Conflict Management For Research Teams

National Postdoctoral Association Meeting

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The Cost of Conflict

- Productivity
- Time
- Relationship
Jump on Journals
The Importance of “Context”

- Regulations
- Assumptions
- History
- Social
- Environment/Culture
- Expectations
- Relationships

Context
Identify the Issue

- An issue is the immediate question for which you need an answer (it may not be the only basis of conflict but it is the question needing attention now).
  - How and when are we disseminating our results?
  - Who is going to be first author?
- All parties must agree on what the issue is.
Options Over Time

Time

Options

A  B  C  D  E  F

A  B  C  D  E  F

A  B  C  D  E  F

A  B  C  D  E  F

A  B  C  D  E  F

A  B  C  D  E  F
Strategies to Resolve Conflict

- Avoidance Strategy
- Accommodating Strategy
- Positional Strategy
- Interest-based Strategy
Positional Approach

A **position** is a claim that one makes to answer the immediate question (the issue).

- I want to present these results at the meeting this November.
- I want one more replication before submitting.
Positional Approach....

- Narrows options in the beginning to two positions; neither one may be the best answer to the issue.
- May harm the relationship.
- Power often dictates the outcome.
The Interest-Based Approach

- An active and collaborative strategy for identifying options when facing particular issues.
- Useful when managing conflicts and when setting expectations.
What are Interests?

**Interests** are needs that must be satisfied and values that must be preserved.

- Self-esteem
- Good working relationships
- Research excellence
- Financial security
- Reputation
## The Interest-Based Approach

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<th>Interests</th>
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Jump on Journals
# The Interest-Based Approach

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## Issue

## Evaluation
“Easy to understand, hard to practice”… Why?

- Trained to be solution-oriented.
- Rewarded for defending our solutions well.
- Against our “nature”?
- Strong emotions are triggered.
Anger and Action

Avoidance / Accommodation

Anger

Action

The trigger event
Anger

- Predisposes one to use a positional strategy.
- Impairs one’s ability to identify interests.
- Compromises one’s rational decision-making abilities.
Setting Expectations

- The interest-based approach as a tool to reduce conflicts.
- Collaborative setting of expectations.
Implicit Expectations:

- Not stated and rarely understood.
- “What didn’t you understand about what I didn’t tell you?”
Explicit Expectations

Explicit Expectations:

- Clearly Stated (verbally, or in written form)
- Checked for understanding
- Unilaterally or jointly set
Explicit Expectations

are set by jointly examining future situations in this order:

Context, Interests, Issue, Options, Decision

and then checking for mutual understanding.
When Setting Expectations… Remember about Nonverbal Communication

- 80% of communication is nonverbal → It matters more **how we say it**.
- Assess the situation: kinesics, proxemicks, paralanguage, autonomic shifts.
- “Feel safe” and “fight or flight” response.
- Acknowledge mixed messages, adjust behavior accordingly.
If You Want to Learn More...


- Contact: nunez@grd.msu.edu, akopec@msu.edu
THANK YOU!