

Emotional intelligence and its impact on negotiation and mediation in the workplace.

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Abstract

This paper aims to define emotional intelligence and identify its impact on negotiation or mediation in the workplace. It also highlights major patterns of conflict at the workplace that may produce emotional triggers resulting in loss of self-confidence and potential mental imbalance. Based on the positive impact of emotional intelligence, the author proposes techniques to unfold emotional intelligence and maximise its use as a negotiating tool.

Keywords: Workplace, Team Member, Emotional Intelligence, Workplace Conflict, Team Member Conflict, Intelligence in Negotiation, Mediation.

Introduction

The popularity of teamwork is increasing in organisations to improve the quality of work, efficiency, effectiveness and to ensure sustainability (Alper, Tjosvold, & Law, 2000; DeDreu & Weingart, 2003). According to Ayoko et al (2002), little attention is being paid to the factors that determine the choice of dispute methods advocated by resolution workgroups. The literature reviewed also suggests that little attention has been paid by well-being management to address conflicts and resolve them in ways that serve the interests of all parties.

In this paper the author addresses the gap that exists between the categories of conflicts identified and the appropriate methods of resolution successfully applied. Focus is placed upon identifying patterns of conflict in the workplace and analysing the different emotional reactions currently associated with those conflicts. Assessments are made about the importance of considering emotions in all negotiation and mediation processes. Thereafter, recommendations are put forward for addressing emotional intelligence and maximising its positive impact on negotiation and mediation efforts.

In the past, the conventional way of dealing with negotiation was to “separate people from the problem” (Fisher & Ury, 1983). This approach has an inherent shortcoming: namely, people are essential to an organisation’s well-being and long-term sustainability. In this paper it is argued that optimal improvements can be brought about by an effective negotiator or mediator considering the emotional tenor of every party involved in the conflict.

Patterns of conflict in the workplace

Several studies including Blake & Mouton (1964), Pruitt & Rubin (1986) and Rahim (1983) show that workplace conflict between team members emanate from two major concerns (1) self-concern and (2) concern for others. According to these two concerns can vary depending on the particular conflict situation. In the study of Rahim (1983), depending on the balance of those two concerns, the conflict pattern at the workplace can have a number of patterns as follows

(1) Dominating, where an individual is highly concerned about himself with low concern for others, (2) Obliging, where an individual is less concerned about himself but highly concerned about others, (3) Avoiding, where an individual is avoiding the situation because he has less concern for both himself and others, (4) Integrating, where an individual is highly concerned for himself and other parties, and (5) Compromising, where an individual is moderately concerned about himself and other parties involved in the situation (Rahim, 1983)

The research qualitative study of Ayoko *et al.* (2002), found that team members at workplaces often follow a submissive approach when dealing with conflict. His study showed that 75% of responses by team members were avoidant. Similarly, other studies by Bartunek (1992) and Roloff (2000) showed that low level team members or team members from the minority in a workplace

tend to refrain from direct confrontation when dealing with issues.

Emotional reactions of workplace team members for different types of conflict

All types of conflict trigger emotions, including anger, hate, frustration, tension and stress. Because of that an unpleasant mental condition creates a barrier to having a positive emotional atmosphere. According to DeDreu and Weingart (2003), conflict derived from relationships or tasks set depends on the level of dissatisfaction and when the expectation has not been met. Moreover, it has been found from the modern study that “relationship conflict” has a stronger impact than “workplace conflict”. Nonetheless, relationship conflict can drive an individual to have negative feelings at the workplace. Conversely, task-oriented conflicts that occur frequently in the workplace will also create an unpleasant emotional atmosphere for other team members.

Impact of emotions in negotiation and mediation processes in the workplace

Emotion is a reflection of the conscious mental reaction: for example, fear, anger or hatred. These can be strong and are often directed towards specific objects or persons and accompanied by psychological changes. According to Fisher and Ury (1983), emotion is defined as an experience that can be felt. Therefore, someone feels the emotion, not just thinks about it. When someone says or does

something that matters to others, people usually react with accompanying physiological changes and the desire to do something.

According to research (Schreier, 2002), unaddressed emotional issues can have a substantial impact on ineffective mediation. It is also proposed that experienced mediators do not have enough training or understanding on how to address the emotional reactions of other parties. Fisher and Shapiro (2005) maintain that emotion plays a substantial role in the processes of negotiation and mediation, whether it is negative or positive. According to Shapiro (2009) the impact of negative emotions are:

- (1) diverting attention from significantly important matter in negotiation,
- (2) emotions can lead the person to be manipulated by other parties,
- (3) it can contravene thinking and
- (4) emotions can take control over the mind (Shapiro, 2009).

According to research, negative emotions can develop from the imbalance of self-concern and concern for others (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Rahim, 1983). When an individual at the workplace is more self-concerned or more concerned for others in an unbalanced manner, he or she will end up with negative emotions in negotiations.

Similarly, Shapiro (2009), posits the positive impacts of emotions are: (1) the expression of emotion provides an opportunity for the other party to understand the needs and interests of the first party, and (2) the expression of emotions gives the other party the understanding of the person, her/his position

and how that party wants to be treated. According to the author, when a person can achieve a balance between self-concern and concern for the other party, that individual can create a positive environment for all parties and engender positive emotions in a conflict negotiation.

Two hundred undergraduate business students participated in the study by Goleman (2005), in which the participants were assessed by a simulated one-to-one negotiation for a job contract. The study shows that Emotional Intelligence has a positive relationship in facilitating a better rapport that, in turn, can maintain the trust and willingness to work with motivation and gain.

It is inevitable to avoid emotion, as it is always present and potentially difficult to handle in a conflict situation. Emotional expression provides opportunities for all parties involved in negotiation to reveal their opinions and to clarify the problems delaying resolution. Without emotion, any negotiation or mediation is a dry transaction that is unlikely to culminate in resolution. Consequently, to enjoy the negotiation, it is important that there are emotions present. In addition, it is also important that the emotions of all parties involved can be understood without misinterpretation.

Emotional Intelligence

What is emotional intelligence? According to Bowling and Hoffman (2000), it is "...the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships." On the contrary, Bradberry and Greaves (2009) explained, "emotional

intelligence is a combination of competencies and skills that are mainly found in the leadership”.

Elements required in Emotional intelligence

Bradberry and Greaves (2009) outlined four elements required for constructing emotional intelligence.

(1) Self-awareness is an ability that gives an individual the capability to understand one's own emotion while making important decisions. Self-awareness gives an individual the capability to recognise situations that will trigger one's negative emotions, as discussed above by Shapiro (2009). It is easier to understand one's own emotions than others; yet it is not an easy achievement. By coming to terms with one's own emotions, individuals should be able to remain constructive even when negative emotions are triggered. Of course, there is always the possibility that self-awareness will lead the individual to project his own emotions over others in a workplace.

(2) Self-management follows from self-awareness, offering the individual the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, called self-management. It is obvious that emotions cannot be ignored. Conversation, negotiation and mediation undertaken without reference to emotion is of very limited utility. However, negative emotions can make circumstances worse and may weaken a negotiator's cognitive and behavioural functioning (Gross, 2002). As a result, emotionally intelligent mediators and negotiators always use words and emotions that do not overwhelm other parties. Neutral vocabulary provides opportunities for

individuals to self-manage their emotions, whether they be positive or negative.

(3) Social awareness is about knowing others. When an individual is self-aware but does not take the emotions of others into account, prospects for success in negotiation and mediation efforts will be limited. (Sun Tzu, 2005). Once an individual understands her/his own emotion and reacts to other parties' emotions positively, s/he can achieve the ultimate success by understanding the needs and interests of other parties, their respective positions and how they wish to be treated (Shapiro, 2009),

(4) Relationship management gives an individual the ability to identify the competencies connected with the management of relationships (Goleman (2005). According to Goleman (2005), these competencies are: inspirational leadership, the ability to function as catalyst for change, the capability to create and maintain networks and, where appropriate, the ability to build effective constituencies.

Relationship management can differ from culture to culture. In some cultures, for example, people can be less emotional in expressing their perceptions, while in other cultures, emotional responses constitute normal behaviour. As a consequence, it is difficult in a diverse society to manage relationships effectively. In addition, according to Babcock and Laschever (2007), it is important for an effective negotiator to be aware of differences that may exist in respect of the ways in which emotions are expressed in different genders.

Attributes required for successful negotiations and mediations.

Negotiators and Mediators in the workplace need to understand the ways to inspire and motivate other parties, to filter out the values and desires people have and to identify the common interests of all participants. Shapiro and Fisher (2005) identify five requirements for successful negotiation which, if left unaddressed, are likely to result in the breakdown of negotiations: 1) Appreciation, (2) Affiliation, (3) Autonomy, (4) Status and (5) Role.

(1) Appreciation: a lack of appreciation for others may generate negative emotions that lead to poor performance in the workplace and create conflict between workplace team members. According to Shapiro and Fisher (2005), an effective way of showing appreciation is to listen to every party involved in a negotiation or mediation. It is important for the workplace to have a balance in the development of the organisation. The negotiator needs to find the common interest of all parties involved and to avoid any criticism of any person or idea. It is also essential to explore the merits of the conversation from each party's point of view and to use positive points to develop an environment that is conducive to the resolution of differences.

(2) Affiliation: a negotiator can create a relationship or affiliation by looking at a situation from the other party's point of view. According to Goleman (2005), success largely depends upon those who are capable of visualising themselves in the other party's situation. Desire for relationships is a primary human need. Neutral responses may increase

sensitivity to differences between individuals, thereby making the sense of rejection as deep as bodily pain. Hence, the objective of affiliation is to turn adversaries into team members in the workplace.

(3) Autonomy: When an individual feels the loss of existing control, there is the danger of an increase in the level of self-awareness and a reduction in awareness about others. Shapiro and Fisher (2005) recommend, "Close consultation with the other party on internal rules of conduct where parties are obliged to notify, hear or negotiate."

(4) Status: An individual can be experiencing low self-esteem when he is unable to use his position in an organisation. Failure of recognition of status given in the workplace can be a difficult situation. It is important to give everyone in the workplace status recognition. It is particularly important for a diverse organisation. Any negotiation should start by addressing the status of individuals in the workplace and gradually progress into an informal address. It is always beneficial in a negotiation to extend courtesy to improve the relationship. (Adler *et al*, 1996),

(5) Role: Recognising, rewarding and understanding the roles played by individuals in negotiating may take longer to relieve negative feelings, but time spent is well worth the effort in creating a pleasant emotional atmosphere. (Callahan S. 1988).

Conclusion

Negotiation is a necessity in the workplace that involves a complex process of behavioural, emotional, and cognitive competencies.

Bradberry and Greaves (2009) and Shapiro and Fisher (2005) have identified some key requirements for successful negotiations and made useful recommendations for improving emotional capabilities. Once these aims have been achieved, individuals should be able to address and maximise the essential requirements for successful negotiation.

According to Ayoko, et al (2002), little attention is being paid to the factors that determine the choice of dispute resolution methods in workgroups. It is important to understand that in the 21st. century, the importance and sensitivity of an individual's emotions in the workplace differ considerably, when compared to the attention placed upon emotions a few decades ago. This issue must be addressed as a high priority, and the negotiator must be able to address the emotional dynamics. Therefore, an organisation must train its employees about emotional intelligence, which can help them understand how to use emotions that not only support self-awareness and self-management but also promote engagement with social-awareness and relationship management. Similarly, managers in any organisation need training and development on how to give recognition to employees and how to deal with their emotional values. For example; managers need to show appreciation to employees for even the smallest amount of good work carried

out for the company. That little appreciation has the capacity to have a large impact on the employee's motivation.

It really is necessary for an organisation to develop and encourage high levels of emotional intelligence to avoid diverting attention from important matters in negotiation, to protect employees from being manipulated by other parties and to facilitate the progressive growth of the organisation..

The author believes that the employee's motivation in the workplace is not only determined by meeting extrinsic needs such as pay, but also fulfilling intrinsic needs. A good working environment is one of the most important intrinsic need that any employee should expect to be met. To maintain that good environment it is essential that a positive conflict management capability exists in the organisation.

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