THE LADDER OF UNMANAGED CONFLICT

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Topics

• A model to help us think about various ways of responding to conflict.
• How conflict escalates and the signs of escalation.
• What effective conflict engagement actually is.
• Basic techniques for de-escalating conflict.
• Reasons not to fear dealing with conflict
Conflict Defined

Conflict is present whenever two or more people perceive they have opposing interests.
Responding to Conflict Effectively

• Attitude toward conflict impacts effectiveness of conflict management.
• Conflict management is a basic skill and professional success determiner.
Ladder of Unmanaged Conflict

• The problem emerges.
• People form sides.
• Positions harden.
• Communication stops
• Sides strengthen their positions.
• Perceptions become distorted.
• Sense of crisis emerges.
• Outcomes vary – litigation, firing or resigning employees, even workplace violence.
Conflict is *not* Inherently Negative

- How you approach conflict is critical.
- Conflict is actually a *necessary* part of the creative process.
Thinking on Your Feet

- Identifying a problem when it arises.
- Clarifying problems for the sake of the problem rather than the sake of an agenda (dialogue process).
Scrum and Conflict

Scrum is a project management framework which relies on and enforces collaborative methods which require a dialogic mindset.
Assertiveness of Collaborative Style

Ref: Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument
Distinguishing Issues, Interests, and Positions

• Issues are components of a larger problem.
• Interests are the keys to finding workable solutions for each issue: a specific need or desire that a person has and wants to satisfy.
• Positions are ways to satisfy interests.
Distinguishing Issues, Interests, and Positions

• Interests are expressed in generalized language with reference to the conflict.

• Interests are often not concrete.

• Positions appear to be black and white or binary expressions.

• There is usually more than one viable position for every interest.
Dealing With Emotions

• What is emotion?
• What does the emotional mind do for you?
• What is emotion’s effect in a conflict?
Tips for Handling Angry People

• Breathe!
• Use “sponges” to absorb some of the energy of emotion.
• Lead the person away from a crowd.
Tips for Handling Angry People

• Respond in unexpected ways.
• Set limits as needed.
• Accept responsibility and apologize as needed.
Questions?

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