Managing Conflict in Organisational Change

Abstract
Organisational change and conflict are two essential topics that engineering managers need to understand and have confidence in acting on, if they are to succeed in today's changing and increasingly competitive environment. This paper examines and dissects the elements of organisational change that almost inevitably result in conflict. Conflicts that impact on organisational change can act as a retardant to progress, creativity, innovation and productivity, and potentially precipitate the demise of an organisation. One of the many difficulties relating to organisational conflict is to define the division between conflict and competition. This paper explores what is known about the various states of conflict and presents an approach to addressing this problem, through identifying and subsequently managing institutional elements influencing organisational change and conflict.

Key words
Affective conflict, cognitive conflict, unrealistic conflict, consequential loss, Lewin, opportunities, problems, change management.

Definitions and Terms
Conflict: Derived from the Latin ‘conflictus’, meaning: a prolonged battle, a struggle, or a clash. The definition of conflict as defined by a variety of scholars, depending on their areas of interest, can be divided into: affective conflicts and cognitive conflicts. Robbins (1978) defines conflict as any opposition or interaction between two or more parties. Hoban (2005) defines conflict as a natural disagreement resulting from individuals or groups that differed in attitudes, beliefs, values or needs. It can also originate from past competitiveness and differences.

Affective conflict: Guetzkow and Gyr (1954) identify affective conflict as conflict in interpersonal relationships that is, relationship related conflict. Rahim (1986) argues that affective conflict occurs when two or more interacting entities become aware that their ideas and emotions are incompatible, which is also known as relationship conflict.

Cognitive conflict: Rahim argues that cognitive conflict occurs when two or more interacting social entities become aware that their thought processes or perceptions are out of step, which is also known as task conflict. Cognitive conflict between decision-makers is the awareness of inconsistent inferences drawn from identical information. In its extreme form, two parties’ inferences from the same data are logical contradictions of one another (Rahim, 1986). Jehn (1994) classifies conflict as being either task conflict or emotional conflict, whereas from Rahim’s viewpoint cognitive conflict is task conflict or task-related conflict and affective conflict is emotional conflict or emotionally-related conflict. Amason (1996) also classifies conflict as being either cognitive or affective.

Introduction
Successful organisations are designed and managed to sustain balance between their structure and function, while meeting the varied demands of the environment, technology, employees, and addressing other internal and external pressures. However, contemporary organisations are not static but dynamic, often in a constant state of change. Successful managers learn to anticipate these changes and take appropriate action. Managing such changes effectively is not only challenging, but essential for an organisation’s survival.
Organisational change can frequently result in conflict, which Oliveira and Sarmento (2003) argue can be affected by factors such as culture and attitude, and may be used to great effect when directed towards achieving positive outcomes, as demonstrated in increased creativity and improved productivity (Nankervis, Compton, Baird and Coffey, 2011). Organisational conflict may be defined as a disagreement between two or more individuals, groups or organisations, often as a result of the requirement to share the same scarce resources or work related activity, which in turn can also raise the potential for a conflict of interest. In the legal sense, there are three accepted categories of conflict of interest. The categories are, ‘actual conflict of interest’, ‘potential conflict of interest’ and ‘perceived conflict of interest’ (AHPRA, 2012).

The definitions given above are intentionally broad. They do not specify the scale of the disagreement, or in what manner the conflicting parties prevail, or how the conflict is managed, or what the outcome is. However, in each of these cases, these factors determine whether the conflict is functional or dysfunctional, and to what extent corporate culture and more particularly corporate nurture may influence the overall scenario.

**Types of conflict**

There are several types of conflict which can affect both our social and working lives. In this paper we are primarily concerned with the effects of conflict on organisations.

**Conflict within the individual:** This type of conflict is generally caused by uncertainty about an individual's work role or work load. This can lead to frustration because personal goals are not obtained and may result in emotional behaviour, irrational thinking and often, destructive actions (Bowen, Edwards, Lingard and Cattell, 2014). Role or load conflict can manifest itself in several ways, and is usually brought on by stress produced through one or more of the following conditions: Inter-role conflict occurs when an individual plays two or more roles. For example: a supervisor responsible to his or her employer to ensure work schedules are met; and his or her role as Union Steward responsible to his or her employees for their work conditions. Role overload conflict occurs when an individual is given a number of jobs which cannot be completed within the time frame. Which job takes priority? Role ambiguity occurs when a job is given with insufficient information to allow the job to be completed. Inter-sender conflict occurs when the expectations of one person or group, conflicts with the expectations of another person or group. For example: Management wants increased production without change in work conditions, and employees seek union support to maintain current working conditions.

Some of the characteristics of this type of conflict are aggression, fixation and resignation. Aggression can be either physical or verbal, in which a person's character may be attacked. Fixation may cause a person to be stubborn or unreasonable. Resignation results in a person losing all hope of bettering his or her work conditions. In turn, conflict within an individual can influence the way in which he or she responds to other types of organisational conflict.

**Conflict between individuals:** This type of conflict is generally caused by differing personalities, or when two individuals are competing for the same resources. This can be disruptive and lead to a toxic work environment as each person strives to become dominant and fulfil his or her needs. Conflicts of this nature can be either lateral, where individuals on the same level are in conflict, or vertical, where the individuals at different levels are in conflict. According to Walton (1987) there are four parts to this type of conflict: (1) The issue or source of the conflict. (2) The trigger which sets off the conflict. (3) The resultant behaviour. (4) The consequence. This is a continual cycle which flares up and subsides only
to flare up again at some later time. Conflict between individuals can involve either emotional or substantive issues or both. Emotional issues can be resentment, distrust or negative feelings. Substantive issues can be disagreements over how a task should be carried out, competition over resources, or a difference in role perception.

**Conflict between individuals and groups:** This type of conflict occurs when an individual is pressured to conform to the wishes or standards set by the work group. If the individual resists, it can result in disruption to work or a break down in communications. Each member of a group is expected to behave in a way which is consistent with the group's activities. This can be either positive, in that an individual may be pressured to improve, or negative, in that, an individual may be pressured to sacrifice his or her high standards so that the overall standard of the group is maintained. An individual's status within the group also plays an important part in how he or she is expected to behave. For example, a new member of a 'level playing field' group would have a lower status and would be expected to play the role of 'newbie'. If he or she tried to dominate another in the group, then the group would collectively pressure the new person to conform.

**Conflict between individuals and the organisation:** The cause of this type of conflict is normally a clash of values. It can be an environment issue, a conflict of moral issues, a clash of objectives or a difference in needs. This type of conflict, as with the previous types, can be disruptive and result in both parties being delayed in achieving their goals. Individuals who have a conflict with their organisation will often seek out others within the organisation with similar views and form a formal or informal group. The group may then attempt to change the organisation's practices or objectives, particularly if the issue is an environmental one. If this is unsuccessful, it can result in individuals leaving the organisation or simply being disruptive. The individual also has personal needs which he or she feels the organisation should meet, if this does not occur then he or she may subordinate the organisation's objectives to suit his or her own needs (Nankervis et al, 2011).

**Conflict between groups:** This is the most common type of conflict within an organisation and requires careful management if the organisation is to achieve its objectives. If stability is to be maintained, there must be co-operation between groups and a clear definition of organisational objectives in the context of social perceptions of individuals and the cultural perceptions of the organisation (Perkins and Arvinen-Muondo, 2013). Group conflict can occur between groups which depend on each other for their work, as in the case of a production line, where one department or group must complete its work to allow the next department or group to start. Conflict can be between management and unions when unions seek to improve the working conditions of its members. Conflicts can be built-in due to the difference in group activities or objectives. For example: Quality Assurance and Production have two separate functions which can automatically put them into conflict, as each strives to attain its objectives. Groups can have unique characteristics which may not allow them to provide the co-operation each requires. The conflict can be polarized where the line of conflict is clearly defined, and everyone rallies on both sides to contest the issues or, it can be de-polarized when the issues are vague and there are mixed feelings within the groups involved. If inter-group conflict is managed correctly it can become a functional tool for building internal competitive advantage and achieving objectives, whereas if it is not managed well it can become destructive, making it difficult to focus on and achieve objectives.

**Conflict between organisations:** This type of conflict is generally restricted to the economic environment of organisations and is generally considered to be an indicator of competition. It can lead to improvements in products or development of new products. Because of this, it is
seen as being functional. Governments institute law and regulations to control any adverse or dysfunctional effects which develop in the marketplace. The success of this type of conflict can be judged by the growth of the organisation. It can create unity within the organisation and provide a healthy air of competition if it is skilfully managed.

Sources of conflict
Whenever there is more than one internal company, group, gathering, club or organisation, there is the potential for a source of conflict. This could embrace incompatible goals, different value structures, divergent interests and interactions that are covert or overt.

Communication: The communicative source represents those opposing forces that arise from semantic difficulties, misunderstanding and irrelevant information or ‘noise’ in the channel of communication (Cahn and Abigail, 2014). One of the major conflict myths is that poor communication is the reason for or source of all conflicts. Whilst certainly not the source of all conflict, it can however stimulate misunderstandings. Insufficient exchange of information, or ‘noise’ in the communication channel, or too much information, can all precipitate conflict (Robbins, Boyle, Judge and Millet, 2014). Differences can arise from different training methods, selective perception, or inadequate information about others. The filtering process that occurs as information is passed between members and the divergence of communication from formal to informal lines, are all sources of potential conflict. Effective communication is also important in resolving conflict. If communication is effective and meaningful data is exchanged, then conflict will be resolved more effectively (Joelle, 2005).

Structure: The term structure is used to include degree of routine, specialisation and standardisation of tasks assigned to workers, cultural differences of workers, leadership styles and reward systems, all can be considered as sources for conflict. Research has indicated that the higher the level of complexity of the work and the more specialised its activities, the greater the likelihood of conflict. Reward systems are found to be a source of conflict, when one person gains at another's expense (Billinkopf, 2001). Structural sources of conflict can include unequal task dependence, power differences, role conflict and work flow patterns.

Personal variables: Variable personal factors include the individual value system that each person has, or the personal characteristics that account for individual idiosyncrasies and differences. Certain individuals who are highly authoritarian, dogmatic, or who demonstrate low self-esteem, are a source for potential conflict. Value differences are the best explanation of such diverse issues as prejudice (including racial) disagreement on the role of unions and political views. Cultural and philosophical differences in these value systems are common sources for creating conflict (Nankervis et al, 2011).

Shared resources: If every department in an organisation had access to unlimited resources, employees, money, materials, equipment and space, the problem of how to share these resources would not arise. This source of conflict exists because these vital resources are limited. Department operating budgets are planned, funds are allocated, and some areas will get less than they need or want. Loss of co-operation or conflict can result, as groups compete for the greatest possible share of available resources.

Differences in goals: Organisational sub-units tend to become specialized or differentiated as they develop dissimilar goals, tasks and personnel. Such changes and re-allocation of focus, purpose and input, frequently lead to conflict of interest and priorities, even when the overall goals of the organisation are agreed to.
**Interdependence of work activities:** Work interdependence exists when two or more sub-units depend on each other to complete their respective tasks. In this case, potential for a high degree of conflict or non-cooperation exists, depending on how the situation is managed. For example, when work groups are given too much work, they may accuse their other sub-unit work mates of shirking their responsibilities, particularly when one work unit is unable to begin work until the other unit completes their allocated task.

**Other sources of conflict:** Individual styles and organisational ambiguities can be a source of irritation. Some people enjoy conflict, debate and argument, and when kept under control, mild discord can stimulate staff and improve their performance (Nankervis et al, 2011, Selye, 1979). However some individuals manage to escalate the conflicts into full scale battles. The source or potential for conflict is highest when group members differ in work attitudes, age, education, and career goals. If members of different groups know little about each other's jobs they may make unreasonable demands on each other resulting in conflict.

**Consequences of conflict**

From the discussion above it is clear that conflict is an inevitable factor in organisational life. It is also clear that conflict arises from many different causes. However, it is also asserted that with appropriate management, conflict can be the process of restoring equilibrium within a system that has experienced or been impacted on by change (Tjosvold, 1988). The following discussion addresses the potential consequences of conflict.

**Realistic conflict:** In this case, resolution may be achieved despite differing goals, frustration of specific needs, and ideological differences, through the participant’s expectation of achieving gains through the conflict. This usually involves an adjustment of the irritant condition resulting in equilibrium being achieved, an outcome commonly achieved in knowledge based organisations (Nankervis et al, 2011).

**Unrealistic conflict:** On the other hand, conflict may not be brought about by rival goals and needs of the antagonists, but by the need for tension release in one or both of them. In this case, conflict is not aimed toward specific results, and rarely achieves positive results other than the release of tension (Wertheim, Love, Peck and Littlefield, 1993).

**Conflict within the individual:** If unresolved, consequences from this type of conflict are typically dysfunctional with none considered positive in their effects. All types of conflict within the individual must be resolved, or the individual is unlikely to function properly. Unresolved stress is likely to become unmanageable with tension and anxiety most likely to cause unnecessary unrealistic conflict (Cahn and Abigail 2014) with associated stress also causing health problems, such as heart disease and strokes.

**Conflict between individuals** Conflict between individuals generally falls within two categories; realistic and unrealistic, resulting in consequences as mentioned above. Alternatively, in conflict between individuals, the closer the relationship, the more intense the conflict. The more the individual's personality is committed to the conflict, the greater the danger of creating lingering conflict between the individuals. However, in the case of virtual strangers, when little individual personality is committed to the conflict, it may not be as intense, and could have the positive consequence of stimulating greater effort and activity.

**Conflict between individuals and their groups:** This type of conflict is generally a means of achieving unity within a group, with low level conflicts usually resolved and a source of benefit for the group provided the same people are not in conflict over varying issues.
However, if the individual is in conflict with the rest of the group over the conceptual basis of the group, a phenomenon called Social Hatred (Cinar, 2013) may develop. This hatred is directed against a member of the group, not from personal motives, but because the member presents a danger to the preservation of the group. A typical example of this, is the way the renegade hates and is hated. This is a very negative consequence and should be avoided.

Conflict between groups within an organisation: Consequence of conflict between internal groups is typically greater internal cohesion within those groups. However, this general principle only holds true if: the group is an on-going concern, that is, there must be at the very least consensus among members of the group; and there must be recognition of an outside threat which is thought to menace the group as a whole, not just some part of the group. If these conditions are not met, the group is almost certain to dissolve or at least capitulate to the outside threat. Another consequence of inter-group conflict is that conflict with another group defines group structure and consequent reaction to internal conflict. Groups in conflict are less tolerant of internal conflict and group leadership tends to centralise about a consensus core.

Conflict between organisations: In the Western World, conflict between organisations is an inherent part of society. A consequence of this conflict is the free enterprise and social capitalism systems. More specific consequences of this type of conflict are the formation of social limiting devices such as laws, for example: a Trade Practices Act. It is generally believed that such conflict also leads to the development of new products, technologies and services, lower prices and more efficient use of resources.

Summary of Consequences: It can be generally said that conflict tends to be dysfunctional for a structure in which there is no or insufficient toleration and institutionalisation of conflict. The intensity of a conflict which threatens to tear apart, which attacks the consensual basis of the organisation, is related to the rigidity of the organisational structure. What threatens the survival of the organisation is not the conflict as such but the rigidity of the structure which permits hostilities to accumulate and to be channelled along only one major line of cleavage.

Conflict management
Until recently, it was commonly agreed that conflict in an organisation was counter-productive, whether it be functional, dysfunctional, overt or covert (Lewicki, Saunders and Minton, 1997). In addition, it was generally accepted that if you had conflict in your organisation, there was something wrong with that organisation. A change to this theory took place when behavioural science and management researchers identified causes of conflict totally unrelated to bad management. They discovered that conflict in an organisation does not have to be dysfunctional as the original theory would suggest, rather it can have the effect of being a functional tool of management (Tjosvold, 1988). Conflict need not be suppressed, but in fact, can be encouraged in order to stimulate creativity and bring about necessary change. Conflict has a part to play in the effective achievement of company goals, in that it stimulates creative capacities and draws attention to problems that may otherwise be neglected.

Regulating Conflict: Some organisations may have an excess of conflict, which even though it is resolved causes disruption, uncertainty, and inevitably becomes counter-productive. It could be said that a company whose major industrial union is very active and even militant and which makes excessive demands on the organisation is a contributor to excessive conflict. Reducing the level of conflict in such the organisations is very difficult, and in most cases does very little to resolve the issues. Diversion tactics aimed at drawing the conflicting party's attention away from the problem, such as substituting a super-ordinate goal, usually is only
temporary as the underlying reason for the conflict still remains unsolved. If the level of conflict needs to be reduced, then it should be by resolution of the cause of conflict (Nankervis et al, 2011). Murray (1974) identifies collective bargaining as the main means by which we seek to do this. He further argues that ‘the purpose of collective bargaining is to resolve conflict’ (1974, p.955). Some organisations present as having very little conflict. However, the apparent absence of conflict may be an indicator that members are either complacent or afraid to voice their opinion. In this situation, factors that could result in improved performance are ignored, poor performance is tolerated and members adopt a passive attitude towards company procedures.

There are many ways to stimulate a conflict situation and they include:

(1) Introducing monetary incentives for increased production and quality. The fostering of competition will lead to increased productivity as the groups fight for superiority. Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg and Kalleberg (2000) argue on the basis of multilevel research covering different manufacturing industries such as steel, apparel, medical electronic instruments and imaging: ‘Based on the survey evidence of high-performance work place practices such as production teams and incentive pay schemes suggested that these practices probably do improve performance’(2000, Preface, pp.12-14).

(2) Restructure the work groups or re-arrange staff responsibilities, this may lead to increased efficiencies but may also result in conflict as the group members voice their opinions.

(3) Employ a manager whose background and style is quite different to that which is the norm in the organisation. Being an outsider, the new manager would not be stereotyped and would be in a good position to hear past grievances and resolve them.

(4) Try something different and go against normal practice and procedures. This may demonstrate that there are good reasons for doing things another way, but then may also stimulate conflict due to a reluctance to change from old habits.

Whatever the situation, the attitude of top managers is of critical importance to encouraging and controlling the level of conflict.

Resolving conflict
For conflict to be resolved, all parties should perceive and the need to do something about it. The nature of the conflict will direct the appropriate strategy. However, it is generally agreed that problem solving is the most successful method employed in the majority of cases (Nankervis et al, 2011). The manager can elect to handle the situation in various ways. He or she can simply ignore that a problem exists or try to quell the situation and resolve the matter. Ignoring the conflict in the hope that it will either resolve itself or just go away is a negative approach and does very little, if anything, to resolve the situation. Normally, if the conflict has any substance, underlying differences and unrest will continue and may escalate the degree of the conflict. Eventually, the conflict situation will need to be addressed. Attempting to suppress the conflict does not address or eliminate the basic causes either. Suppression may keep the peace on the surface, but still allows the reason for the conflict to remain and manifest itself as either supporting material for future conflicts, or indeed, be the basis for a re-occurrence of the initial conflict situation at a later date. Conflict resolution only exists when the reasons for a conflict are eliminated, if lingering issues or antagonisms remain they can generate more such conflicts in the future. Conflicts can be addressed through several strategies, such as lose-lose, win-lose and win-win. It is only in the win-win strategy that true conflict resolution occurs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Conflict</th>
<th>Typical Resolution Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Semantic difficulties</td>
<td>Super-ordinate goals</td>
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<td>Insufficient exchange of information</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
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<td>Channel noise</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alter human variables</td>
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<td>Educate in relationship</td>
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<td>T Group training</td>
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<td>Alter structural variables</td>
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<td>Exchange members</td>
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<td>Change communication channels</td>
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<td><strong>STRUCTURE</strong></td>
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<td>Power differences</td>
<td>Super-ordinate goals</td>
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<td>Work flow</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
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<td>Unequal task dependence</td>
<td>Expand resources</td>
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<td>Goals and rewards</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
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<td>Differentiation/specialisation</td>
<td>Smoothing</td>
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<td>Dependence on common resources</td>
<td>Compromise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role conflict</td>
<td>Authority</td>
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<td>Ambiguity in credit and blame</td>
<td>Alter human variables</td>
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<td>Team building</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Confrontation meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alter structural variables</td>
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<td>Integrative unit/person</td>
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<td>Regroup activities</td>
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<td>Redesign job</td>
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<td>Appeal system</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONAL – BEHAVIOUR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personality attributes</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role dissatisfaction</td>
<td>Super-ordinate goals</td>
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<td>Differing goals</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
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<td>Team building</td>
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<td>Confrontation meeting</td>
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<td>Transfer person</td>
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<td>Selection/training</td>
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<td>T-group training</td>
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<td>Alter structural variables</td>
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<td>Redesign job</td>
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Figure 1. Matrix of potential causes of conflict and typical resolution strategies

**Lose-Lose conflict:** Lose-Lose outcomes occur due to Avoidance, Smoothing or Compromise. No one really achieves satisfaction, and the underlying causes of the conflict remain to initiate future conflict over the same issues. Avoidance is a form of ignorance, in that the manager does not wish to know the problem exists, in the hope that it may just go away. Quite often, this occurs because the manager has no idea of how to handle the problem. Smoothing attempts to play down the problem by highlighting areas of agreement and similarities, unfortunately, smoothing may ignore the real issues involved in the conflict situation. It could
be said that smoothing is intended to bring about a situation of peaceful co-existence, however, if the underlying issues are not addressed, this is not likely to happen. Compromise occurs when each party to the conflict is prepared to relinquish something to achieve its ultimate objective. In this case, neither party gains and although the conflict appears to be resolved, once again the basis for future conflict exists (Wertheim et al, 1993).

**Win-Lose conflict:** In the Win-Lose context, only one party gains some satisfactory resolution to their conflict situation. Usually, the winner does so at the expense of the other party or parties. In this situation, there is no compromise, either the satisfied party achieves its result or the manager simply dictates a solution and specifies what is gained or lost and by whom. If the authority is a party to the conflict, it would normally be easy to predict who will be the winner and the loser. This strategy also fails to resolve the matter or address the root causes of the conflict (Wertheim et al, 1993). One or more parties may still feel aggrieved, rarely is the conflict justly resolved and therefore, the potential for a reoccurrence of the issue is still there.

**Win-Win conflict:** Win-Win conflict resolution is achieved by collective problem solving, where all parties to the conflict meet to achieve a resolution that is mutually satisfactory to all parties. All parties must recognise that there is an issue to be addressed. Confronting each other with their views allows each of the parties the opportunity to gain a broad perception of the problem and with skilled leadership a satisfactory conclusion can be reached. Problem solving can lead to the possibility of an acceptance of a super ordinate goal that can be achieved mutually, due to the satisfactory resolution of the conflicting parties’ lower level goals. Win-Win conditions should be such that the resolution is total leaving no lingering dissatisfaction with the conclusion that could cause the issue to re-emerge. Bodine, Crawford and Schrumpf (1994) suggests a model to foster mediation and group problem solving as a six-step process: (1) agreeing to mediate, and accepting ground rules, (2) gathering points of view; (3) focusing on interests; (4) creating win-win options; (5) evaluating options; (6) creating an agreement.

**Reasons for change**
Organisational change is bound to occur, given the variety of forces for change that exist both within and outside an organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Forces</th>
<th>External Forces</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Increasing costs of labour, services, raw materials, energy, redundancies, high inflation and interest rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>Government cutbacks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technologies</td>
<td>Environmental factors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working conditions</td>
<td>Technological advances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal relationships</td>
<td>Competitive actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective expectations</td>
<td>Regulatory compliance requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atmosphere, of innovation &amp; change (supporting or otherwise)</td>
<td>Market place readjustments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Governance, policy, process, practice</td>
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**Figure 2. The variety of forces for organisational change**
Responding To Change: There are two constructive ways that managers can deal with change: they may React-to-it or Plan-for-it. A React-to-it approach is appropriate for the day-to-day decisions a manager must make, whilst a Plan for it approach is necessary when a major part, or all, of the organisation needs to change. Planned change is greater in scope and magnitude than reactive change. It requires a greater commitment of time and resources, requires more skills and knowledge in order to guarantee success, and can lead to more problems if implementation is unsuccessful.

Planned Change: Many forces act to keep an organisation in a state of equilibrium. Forces offering change may at first appear disruptive and inevitably adverse, if allowed to become dominating and controlling the environment. Alternatively, they may also be seen as forces supporting stability. To understand how pressures for change and pressures for stability interact, Lewin and Schein developed a three-step model of planned change, the ‘force-field’ theory (Schein, 1996).

Unfreezing -- Changing -- Freezing

Figure 3. Lewin Model for change

Step 1. Unfreezing: Lewin and Schein’s model requires that the need for change is acceptable to the individual, group or organisation. This may be done by various means, including introducing new information to highlight an imbalance between objective and performance, decreasing old inappropriate values or showing ineffectiveness.

Step 2. Changing: Change agents are individuals or groups of people who are responsible for providing a leadership role in managing the process of change. The change aspect helps to create situations in which new values, attitudes and behaviours can be identified, discussed, learnt and tested out in practice.

Step 3. Freezing: Freezing means locking the new behaviour pattern into place. The change has been effected to the benefit of the individual, group or organisation. To reinforce the change, praise and rewards are important in the initial stages of refreezing. As time continues, the change becomes the norm. This model recognises that many organisations and individuals are not ready for change. Pressures for equilibrium or stability may counteract those for change.

The Lewin-Schein change model shows that whilst there are three main steps to effective change, there may also be failure at any stage because: (1) Too much energy is needed to make the necessity for change obvious. (2) Those seeking the change don’t put every effort into effecting it. (3) The unfreezing step is too difficult or not important, resulting in reversion to the original state.

Resistance to change
It has been attributed as a Confucianism: ‘The only certainty in life is change’. Resistance to change has been identified by Ewing (1969) as ‘the most universal barrier to effective planning’ (Ewing, 1969, p.25-44). Before we look at resistance to change from an organisational point of view, we must look at why humans are so resistive to change. The
reasons are varied and complex, but may stem from some fear of the unknown and the feeling
of being manipulated, especially if they're not involved in the change. In any organisation, if
people resent planned changes, it will be difficult to implement those changes. This can lead
to many disruptions, some of them are:
(i) Poor morale.
(ii) Open rejection of planned changes.
(iii) Half-hearted attempts to implement plans.
(iv) Sabotage of planned changes.
(v) Conflict of interests.
(vi) Restricted freedom.
(vii) Increase of work-load.

Conflict of interest can occur when a change will reduce benefits or rewards, such as status,
power or career opportunities. Restricted Freedom can occur if an organisation member is told
to spend more time doing paperwork and reports, rather than managing his or her
subordinates. Increase of work-load will cause resistance to change if an organisation member
cannot physically handle an increase in workload or their salary does not reflect the expected
increased productivity. There are a number of ways that resistance to change can be reduced.
Most relate to reducing a sense of fear of change. In essence, once man had knowledge of fire,
his fear of it was greatly reduced or eliminated. Basically, knowledge and involvement is the
best way of reducing fear. Advance knowledge of organisational planned changes and their
probable consequences, and involvement of organisation members in the planning process
will help overcome resistance to change.

Managing organisational change
There are many factors that can bring about organisational change, some anticipated and
planned for and some that are not. Some are due to outside influences such as the rising cost
of materials, loss of market share to competitors, advances in technology, and some are
initiated from within the organisation in order to achieve a specified objective. Another cause
of change can be a result of a conflict situation, whether it is induced by management, or as a
result of differing goals and perceptions of employees. Regardless of the cause of the conflict,
if it is to bring about a change in operating philosophy, climate, style or the establishment of
new goals which are agreeable to all parties, it must be addressed immediately, so as to
minimise negative consequences and maximise the benefits.

The Process Of Managing Change: Every manager must be prepared to act as a change agent.
However, under certain circumstances this may not be the most beneficial way of
implementing the desired change. The change agent can be internal or external, depending on
the circumstances. An external change agent's role is to provide leadership in the process of
managing the change. The change agent may be an industry specialist or an academic with
specialist skills and expertise in the area of concern and can contribute in a meaningful way.
One of the key benefits of an external change agent is to be able to see problems in a different
light to those who are engaged in it. An internal agent may be a member of the Personnel
Department, with special skills in this area and with a sound understanding of the
organisation's structure and short and long range plans. In some cases the combination of
internal and external agents are used in concert with the Department Manager.

The following approach outlines six phases of managing change in relation to the Lewin
model and is illustrated in Figure 4.
(1) **Pressure and Arousal**: This process begins when management begin to feel a need for change, caused by a significant problem.  

(2) **Intervention and Re-orientation**: A consultant or change agent can be brought in to define the problem and commence the process of bringing about change. Outsiders are often used, however, internal staff members considered proficient at handling such problems may be designated the task.  

(3) **Diagnosis and Recognition of Problem(s)**: The facts are gathered and analysed by the change agent and management.  

(4) **Invention of and Commitment to Solutions**: Solutions are found by creatively developing plausible alternatives.  

(5) **Experimentation and Search For Results**: Test the solutions developed in phase and evaluate the results.  

(6) **Reinforcement and Acceptance**: When the correct course of action has been selected, it should be accepted and improved; performance should indicate a commitment to the change.

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**Is It Permanent?**  
Managers must be able to not only improve the structure, technology, people, relationships in the organisations, but do it in such a way, that human behaviour is modified effectively. Effective change only occurs when staff expressly modify their behaviour in the desired
direction. If the changes are made properly, they will be permanent, if not, they will only be temporary. Sociologist Kurt Lewin (1958) noticed that if the three related conditions of, Unfreezing, Changing and Freezing (see Figure 3.) were not present, effective behavioural change may not be present, and prior conditions or some interim state would be reverted to. It is most important to realise that any change, even if it is a result of a resolving a conflict situation, may attract resistance. The presence of resistance usually suggests that the change has not gained the acceptance required to make it successful, therefore, the change agent must be willing to accept feedback in order to make constructive modifications in the change, change strategy, or themselves as the change agent.

Conclusion
Conflict in one form or another is everywhere. Two opposite positions are taken about conflict, one view holds that conflict is an undesirable characteristic of organisational life and should be eliminated, the contrasting view maintains that conflict is a healthy stimulus for change and should be encouraged within limits. Thus, conflict is a dynamic process that tends to move through clearly discernible stages. Latent antecedent conditions for conflict are present in all organisations. When any of these antecedent conditions is perceived and becomes personalised, conflict usually appears in some behavioural form, triggering various conflict resolution methods. Whatever the approach to resolution, there are ensuing consequences (resolution aftermath) depending upon how the conflict was handled. The conflicting parties may be satisfied in varying degrees, or the resolution may provide fuel for the next cycle of conflict. Whilst managers develop their own personal approach for coping with conflict situations, conflict management styles invariably take the form of: avoidance, suppression, smoothing, compromise, or confrontation. These five styles reflect the two views of conflict: undesirable and eradicate, or desirable and regulate.
The art of dealing with conflict in the workplace may be the most significant skill that leadership must learn to handle. As a result, effective conflict management is a staple of good leadership. Because conflict management is rapidly becoming a critical and time-consuming aspect of management, it is essential that, managers are prepared to face these challenges and are equipped to channel conflict in the workplace into constructive outcomes. Clearly, conflict both positive and negative, is here to stay. However, armed with the skills and understandings outlined above, managers can use conflict as a positive and strategic management tool.
Addressing conflict in the workplace should not be seen as a task to be avoided. On the contrary, leaders can embrace conflict as a mark of a productive workplace environment.

References


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