While attending a counseling conference, four friends from the same geographic area sat together in a hotel lobby sharing some of the highlights of the first few days of this annual event. All were professional counselors and had been friends and colleagues for a number of years, but each had found a niche in a different work setting. As a result, their get-togethers and discussions while attending meetings were always lively and engaging, involving a wide diversity of ideas and perspectives.

Grace, a guidance counselor in a rural public school district, frequently organized the get-togethers. She was dependable and consistently able to provide a structure that made others feel comfortable and welcome. One could count on Grace to take care of the details of any event and be an empathetic hostess. She was active in a number of community service organizations and had developed an award-winning career guidance program in her school.

Alex had been the director of a career development center at a small college but, with time, had found the position too dull and routine. Five years ago, he became the human resources manager in a moderate-size retail corporation. His interest in careers and group work along with his counseling background proved to be an ideal match with the organization, whose major human resources concerns were improving communication and reducing the conflicts associated with rapid change. He was the free spirit of the foursome.

Irma and two colleagues operated a community counseling service. Irma specialized in family and marriage counseling, focusing much of her high energy on understanding people. Others saw her as imaginative and inspirational. She was adept at both individual and group therapy. Irma provided the quartet with an enthusiasm for living and a deep appreciation for the individual person.

Ron was currently serving as the chair of the counselor education department at the only university in the area. Viewed as an innovator and critical thinker, he brought a serious determination to the group. His understanding of theory and conceptual models proved useful for integrating discussion ideas and developing broad perspectives. Ron viewed learning as the means of obtaining the most critical set of skills needed to live a fulfilling life and viewed group dynamics as the process for maintaining the energy needed for this complex task.

The four friends decided to get together regularly to discuss areas of interest and share perspectives. They were considering writing a paper or a book on everything they were researching, learning, and sharing. They left the counseling conference dedicated and committed to the project, although they knew coordinating schedules would be difficult.
Grace, Alex, Irma, and Ron met again after having to postpone their get-together twice because of summer vacations. The irony, of course, was that the discussion topic was change and conflict. All agreed that increases in the amount of change produce increased conflict. Grace added that the rapidity of change has the same effect. Alex asked if change was a choice, as he typically felt compelled to change. He noted that the act of his not choosing to make changes usually resulted in others making those choices for him. Ron suggested that change was a given and that the real choice was in how and when to influence the change process. Irma noted that the change process in group and team development frequently involved a conflict stage and that when conflict issues were skipped over, the group would eventually regress backward and engage those issues, sometimes more than once. Alex pointed out that within the group and team context, conflict, like change, is a naturally occurring process. In fact, it appears to be an essential component to the growth and development of a group or team.

Ron introduced the idea that if conflict is essential to growth, it should be viewed as positive with its extremes viewed as negative. He noted that too much conflict results in chaos and the absence of conflict encourages apathy. Grace added that managing conflict is therefore an important skill for influencing change. "So is managing emotions," Irma said, "since conflict is frequently accompanied by anxiety and tension." Alex stated that conflict also increases energy and expressed a preference for chaotic groups over apathetic ones. "At least, with the former, you have the energy for change," he said. All began to view understanding conflict as an important insight for team development. They reached the conclusion that it was important to trust the group development process and understand that the anxiety and tension of natural conflict provides the energy for continued growth. They noted, too, that leadership interventions may be needed for effective conflict management.

Each had done extensive research and writing given the extra time they had as a result of postponed meetings. Alex had written about the nature of conflict. Irma had chosen the causes of conflict. Grace had examined conflict and leadership. Ron had looked at managing change.

THE NATURE OF CONFLICT

The storming stage of group development involves a movement toward conflict. It follows the movement toward awareness in the forming stage. Group members who were originally eager and willing to participate may now be exhibiting signs of resistance and hostility. Their inexperience compounds the situation. As member interactions and task involvement increase, so do possibilities for conflict (Kormanski, 1982).

Conflict in this context is a naturally occurring behavior pattern and an essential stage in the growth and development of the group. Thus, it is a positive phenomenon and a prerequisite for group growth. Just as algebra and trigonometry are prerequisites for calculus, healthy conflict is necessary for promoting group development.
Individual development follows a similar pattern. One grows and matures more quickly during periods of personal conflict. A change in schools, a move to a new neighborhood, the loss of a good friend, a family divorce or separation, a change in job status, or the death of someone close—each, in its own unique way, challenges the individual to react in a more responsible manner, to take charge of the situation, to keep control of his or her emotions, to act in an initiatory and decisive way. Conflict frequently brings out the best in each of us as long as we are developmentally ready for the challenge.

As noted earlier by Ron and Grace, the key to resolving the issues of the storming stage is to manage conflict, not eliminate it. Unmanaged conflict becomes chaos that will create a barrier to the further development of the group. The absence of conflict encourages apathy, which may be worse than chaos because it results in a lack of energy with which to work. Effective leaders are adept at introducing conflict into apathetic groups to increase the energy for change and at reframing chaotic groups to create a focused direction that all members can follow.

Dana (1984) suggested that group conflict can result in a number of costs that take a toll on both the people and the finances of today's organizations. The costs include wasted management time, reduced decision quality, loss of skilled employees, restructuring, employee sabotage, lowered motivation, lost work time, and health costs. Indeed, current trends in business and industry may be increasing the level of these costs. The increasing diversity of the workforce is bringing more value, attitude, and behavioral differences into the workplace. Participative management is giving more individuals supervisory responsibilities. With these changes, conflict is increasing.

Yet conflict is necessary for change. The use of teams and task forces is providing a natural setting for the group development process to unfold. With this process comes the storming stage and the potential for continued growth.

Trends in educational institutions follow those in business and industry. The challenge of developing a more skillful and adaptable workforce rests on the abilities of our schools to graduate students with the ability to learn. The skills needed in the global marketplace mostly involve communications, computers, and interpersonal relations, including skills in conflict management. We are in the age of information, and creating learning organizations is fast becoming the preferred survival strategy.

Peters (1987) encouraged thriving on chaos and noted that the core paradox that leaders at all levels must face is the need to foster internal stability in order to encourage change. He stressed a view of leadership that establishes direction by developing an inspiring vision, managing by example, and practicing visible management; that empowers people by increased listening, deferring to the front line, delegating, reducing bureaucracy, and increasing horizontal management; and that embraces the process of change. In essence, success will come to those who thrive on chaos and learn how to manage conflict effectively.
Peters (1987) posited nine tips for simultaneously creating stability and instability:

* Be out and about (management by walking around).
* Demand empiricism (have everybody evaluate everything).
* Listen (institute listening forums and encourage sharing).
* Laud failure (test fast, fail fast, adjust fast).
* Proclaim speedy horizontal action taking (involve multiple functions).
* Define common denominators (make successful group efforts visible).
* Let customers teach (learn from those you serve).
* Make the workplace fun (take pleasure in successes and failure alike).
* Promote those who deal best with paradox (reward change).

In addition, he suggested that leaders organize as much as possible around teams and that the self-managing team should become the basic organizational building block. Understanding group development theory is critical for putting these ideas into practice.

Although the storming stage is the expected venue for conflict, it will occur in other stages as well. Certainly, some conflict is involved in getting started and in resolving dependency issues during the forming stage. It occurs in the forming stage as procedures and standards are developed and communication is emphasized. The interdependence of the problem-solving, performing stage is not without conflict. Finally, closing down projects and groups creates some conflict during the adjourning stage.

THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT

As a group gets oriented and dependency upon the leader decreases, an atmosphere of counter-dependency begins to surface (Bennis & Shepard, 1956). Conflict will not always be loud and obvious with illogical ideas and irrational emotions taking center stage. Frequently, it will present itself as differences of opinions, as members presenting a variety of alternatives or choices, or as members suggesting different opportunities for taking action. All of these offer positive possibilities. Sometimes conflict will be subtle, quiet, and hardly noticeable. Identifying conflict of this type involves observing nonverbal behavior, communication patterns, and unmet human needs. If left unattended, such conflict will smolder and eventually create feelings of resentment and a behavior pattern best described as "good old-fashioned" stubbornness.

Conflicts may be classified as involving behaviors, attitudes, or values. Behavioral conflicts have been described as approach-approach, avoidance-avoidance, or approach-
avoidance in reference to a specific goal (Lewin, 1951). The approach-approach conflict involves two or more positive goals. Only one of the goals is attainable at a given point in time, as movement toward it is movement away from the other goal(s). The choice of a college major, a marriage partner, a vacation site, or a movie involves this type of conflict.

The avoidance-avoidance conflict represents the opposite dilemma. One must choose among a number of negative outcomes. Taking the lesser of two evils is the end result. The prospective employee who has to choose an entry-level job from among several in the company when he or she really wants a higher level position and the teenager who must choose among several punishment options for staying out too late are faced with this type of conflict.

The approach-avoidance conflict occurs when choices contain both positive and negative components. The single approach-avoidance conflict involves deciding whether to approach a goal with a positive-negative mixture; the double approach-avoidance conflict involves more than one mixture choice. Deciding whether to eat at one's first choice of restaurants when it will be necessary to stand in line for an hour is an example of the former; deciding on a job offer or college to attend is an example of the latter.

Attitude conflicts occur between individuals with different personalities and may involve the way in which events are perceived and are evaluated. Such differences lead to misinterpretations, which may result in defensiveness, misunderstandings, or feelings of being rejected, devalued, or stereotyped. These added complications increase the complexity of the situation and heighten the emotional climate within which the conflict occurs. Issues of control and influence are frequently central to personality conflicts.

Value conflicts are more deeply rooted than other types of conflicts and often come to light in decisions about lifestyle and work style. Our values are not altered as easily or as quickly as are our attitudes or behaviors. In fact, core values that are formed in childhood are quite resistant to change and persist into our adult life. Making a choice between a value that has a negative connotation and one with a positive connotation is relatively easy. Being honest versus dishonest, acting lazy versus being ambitious, and feeling sincere versus feeling insincere are typical examples. Selecting among a number of positive values in a given situation is much more difficult. Should one choose honesty, ambitiousness, or sincerity? We have already chosen most of our values by the time we leave childhood. The real challenge is in prioritizing our values and in dealing with the conflict that comes when we interact with other individuals who hold similar values to ours but have prioritized them in a different manner. In addition, changing situations can create changes in the prioritization of a value set.

**CONFLICT AND LEADERSHIP**

Conflict and leadership are inseparable (Burns, 1978). As conflict increases, the need for effective leadership increases (Kormanski, 1982). Effective leadership within conflict situations mandates both knowledge of and skill in conflict management techniques. The
group leader should acknowledge conflict and share the positive benefits that can be derived from it.

Much of leadership involves influencing and controlling change. As our environment becomes more complex and involves increased interpersonal interactions, individual effort has less impact (Kormanski & Mozenter, 1987). Group effort is fast becoming the preferred strategy for managing change and teamwork the preferred process. Both rely heavily on group development theory as a basis upon which to build implementation efforts. Education can learn from business and vice versa. Seeing similar problems in a different setting will often provide the necessary perspective for developing innovative solutions.

Ohme (1977) offered a law of institutional change that suggests that it is not the merit of the plan but the right combination of leadership and member involvement that determines successful outcomes. Such a working relationship is best accomplished through participative management, but only after group members have had some appropriate experience and training. When an organization is willing to make the investment necessary to provide these opportunities to their employees, a new atmosphere surrounding the workplace is possible. As stated by Rosebeth Moss Kanter (1983), "After years of telling corporate citizens to trust the system, many organizations must relearn instead to trust their people" (p. 18).

Day and Roth (1980) offered the following seven methodological assumptions for effectively managing change within an organization:

* Starting at points of readiness
* Using a bottom-up, top-down approach
* Making creative use of bureaucracy
* Viewing crisis as opportunity
* Having a clear image of ideal change
* Espousing the attitude of doing things better, not perfectly
* Having a "we can muddle through" philosophy

Strategies that have proven useful as interventions include

* using ad hoc task forces,
* mixing mandated change with creative input,
* using crisis to further change,
* scanning the system for small trouble spots,

* maintaining a holistic policy,

* conceptualizing major efforts as projects, and

* involving everyone in the change process.

People resist change only when it is imposed (Burke & Church, 1992). Highly involving those who are most affected by the change in the planning process reduces resistance and improves the implementation of the plan (Bennis, 1990). Commitment and ownership are powerful sources of motivation. Ownership in team projects demands a high level of maturity from everyone involved (DePree, 1989).

Leadership can be transactional or transformational. Transactional leadership manages conflict while transformational leadership builds both morale and maturity. The need for both is obvious. The former addresses the challenges of the present; the latter influences the future. DePree (1992) has suggested that we too often focus only on what we need to do and neglect what we need to be.

Visioning and empowerment are critical skills for leaders (Block, 1987). Both represent higher level motivation needs for individuals and groups. Providing opportunities for individuals and groups to fulfill these needs is a major task of leadership (Kormanski, 1994). Effective leaders use the change process and conflict as opportunity for both individual and group development. Both task accomplishment and quality relationships are important goals. Visioning provides the direction and meaning. Empowerment leads to a motivated group of achievers.

The principles of transactional and transformational leadership are reflected in the following description of a seminar for a group of small business owners interested in initiating strategic planning in their companies. Meeting monthly, this group was composed of owners of a variety of community firms involved in communications, food service, engineering, transportation, health care, consulting, scientific research, personnel, and real estate. They quickly identified the rapidity of change in the workplace as a critical concern that resulted in frequent conflicts.

The consensus viewpoint was that as the speed and intensity of change increased, the following dynamics were evident for their employees:

* They became less competent, less confident, and more uncomfortable.

* They were at different readiness levels to handle changes.

* They did not think they had adequate resources.

* They focused upon what they would have to give up.
* They reacted with limited creativity and reduced risk taking.
* They gradually increased their resistance and frustration to anything new.
* They acted in a reactionary manner rather than looking to the future.
* They could handle only so much change at one time.
* They lacked insight and understanding of change dynamics.
* They reverted to previous behavior patterns when the pressure to change was reduced.

The major conflict for the owners was in balancing attention to the current crisis and attention to the future of the business. Furthermore, the business owners did not see themselves as having time to do both. Therefore, they postponed the latter until they could gain control of the former. Before this group began to meet they rarely gave any substantial time or effort to future planning.

The need for strategic planning and employee involvement in the process became apparent to the owners as the seminar presenters described how successful organizations were profiting from this endeavor. The owners were still concerned, however, that the small size of their businesses and the low motivation level of their few employees were hindrances.

They would need both transactional and transformational leadership to successfully implement strategic planning. Employee involvement would be essential. Creating and sharing a vision would be critical. The use of the current conflict as an opportunity for empowering employees and fostering organizational growth was seen as a major goal. The following strategies were developed to achieve this desired outcome:

* Publicly commit to the strategic planning process.
* Build a small but diverse strategic planning team.
* Create opportunities for all members of the organization to participate by using surveys, focus groups, forums, training events, regular meetings, and interviews to gather data.
* Demonstrate how mission, values, and vision are being used in the organization.
* Establish three to five strategic goals along with related strategies and measurable objectives (critical success indicators).
* Measure progress regularly and publish results.
* Make sure the strategic plan is data driven.
* Provide regular feedback and updates about the strategic planning process.

* Reward participation and contributions.

* Model strategic thinking and transformational leadership qualities.

The final and most challenging strategy was to establish a regular meeting time for the strategic planning team.

**MANAGING CHANGE**

The choice by team leaders to influence change is a key component of group growth and development. Team leaders foster change by providing direction and maintaining commitment among the members. Thinking strategically enhances the process of managing change by encouraging a balance between attention to the present (operational issues) and focus on the future (strategic issues).

To complicate matters, issues are not either/or entities but fall somewhere along the continuum between being operational and being strategic. Furthermore, issues are not static; they are typically moving in a developmental direction (from strategic to operational). Effective leaders and teams that function successfully as change agents are able to differentiate and manage multiple issues of change within their organization.

Strategic planning is a viable method for managing change in organizations. It is used to help those in leadership roles think and act more decisively about the organization's future. Thus, the most important desired outcome of this critical intervention is to create strategic planners, not simply to create a strategic plan. Thinking strategically is the essential process (Kormanski, 1994). The plan that is developed represents the outcome of that process.

Although the paradigm once existed that permanent solutions could be developed for temporary problems, that paradigm has been changed radically (Kormanski, 1994; Schein, 1985). Indeed, Peter Senge (1990) has suggested that the solutions of yesterday are frequently the problems of today. The current belief is that there are permanent problems in need of temporary solutions. With time, temporary solutions lose their effectiveness and begin to contribute to the problem. A new temporary solution is required that is more appropriate for the problem's new characteristics.

The following example illustrates this paradigm shift. When personal computers were introduced into a worksite to increase employee efficiency and effectiveness, the unit head viewed the computers as a permanent solution to the temporary problem of work overload and the resultant stress on employees. However, the computers necessitated set-up time, training, continuous upgrades, and more training. The company hierarchy increased work standards using the rationale that technology had been improved and expressed a need for a return on investment of costs. In addition, the everyday challenges of the new technology created a new set of problems that added stress to the employees.
and required assigning one of them, who had already developed some computer skills, to
the function of coaching the others. This responsibility took time away from aspects of
her regular job, and others had to be assigned to help in those areas. Thus, more
temporary solutions were needed to address what is best considered a permanent
problem--work overload and employee stress--for it will surface again when the new
solutions wear out.

Another example of this paradigm shift concerns the job search following educational
graduation. In the past, the job search was viewed as a temporary problem for many; the
initial job was a permanent solution. Today, increases in company downsizing, in small
business ownership, in part-time employment, in working at home, and related career
dynamics have resulted in the job search being viewed as a permanent problem, even for
those who have a job (Barker, 1992). Job and career changes are increasing in number
both within and between organizations, as are the number of individuals who choose to
start their own businesses. Job search strategies have become temporary solutions for a
permanent problem.

Strategic thinking encourages the development of multiple solutions that can be stacked
in a timeline much like commercial airplanes are arranged for takeoff and landing at
major airports. As one solution loses its impact, the next one is adapted and applied. This
process is enhanced by a team approach involving a variety of perspectives from creative
individuals who can develop numerous integrative solutions.

Following planning, action must occur. Thus, for the effective leader, decision making
must include action. Too often the heightened enthusiasm and attention to detail that
characterize the planning phase of a project are lost when implementation begins. This is
particularly true when planners delegate plans to implementers who have had limited
involvement in the planning.

Since no one can do everything at once, effective leaders prioritize items based on needs
and resources. They are not paralyzed by being overwhelmed with multiple demands for
action. Decisive action by leaders also involves an element of risk taking. David
McClelland (1961) described achievement-motivated individuals as those who take
moderate risks that result in a 40-60% chance of success. A corollary to moderate risk
taking is the willingness by superiors to accept modest failures and to view failure as a
valuable learning experience. Strategic thinking encourages leaders to use both successful
and unsuccessful action to promote learning.

No one can predict the future, but effective leaders can influence it. The skill of visioning
involves building an ideal scenario for the organization at some point in the future.
Whereas a mission is fairly stable over time, a vision is in a constant state of change. The
vision becomes more clear, concrete, and specific as one moves from the present into the
future. A hiker climbing a series of mountains provides an appropriate analogy. As the
hiker climbs the first mountain in the chain, she makes decisions regarding her specific
pathway and use of energy. A map provides some clues. As she ascends each other
mountain in the chain, she adds data to her hiking experience that influences the continuous building of her vision of what she hopes to achieve as she hikes along.

Some of the most difficult but important decisions are made today but will not impact the organization until tomorrow. These decisions are major building blocks for the future scenario. Senge (1990) noted that even though such changes may be small, they can produce big results. Further, those areas of the highest leverage may often be the least obvious. Strategic thinking requires a visionary perspective that involves taking risks that are challenging and realistic. It provides direction and motivation.

Visionary champions are essential if the vision is to be carried throughout the organization. Maslow's (1971) description of self-actualized people can be summarized as those who live their values. True champions of strategic thinking become the vision. They are what they believe. These individuals position themselves where the strategic planning action is and continuously demonstrate the congruency among values, attitudes, and behaviors.

When asked about his phenomenal success as a hockey player, Wayne Gretsky (1993) responded that his objective is to skate to where the puck will be. Like many exceptional athletes, he arrives before the action begins and is able to secure a position of leverage and influence. Strategic thinking by the organizational leadership has the potential to give the organization this same advantage. Teams that can apply the concepts of strategic thinking and implement visions are powerful change agents.

MORE GROUP DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

Grace, Alex, Irma, and Ron discussed how conflict appeared to affect their individual groups. Grace noted that conflict had been crucial to the development of all of their teams. Her parent involvement team appeared to be finally managing its conflict. Even the students had become active. Volunteer parent groups were now participating in a variety of programs throughout the school district. Grace found that she still had to provide a lot of support and encouragement. A few minor conflicts still surfaced but were quickly managed. Grace felt more confident about her own understanding of group dynamics and skills as a team facilitator.

Alex spoke about his continuous quality improvement team and how their project was almost completed. He was delegating the few remaining tasks and had already begun to plan a celebration activity. Organizational management had not only praised the quality of the project but were extremely pleased with the working relationships among Alex's staff. He was convinced that the early conflicts were what brought the team together and created a sense of belonging and cohesion.

Irma reported on her state counseling conference. It had been both a professional and a financial success. Like Alex, she saw the early conflicts as building commitment and clarity among the team members. A recent party celebrated the final accounting report, which had resulted in an excellent profit for the state counseling association.
Ron reiterated that change and conflict were constantly intertwined and that managing conflict was a major contributor to influencing change. The disagreements concerning prioritizing issues, setting realistic goals, and how to best measure progress were particularly emotional and required an extended period of time to resolve. He asked the other team members what each of them did, specifically, to manage conflicts in their individual teams. Was there a strategy that worked best?

Grace responded to Ron's question about a preferred strategy for managing conflict by describing her use of authority with her parent involvement team. With so many team members and so little time, she instituted democratic voting as a means of determining the majority opinion. At times, the team also used expert authority, and when Grace had to make an important decision between meetings she used her personal authority.

Alex's favorite strategy was compromise. His continuous quality improvement team frequently had limited resources, and compromise allowed everyone to win a little. He admitted to enjoying the bargaining process that created the final outcome. Compromise was not the only strategy used for managing change, but for Alex it was the most exciting.

Irma's concern for keeping everyone happy resulted in her using consensus most of the time. Her state counseling conference committee was small, and seeking agreement from all was essential. This integrative approach took time but provided a highly supportive climate.

Ron noted that his strategic planning team had used all of these strategies plus a few more. None was a strong favorite of his, but the decision to use each was based upon situational variables. "At times," he said, "suppression of one's own preference and willingness to go along with another choice made sense; at other times, simply withdrawing from the conflict seemed to work best."

The team members reached a consensus by agreeing that situational variables were critical, and each volunteered to investigate one of the strategies. The results were to be mailed to each member prior to the next meeting. Grace, Alex, and Irma chose their favorite strategies, which were authority, compromise, and consensus. Ron consented to examine suppression and withdrawal as strategies. Their summaries follow.

**AUTHORITY AS A STRATEGY**

The use of authority involves utilizing power to influence attitudes, behavior, or both. Basic sources of power include the ability to reward and punish (reward and coercive powers); official regulations, contracts, and positions (legitimate power); competence (expert power); personality (referent power); relationships (connective power); and knowledge (information power). These seven sources are often divided into the categories of position power and personal power (Machiavelli, 1952). Position power includes the reward, coercive, legitimate, and connective types; personal power consists of the referent, informational, and expert types (French & Raven, 1959; Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979).
People often think of authority as being held by one individual or by a small group. Democratic voting, however, is nothing less than the authority of the majority. Authority is used most advantageously in crisis situations with short time constraints and in situations in which the involved parties are unable to find common areas of agreement (Kormanski, 1982). Authority often becomes the preferred choice when other techniques do not resolve the conflict or when others are incompetent. It is also a useful strategy when an unpopular decision needs to be made and may be required when decisions that are critical to the survival of the organization are involved. The major disadvantage of authority is that it creates win-lose situations, and losers do not work as hard as winners to implement the chosen alternative. In addition, the use of authority can foster the growth of resentment and feelings of powerlessness if used too frequently. It also promotes dependency. Arbitration is a typical example of the use of authority. Some other examples follow.

Seventy percent of the students in a career guidance class had been completing their weekly assignments 1 to 2 days late. The instructor, Mark, stressed the importance of completing assignments on time. Now, 40% of the assignments were coming in late. An authority strategy would be appropriate. Mark had set a specific standard, but many of the students were not following through in a competent manner. A decision to deduct points would be appropriate.

The committee appointed to arrange a retirement dinner for an unpopular but loyal employee had not competed its task by the set deadline. The chairperson and one of the three members of the committee were currently on vacation, leaving another committee member, Jane, in charge. Even though this event would likely be unpopular, Jane's commitment to the system compelled her to make an authoritative intervention to meet the deadline and follow through with the event.

As a result of a recent transfer and the notification that the transferee's previous position would not be filled, Stan needed to realign work responsibilities in the guidance department. An organizational value stressed attention to student needs, and Stan wanted to avoid gaps of service. No one on his staff wanted the added duties or the responsibility for the decision of who should acquire these duties. Start used his authority, after collecting input from each staff person, to quickly create a realignment of duties. He stressed to those involved the crucial nature and timing of the decision to ensure organizational survival.

The use of authority always requires follow-up monitoring by leadership. Leaders must review reactions by losers, the presence of dependency behaviors, and any increases in emotions to assess their impact and the need for additional leadership interventions. The wise use of power can be very helpful in such instances. Being able to balance concern for the individual and concern for the organization as well as make decisions that are fair, logical, and consider the impact on all people involved is a challenge for any leader.
COMPROMISE AS A STRATEGY

The use of compromise involves each individual or group giving up a little and obtaining some of what it wants to achieve resolution of the conflict. This strategy ensures that everyone wins. The creation of win-win sets fosters cooperative behavior and promotes collaborative learning among team members. Individuals are encouraged to identify preferences and build solutions on the basis of combinations of selected priorities. Occurrences of win-lose sets are reduced, and lose-lose sets are eliminated (Kormanski, 1982).

The use of compromise behavior reflects a political model of group interaction and leadership (Baldridge, 1971). Conflicting groups realize that when there are limitations of time, personnel, or materials, solutions must be constructed that provide for equal and just distribution of the limited commodities. In groups, individuals learn to collaborate together and be satisfied with achieving team goals instead of personal goals. Leaders and facilitators must monitor both individual and group demands to ensure that wants are realistic and not increased in anticipation of a compromise solution.

One disadvantage to this approach is that because the chosen solution is not necessarily the best or second best choice but the only one for which there was agreement, the eventual action could be weak or ineffective. Another disadvantage is that those in conflict may begin to inflate their wants and demands in future situations. The advantages are that this approach can be used to delay or forgo win-lose situations; it is useful when the power between parties is equal; and it is extremely effective in situations in which resources are limited (Kormanski, 1982). Negotiation is typically involved in compromise; however, a third party is often needed to direct the process. Examples of compromise follow.

Two employees have requested the same 2-week vacation period. They are the only employees trained to carry out an essential task. Some type of compromise is needed. Possible solutions where each employee would win a little include each employee selecting one of the two weeks and the employees alternating the 2-week period each year.

Two groups of support staff have identified a number of undesirable tasks they are currently performing that they think the other group should be performing. The groups, which have equal power, continue to complain about having to complete the tasks themselves. A compromise strategy would delineate the task responsibilities and standards for each group. With such a strategy, the undesirable tasks could be divided in a fair and just manner.

Budget requests for all departments in an institution had to be cut for the past 2 years. Preparation for this year's budget has begun, and rumors are flying that some departments are inflating their needs in order to acquire more financial resources. A compromise strategy that limits the amount or the percentage of increase over the current year's budget request would be in order.
In all of these examples, compromise was used to create win-win sets when resources were limited and power was equal. Constant vigilance is required, however, to combat inflation attempts as well as to ascertain if the selected alternative is strong enough to be effective. Sometimes compromises result in the weakest choice because of the need to reach agreement. As has been noted, a third party is often needed to conduct the negotiations.

**CONSENSUS AS A STRATEGY**

The consensus approach is based on the idea of seeking a solution with which everyone can live. Each individual involved in the conflict is encouraged to take part in problem solving—to reexamine the situation, identify points of agreement, and help come up with new alternatives. The conflicting parties should be able to accept group decisions on the basis of logic and feasibility (Hall, 1971). Although complete unanimity is preferred, total consensus is difficult to reach and may not always be achieved.

Weisbord (1992) advocated seeking common ground, a strategy similar to consensus. In this strategy the team members identify consensus possibilities and specific topics for which consensus is currently not possible. The team then seeks consensus for the topics for which agreement is possible and agrees to postpone work on those topics for which consensus is not possible until a later time. The rapidity of change suggests that enough significant variables will be altered at some point in the future that consensus may eventually be achieved for topics that are presently unresolvable.

Consensus seeking is a popular technique of group leaders. This integrative technique is frequently chosen to teach and develop channels for open communication and to build cohesiveness and unity within the group. Additional techniques that are integrative in nature include brainstorming, the nominal group process, force field analysis, role-playing, and related problem-solving methods (Kormanski, 1982).

A disadvantage to integration is that it is time consuming. In addition, the conflicting individuals may be unwilling to put team or organizational goals before personal goals. The advantages of this approach include the identification of new and creative solutions as well as the building of team cohesiveness and commitment. Consensus, like compromise, is a way to produce a win-win outcome. Mediation is a typical example of consensus. Other examples follow.

At a recent staff meeting, two individuals disagreed over how written reports should be filed. One individual thought each department should maintain its own file for easy access. The other individual thought that by maintaining a central file, expenses could be reduced and all materials would be kept together. A consensus strategy could be used to help the individuals apply problem solving to their obvious impasse. The locus would be on creating new alternatives to the current dilemma that both individuals could accept.

A group representing 40% of the staff of an organization requested that during the summer, the office be opened an hour early so that employees could have more evening
time at home. They were certain others would support their idea. One employee knew for sure that at least one department would not support the idea and mentioned that fact. A vote was suggested. Integration, however, would be a better strategy. Voting results in two factions, winners and losers, and losers do not work as diligently as winners to implement the voted-upon decision. Furthermore, if the losing faction is substantial (30% or more), it can erode morale and commitment to current and future goals.

In another organization, it had become obvious that the department copy machine was being used for a variety of personal reasons including copying obscene jokes. As each week passed, the behavior increased and was noticeable by staff and clients. A consensus strategy confronted the situation and promoted open communication. Trust was imperative. With today's concern for organizational values, public image, and customer service, the behavior employees exhibit during the workday communicates the degree of professionalism represented by a particular office or department. To manage conflict involving employee behavior, group commitment is needed. In the current scenario, the leader could not provide the time that would be needed for authoritative supervision; compromises were not acceptable; the problem behavior was increasing, thus ruling out suppression; and the matter was too important for withdrawal to be a possibility. All department members needed to be involved in establishing a policy and monitoring its implementation. Consensus would be the preferred strategy.

In all of these examples the emphasis was upon including those involved in the conflict in the problem-solving process. The strategy breaks down when there is not enough time for the process to be completed. Hidden agendas and placing personal goals above organizational goals hinder the process. Finally, because consensus is a communicative strategy that encourages flexibility and creativity, it does not work with dull, rigid people.

SUPPRESSION AS A STRATEGY

The suppression strategy consists of the leader or facilitator giving the conflict issue less attention, thus creating a climate that does not feed the growth of the conflict. Emotions are kept under control by an active dialogue that emphasizes empathic understanding. The use of suppression allows the facilitator time to build a more supportive climate before using consensus, compromise, or authority interventions. This strategy is commonly used for issues that are beyond the influence of the team as well as for those of lesser importance that may soon be forgotten. A budget decision based upon federal regulations is an example of the former; the decision to have employees sit alphabetically at staff meetings to ensure equal participation is an example of the latter.

Sometimes, the relationship with the team member involved in a conflict issue is more important than the issue. The relationship factor takes priority over the task. Because of friendship, respect, esteem, trust, or recognized competence, the conflict issue receives minimal concern. A group leader makes a decision to strengthen the self-concept of the individual rather than ensure the completion of a specific task. For similar reasons, we often choose to engage in a disliked activity because a friend wants our help (Kormanski, 1982).
Suppression is most effective when the issue is beyond the control of the group, an emotional cooling down period is needed, or an important relationship is involved in the conflict. The disadvantages to using this strategy include the fact that the conflict issue may continue to smolder and may erupt later. In addition, by using suppression frequently, one could be viewed as being weak and giving in to the opposition. The following are examples of the suppression strategy.

Two complaints have appeared in the suggestion box regarding gossip and rumor-spreading behavior by school staff. Both complaints were signed and expressed concern for the feelings of others. Talking with the individuals who wrote the complaints and using a suppression strategy would be most appropriate. This strategy would provide an opportunity to put emotions into perspective and to assess how widespread the issue is.

Few of the staff of a Midwest organization attended the office's Fourth of July picnic at Sam's house last year. However, Sam, who has been with the organization for 25 years, asked if he could plan and host the picnic again this year. A few employees have already suggested that the event be canceled. Since attendance is not mandatory and individuals are not expected to attend, suppression would be an appropriate strategy. Sam is a loyal employee and enjoys hosting this event. For the office manager, the issue is not as important as the relationship. Even though she does not see a lot of value in the affair, she decides to support Sam in his efforts. In addition, she will probably attend what will likely be a very dull picnic because she likes Sam. She might even offer him a few suggestions to liven up this year's picnic.

Both of these situations involve important relationships and/or issues that do not appear significant but could become so quickly. The suppression strategy allows the leader to be part of the issue and gives the leader access to information. Because the leader is not taking direct action, however, use of this strategy may cause him or her to appear to be weak and ineffective.

WITHDRAWAL AS A STRATEGY

This strategy involves the team leader remaining at a distance or actually moving away from the conflict. He or she postpones involvement and selects a passive position. By not pushing leader involvement, the individual allows conflicts to be resolved naturally by the team members. Use of this strategy reduces the possibility of excessive leader influence. The leader can use this time of noninvolvement for observation and data collection. By postponing an intervention, the leader lessens his or her impulse to join one of the conflicting sides.

Situations most appropriate for withdrawal include those in which critical information is lacking, the leader is powerless, the issue is unimportant, others are more competent at resolving the issue than the leader is, and the leader does not wish to choose sides. There must be adequate time to implement this strategy. In addition to the time needed for the group members to resolve the conflict, there must be time for the leader to implement one of the other strategies should withdrawal not prove effective (Kormanski, 1982).
disadvantages of this approach are that it cannot be used in a crisis situation; the leader gives up his or her opportunity for legitimate action, may be perceived as a failure, and loses his or her access to firsthand information; and important conflicts may grow into large, serious ones. The examples that follow illustrate the withdrawal strategy.

A heated argument in the lounge has resulted in damage to the coffee machine. Both parties involved blame each other. No witnesses have volunteered additional information. The coffee machine was purchased by volunteer contributions from the staff. Withdrawal would be an appropriate strategy. From a leadership perspective, the leader is missing critical information and would want to avoid choosing sides.

Two departments have requested budget increases for supplies and ask for the department head, Maria, to support them. A finance officer, not Maria, will make the decision. Maria is aware that increasing funds for one group will result in decreases in funds for all others, as the total budget figure for supplies is set. Using the withdrawal strategy would be Maria's best choice. She does not have the power to make the budget decision, and it is to her advantage to not choose sides.

In both of these situations, the leader does not have problem ownership, and neither situation presents a dire crisis. The leader may, however, be perceived as a failure for not choosing to take action, and the issues could grow into more serious situations. If withdrawal does not work, the leader could reenter the conflict and implement a different strategy at some future time.

**DISCUSSION OF CONFLICT STRATEGIES**

Irma, Ron, Grace, and Alex engaged in a lively and insightful discussion about the conflict management strategies the team members had summarized. Irma agreed to put their ideas into written form, adding some appropriate references. Her summary concludes this article.

Ron suggested that since effective leadership was mentioned so frequently in their discussion of conflict and change, this might be an appropriate topic for the next team meeting. Grace agreed to coordinate the topic selection, and Alex volunteered to secure a meeting facility. Irma commented on how easily and with minimal conflict the team had made these arrangements. They hope to continue working toward their project goal with the same kind of teamwork.

**CHOOSING A STRATEGY: A SUMMARY**

The strategies for conflict management can be arranged in a hierarchy with authority at the lowest and most powerful level followed by compromise, consensus, suppression, and withdrawal. This hierarchy of conflict management strategies and a set of contingencies for choosing an appropriate strategy for a specific conflict are presented in Table 1. These contingency guidelines provide assessment criteria for conducting a situational analysis.
The leader begins by assessing the situation in which the conflict is occurring. The ability to identify key parameters and priorities is critical to the leadership role. Because each strategy has both advantages and disadvantages, selection is situational. Emphasis should be given to such situational variables as the task to be accomplished, the readiness of the team, and the personalities of the leader and team members. Skill in discrimination is essential for making effective choices. Personal style and theoretical orientation will determine the manner in which the leader uses the understanding and discriminating skills within a team setting. Adherence to theories that are more structured will require teaching or modeling; less structured approaches are better matched with nondirective, self-discovery methods.

The hierarchical nature of the conflict management strategies can be drawn upon to provide a backup or secondary strategy (Kormanski, 1982; Kottler, 1993). If withdrawal is chosen and proves ineffective, the other four choices remain and can be chosen subsequently. If suppression is chosen and fails to work, there are still three additional alternatives. Authority becomes the ultimate choice of last resort. With its use, the other choices are eliminated.

Consideration of the contingencies presented in Table 1 in choosing a conflict management strategy will increase the likelihood of a positive outcome. Choosing a strategy for the wrong reason will eventually compound the conflict situation and make it more difficult to manage. Some examples of the wrong reasons for choosing a strategy follow. Withdrawal could be chosen to avoid disagreements and protect the self from a perceived emotional battle. Suppression could be used to protect or patronize others. Consensus might be selected to buy time and keep others who are competent from making a decision. Compromise might be opted to protect against losses. Authority could be utilized to maintain a high ego involvement for the decision maker. All of these reasons are inappropriate.

In addition to being knowledgeable about conflict and conflict management strategies, the leader must develop the intervention skills of using and combining the strategies for their successful implementation. Successful team leadership encourages conflict and manages it effectively. This combination of dynamic leadership and healthy conflict are prerequisites for a growing, productive group (Kormanski, 1982).
REFERENCES


TABLE 1
Conflict Management Strategies and Contingencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred Strategy</th>
<th>Use When (Advantages)</th>
<th>But Be Aware That (Disadvantages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>Choosing sides is to be avoided. Others are competent for dealing with the crisis. Critical information is missing. You, as the leader, are powerless. The issue is unimportant.</td>
<td>It cannot be used in a crisis. Legitimate action is no longer possible. Failure is perceived. Access to information ceases. The issue may grow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppression</td>
<td>A relationship is important. A cooling down period is needed. The issue is outside the team.</td>
<td>You, as the leader, appear weak. The issue may intensify.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensus</td>
<td>Team commitment is needed. Promoting open</td>
<td>More time is needed. Team goals must be put</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chuck Kormanski is a business and educational consultant. He is frequently invited to conduct workshops and seminars around the country. He spent 28 years at Penn State University, Altoona, and now teaches part-time for the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. This article is adapted from The Team: Explorations in Group Process by Chuck Kormanski and published by Love Publishing Company.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication and trust</th>
<th>first.</th>
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<tr>
<td>is desired.</td>
<td>It does not work with rigid, dull people.</td>
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<td>New alternatives are</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>needed.</td>
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<td>Problem solving is</td>
<td></td>
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<td>needed.</td>
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**Compromise**
- Resources are limited.
- A win-win set is desired.
- Power is equal.

**Authority**
- Time is limited (crisis).
- A deadlock persists.
- Others are incompetent for dealing with the crisis.
- An unpopular decision needs to be made.
- Survival of the organization is critical.

**Note:** Adapted from C. L. Kormanski (1982), "Leadership Strategies for Managing Conflict," Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 7(2),