemingly unusual setting for sexual harassment is the United Nations (UN). The organization aspires to protect human rights, yet has struggled to deal with an embarrassing series of complaints within its own ranks. Many UN workers who have been harassed say that the system for dealing with complaints is arbitrary, unfair, and bogged down in complicated rules.

The UN is now working to decrease the amount of sexual harassment, as well as to improve the process for dealing with legitimate complaints. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon wrote to a women rights group that had complained to him, "I fully share your concerns regarding sexual harassment and sex discrimination. This scourge remains a high priority for me."^[36]

The Adverse Effects of Sexual Harassment

Aside from being unethical, immoral, and illegal, sexual harassment is widely thought to have adverse consequences. The harassed person may experience job stress, lowered



TABLE 9-1 Consequences of Sexual Harassment

| Job-Related Outcomes | Number of Responses to the Question about the Problem | Direction of Change |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Coworker satisfaction | 34,221 | Decreased |
| Supervisor satisfaction | 34,450 | Decreased |
| Work satisfaction | 33,486 | Decreased |
| Global job satisfaction | 14,455 | Decreased |
| Organizational commitment | 31,194 | Decreased |
| Job withdrawal | 6,201 | Increased |
| Work withdrawal | 4,940 | Increased |
| Workgroup productivity | 27,425 | Decreased |

| Health and Well-Being Outcomes | Number of Responses to the Question about the Problem | Direction of Change |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Mental health | 45,880 | Decreased |
| Physical health | 32,121 | Decreased |
| PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder) | 4,076 | Increased number of cases |
| Life satisfaction | 4,545 | Decreased |

Source: Portion of a table adapted from Chelsea R. Willness, Piers Steel, and Kibeom Lee, "A Meta-Analysis of the Antecedents and Consequences of Workplace Sexual Harassment," *Personnel Psychology*, Spring 2007, p. 141.

morale, severe conflict, and lowered productivity. Table 9-1 summarizes the results of a synthesis of many studies about the adverse effects of sexual harassment. The studies indicate that harassment negatively affects job performance, loyalty to the firm, and personal well-being. Note also that some women suffered posttraumatic stress disorder, almost as if they had been involved in a serious accident.^[37]

Guidelines for Preventing and Dealing with Sexual Harassment

A starting point in dealing with sexual harassment is to develop an awareness of the types of behaviors that are considered sexual harassment. Often the difference is subtle. Suppose, for example, you placed copies of two nudes painted by Renoir, the French painter, on a coworker's desk. Your coworker might call that harassment. Yet if you took that coworker to a museum to see the originals of the same nude prints, your behavior usually would not be classified as harassment. Following is a sampling of behaviors that will often be interpreted as environmental harassment.^[38] Awareness of these behaviors is important because many harassers have no desire to offend, or knowledge that they are offending others. Such individuals are insensitive, and often ill informed.^[39] If people refrain from doing these acts, many instances of sexual harassment will be avoided.

1. **Inappropriate remarks and sexual implications.** Coworkers, subordinates, customers, and suppliers should not be referred to as sexual beings, and their appearance should not be referred to in a sexual manner. Telling a coworker she has gorgeous feet, or he has fabulous biceps, is out of place at work.
2. **Terms of endearment.** Refrain from calling others in the workplace by names such as "cutie," "sweetie pie," "honey," "dear," or "hunk." One might argue that these terms are simply sexist (different roles for men and women) and not sexual harassment. However, this argument is losing ground because any behavior that puts people down based on their gender can be interpreted as harassment from a legal perspective. Keep in mind also that some people find terms of endearment

to have a sexual connotation. If you felt no physical attraction toward another adult, would you call that person "beauty" or "hunk"?

3. **Suggestive compliments.** It is acceptable to tell another person that he or she looks nice, but avoid sexually tinged comments, such as mentioning that the person's clothing shows off his or her body to advantage.
4. **Physical touching.** To avoid any appearance of sexual harassment, it is best to restrict physical touching to handshakes and an occasional sideways hug. High-five handshakes are favored by many because they are less intimate than the traditional type. Hugging a long-term work associate is much more acceptable than hugging a new hire. Minimize such behaviors as adjusting a coworker's earring, touching hair, and tweaking a person's chin.
5. **Work-related kissing.** It is best to avoid all kissing in a work context—except, perhaps, a light kiss at an office party or picnic. It is much more professional to greet a work associate with a warm, sincere handshake, including the high-five type. Cultural differences must be taken into account here, such as many Europeans and Africans greet work associates with a peck on both sides of the face.

Company management also plays a major role in preventing and dealing with sexual harassment. Based on the observations of dozens of human resource specialists and employment law attorneys, several actions by management are critical.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The cornerstone of control of sexual harassment is creating and widely disseminating a policy about harassment. The policy should carefully define harassment and state that the company has zero tolerance for such behavior. Company officials designated for hearing complaints should be specified. In addition, the company should have an *open-door policy* about harassment. Such a policy means that any employee with a concern about being harassed is able to go directly to a senior manager without worrying about his or her supervisor taking revenge.

Brief company training programs covering the type of information presented in this chapter are also part of a serious program to prevent and deal with sexual harassment. However, a one-time presentation of a 15-minute videotape about sexual harassment is not sufficient. Periodic discussion about the topic is recommended.

After sexual harassment has taken place, the victim will usually want to resolve the conflict. Two key strategies are either to use a formal complaint procedure or to resolve the conflict on your own. If you choose the latter course, you will save yourself the time of going through a lengthy investigation procedure. Figure 9-2 presents details about the two key strategies for dealing with sexual harassment. Skill-Building Exercise 9-5 offers you an opportunity to simulate the control of sexual harassment.

FIGURE 9-2 How to Deal with Sexual Harassment

The potential or actual victim of sexual harassment is advised to use the following methods and tactics to deal with the problem.

Formal Complaint Procedure. Whenever an employee believes that he or she has encountered sexual harassment, or if an employee is suspected to be the perpetrator of sexual harassment, the complainant should report the incident to his or her immediate supervisor (if that person is not the harasser) or to the next higher level of management if the supervisor is the harasser. The supervisor contacted is responsible for contacting a designated company official immediately regarding each complaint. The officer will explain the investigative procedures to the complainant and any supervisor involved. All matters will be kept strictly confidential, including private conversations with all parties.

Dealing with the Problem on Your Own. The easiest way to deal with sexual harassment is to speak up before it becomes serious. The first time it happens, respond with a statement such as: "I won't tolerate this kind of talk," "I dislike sexually oriented jokes," or "Keep your hands off me."

SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 9-5

Combating Sexual Harassment

The two role-plays in this exercise provide practice in applying the recommended techniques for combating sexual harassment. The activities have an implied sexual content, and they are for educational purposes only. Any students offended by these role-plays should exclude themselves from participating.

Scenario 1: The Offensive Jester. One student plays the role of Max, a man who delights in telling sexually oriented jokes and anecdotes in the office. He often brings a tabloid newspaper to the office to read sexually oriented passages to coworkers, both male and female. Another student assumes the role of Maxine, a woman in the office who takes offense to Max's humor. She wants to convince Max that he is committing sexual harassment with his sexually oriented humor. Max does not see himself as committing sexual harassment.

Scenario 2: The Flirtatious Office Manager. One student assumes the role of Bertha, an office manager who is single. Another student plays the role of Bert, a married man who recently joined the company as an office assistant. Bert reports to Bertha, and she finds him physically attractive. Bertha visits Bert at his desk and makes such comments as "It looks like you have great quadriceps. I wonder what you look like in running shorts." Bert wants to be on good terms with Bertha, but he feels uncomfortable with her advances. He also wants to behave professionally in the office.

Run both role-plays in front of the class for about eight minutes. Other students in the class will observe the role-plays and then provide feedback about how well Maxine and Bert were able to prevent or stop sexual harassment. Observe if Maxine and Bert used any of the recommended techniques for dealing with harassment.

A major recommendation for documenting acts of sexual harassment is to keep a running diary of incidents against you. A log of the incidents is impressive to company officials, lawyers, and judges (should a lawsuit ultimately be involved). Examples of log entries from a woman and a man are given below:

- January 17, 2012: Jim Quattrone, the manager of accounts payable, asked me to have dinner with him for the sixth time, and I turned him down again. I said "no," "no," "no."
- March 13, 2011: Meg Evans, my supervisor, said that I would receive a much better performance evaluation if I could come over to her house for dinner. She said her husband would be out of town, so I could stay overnight if I wanted to. I felt so uncomfortable and pressured. I made up an excuse about having an exclusive relationship.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUIZZES IN OVERVIEW

Self-Assessment Quiz 9-1, Styles of Conflict Management, provides some tentative insights into your style of managing conflict. A possible clue to personal development stemming from this quiz is whether you are able to use different style of conflict resolution to adapt to a situation. Sue might be the assistant manager at a fashion boutique. A customer might be raising a big fuss about wanting to return shoes that she says are uncomfortable. Although the customer has passed the limit for returns, Sue accommodates the customer by giving her a complete merchandise exchange just to "shut her up." At other times, Sue might be more collaborative in resolving conflict.

Self-Assessment Quiz 9-2 measures your negotiating skills as reflected in your attitudes toward negotiating. These attitudes must be backed up with good communication skills to translate into effective negotiating. The two quizzes are related because negotiation is a major part of resolving conflict, such as attaining a compromise or collaborating with the other side.

conflict 181
role conflict 181
work-family conflict 183
personality clash 184

incivility 185
win-win 188
cognitive restructuring 191
negotiating 192

compromise 194
sexual harassment 196

A conflict is a situation in which two or more goals, values, or events are incompatible or mutually exclusive. Interpersonal conflicts have many sources or causes. An underlying source of job conflict is that people compete for limited resources. Another leading cause of incompatibility is role conflict, having to choose between two competing demands or expectations. Competing work and family demands represent a major role conflict. Other key sources of conflict are personality clashes, aggressive personalities including bullies, incivility and rudeness, and cross-generational conflict. Workplace violence is both a cause and an effect of job conflict.

Five major styles of conflict management have been identified: competitive, accommodative, sharing, collaborative (win-win), and avoidant. Each style is based on a combination of satisfying one's own concerns (assertiveness) and satisfying the concerns of others (cooperativeness).

Confrontation and problem solving is the ideal method for resolving conflict. Learning to benefit from criticism is an effective way of benefiting from conflict. People who benefit from criticism are able to stand outside themselves while being criticized. Another way to deal with criticism is to disarm the opposition by agreeing with his or her criticism. Reframing a situation can be helpful in resolving conflict. Reframing through cognitive restructuring lessens conflict by the person looking for the positive elements in a situation. Asking questions such as "How would I want to be treated if the situation were reversed" is another type of reframing.

Negotiating and bargaining is a major approach to resolving conflict. People negotiate for economic value and also for intangibles such as feeling good. Negotiation tactics include understanding the other party's perspective, focusing on interests rather than positions, compromising, beginning with a plausible demand or offer yet allowing room for negotiation, and making small concessions gradually. It is also important to know your BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement). Using anger to your advantage can sometimes work. Allowing for face saving is also recommended.

Sexual harassment is a form of interpersonal conflict with legal implications. The two forms of sexual harassment are (1) demanding sex in exchange for favors and (2) creating a hostile environment. People have differing perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment, and some workers enjoy sexually oriented behavior on the job. Sexual harassment is often an expression of power. Sexual harassment is widespread in the workplace. Research has pinpointed adverse mental and physical consequences of sexual harassment.

A starting point in dealing with sexual harassment is to develop an awareness of the types of behaviors it encompasses. Company policies and complaint procedures about harassment are a major part of dealing with the problem. To deal directly with harassment, the harassed person can file a formal complaint or confront the harasser when the behavior first begins. Keeping a diary of harassing events is strongly recommended.

1. Several large companies dismiss each year the 5 percent of their workforce receiving the lowest performance evaluations. What kind of conflicts do you think this practice leads to?
2. During the recent recession, many workers were hesitant to take more than a three-day vacation from the office. Their reasoning was that if the company could get by without them for a week or more, it might be concluded that they were not really needed. To what extent do you think that not taking a vacation was a useful way of holding on to a job?
3. Suppose someone finds out that a coworker raises dogs for dog-fighting, leading the first person to conclude that the coworker is potentially violent. Describe whether you think the first worker should tell the supervisor that the coworker is potentially violent on the job.
4. What are the disadvantages of having an accommodative style of handling conflict?
5. Several school systems in recent years have requested that teachers correct student work with a purple marker rather than a red one because the color red is associated with harsh criticism. What is your opinion of the merits of a shift from red markers to purple?
6. Have you ever attempted to disarm the opposition? How effective was the tactic?
7. How might a student use cognitive restructuring to get over the anger of having received a low grade in a course?
8. Visualize yourself buying a vehicle of your choice. Which negotiating technique (or techniques) would you be most likely to use?
9. Sexual harassment involves an unwanted sexual advance, and people at work have many different interpretations of an "unwanted sexual advance," including asking a coworker to join you for lunch. So how can a career-minded person completely avoid any behavior that might be interpreted as an "unwanted sexual advance"?
10. Imagine yourself as a human resources professional who wants to alert top-level management to the importance of developing a policy against sexual harassment. What interpretations could you make of Table 9-1 to help you emphasize the importance of developing such a policy?

<http://www.ehow.com>
(Resolving workplace conflict)

<http://www.karass.com>
(Resolving workplace conflict)

Internet Skill Builder: Finding Suggestions for Resolving Conflict on YouTube

YouTube.com often has a generous sampling of brief videos about resolving conflict that apply mostly to personal life,

but some are about the workplace. Visit YouTube.com, and watch a handful of videos about conflict resolution, and look for a few serious messages. Look for any similarities between the information presented in YouTube videos and in this chapter. Also, does it appear that any of the videos you find present a humorous aspect to conflict resolution?

Developing Your Human Relations Skills

Human Relations Case 9.1

The Apprehensive Sales Trainee

Maria was ecstatic about the position she just landed as a sales representative for a company that provides payroll and human resources services for small companies throughout the country. She was to be assigned a sales territory in Madison, Wisconsin, where she lived with her husband and three young children. Before working her territory, Maria had to attend 10 days of training and orientation at the company headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts.

One of the key trainers in the program was the national sales manager, Todd, an energetic and successful-looking man in his early forties. During a beverage break at the first morning of the training program, Todd approached Maria and complimented her on her "great tan" and "fabulous appearance." Maria was not particularly comfortable with the comments, but she let them pass.

Before the dinner meeting at the second night of the program, Todd came over to Maria and engaged her in a brief conversation about how she was enjoying the sales training. He then handed her a business card and said, "I imagine you might get lonely being away from home for so long, so here is my business card. Please get in touch if you would just like to hang out a little with me." Maria thought that Todd was stepping over the line of good

business judgment, but she just smiled politely and said, "Thanks anyway, but I am so overwhelmed with all this great information I am receiving, I have no spare time."

The following morning, Maria received a text message from Todd on her BlackBerry that said, "Your beauty is devastating. Get back."

Maria later phoned her best friend in Madison, and said, "Todd carries a lot of weight being the national sales manager. But I think his behavior toward me borders on sexual harassment. Yet five days into my job, I guess I shouldn't attempt to rat on a company executive."

Maria's friend replied, "You have got to do something. That sales manager is a predator."

Questions

1. To what extent is Todd engaging in sexual harassment toward Maria?
2. If Todd is guilty, what type of sexual harassment is he committing?
3. What steps should Maria take so that she can stop the harassment, yet still maintain a good working relationship with Todd?
4. What would be the positives and negatives of Maria filing a complaint about Todd with the company?

Human Relations Case 9.2

Maria Tries to Fend Off Todd

The case about Maria, the sales trainee, provides the background information and storyline for this role-play. One person plays the role of serious-minded Maria who wants to receive high ratings in her sales training. She does not want to create problems at the company, yet she recognizes she has the right to a harassment-free environment. Another student plays the role of Todd, who is infatuated with Maria, and also believes that he is powerful, and somewhat irresistible to women. Todd corners Maria during a cocktail hour prior to dinner on the third night of the sales training program. He once again starts to hit on her,

and Maria wants to avoid being hit on. At the least, a few sets of role players should perform in front of the class for about seven minutes.

Observers rate the role players on two dimensions, using a 1-to-5 scale from very poor to very good. One dimension is "effective use of human relations techniques." Focus on Maria's ability to effectively deal with sexual harassment. The second dimension is "acting ability." A few observers might voluntarily provide feedback to the role players in terms of sharing their ratings and observations. The course instructor might also provide feedback.

The Refrigerator Caper*

Two e-mail messages were sent at a technology company in Northern Virginia, covering the same topic:

From: Nestor, Jenna
Sent: Tuesday, August 7, 12:50 p.m.
To: All employees on 3rd, 4th, and 8th floors
Subject: Re: Refrigerator Etiquette
Importance: High

To the person who ate my lunch:

I would like to thank you for completely taking it upon yourself to deny me sustenance this afternoon. It is completely inappropriate to take things that are not yours. Are we in the 1st grade?

Please read Diana's e-mail that I have copied below. I would be happy to read it out loud and explain it to you if it is too hard to understand.

Jenna

A Very Angry Victim

P.S. In case you were wondering what that extra flavor was, each and every day I take the time to spit in my lunch. I hope you enjoyed it.

From: Sanders, Diana
Sent: Monday, July 30, 4:32 p.m.

To: All employees on 3rd, 4th, and 8th floors

Subject: Refrigerator Etiquette

Over the last month, a number of employees have been disappointed when they went to grab their lunch out of the refrigerator. Unfortunately, they found that someone had either taken part of their lunch out of their lunch bag and or the entire lunch was missing.

Please be respectful of others and do not eat anything from the fridge that is not your personal property. If you bring your lunch, please label with your name and date. Thank you for your immediate cooperation and consideration of coworkers.

Diana Sanders

Direction of Administration

Case Questions

1. What is the exact conflict in this situation? What is the source of the conflict?
2. What is your evaluation of Jenna Nestor's method of resolving the conflict over the stolen lunch?
3. How can professional adults really act in this manner?

*The company involved in this incident chose to remain anonymous.