

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AS AN INCENTIVE MEASURE FOR
CREATIVE PROCESSES OF INNOVATION TEAMS**

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Abstract

In innovation activities, creativity is crucial as it makes them different from routine areas of management. The need to apply other approaches to conflict management when implementing innovative projects was substantiated with the aim to diversify ideas and solutions developed by the group. The ultimate goal is to formulate principles of conflict management in order to develop an appropriate HR strategy. The primary tasks differentiate the types of conflicts in terms of impact on the innovation process and determine tools for managing conflicts in the group. The present study identified key distinctive features of the innovative and routine processes in the context of conflict management as well as tools for influencing conflict relations in the group. Based on these results, a set of rules for managing conflicts were formulated. They are aimed at enhancing the creative output of working groups. These rules can be taken into account when forming a strategy for personnel management in organizations.

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1. Introduction

One of the most important factors of the effective management of an innovative project is competent and skillful management of human resources. The specificity of this kind of activity requires different opinions of the participants, which inevitably creates conflict situations in the group. Due to the lack of understanding of such conflicts, managers often use wrong approaches to managing them. Some team leaders do their best to suppress group conflicts, believing that they disorganize the development process. In order to encourage the creative process of the team, other managers deliberately create conditions for their emergence without distinguishing between personal conflicts and conflicts based on differences in opinions. Both of these approaches are destructive in achieving the goals of a radical innovation project.

2. Problem Statement

One of the weak points of modern conflict management is generalization of approaches to solving problems in groups that arise when the opinions and interests of the participants differ. In particular, the bulk of research is aimed at finding ways to resolve conflicts. For example, Hamburg School of Communication considers the search for a compromise solution as the best strategy for resolving a conflict, since such a solution allows one to combine positive aspects of opposing positions. This approach is more relevant for interpersonal conflicts rather than for conflicts of opinions. This is due to the fact that it is rarely possible to find an averaged solution in the presence of alternative views on the solution of general problems (Redlikh, 2009).

There are various studies that reveal the negative impact of conflicts on the innovation process. However, they represent a conflict of interests caused by the unwillingness of certain people to make changes. Conner (1998) argues that "resistance to changes is a natural reaction of people to something that violates their status quo. Changes destroy our expectations and a psychological balance" (p. 93). Conner (1998) and Kilian (2003) see a direct connection between resistance to changes and conflicts in organizations.

However, there are studies devoted to the positive functions of resistance to changes and conflicts: for example, these phenomena make it possible to revise the strategy of changes and eliminate its shortcomings (Piderit, 2000).

However, we are interested in conflict relations occurring within the project innovation groups, which are initially aimed at changes; the factor of resistance to changes is not significant. Nevertheless, the danger of interpersonal conflicts remains within the projects that have been studied by Antsupov and Shipilov (2000): "an interpersonal innovation conflict is opposition between supporters and opponents of innovations, accompanied by negative emotions" (p. 215).

Thus, there is a need to study peculiarities of creative and routine processes in the context of confrontation of interests and opinions, as well as to formulate principles of conflict management when implementing innovative projects.

3. Research Questions

1. Differentiation of the types of conflicts by impacts on creative and innovative processes.
2. Search for features of the innovation process which differ it from the routine one in the context of conflict management.
3. Determination of tools for managing conflicts in the group.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to develop a set of rules for managing conflicts in innovative project teams.

5. Research Methods

The analytical method was to determine problem areas, and the synthesis method was employed to search for patterns and formulate proposals for solving these problems.

The information and empirical base of the study was materials collected during the study of Russian and foreign scientific articles on the issue of group creative activities and conflictology.

6. Findings

In the present study, we used the definition of conflict given by Haywood (2005): "Conflict is a rivalry between the opposing parties, reflecting differences in their views, preferences, needs or interests" (p. 363). According to this definition, personal dislike is not an inherent attribute of conflict.

Conflicts can be classified into two types:

1. Opposition of points of view. Each party insists on the correctness of own point of view. Personal hostility is minimized or absent. The main source of motivation is the desire to solve the problem.
2. Personal opposition. The motivating factor is the desire to inflict moral or other damage on the rival side, due to the personal hostility of the parties or a feeling of infringement of their rights and interests. It can be disguised as a desire to defend your point of view.

Real conflicts can rarely be attributed to one of the above levels, since each one has features of both the first and second types. In addition, a conflict can transition from one state to another one at any time. It is difficult to hold a conflict. An active role belongs to the immediate manager.

The present study focuses on those conflicts in which participants adhere to alternative solutions to the problems. The goals and interests of the participants can converge. The development of conflicts always tends to either polarize, when each of the parties tries to strengthen its positions with the help of argumentation or searches for like-minded people, or there is a tendency to find a compromise.

Many scientific works investigating the problem of personal and subject conflicts and their influence of the performance of a group emphasize their negative impact. The main problem is a significant decrease in the performance of the more vulnerable side due to psychological depression. This point of view is shared by Brown (1983), Hackman and Morris (1975) and Wall (1995).

These works do not take into account differences in the activities of groups engaged in routine work and creative groups. In the latter, competition and opposition of points of view can become a valuable resource in achieving the goals of an innovative project, while this factor does not play a significant role in routine work (Tavbulatova, 2016a).

Boyle et al. (2011) argue that the conflict of tasks increases the effectiveness of groups: "Conflicts arising from differing perspectives and corresponding values held by decision makers increase the volume and scope of information taken into account and the value of that information." According to Carsten De Dre, with a moderate opposition of points of view, group productivity increases, while sluggish or over-expressed conflicts hinder work (as cited in Thompson, 2013).

The following argument also testifies to the positive impact of conflicts of viewpoints on the innovation process. Sharp confrontation of views and opinions is necessary where complex issues are raised. Each of the alternatives can have its own algorithms for solving the problem. Participation in such a dispute is a powerful motivating factor for finding effective solutions. This is especially important when developing radical innovative products, where the ability of the team to generate extraordinary ideas is of particular importance (Tavbulatova, 2016b).

In addition, unlike most conflicts, the parties strive to achieve a common goal, and they differ only in the ways of achieving it. In other words, it is not a conflict of interests, and there is no need to seek a solution that is equally consistent with different goals.

When developing a conflict management policy, it should be borne in mind that a deliberate clash of views does not always lead to positive results. Some measures may cause personal conflicts. Delegating authority to subordinates, managers deliberately duplicate functional responsibilities for two or more employees. Such actions significantly increase the risk of conflicts, since the traits of personal confrontation are most clearly manifested, since the question of competence of workers is raised. In addition, this creates additional difficulties in the work process.

The opposite problem can be actions of the managers aimed to prevent and suppress any manifestations of conflict. Given that the clash of opinions is a natural feature of innovative projects, we believe that suppressing conflict can lead to negative consequences for the project.

To keep the conflict within the constructive opposition, it is necessary to remember that most personal conflicts arise as a result of a lack of mutual understanding, in which the parties have erroneous judgments about the position and motives of opponents. Therefore, it is necessary to help to clarify positions.

In any group, a certain part of the participants is most active in expressing their ideas and opinions, due to their increased sociability, character stability and other psychological characteristics. This can create a false point of view according to which less active participants do not have their own views and ideas, because it is more difficult for them to express their positions. Classic meetings or brainstorming sessions are not places where everyone expresses their position and defends it. The solution is to provide opportunities for employees to anonymously share ideas.

The composition of the group should be as diverse as possible for the ideas to be diverse. For this reason, the national, social, and professional diversity of groups should be encouraged by the leaders.

The friendship of team members also contributes to their more conformist attitude towards each other, due to their desire to maintain friendship. On the contrary, it is easier for strangers to voice their opinions against others, while jeopardizing their working relationship with them.

The leader must have extensive conflict management abilities. He must have formal and informal levers of influence on the conflict:

- Development of organizational culture. Much depends on whether the management can develop the spirit of competition and initiative while maintaining mutual respect, and developing an appropriate management style in the company. This must be done at the stage of creating the company or the innovation unit, since otherwise attempts to make changes will be unsuccessful.
- Directives or instructions. These include formal guidelines regulating the order and form of punishment and rewards. In the absence of a flexible culture that regulates relations between employees, they can become an effective tool to prevent relationships that are unacceptable for the team.
- Direct orders. This includes instructions about various kinds of remuneration, fines, warnings and other formal measures.
- Appointment and movement of employees within the innovation unit. It may be connected with the desire to withdraw those players whose presence is undesirable.
- Appointment of the curator of the conflict. It is often necessary to have a third party, usually a leader, directly and formally overseeing the conflict. He can play the role of an arbiter, give clear instructions to the parties, and direct the conflict.

The leader also possesses many other tools, including more traditional ones, which include the approval of the parties, their criticism and provocation.

The managers often underestimate the influence of a conflict on employees and the group as a whole. A conflict is a challenge that provokes the parties to actively respond, regardless of whether it was deliberately announced by someone. If before its appearance there was an opportunity to abandon one's point of view, in a new situation there is a possibility to perceive it as a lack of competence or persistence in defending one's position. This situation serves as a powerful incentive for the positions of the parties to evolve and be supported by better argumentation.

In addition, such conflicts allow team members to realize that they are not just executors of the will of the managers, but have the right to defend their own position, or support one of the parties to the conflict. All this allows them to participate in the creative process.

If the conflict crosses the line of working relations and goes to the level of interpersonal confrontation, it can create unpleasant consequences for the project. This affects the morale of the participants, causing depression, apathy, which negatively affects their performance. Studies carried out in the USSR have determined that the time of post-conflict mental resonance is several times greater than the time of the conflict itself. For every minute of the conflict that arises in the research team due to the inconsistency of the plan of the new topic with personal interests of its members, there are 12 minutes of post-conflict time, and for a minute of the conflict that arose due to the tactless statement of a fellow worker, there are 14 minutes (Potemkin, 2009)

A rather risky situation can arise when the conflict turns into intergroup confrontation, in which each of the conflicting parties has its supporters. Minor manifestations of aggression can escalate to intergroup hostility, which can disrupt their interaction.

On the other hand, this can turn into significant benefits for the project, as it allows the creative energy of more people to be tapped. The leader can stimulate neutral players to support one of the parties to the conflict.

In order to keep the conflict within the acceptable framework, it is important not to allow an excessive number of participants to participate in the project, since management problems can grow at an accelerating pace. This can be caused by double functional responsibilities of employees. In addition, Lee Thompson conducted a study according to which even a slight increase in the number of participants can increase the duration of a meeting (Thompson, 2013).

Thus, the conflict of opinion carries a high potential for creative stimulation of the innovation process. When developing a conflict management strategy in breakthrough projects, the management must adhere to the following rules:

1. Formation of conflict ethics which is an unwritten set of rules for resolving a conflict. It is based on the principles of mutual respect for the team, rivalry, and corporate culture. It is advisable to develop it at the early stages of organization's existence, when most of the company's cultural characteristics have not yet been formed;

2. Clarification of positions. Each of the parties provides a clear and comprehensive answer to its vision of the task, its strategy, tactics, ways and means of achieving it. Such clarification of positions can prevent many mistakes by preventing the parties from diverging with the innovation strategy. It also helps to remove the emotional coloring of the conflict and restrains the conflict situation from the transition to the interpersonal level;

3. Structuring of conflicting groups. Determination of the composition of the participants in the conflict, representatives (leaders) of rival groups, various centers of group influence and their strength. The leadership aspect is important, since the absence of a leader makes it difficult to form a clear and well-defined position, and there will be contradictions. At this stage, the neutral parties to the conflict should express their opinions;

4. Localization of the conflict. Confrontation should take place in the context of work relationships and during work hours. Thus, the participants will perceive the conflict as a game. Outside the workflow, the conflict becomes out of control;

5. Identification of alternatives. Before the conflict turns into an active stage of counteraction, it is necessary to clarify all alternatives for solving problems, since the initial positions of the parties may be incorrect or unproductive, and the most rational options will remain outside the control of the team. It should be taken into account that when the carriers of different views are opposed, the range of alternatives also expands;

6. Maintaining the conflict at an optimal level. Confrontation can be productive only at a moderate pace. By combining conflict management tools, the leader can achieve an optimal level of confrontation. For example, he can do it by preventing the parties from finding common ground if this is not in line with

the strategy. If it is necessary to bring different positions together, it is advisable to establish good relationships between the parties.

7. Conclusion

The present study identified key distinctive features of the innovative and routine processes in the context of conflict management as well as tools for influencing conflict relations in the group. Based on these results, a set of rules for managing conflicts were formulated. They are aimed at enhancing the creative output of working groups. These rules can be taken into account when forming a strategy for personnel management in organizations.

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