Conflict Blueprint Scenarios and Team Discussion Guide

Conflict Blueprint #1: Addressing Current Conflicts

This blueprint helps team members manage present-day tensions using principles from game theory-a strategy framework that emphasizes cooperation over persuasion. Before persuading, both colleagues must first be heard. This requires taking turns to speak and listen. Emotional regulation is key-stay calm and grounded.

Scenario: Missed Deadlines and Miscommunication

Jordan and Alexis work in the St. Johns County Housing and Community Development Department. They are collaborating on a grant application for federal funding with a tight deadline. Jordan is responsible for data analysis, while Alexis is writing the narrative portion of the proposal.

During a team meeting, Alexis voices frustration in front of the group, saying: "We're behind because I didn't get the data until the last minute."

Jordan feels blindsided, as they had emailed the data the day before the internal deadline and had not been informed of any issues. Tension rises as the two exchange curt remarks after the meeting.

Later that day, their supervisor suggests they step away to cool down and reconvene the next morning.

The Conversation (Modeling Blueprint #1)

Setting: Private meeting room. Calm, neutral tone.

Jordan (Speaker 1):

"Thanks for taking time to meet. I'd like to share how I experienced yesterday's meeting. I felt caught off guard and embarrassed when the delay was brought up in front of the team. I had worked hard to get the data to you by the deadline I thought we agreed on. In the future, I'd appreciate a heads-up if something feels off so we can sort it out before it becomes a bigger issue."

Alexis (Listener 1):

"I hear you. I can see how that caught you off guard. I didn't mean to make it personal-it was just a stressful moment. I should've come to you privately."

Jordan:

"Thank you. That helps."

Alexis (Speaker 2):

"I'd like to explain where I was coming from. I was under pressure to have everything drafted by the next morning. When I got your email, the data format wasn't what I expected, and I didn't know how to use it. I should've communicated that earlier instead of assuming you'd know."

Jordan (Listener 2):

"I understand. I didn't realize the format was an issue. I can definitely tweak how I send things next time."

They agree on a system to clarify deadlines and data formats going forward-and end with a light joke about turning spreadsheets into codebreakers.

Team Discussion Guide

Use the following questions to facilitate a group discussion:

1. What signs of emotional regulation did you observe in Jordan and Alexis?

2. How did taking turns to speak affect the outcome of the conversation?

3. What 'repair attempts' were used, and how did they help de-escalate the conflict?

4. How can this model be applied to conflicts in your own team or department?

5. What personal communication habit could you improve based on this scenario?

Additional Conflict Blueprint Scenarios

Conflict Blueprint #2: Repairing Workplace Trust

Scenario: During a county-wide emergency response project, Priya was responsible for communicating updates to the department heads. However, a key email about changing safety protocols was not sent out, resulting in confusion and mistakes. Darren, who relied on that email, confronted Priya in a public meeting, accusing her of 'dropping the ball.' Priya felt attacked and embarrassed. Trust between the two eroded.

The Conversation (Modeling Blueprint #2)

Setting: Supervisor encourages a private conversation to address the trust issue.

Priya (Speaker 1):

"When I was called out in the meeting, I felt humiliated. I recognize I missed the email, but it would have helped to discuss it privately first. I value our working relationship and want to repair the trust."

Darren (Listener 1):

"I understand. I reacted poorly in the moment. I was stressed about the errors that followed. I should have come to you first."

Darren (Speaker 2):

"I felt frustrated because I was held accountable for mistakes caused by the missing information. It

felt like a lack of follow-through."

Priya (Listener 2):

"I understand why you were frustrated. I accept responsibility for the missed email. Next time, I'll set up reminders so it won't happen again."

Team Discussion Guide

1. How did Priya and Darren each take responsibility for their actions?

2. What apology or repair attempts helped rebuild trust?

3. How might your team handle similar breaches of trust?

Conflict Blueprint #3: From Gridlock to Productive Dialogue

Scenario: The Parks and Recreation Department is gridlocked about how to allocate limited budget funds. Morgan believes funds should go toward repairing aging facilities to meet safety codes. Riley argues the money should instead be spent on new community programming to increase public engagement. The disagreement has dragged on for months with no progress.

The Conversation (Modeling Blueprint #3)

Setting: Facilitated dialogue meeting, focusing on understanding core needs and values.

Morgan (Speaker 1):

"For me, repairing facilities is about public safety. If something happens because we ignored issues, that would undermine trust with the community."

Riley (Listener 1):

"I understand that safety is critical. I hear that this is about protecting the community and our reputation."

Riley (Speaker 2):

"For me, funding programs is about showing residents that we're innovating and creating value. I think that could increase public support and funding."

Morgan (Listener 2):

"I understand that public engagement is important. If we lose community support, future funding could be at risk."

They agree to set aside a portion of the budget for immediate repairs while drafting a plan to launch at least one new program with the remaining funds.

Team Discussion Guide

1. How did Morgan and Riley uncover the deeper values behind their positions?

2. What role did compromise play in moving from gridlock to dialogue?

3. How can your team honor different core needs when making tough resource decisions?

Credits and Acknowledgments:

Some content adapted from the work of Dr. John Gottman and The Gottman Institute, including principles from The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work.

This material has been contextualized for county government team settings by Elbow Tree Cooperative for educational and training purposes.