Creative Strategies in Conflict Management

February 5, 2016

Student Organization

▶ Aims may involve practice and propagation of a certain professional hobby or cause, or to promote professional development.

Examples:
- Debate Society
- Math Club
- Travel Club
- Science Club

Student Organizations

- Student organizations are seen as an integral part of the mission of universities and particularly in student leadership development.

- Student organizations are viewed as "learning laboratories"

Student Organizations

▶ Student organizations offer many opportunities for students the chance to

  ▶ develop meaningful relationships

  ▶ pursue special interests

  ▶ clarify a sense of purpose and identity, and

  ▶ develop interpersonal, leadership, organization, and social skills

Phases of Group Development

Forming

Storming

Norming

Performing
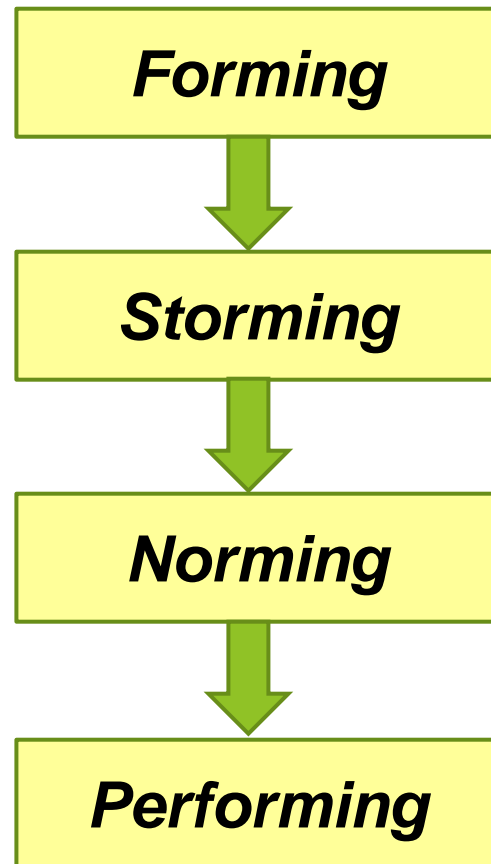
Group Task

▶ **Define purpose**

▶ **Determine objectives**

▶ **"Best Behavior"/ Inwardly focused**

- **Competition for ideas**
- **"What are we supposed to do?"**
- **Determine & accept roles**

- **Ease into roles and ground rules**
- **Development of trust & consequences**
- **Agenda setting**

- **Comfort in assigned roles**
- **Autonomous**
- **Dissent expected and encouraged**

Phases of Group Development

Forming → **Storming** → **Norming** → **Performing**
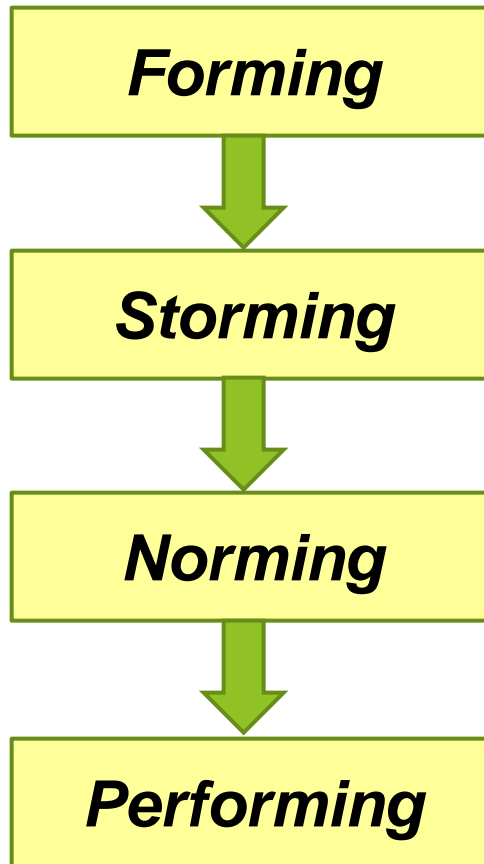
Group Task	Evidence of Failure
Define purpose Determine objectives "Best Behavior"	Group lacks focus Attends to wrong things Conflict over objectives
Competition for ideas "What are we supposed to do? "Determine & accept roles	Not completing tasks Conflict within group Confusion over roles
Ease into roles and ground rules Development of trust Agenda setting	Poor standards Conflict within group & w/instructor Late assignments
Comfort in assigned roles Autonomous Dissent expected and encouraged	Poor performance continues Conflicts go unresolved Sense that grades unfair

What is Conflict?

Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.

What is Conflict?

▶ Conflict in not only inevitable in student organizations, but it is also beneficial and healthy, if properly managed.

▶ Conflict can stimulate new ideas, clarify elements of an issue, increase task motivation, and lead to better solutions because of increased understanding of opposing perspectives
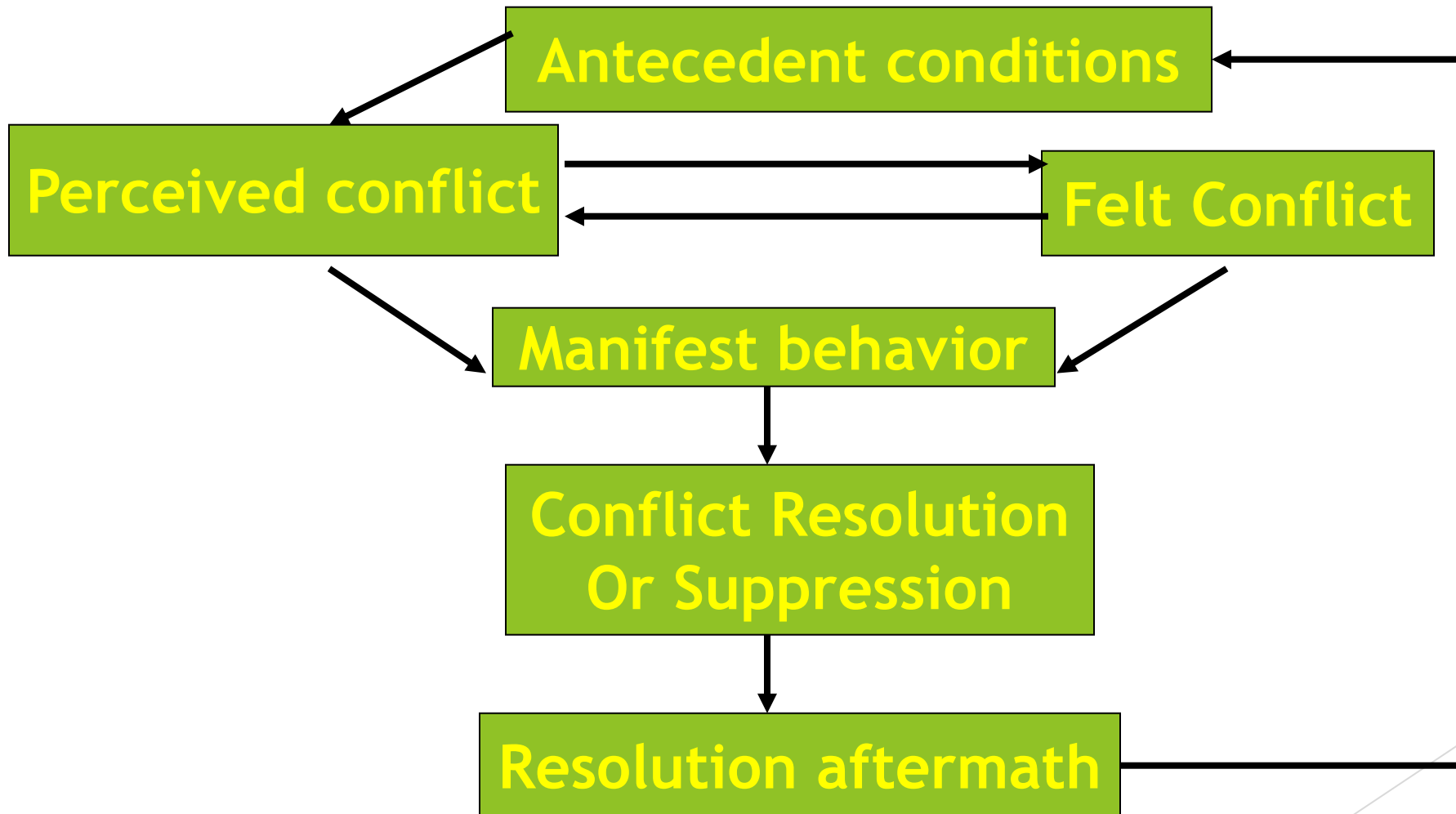
Conflict Management

Conflict management is the practice of identifying and handling conflict in a sensible, fair and efficient manner

Types of Conflict

- Inter-personal and intra-personal
- Inter-group and intra-group
- Competitive and Disruptive

Conflict Process

Antecedent conditions

Perceived conflict → **Felt Conflict**

Manifest behavior

Conflict Resolution Or Suppression

Resolution aftermath

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Antecedent Conditions

- Scarce Resources
- Conflicting attitude
- Ambiguous jurisdiction
- Communication barriers
- Need for consensus
- Unresolved prior conflicts
- Knowledge of self and others

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How to create conflict?

▶ Not being a role model

▶ Take credit, no recognition

▶ Be judgmental

▶ Send written messages

▶ Subordinate should come to see me

▶ Make yourself inaccessible to your team

▶ Individual Vs team approach

▶ Telling them? Consulting them? Or deciding with them?

▶ Come tomorrow

▶ Introduce change without consultation or discussion

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General causes of conflicts

- ▶ Poorly defined goals
- ▶ Divergent personal values
- ▶ Lack of cooperation/trust
- ▶ Competition of scarce resources
- ▶ Unclear roles/lack of job description

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Why Conflict Arises

Type "A" Personality

Vs.

Type "B Personality

Type "A" Personality

- ▶ **Highly Competitive**
- ▶ **Strong Personality**
- ▶ **Restless when inactive**
- ▶ **Seeks Promotion**
- ▶ **Punctual**
- ▶ **Thrives on deadlines**
- ▶ **Multi-Tasking**

Type "B" Personality

- ▶ Works methodically
- ▶ Rarely competitive
- ▶ Enjoys leisure time
- ▶ Does not anger easily
- ▶ Does job well but doesn't need recognition
- ▶ Easy-going

Aggressive People

- **Body language**
  - Stiff and straight
  - Points, bangs tables to emphasize points
  - Folds arms across body
- **Verbal language**
  - "I want you to…"
  - "You must…"
  - "Do what I tell you!"
  - "You're stupid!"

Aggressive people are basically insecure….. Try to avoid them.

Submissive people

- **Body Language**
  - **Avoids eye contact**
  - **Stooped posture**
  - **Speaks quietly**
  - **Fidgets**

- **Verbal Language**
  - **"I'm sorry"**
  - **"It's all my fault"**
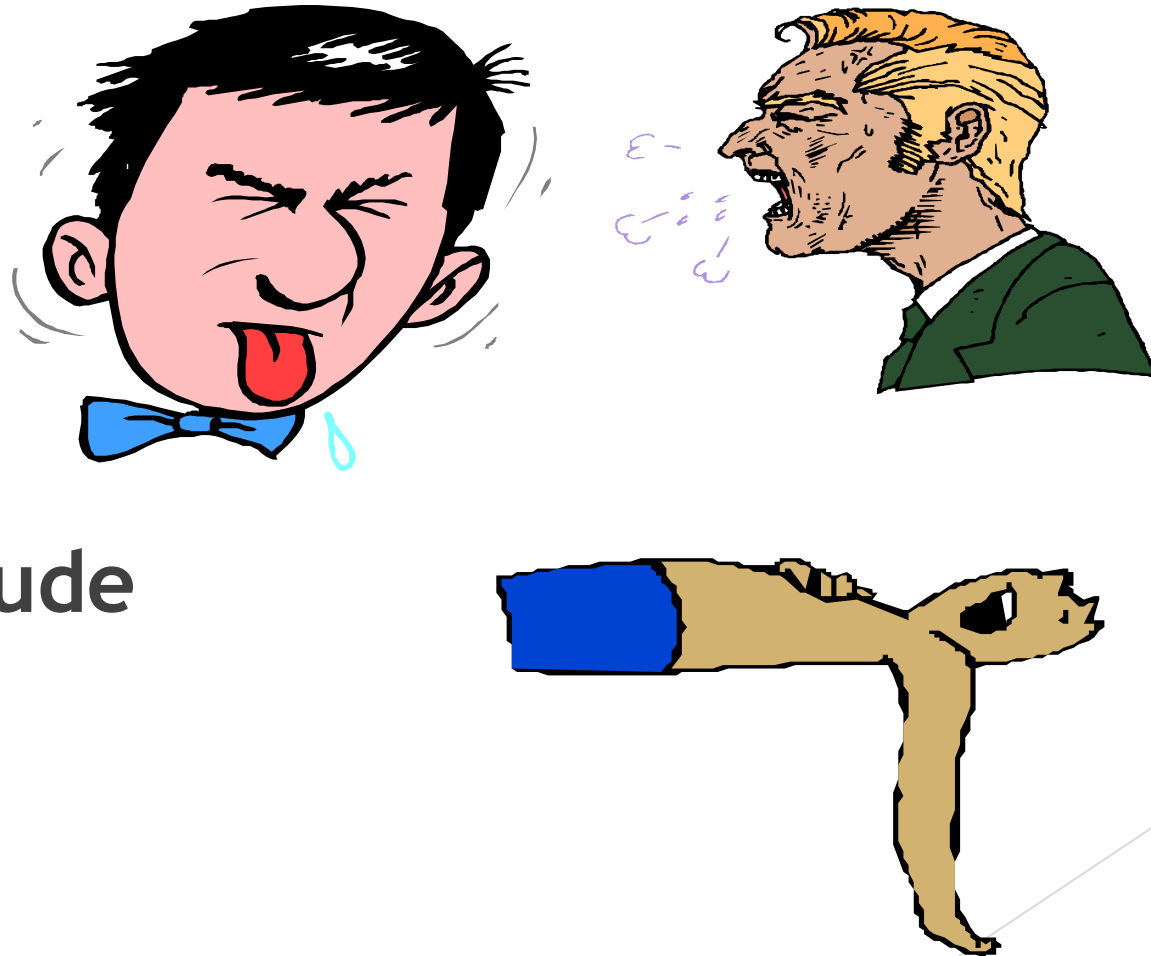 - **"Oh dear"**

Submissive people have a great sense of inferiority

Assertive People

- Body language
  - Stands straight
  - Appears composed
  - Smiles
  - Maintains eye contact
- Verbal language
  - "Let's"
  - "How shall we do this?"
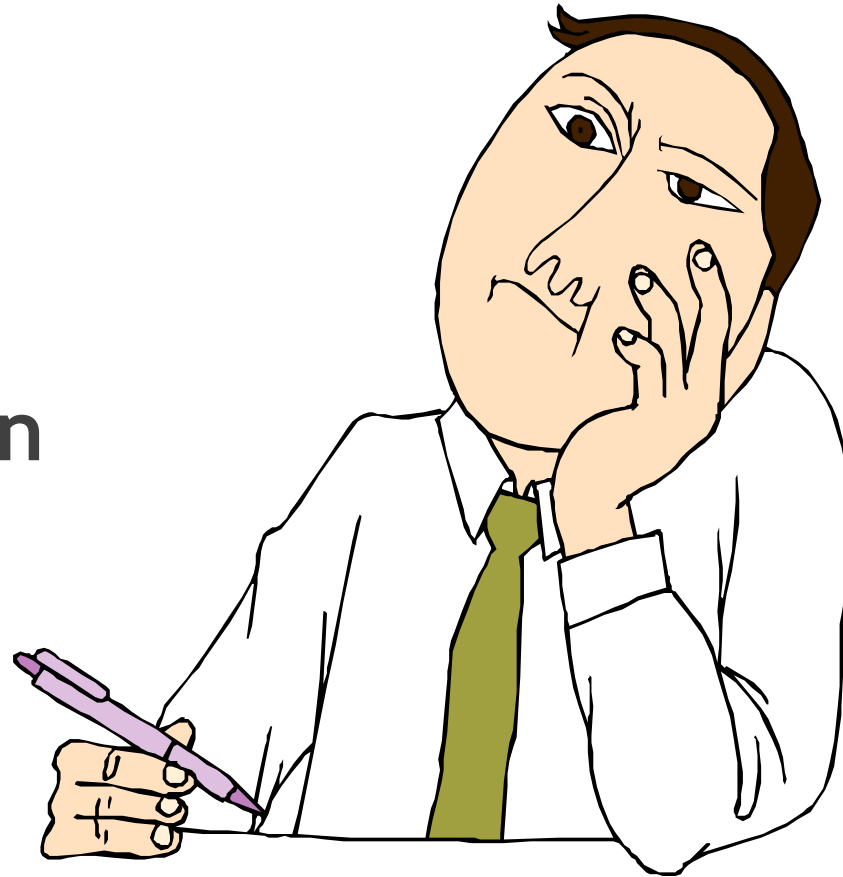 - "I think... What do you think?"
  - "I would like..."

Personalities who cause conflict

- ▶ **Aggressor**
- ▶ **Passive**
- ▶ **Absentee**
- ▶ **Error prone**
- ▶ **Negative attitude**
- ▶ **Chatterbox**
- ▶ **Do nothing**

Personalities who cause conflict

- ▶ **Unreliable**
- ▶ **Time waster**
- ▶ **Resentful person**

Types of Conflict

- ► Within an individual
- ► Between two individuals
- ► Within a team of individuals
- ► Between two or more teams within an organization

Causes of conflict

▶ **Conflict of aims- different goals**

▶ **Conflict of ideas- different interpretations**

▶ **Conflict of attitudes – different opinions**

▶ **Conflict of behavior- different behaviors are unacceptable**

Stages of Conflict

- **Conflict arises**
- **Positions are stated and hardened**
- **Actions, putting into action their chosen plan**
- **Resolution???**
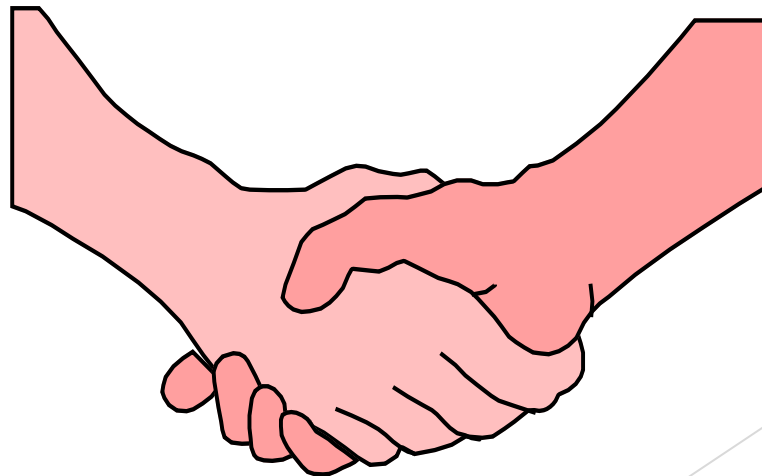
Preventing Conflict

- Assess positive and negative personality traits of people involved
- Determine personality type
  - Aggressive
  - Submissive
  - Assertive
- Assess if people are introvert or extroverts…

Preventing Conflict

▶ **Review past conflicts**

▶ **Assess communication skills of those involved**

▶ **Read body language of participants**

Preventing Conflict

- Try to reduce conflict
  - Realize that communication is colored by personal experience, beliefs, fear, prejudices
  - Try to be neutral
  - Plan the timing and place of the conversation
  - Realize that outside stress may add to confrontation
  - Eliminate/reduce external interruptions

Preventing Conflict
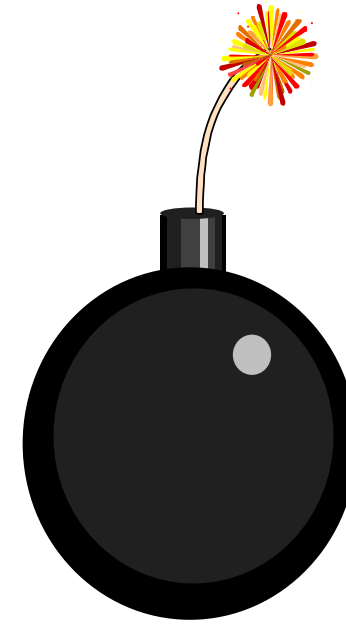
- Manage the language used
  - Neutral vs. loaded words
  - Reduce technical language
  - Allow for cultural differences in language
  - Words may have different meanings for different people...ask them to elaborate

Aids to Communication

- Listen Actively
- Relax
- Observe body language
- Develop interest in others interests
- Ask for clarification
- Plan what you are going to say

- Tailor words to person
- Determine the best timing
- Determine the best place
- Why is the conversation necessary

Steps to resolve conflicts

- ▶ Assure privacy
- ▶ Empathize than sympathize
- ▶ Listen actively
- ▶ Maintain equity
- ▶ Focus on issue, not on personality
- ▶ Avoid blame
- ▶ Identify key theme
- ▶ Re-state key theme frequently
- ▶ Encourage feedback
- ▶ Identify alternate solutions
- ▶ Give your positive feedback
- ▶ Agree on an action plan

Conflict Table

	I win	I lose
You win	**Win-Win**	**Lose-Win**
You lose	**Win-Lose**	**Lose-Lose**

Methods to deal with conflicts

▶ **Competition** (win-lose situation)

▶ **Accommodation** (win-win situation)

▶ **Avoidance** (lose-lose situation)

▶ **Compromise** (lose-lose situation)

▶ **Collaboration** (win-win situation)

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How to prevent conflicts

- ▶ Frequent meeting of your team
- ▶ Allow your team to express openly
- ▶ Sharing objectives
- ▶ Having a clear and detailed job description
- ▶ Distributing task fairly
- ▶ Never criticize team members publicly
- ▶ Always be fair and just with your team
- ▶ Being a role model

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Conclusion

Conflict is unavoidable

- Complexity of organizational relationship
- Interaction among workers
- Dependence of workers on one another

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Conclusion (Cont'd)

► **Conflict is a healthy sign not a negative process**

► **It reflects dynamics**

Conclusion (Cont'd)

▶ **Poorly managed conflicts**
- ▶ Unfavorable with counter productive results
- ▶ Problems and negative attitude

▶ **Well managed conflicts**
- ▶ Stimulate competition
- ▶ Identify legitimate differences
- ▶ Powerful source of motivation

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