Building Conflict-Competent Teams

Ben Ziegler, MERIT TA
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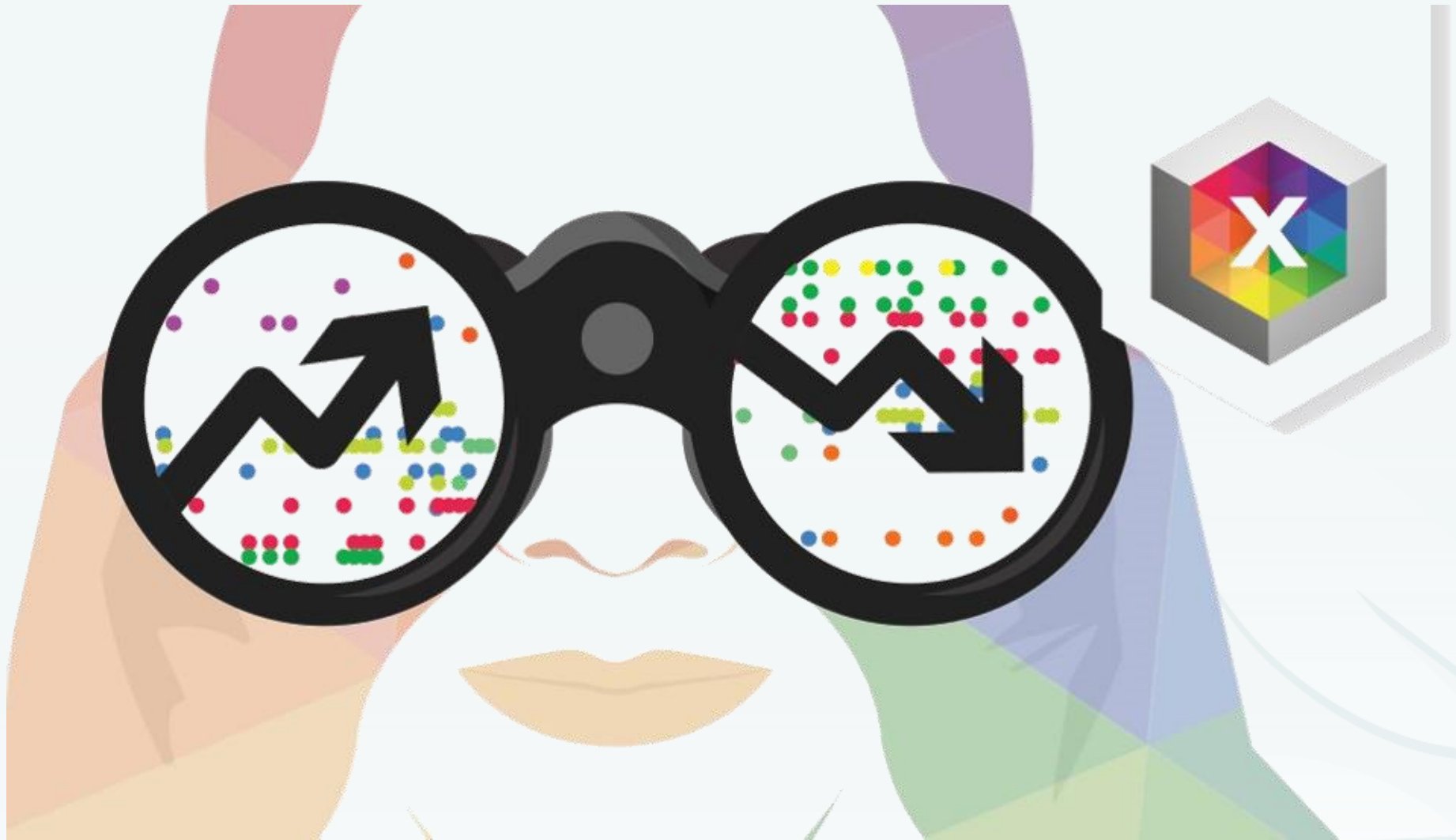
Agenda

1. Conflict in teams

2. Task vs. Relationship conflict

3. Techniques for staying on track as a team

4. Trust and psychological safety in teams

Why Conflict in Teams can be good?

"In great teams conflict becomes productive. The free flow of conflicting ideas is critical for creative thinking, for discovering new solutions that no one individual would have come up with on their own."

"Conflict is the primary engine of creativity and innovation."

"Conflicts are the bedrock for building stronger intra-team relationships and collaboration."

Level 1: Differences

Level 2: Misunderstandings

Level 3: Disagreements

Level 4: Discord

Level 5: Polarization

- **Task Conflict** – concerns disagreements among team players about the work they are performing. It evolves from the natural differences of ideas and opinions that occur among people. This type of conflict, when managed well, can improve the performance of teams.

- **Relationship Conflict** – centers more on who is to blame than on how to solve the problem.

- **Task conflict can morph into relationship conflict**… when the situation regarding the task gets out of hand, debate about the best ways to approach a particular issue suddenly becomes personalized attacks on each.

- **Key:** "how can we use task conflict while at the same time lessening the chances that it will change into relationship conflict?"

Activity – We can do it!

Scenario:
Most teams focus on tasks and not much on 'how' they work together. Rather than your team running to HR with complaints, you want your team to handle conflicts, themselves.

Question for discussion in small group (Zoom breakout)
Conflict is inevitable. What needs to happen for your team to manage its' own conflicts more effectively?

Activity:
1. Discuss questions in your assigned Zoom room/group
2. Return to main room
3. Share answers

Two good questions the team leader can ask team members:

1. What will it take for you to bring yourself fully to the team process?

2. What has not worked well for you with past teams, and how can we address the problem at the start this time?

Activity – Getting started on the right foot!

Questions for discussion in small group (Zoom breakout)
1. What has <u>not worked well</u> in past teams or projects that you have been part of or observed?
2. What would you recommend be done differently at the startup of your next team or project in order that <u>things worked well</u>?

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- **Team agreements**

- **Structured disclosure** (safely sharing views, thoughts, unique perspectives, and experiences can help camaraderie and trust)

- **Predicting "hot" topics** (being proactive with potential hot spots)

- **Describing desired outcomes** – starting with the end in mind

- **Pre-mortem** (By imagining failure in advance – by thinking backwards, through to what might cause a false start – you can anticipate some of the potential problems and avoid them once the actual project begins.)

- **Preliminary perspective sharing** – quick and concise (a form of iterative pre-empting of issues)

Psychological safety is the belief that your environment is safe for interpersonal risk–taking.

TRUST
Will **YOU** give others the benefit of the doubt when you take a risk?

"Dorj is probably going to freak out if I disagree with him."

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY
Will OTHERS give you the benefit of the doubt when you take a risk?

"My team expects me to speak up. It's how we do things."

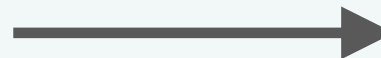**Things that may help cultivate psychological safety**

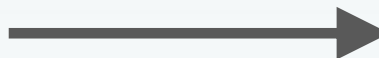Role clarity

Peer support

Interdependence

Learning Orientation

Positive Leader Relations

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

A sense that people will not be embarrassed or punished for speaking up.

Benefits associated with psychological safety

Information sharing

Satisfaction

Learning behaviours (seeking info: experimenting: reflecting)

Engagement

Improved Performances

Outcomes

(Not) Speaking up and knowledge loss

Situation	My Intent	My Action	Loss of Knowledge
When someone asks me a potentially embarrassing question	To save face, my own or her's	I answer a different question while pretending that I am answering the question asked	• I do not learn how she views the issue that the question raised. • I fail to learn the relationship of her question to our work
When all others in the group support a decision that I believe is wrong	To avoid being seen as not a "team player"	• I do not offer my thinking or evidence • I pretend that I agree	• Others lack access to all the knowledge available to make the decision • Potentially, the group makes a mistake
When another disagrees with my position on an issue	In an attempt to be clear and to help him understand	• I assume he does not yet understand and explain again, then again • When he still does not agree I assume he is closed or stupid • I give up on him and decide he is not worth the effort	• I fail to learn about any information about my position that I may be missing • I fail to learn where my logic may be faulty • He sees me as dictatorial and closed

Speaking up and knowledge gain

Situation	My Intent	My Action	Knowledge Gain
When someone asks me a potentially embarrassing question	To learn if I have made a mistake and to understand why the question is important to the asker	• If I have made a mistake I acknowledge it, and work with her to find out how to rectify it • Ask her what her intent is behind her question	• I learn how she views the issue that the question raised • I learn if I have made a mistake, so I can correct it
When all others in the group support a decision that I believe is wrong	To offer the group my thinking so they can take it into account in the decision	• Clearly state my position, my interests, and the evidence that supports it • Ask others if they see something missing from my reasoning or evidence	• Knowledge gain?
When another disagrees with my position on an issue	To understand why he disagrees and what I may be unaware of that impacts on my position	• Ask him how he sees the issue differently • Ask him for his reasoning and the evidence that supports his position	• Knowledge gain?

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When all others in the group support a decision that I believe is wrong	To offer the group my thinking so they can take it into account in the decision	• Clearly state my position, my interests, and the evidence that supports it • Ask others if they see something missing from my reasoning or evidence	• I discover if I am mistaken in my reasoning or evidence • If my position and evidence is persuasive other take it into account in the decision process
When another disagrees with my position on an issue	To understand why he disagrees and what I may be unaware of that impacts on my position	• Ask him how he sees the issue differently • Ask him for his reasoning and the evidence that supports his position	• If he has evidence I was unaware of, I learn about it and change my position • If we are misinterpreting each other's words or meaning, we both discover that • If his evidence is unconvincing, I explain to him why I do not find it convincing and continue to hold my initial position

Wrap-up Activity
Start, Stop, Continue

Start, Stop, Continue: A technique to help teams experiencing conflict to slow down so they consider what is working, what is not working, and what else is needed for improved interactions and results.

Question for discussion in small group (Zoom breakout)
- What else is needed for improved interactions and results in your team?

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Mongolia:
Enhancing Resource
Management through
Institutional Transformation