

Unit 4 – Key skills and behaviours



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Learning Objectives

To gain an understanding of:

- The importance of effective teamwork
- The key skills and behaviours required to be an effective project controller
- How to build relationships with other project professionals
- How to conduct effective meetings
- How to deal with conflict and difficult working relationships

Effective Teamwork

It is of vital importance if you want your project to succeed that you work together as a team.

You can ensure that all of your planning is of the highest standard but if the project team does not work together efficiently and effectively your project is likely to fail.

Successful Teams have....

1. Common Objectives
2. Role Identity
3. Leadership
4. Commitment
5. Communication
6. Enjoyment
7. Involvement
8. Mutual Trust
9. Supportive
10. Well Trained



Exploring the common factors needed for a successful team, regardless of the size of the team or its objectives will possess common factors:

1. **Common objectives.** Each member will know what the objectives are and what they need to do to achieve them.
2. **Role identity.** Each member of the team will have a specific role to play. This ensures that no tasks are left undone
3. **Good leadership.** Every successful team will have a good leader who is recognised as such and accepted and respected by the team members.
4. **Commitment.** Everyone is totally committed to reaching the goals and is willing to forego any personal objectives which may cause conflict.
5. **Communication.** The team members will talk to each other to exchange information, ask for and give help to their colleagues, encourage and motivate each other.
6. **Enjoyment.** It is noticeable that people involved in successful teams appear to be enjoying themselves.
7. **Involvement.** Everyone is totally involved all the time with nobody hanging around wondering what to do.
8. **Mutual trust.** It is vital that every member of the team trusts their colleagues. This is particularly important in terms of Health and Safety. If one person is at the top of

a high ladder it is vital that they can trust their team maps to hold it steady and not wander off for a tea break.

9. **Supportive.** Team members will help each other to reach the target. When one person has completed their particular job, they are willing to help others finish theirs.
10. **Well trained.** Everyone is fully trained to perform their tasks to the highest standards and trained in working as a team.

Benefits of Team Working

There are numerous benefits to working as a team, the following list is not exhaustive but offers a few key examples.

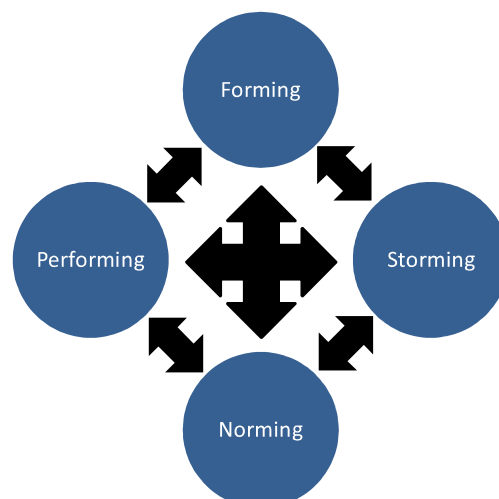
- It will allow you to coordinate individual effort, allowing you to tackle complex tasks.
- It will utilise the expertise and knowledge of everyone involved expertise and knowledge that might otherwise remain untapped.
- It will Improve and sustain motivation and confidence, so that team members feel supported and involved.
- It will encourage the synergy of ideas to solve problems and spark ideas.
- It will help improve communication.
- It will raise the level of individual and collective empowerment.
- It will support initiatives and change.

The Tuckman Model

In 1965 Dr Bruce Tuckman identified a group development model which had four clearly defined stages. It offers a helpful explanation of team development and behaviour.

It is important to note that the process is not simply a linear one, the team can slip back if the scope of the project changes or a new member joins.

The diagram below illustrates the non-linear nature of the model by the use of double ended arrows.



Group Development

Tuckman described the four distinct stages that a group can move through as it comes together and starts to operate. This process can be subconscious, although an understanding of the stages can help the group reach effectiveness more quickly and less painfully.

Stage 1: Forming

Individual behaviour is driven by a desire to be accepted by the others and avoid controversy or conflict. Serious issues and feelings are avoided, and people focus on being busy with routines, such as team organisation, who does what, when to meet, etc. But individuals are also gathering information and impressions - about each other, and about the scope of the task and how to approach it. This is a comfortable stage to be in, but the avoidance of conflict and threat means that not much actually gets done.

Stage 2: Storming

Individuals in the group can only remain nice to each other for so long, as important issues start to be addressed. Some people's patience will break early, and minor confrontations will arise that are quickly dealt with or glossed over. These may relate to the work of the group itself, or to roles and responsibilities within the group. Some will observe that it's good to be getting into the real issues, whilst others will wish to remain in the comfort and security of stage 1. Depending on the culture of the organisation and individuals, the conflict will be more or less suppressed, but it'll be there, under the surface. To deal with the conflict, individuals may feel they are winning or losing battles, and will look for structural clarity and rules to prevent the conflict persisting.

Stage 3: Norming

As Stage 2 evolves, the "rules of engagement" for the group become established, and the scope of the group's tasks or responsibilities is clear and agreed. Having had their arguments, they now understand each other better, and can appreciate each other's skills and experience. Individuals listen to each other, appreciate, and support each other, and are prepared to change pre-conceived views: they feel they are part of a cohesive, effective group. However, individuals have had to work hard to attain this stage and may resist any pressure to change - especially from the outside - for fear that the group will break up or revert to a storm.

Stage 4: Performing

Not all groups reach this stage, characterised by a state of interdependence and flexibility. Everyone knows each other well enough to be able to work together and trusts each other enough to allow independent activity. Roles and responsibilities change according to need in an almost seamless way. Group identity, loyalty and morale are all high, and everyone is equally task-orientated and people-orientated. This high degree of comfort means that all the energy of the group can be directed towards the task(s) in hand.

Building relationships

The project controller must build powerful and collaborative relationships with other project professionals and the wider stakeholders. Build trust requires concerted effort and time while losing it can be done very quickly therefore the project controller must both plan how to build these relationships and develop their own skills and behaviours.

When you have effective relationships with other professionals and team members, you are more likely to enjoy your day-to-day. Building relationships in the workplace is also important for career success. Not only do relationships with colleagues in the workplace assist with networking, but they can also offer you the guidance and encouragement you need to succeed in your role. Workplace relationships offer the following benefits:

- Increased satisfaction with your career
- Increased comfort with presentations and team meetings
- Improved productivity for all team members
- Moral support and assistance with meeting difficult timelines
- Higher retention rates

Good workplace relationships tend to have the following characteristics:

- **Trust:** The ability to trust your co-workers and the feeling that you can rely on them is an important characteristic when building a workplace relationship.
- **Acceptance:** Acceptance and understanding of one another and your role in the workplace relationship is an important element.
- **Team member:** Individuals who work well in a team setting, doing their fair share of the work and giving credit when it is due, tend to have stronger relationships.
- **Open communication:** Open communication is crucial to any relationship, including a workplace one. Encouraging open communication, asking questions and getting to know your co-workers is one of the first steps toward a working relationship.

The following list shows the key components in building relationships that will last:

- Understand your strengths and weaknesses
- Schedule time to develop relationships
- Ask questions and listen
- Show genuine interest others
- Offer assistance
- Know when to ask for assistance
- Appreciate each employee's role
- Keep your commitments
- Be present
- Be open and honest
- Add value in what you do and say

Effective Meetings

The importance of running effective meetings within the project environment cannot be understated. The diagram below lists six key elements that are vital for the successful outcome of your meetings.

The Golden Rules of Meetings

- ▣ *Run your meetings as you would have others run the meetings that you attend.*
- ▣ *Be prepared and ensure that all the participants can be as well.*
- ▣ *Stick to a schedule.*
- ▣ *Stay on topic.*
- ▣ *Don't hold unnecessary meetings.*
- ▣ *Wrap up meetings with a clear statement of the next steps and who is to take them.*



The key message here is that structure and discipline in meetings equals more effective meetings; and although the contents outlined above are largely 'common sense' they are rarely enforced.

Golden Rule #1: *Run your meetings as you would have others run the meetings that you attend.*

This is the most fundamental Golden Rule of Meeting Management. Running an effective meeting—or being a good meeting participant—is all about being considerate of others. All of the other Golden Rules of meeting management flow from this principle.

Golden Rule #2: *Be prepared and ensure that all the participants can be as well.*

Distribute the meeting agenda at least day before the meeting and make sure everyone has access to any relevant background materials. Participants, of course, have the obligation of reviewing the agenda and background materials and arriving at the meeting prepared. If the meeting organiser has not provided adequate information about the objectives of the meeting, the participants should take the initiative to ask. No one should arrive at a meeting not knowing why they are there—and what is supposed to be accomplished.

If there is nothing to put on the agenda, the organiser should ask him/herself whether there really needs to be a meeting.

Golden Rule #3: *Stick to a schedule.*

Start the meeting on time and end it on time (or even early). Starting on time requires discipline by the organiser and the participants and arriving late shows a lack of consideration for all those present who were at the meeting on time. If all participants

know that the organiser is going to start the meeting right on time, there is a much greater likelihood that everyone else will make the effort to be punctual.

Finishing in a timely manner is also crucial. If everyone agreed that the meeting would last an hour, the meeting should not run any longer than that.

Keeping the agenda realistic is important, of course. Finally, if only 20 minutes are required to accomplish the meeting objectives, the meeting should end after only 20 minutes. It would be a waste of everyone's time to let it go on any longer than that.

The time for which the meeting is scheduled is also important. Scheduling regular meetings at inconvenient times (e.g. after the end of the official work day) can have a very negative impact on morale.

Emergencies are a reality for most organisations and may necessitate meetings at odd times, but routine meetings should be scheduled at a time that is reasonably convenient for the participants.

Golden Rule #4: *Stay on topic.*

Most groups have at least one person who tends to go off on a tangent or tell stories during meetings. Whether this is the organiser or one of the participants, all meeting participants have the responsibility of gently guiding the meeting back to the substantive agenda items.

This should not be done at the expense of all levity, of course, as that is an important ingredient for esprit de corps. Also, storytelling can be very useful if it is being used deliberately as a coaching or teaching tool.

As a rule, however, someone needs to guide the discussion back to the agenda if the meeting becomes clearly off track.

Golden Rule #5: *Don't hold unnecessary meetings.*

Carefully assess how often routine meetings really need to be held. For example, if you have daily staff meetings, how productive are they?

Can they be held less frequently? Or, perhaps, can they be held standing up someplace and kept to a few minutes?

Staff meetings are crucial vehicles for maintaining good communication in the office, but it is important to find the right balance between good communication and productive uses of time.

Golden Rule #6: *Wrap up meetings with a clear statement of the next steps and who is to take them.*

If any decisions were made at the meeting (even if the decision was to "study the issue more") the meeting organiser should clearly summarise what needs to be done and who is going to do it.

If the organiser fails to do this, one of the participants needs to speak up and request clarification of the next steps. This is crucial. If the participants leave the meeting and no one is accountable for taking action on the decisions that were made, then the meeting will have been a waste of everyone's time.

Site Meetings

It is vitally important that you have an appreciation and understanding of the nature and conduct of site meetings and the contractual significance of communications between the parties.

Client Meetings

It is often necessary and sometimes essential to hold meeting with the Tenders to discuss the Contract. These are held at different stages of the Contract process as follows:

Pre-Enquiry

It is necessary to interview the proposed tenderer(s) to satisfy the Client that the Contractors are capable of carrying out the work involved to meet the client's requirements. It is imperative and an ethical requirement that all relevant information is given in an unambiguous manner to all those who are invited to tender.

The invitation to tender shall not be given to any tenderer who we do not intend to place a Contract with. This act could lead to tenderer demanding costs of tendering and /or legal action against the Client.

Pre-Contract

Following receipt of tenders and appraisal of the bids, both financial and technical, it may be necessary to invite the two or most competitive tender to discuss their tender submission. Subjects which might be raised are:

- Technical proposals made by the Contractor that form part of their tender.
- Alternative tender proposals submitted by the Contractor.
- Proposals for reducing tendered amounts or rates by changes in programme, specification or management.
- Additional or alternative management or constructional plant which could be committed.

Any recorded and approved detailed discussions that take place regarding technical, commercial, or contractual matters, which amend the original tender, shall be confirmed by the tender in writing.

Post Contract

During the execution stage of a Contract regular meetings are normally held with the Contractor and the notes of these meeting shall be taken and distributed to all present, and other relevant representatives.

At these meetings, items which affect the programme, scope of work, variations, and manpower, are often discussed and may have a bearing on the final cost or lead at a later stage to a Contractual claim.

Contractors should always be asked if they are experiencing delays, have any problems, need any information or drawings – the answers should always be recorded in the minutes.

Minutes of Meetings

It is essential that minutes of meetings are taken at all stages and that agreement to these minutes is sought.

At pre-Contract meetings the minutes may form part of the Contract documents and these should be signed as a true record by both a representative of the Client and the Contractor.

At post Contract stage minutes of meetings taken should be distributed and at the next meeting confirmation obtained from all parties that they are a true record of what took place and was said.

Minutes must be written by the Clients representative and not by the Contractor.

Care must be taken in the drafting of the minutes as to what was said, e.g., minutes will often contain a statement by the Contractor that he has been delayed for two weeks due to certain design may only be one minor part of the Contract with the rest of the Contract on or ahead of schedule.

If these types of comments are not elaborated on or challenged by the Client, then later these minutes may be used by the Contractor in a claim against the Client as evidence of delay.

Conflict Management

Regardless of how well the leader and the team develop and perform there will undoubtedly be instances of disagreement and conflict. These may be within the project team or with stakeholders and others outside of the team. Conflict can manifest itself in many different ways. At the highest level, disagreements can lead to the pursuit of remedies through legal channels. These normally arise as a result of contractual issues.

People

At a lower level, conflict within a team may need to be dealt with by the leader or manager using softer skills and techniques. He/she must recognise that the pressures associated with achieving quality objectives, will inevitably lead to conflict. It is **People** who will achieve these objectives for you, but **People** are complex and will require motivation and support. The detrimental aspects of conflict can be minimised, if the manager anticipates the potential conflicts and understands their determinants.

Conflict can arise from any of the following players:

- Managers
- Senior Management
- Client
- Team members
- Sub-contractors

Causes of Conflict

Potential causes of conflict are:

- Diversity of Disciplinary expertise.
- Task interdependency.
- Poor leadership by the project manager.
- Insufficient authority given to the project manager.
- Lack of Communication or an understanding of objectives.
- Lack of organisation structures and role ambiguity.
- Human emotion.
- The prospect of change.

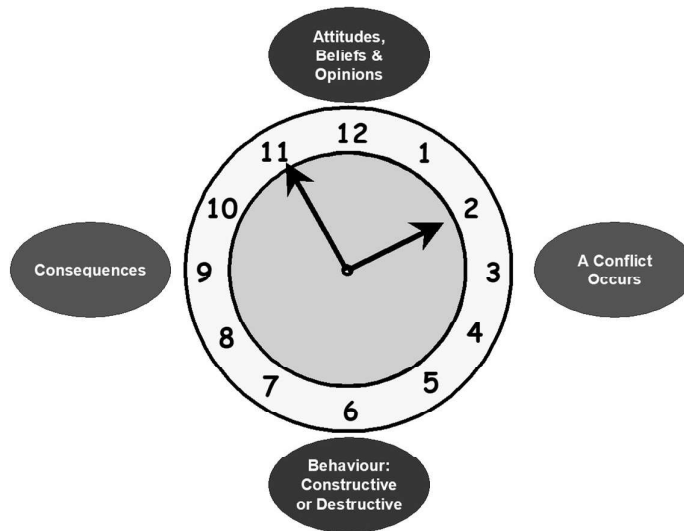
Sources of Conflict

A study by Hans J Thamhain (GEC) and David L. Wilemon (Syracuse University) identified seven potential sources of conflict:

- **Conflict Over Project Priorities**
Differences of opinion over the sequence in which tasks should be undertaken. Such conflicts may not only occur between the project team and other support groups, but also within the team itself.
- **Conflict Over Administrative Procedures**
A number of managerial and administrative-oriented conflicts may develop over how the project will be managed, for example the project manager's reporting relationships, definition of responsibilities, interface relationships, project scope, operational requirements, plan of execution, negotiated work agreements with other groups and administrative support.
- **Conflict Over Technical Opinions and Performance Trade-Offs**
In technology-oriented projects disagreements may arise around the staffing of the project team, with personnel from other functional and staff support areas, or from the desire to use other department's personnel for project support, even though the personnel remain under the authority of their functional or staff superiors.
- **Conflict Over Manpower Resources**
Conflict may arise over the staffing of the project team from personnel, under the authority of other functional support groups, or superiors.
- **Conflict Over Cost**
Frequently conflict may develop over cost estimates from support areas regarding various project work breakdown packages, e.g. the funds allocated by project a manager to a functional support group, might be perceived as insufficient for the support requested.
- **Conflict Over Schedules**
Disagreements may develop around the timing, sequencing and scheduling of project related tasks.
- **Personality Conflict**
Disagreements may tend to centre on interpersonal differences ("ego" centred), rather than on "technical" issues.

The Conflict Cycle

Morton Deutsch, Professor at Columbia University uses a clock face to describe a cycle of conflict.



The cycle of conflict can be an unbroken loop that is fuelled by a disputant's sense of being wronged. Deutsch says, "conflicts occur when two or more people perceive incompatible differences between or threats to their resources, needs, or values."

However, the conflict cycle can be broken at two key places: **12:00** (attitudes and beliefs) or **6:00** (behaviour). These places serve as "gateways" to break destructive attitudes or behaviours. To change the conflict cycle, consider three "challenges:"

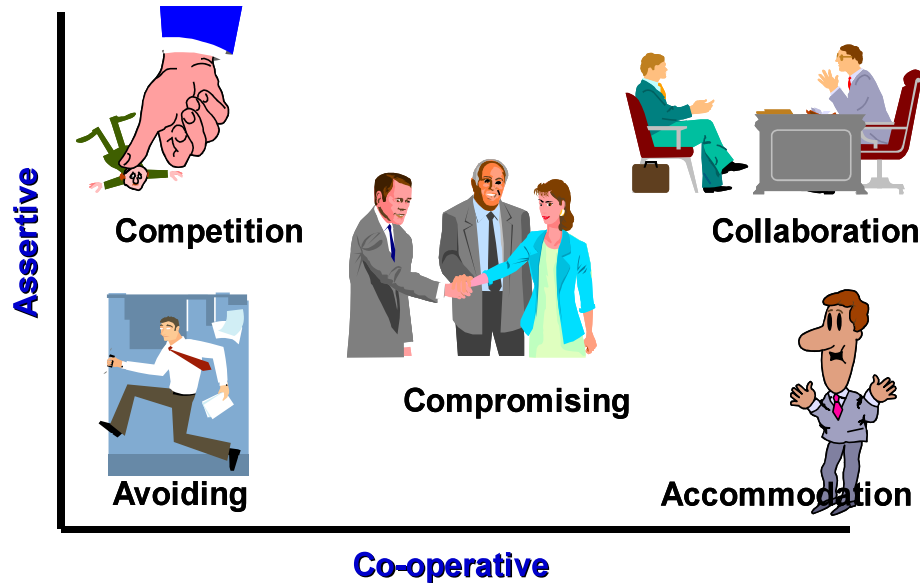
- Promote awareness of new attitudes and beliefs.
- Develop a willingness to change.
- Build new skills.

The skills required for dealing with conflict, will depend on the conflict-handling mode that is most appropriate for the situation.

Dealing with Conflict

The following model (known as the Kilmann model) shows various options leaders have for dealing with the challenge of conflict management.

To reach a resolution that is amenable to both parties a balance of assertiveness and co-operation is required.



Avoidance

When a leader employs this option, he/she is ignoring the conflict, letting it be. For whatever reason, the leader may feel that the conflict is not worth the effort to resolve. This could be complete avoidance (never planning to come back to the conflict) or it could be avoiding the conflict at the present time and coming back to it later, when conditions are more favourable. Avoiding conflict does not deal with the issues at hand.

Accommodation

Accommodation is agreement through yielding or conforming to the positions of others; cooperation in an effort to create harmony, even at the expense of your own ideas and values; agreement in the name of peace and tranquillity, knowing full well that you don't entirely buy into it. Accommodators may not always be famous for their creativity but can often be relied upon for social tact and diplomacy.

Compromise

Compromise involves a search for a solution which is mutually acceptable. Compromise involves two or more parties coming together and "meeting in the middle." With compromise, there will be give and take to get to the middle ground. **"Everybody wins something but does not get everything."** People who compromise settle for the best they can get, as opposed to reaching a decision that everyone wants. Compromise may be one of the best ways of dealing with conflict when time is short, or when total agreement is impossible.

Competition

This is the offensive aggressive approach to conflict resolution. It is especially attractive to those in power and authority who like to **"get things done"** and **"win"**. One of the criticisms of competition is that it takes advantage of the opposition's weakness, by resorting to various strategies and tactics which have a disarming nature.

In a competitive situation, there is little listening, little information sharing, and little interpersonal reasoning. Leaders who fall into this area often make decisions without

input from others, if any. Competitive leadership is often viewed as inappropriate and destructive by group members.

Collaboration

Collaboration is a total-membership approach to conflict resolution. In the collaborative mode, the group: (a) accepts the fact that there is conflict; (b) takes time for sharing of values, needs, interests and resources; (c) discovers many possible solutions and weighs the consequences of each; (d) selects the alternative that best meets the needs and concerns of each member; and (e) forms a team plan, implements and evaluates the outcomes.

Collaboration takes more time and requires higher levels of commitment than other leadership approaches to disagreement. Therefore, it is often reserved for those issues of greatest importance to the membership.

Collaboration is the vehicle which (a) generates the most creative solutions; (b) gets the greatest membership support; and (c) produces the greatest amount of personal growth.

The above list is designed to be helpful in describing different styles of leadership which can be used in the area of conflict management. There is no single best approach that will help leaders deal with every conflict situation. It is up to leaders to develop a situational style which incorporates many different ways of dealing with conflict. **Effective leadership is leadership which is adaptive.** If leaders are able to adapt to varying conflict situations and manage them accordingly, they will be highly acclaimed!

Defining Basic Needs

The problem-solving strategies of conflict management address needs and create opportunities for those needs to be satisfied. When individuals choose to continue the conflict, no one's basic needs are fulfilled. Basic psychological needs are the root of almost all conflict.

The impulse to meet these needs during a conflict is so strong that we can act irrationally, even violently, if they are not satisfied. Consider the needs below and think about how important they were to you during a previous conflict.

- Belonging** – Fulfilled by loving, sharing, cooperating with another person.
- Power-** Fulfilled by achieving, accomplishing, and being recognised and respected.
- Freedom-** Fulfilled by having the opportunity to make choices.
- Fun-** Fulfilled by laughing and enjoyment.

Learning Objectives

You should now have an understanding of:

- The importance of effective teamwork
- The key skills and behaviours required to be an effective project controller
- How to build relationships with other project professionals
- How to conduct effective meetings
- How to deal with conflict and difficult working relationships