Conflict communications in the production management

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Abstract. In this article, the nature of conflict communications between the executive and the subordinates in the sphere of production management is investigated, as well as possible strategies and patterns of behavior for both parties are determined. Also, the causes, mechanisms, and solutions for conflict communications are analyzed. This article presents the results of the practical research carried out at Volgograd’s two enterprises. In this research, the way the executive's style of behavior in a conflict situation influenced the relationship with subordinates was studied.

1. Introduction
Conflict communications are found in all spheres of human activity and are often considered to be the significant and thrilling events of human life. Conflict communications – as Darwin, Marx, and Freud have shown – are a necessary and important element of life. However, their consequences may have negative effects sometimes, and these effects can be mitigated provided one possesses the skills of constructive conflict resolution. Revealing the deep foundations of conflict behavior, the psychological research is a key element in the process of cognition and management of conflict communications.

Conflict communications are a necessary component of the development of one’s personality, interpersonal relations. They also play an important role in the development of any organization and society as a whole. There are potential resources for conflict communications in any organization, and these resources usually bear the imprint of the social system and the environment in which the organization operates.

Conflict communications do not always contribute to the development of the organization. For example, conflict communications can be regarded as beneficial if they take place between the parts of the organization, thus raising the effectiveness and helping achieve the main goals[1].

The executive of any level should strive to achieve the best results so it is necessary to ensure proper interaction both between groups and between individual members, including both competition and conflict communication. Competition between groups in the organization, as well as between individual members, can be beneficial forcing them to work better, rallying the team [2].

Conflict communications are a strong radical means and its use by an opponent (a leader or a group) is justified only in extreme situations when other measures are not successful. Conflict communications violate the normal course of events and the team’s well-being and are considered socially undesirable, and in acute and abrupt forms – and as an unacceptable phenomenon. To solve such situations, it is necessary to eliminate the causes which gave rise to conflict and to restore normal relations.

2. Discussion
The study of the methods of interaction between the executive and the subordinate is associated with the definition of tactics or styles of interaction. The number of behavioral tactics, highlighted by different researchers, varies from two to five; on the other hand, there is no unity of ideas about their content characteristics [3]. However, the most productive way to study the interaction between the
executive and the subordinate is to diagnose behavior styles using methods based on the ideas of Thomas E Phipps JR [4].

Various combinations of quality and degree of attitudes intensity of interacting parties determine the way in which their interaction will unfold. On the one hand, understanding the basic styles of behavior helps predict the tactics of interaction, and on the other hand, to assess the effectiveness of one’s own behavior.

The following basic interaction styles are described:
1) The use of power – subordination. There is a high level of interest in achieving results combined with a lack of concern for the interests of the other side.
2) Smoothing of contradictions based on flexibility and tolerance. This interaction style is characterized by a high focus on the interests of the subordinate, and a low focus on the result. Interaction is often achieved by parties abandoning their original positions.
3) Neutrality maintenance no matter what it takes (the lowest values for both measurements).
4) The average position on both coordinates determines the strategy when the positions come to the agreement. The agreement is the result of negotiations.
5) A Paternalistic approach to interaction is possible with high support of the interests of another person and a high interest in finding a solution to the problem. With this orientation, partners are able to reason sensibly and to find out who is right by comparing the facts, logical analysis, and evaluation.

As the authors highlight, none of these styles characterize one person compared to another, though each style can be dominant. In addition, the dominance of one style can be temporary; a person can abandon it and change it to another if it is inefficient. Further conceptual development of the ideas of Blake, Mouton, and Thomas was carried out in the study of N V Grishina, in which the explanatory models mentioned above are directly applied to the subordinate relations.

In order to identify the dominant factors in conflict communications between the head of the enterprise and the subordinates, in 2017, the practical studies were conducted at two enterprises in Volgograd, examining the influence of the executive’s behavior style in a conflict situation on his relationship with the subordinates. The main hypothesis of the study was based on the assumption that the relationship between the head and the subordinates is determined by the strategies of behavior used by the head in a conflict situation. Thus, the objects of the study were 10 chiefs and 2 directors of the enterprises. The sample size was 280 people. The survey was chosen as the method of data collection. The data obtained were encoded; automatic processing of the obtained sociological information was carried out with the help of Microsoft Excel editor.

The data collection procedure was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, each of the 12 executives was tested by the method of R Kilmann, K Thomas (in the adaptation of N V Grishina) aimed at identifying the strategies of behavior used in conflict situations. In the second stage, each executive was evaluated by his subordinates according to the following parameters: 1) the quality of the executive’s work; 2) the level of special knowledge possessed; 3) independence; 4) a sense of responsibility; 5) perseverance; 6) the team management; 7) the attitude to subordinates; 8) the relationship with the superior managers; 9) self-control; 10) overall assessment. Each parameter was estimated on a five-point scale. Various combinations of quality and the degree of attitudes intensity of interacting parties determine how the process of interaction between the executive and the subordinate will unfold [5]. In this study, particular attention is paid to the problem of conflict communication between the executive and the subordinate, and possible strategies of the behavior of both parties are identified. As a tool for the analysis and settlement of conflict communications in the office, a package of diagnostic techniques and practical recommendations for the analysis, management, prevention, and resolution of conflicts is given to the executive. The results show that even in the groups with good relationships and in the organizations with effective management some conflict communication is not only possible, but even desirable. Undoubtedly, they are not always positive. In some cases, they may interfere with the satisfaction of the needs and desires of the subordinates and the achievement of the goals of the organization. Based on the analysis of each executive’s performance, the following conclusions can be drawn.
3. Results
In cases when the executive’s activity is mainly connected with working with people (human resources, administrative service), the subordinates demand from the executive such parameters as self-control, the appropriate relationship with subordinates. Such executives get a higher assessment if the prevailing strategies of behavior in the conflict are a strategy of cooperation.

The attitude of subordinates to the chiefs, whose direct duty in addition to the management of subordinates is the performance of production activities, involving the presence of deep professional knowledge (in the field of construction, etc.), is determined by a number of factors. These factors are the quality of work, expertise, and leadership; and to a lesser extent - self-control and the relationship with the subordinates [6].

Such executives are regarded by the subordinates as, first of all, the experts and their errors and mistakes in the management are not always noticed. In this case, the attitude of subordinates to their executive is less determined by the strategies of behavior in the conflict they prefer. It should also be noted that the overall assessment of the head of the personnel or administrative service is higher than that of the "production manager", though insignificant (at the level of statistically insignificant differences).

Almost every participant is looking for supporters, which means that the original conflict is replenished with new contradictions that reflect the interests of those who joined it. And since the conflict can bring less benefit, compared to material, moral, and psychological damage to the team, and can endanger physical and mental condition of the participants, the executive has to take measures. The executive’s inaction can be regarded as indifference, cowardice, and incompetence.

Analyzing the behavioral tactics of managers in interaction with the subordinates, we can distinguish two main dimensions:
1) The aim to satisfy the interests of the subordinate involving cooperation and associated with an integrative style of behavior;
2) The aim to satisfy the personal interests of the executive and the achievement of his own goals in the first place.

The combination of these basic styles with the account of the degree of their severity create five tactics of interaction:
- A persistent and unable to unite (non-cooperative) leader is likely to choose the tactics of perseverance, competition, competition;
- A persistent and cooperative leader is likely to choose cooperation tactics;
- A non-persistent and non-cooperative leader is likely to choose avoidance tactics;
- A non-persistent and cooperative leader is likely to choose adaptation tactics;
- The average degree of expression of each of these styles is likely to lead to compromise tactics.

Analyzing the answers of respondents which characterize the influence of the behavioral style of the executive in a conflict situation on his relationship with subordinates, we can state the following. As can be seen (Table 1), if the activity of the executive implies the possession of serious professional knowledge, then his relations with the subordinates are determined not only by the strategy of behavior of this executive in the conflict communication but also by his assessment as a specialist. The assessment of the executive, whose work is mainly connected with interaction with people, is largely determined by the strategies of his behavior and such quality as self-control.

| Table 1. Ways of resolving conflict communications in the workplace |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ways of resolving conflict communications | Executives, HR, and administrative services | Manufacturing managers |
| Conflict resolution according to the nature and content of the conflict | | № 3 № 10 |
| Conflict resolution according to its aims | | № 4 № 5 |
Conflict communications between the head and the subordinate are inevitably associated with the aggravation of the emotional tone of the relationship and their progressive destabilization. However, the open contradiction arising in the course of industrial relations performs at the same time a kind of cognitive function when the development and dynamics of this situation lead to a systemic understanding of the conflict situation.

One reason for the conflict between an executive and a subordinate may lead to conflict communication of different psychological types with different development models, different consequences for the participants. It depends on such psychological factors as participants’ perception of the situation, their attitude to it, the strategy of their behavior. The study conducted by the authors helps identify the following main models of the development of conflict communications in the workplace [7].

The "Industrial dispute" model. In this type of situations, there are contradictions on production questions between the executive and the subordinate and these questions are usually connected with their shared activity. Both the executive and the subordinate believe they can reach the agreement and look for the ways to achieve it. Their communication becomes intense, they discuss the situation, advantages and disadvantages of both points of view, use arguments, try to justify their position. The relations between the executive and the subordinate are characterized by goodwill, concern, and companionship. If conflict communication in the workplace develops according to this scheme, the subject of the proceedings will be the specific circumstance that caused the contradiction, and these differences will not be transferred to other aspects of the work. In this model, there is a high probability of making a really constructive decision that will satisfy both sides of the argument.

The "Formalization of communications" model. In the case of expanding the zone of contradiction in the workplace, arising on a wider range of issues, there are conflict situations developing under the scheme of the "production dispute". Recognizing a wide range of existing contradictions, the executive and the subordinate usually doubt that it is possible to reach the agreement and sometimes simply do not want to discuss controversial issues. If the decision is made, the parties turn to external, formal, and official methods of decision ("You are the boss, you decide", "Let the team members decide"). If one of the opponents is superior, he uses his right to make a final decision. The interaction of the participants in a conflict situation can be characterized as the interaction in the workplace. In such situations, the executive and the subordinate refuse to make a mutual decision but state their disagreements and claims, show the inability to agree, which causes serious damage to their future relations. Communications become strictly official, the communication becomes limited, all personal leaves the relationship, i.e. the relationship becomes strictly formal.

The "Psychological resistance" model. In this type of conflict communication, the real zone of disagreements in the workplace is not defined and tends to expand since the executive and the subordinate find it difficult to clearly determine the disagreements and tend to exaggerate them ("We are completely different people"). Communication in such a situation is almost impossible, opponents have a negative attitude towards each other and do not hide it either from themselves or from the
partner, or from others. Any word can become a source for insults and disagreements. Both parties try to affect each other’s feelings through openly hostile actions. In this conflict situation, it is not the fact of disagreements that is decisive but the development of this situation, the nature of communication, and relations between its participants.

Thus, in order to minimize conflict communications in the workplace between the executive and the subordinate the following factors must be taken into account:

1) Constructiveness depends on the friendly tone of the executive. To talk in a friendly way sounds simple and natural. It makes sense to try to speak in a friendly way when it comes even to the exchange of information in the workplace. Talking to the subordinate in a friendly tone means showing respect, concern, and eagerness to act in his interests;

2) The research conducted by psychologists concluded that those who report information and those who accept it, 80% act under the influence of feelings and only 20% – under the influence of the mind. Therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind the emotional side of communication when dealing with subordinates. The executive should perceive subordinates as a complex and should not be afraid to show his feelings in the conversation. Such an executive can win the subordinates’ trust. The emotional part of the information is more difficult to decipher than its business content;

3) In the executive-subordinate conversation on production questions, it is important not only what the executive wants to report but also how much of the information the subordinate understands and how he processes what has been said;

4) The main resource for minimizing the conflicts in the workplace is the executive’s patience. He should be able to listen to the subordinate and find enough time to do this;

5) Favorable interaction in the workplace helps maintain the atmosphere of frankness. Thus, the executive helps the subordinate take the right position;

6) If the executive wants the conversation to be effective, he should not resort to double-meaning and vague formulations. The subordinates will rather understand unambiguous orders, short, and clear phrases;

7) The executive should not avoid responsibility. He also has the right to make mistakes, but the employees can ascribe to him only the mistakes that he has really made;

8) The executive should be able to defend his projects or position. These qualities subordinates will appreciate.

9) If the subordinate is not ready for a serious conversation or is not able to conduct a constructive conversation, it is better to postpone the conversation. The proposal to postpone the conversation can come from both the subordinate and the executive. If they are not honest with each other, the conversation will not be constructive and each will justify the behavior of the other participant in different ways.

Each individual has his own personality that requires a respectful attitude. A positive attitude creates a good mood, inspires a person to new labor feats [8]. The executive’s unfair assessment discourages the subordinates, narrows the consciousness and creativity, the subordinates quickly get tired under the "burden of work", which in itself feeds the emergence of conflict communications. The most frequently mentioned causes of conflict communication are the following:

- The errors in the application of sanctions and incentives, especially when this system is poorly thought out and the executive encourages the employee on the basis of personal sympathy, not an objective assessment of his work;
- The flaws in the distribution of work between the employees according to their knowledge, experience, position, and salary;
- Every conscientious worker expects promotion which is associated with his financial position, prestige in the team and, finally, self-esteem but the executive invites someone "from the outside" when there is a candidate inside the team;
- The salary determination which disrupts the balance "contribution-salary";
- The executive is sensitive to the standing of the subordinate, neglects his standing, and tries to harm him, to undermine the credibility;
The executive accuses the employee, undermines his reputation in front of other people;
- The vague formulation of the assigned tasks with a deliberately negative assessment of the result;
- Suspicion and secret supervision of the documents, workplace, etc;
- The executive’s underestimation of the importance of tasks explanation, information relevance cause mistrust, suspicion, and intrigues [9].

In this study, the subordinates noted that these mistakes of the executive have a negative impact on the moral and psychological climate in the team. Thus, this helps identify the dynamics of the conflict impulses in the everyday space of the relations of production.

According to N V Grishina, conflicts can be seen as people’s reaction to obstacles they face when trying to achieve various goals in a shared activity, the reaction to others’ behavior that does not meet their expectations, as well as a reaction based on the incompatibility of characters, dissimilarity of cultural foundations and needs [10].

4. Conclusion

The results of the practical study showed that the responsibility of the head of the organization is to choose an appropriate strategy which can serve a basis for the most productive ideas as well as attract people who can turn these ideas into reality. In order to make the right choice, the executive should have great knowledge and skills in the field of management psychology. In particular, the ability to behave in the conflict situations is important for an executive of any level. The results of the study and their analysis make it reasonable to put forward the thesis that the head of any Department, regardless of the content of his work, should possess certain skills in the field of conflict communications and the methodology for their settlement [11].

The stage of conflict behavior is inevitably associated with the aggravation of the emotional tone of the relationship between the executive and the subordinate, and their progressive destabilization. However, the executive’s actions perform at the same time a kind of cognitive function, when the escalation and development of the conflict lead to a deeper, though not always a more accurate understanding of the situation.

In terms of the socio-psychological analysis, the possible conflict communications in the field of management can be of the following types: aspect (trait or set of traits) of personality – aspect of the personality, person - person, person – group, and group – group. In the first case, we usually deal with the conflict impulse of individual characteristics of a person and people’s behavior; in the second, with their open confrontation about their needs, motives, values, and attitudes; in the third and fourth, an open clash of an individual with a group or a group with a group [12].

Almost all of these variations of conflict communications take place in the situation of business interaction since contradictions in it can be associated with the peculiarities of people’s behavior, for example, their lack of compatibility (the first case), as well as with an open confrontation of the executive and subordinate, or the whole team [13].

The management in any conditions remains organizational and communicative. The styles of the interaction between the executive and subordinates we have examined are open to being filled with the psychological content.

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