

STAFFING THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY FOR THE NEXT MILLENNIUM:

DIVERSITY, TEAM-BUILDING, AND
CONFLICT RESOLUTION ISSUES

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TRAITS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

- n interest and ability to learn constantly
- n flexibility
- n creativity
- n comfort with risk-taking
- n tolerance for ambiguity
- n a unshakeable user-centred attitude
- n skill at facilitating and fostering change
- n an understanding of when it is appropriate to lead and when it is appropriate to follow
- n the capacity to be a self-starter and to work independently
- n personal and professional confidence

TRAITS

- an appreciation of diversity and what others bring to the endeavour
- the ability to work with others effectively as a good team member and leader
- the avoidance of conflict avoidance:
the recognition of the benefits of conflict in an organization

DIVERSITY

Diversity implies including on work groups not only those individuals who differ with respect to characteristics such as age, gender, race and ethnicity but also those who differ in amount of experience, sets of skills or occupations, and hierarchical levels.

ADVANTAGES OF A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

- n Different points of view
- n Unique qualities
- n Innovation



DEFINITION OF A TEAM

A team is a small group of people with complementary skills committed to a common purpose and set of specific performance goals.

KEY POINTS ABOUT TEAMS

- True teams are very different from other kinds of work groups.
- Team effectiveness is measured by useful output, not good feelings
- Diversity in membership makes teams stronger
- Effective teams are skilled at dealing with internal problems such as conflict
- Effective team leaders practice facilitational leadership rather than controlling leadership
- Teams benefit from the output of all members
- Mutual respect and mutual accountability are the cornerstones of team effectiveness.

Soete, George. "Reorganizing for a Changing Information World."p.112

QUESTIONS TO ASK TO COUNTER STRATIFICATION

- Do we have important skills in library staff that are not captured by our formal roles and responsibilities?
- Can we better utilize the basic skills and experiences of our group by working together, beyond as well as within our formal functional responsibilities?
- Could some of us build skills in other areas, and thereby help strengthen the overall capabilities of the group?
- Can we break up hierarchical patterns by assigning work tasks based on skills rather than position?
- Can we assign leadership roles to someone other than a manager?

Katzenbach, Jon. *The Wisdom of Teams*, p. 237.

TEAM NORMS

- “ All ideas are given a fair hearing
- “ Everyone will have an opportunity to contribute information and opinions
- “ Open and honest opinions are welcome
- “ Members are expected to actively listen to one another
- “ Rank does not have its privileges

Parker, Glenn. *Cross-Functional Teams*. p.116

INTERNAL ISSUES

- Conflict resolution, the ability of team to discuss and resolve differences
- Open communication and trust, the degree to which team members feel free to express their views

CONFLICT

As the traditional hierarchical organization gives way to group-based structures, conflicts on teams will become more prevalent. **IF WE DEFINE CONFLICT AS SIMPLE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION,** this is exactly what we want to happen.

TYPES OF TEAM CONFLICT

- “ Relationship conflict exists when there are interpersonal incompatibilities among group members which typically includes tension, animosity, and annoyance.
- “ Task conflict exists when there are disagreements among group members about the content of the tasks being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas and opinions.

TEAM CONFLICT

- INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT
- TASK-BASED CONFLICT
 - ROUTINE
 - NON-ROUTINE

INTERPERSONAL TEAM CONFLICT

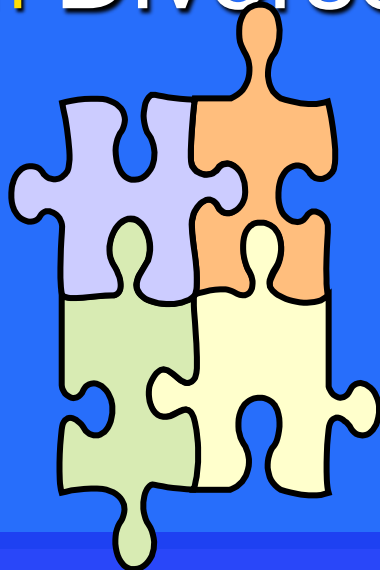
- “ Relationship conflict reduces the ability of group members to assess new information provided by other members
- “ The interpersonal conflict makes members less receptive to the ideas of other group members
- “ The time and energy that should be devoted to working on the task is used to discuss, resolve, or ignore conflicts

BENEFITS OF CONFLICT IN A TEAM SETTING

- Diverse ideas of group members introduce superior alternatives
- Critical evaluation is facilitated by task conflict
- Decreases “groupthink” phenomenon by increasing consideration of alternatives
- Encourages creativity by focussing on innovative ideas rather than consensus
- Increases the understanding of the task by identifying and discussing diverse perspectives
- Allows for a more thorough evaluation of criteria needed for sound decision-making

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- n Difference is beneficial
- n Conflict = difference of opinion
- n Diverse opinion is beneficial



DEALING WITH TEAM CONFLICT

- Team training must include sessions on conflict resolution
- Top management as well as functional department managers must be helped to form realistic expectations of the potential outcome of cross-functional teams
- In some cases, teams may need expert help in facilitating team processes

DIVERSITY, TEAM-BUILDING, CONFLICT : LESSONS LEARNED FOR LIBRARY STAFFING

- Valuing and respecting the contributions of all staff, regardless of their employee group, enhances the quality of our decision-making.
- Team structures have the potential to mitigate the negative impacts of group stratification.
- They draw out the benefit of skills available in all our staff to achieve better outcomes.
- Different types of tasks produce different types of conflict.
- Establish team norms that make conflict work for the organization.
- Conflicts are what we want to push us to creative solutions. It is how we handle these conflicts that is the test.
- It is vital that in the training and preparation for teamwork that we include conflict resolution skills.
- Since we cannot make conflict go away, we should work with it to maximize its benefits.

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