

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AS AN ELEMENT OF ACTIVITY OF THE CONSULTING ORGANIZATION

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Abstract: The work is devoted to the study of the specifics of conflict management methods application by consulting organizations in the course of rendering professional services to small business entities. The relevance of the research topic is due to the fact that in the modern society the intellectual work product is becoming more and more important, what can be applied in solving production problems, topical management tasks and providing the foundations for the functioning of an organization. At the same time, there are actively developed methods and procedures of effective management of various and negative, at first sight, social phenomena, such as conflict. One of the "conducts" for conflict management intellectual technologies is the consulting, which ensures the reproduction of qualitatively new services and products, and is the focus of practical knowledge and experience that are necessary for business and government structures. As practice of the interaction process between subjects in the business environment shows, a conflict is a socially organized process that is deliberately initiated by members of society to resolve any contradiction which complicates the implementation of the main interests. Thus, the conflict has the property of harmonizing the current social development. In view of this, the authors have carried out a comprehensive study of conflict management within the framework of implementation of consulting activities, the ultimate goal of which is to assist in identifying and overcoming negative aspects of the contradictions that have arisen, at the same time, designing and implementing a constructive scenario for the development of conflict situations among business entities.

Keywords: conflict management, conflict management methods, consulting, constructive conflict, organizational environment, entrepreneurship.

1 Introduction

Conflict management as an area of activity and management tool in the organization has been developed in its practical and theoretical field relatively recently.

In the middle of the XX century, the first professional consultants in the field of conflict management, such as L. Krisberg and F. Glazl, have occurred. This situation is due to the fact that after the "great depression" of 1929-1933 conflict management or "crisis management" became a well-known tool for establishing interaction in the internal and external environment of an organization, and its strategies and tactics have helped to improve management practices.

In addition, F. Glazl insisted on the search for a mechanism for institutionalization and differentiation of conflicts in terms of "formation of constructive attitudes in the course of conflict interaction" (Glazl, 2002; Villalobos Antunez, 2018). We believe that in this thesis F. Glazl meant the process of finding a person with skills of conflictological competence. We consider that the presence of this quality among representatives of entrepreneurship will lead to a significant increase in the efficiency of the business sector.

However, on the way of professional intervention in a conflict, difficult obstacles often arise in the form of attitudes and stereotypes in conflicting subjects, such as conflict-phobia (Coser, 1968). It's no secret that some representatives of modern society find that all conflicts are equally dangerous, and that those who are inclined to be in conflict need to be isolated from the rest of society. Such an incorrect understanding of the essence of conflicts loads the situation with various speculations and saturates the negative background.

Meanwhile, conflicts occupy one of the central positions in the functioning of an organization. This is due not only to the resource costs associated with them and possible destructive consequences, but also to their high importance in terms of organizational, innovative and creative capabilities. These characteristics correspond to the concept of "constructive conflict", which L. Kozler discloses as "a conflict that positively influences the structure, dynamics and effectiveness of socio-psychological processes and serves as a source of self-

improvement and self-development of an individual" (Shane, 2008; Dashkin, 2017).

In our view, from the perspective of functional organization and settlement of conflictual relations, it is possible to address the experience and specifics of the consulting institute, namely, the services of professional consultants into the field of conflict management. At the same time, the active work of an organization in this direction can become its competitive advantage, especially in the context of the crisis and the development rates fluctuations.

2 Methodology

The following approaches and methods of research were applied in the work: organizational theory and organizational behavior, structural-functional approach, institutional and interdisciplinary approaches.

The structural and functional approach allows us to consider the activity of a consulting organization in the form of an integrated structure of goals and functions on the application of conflict management capabilities to improve the efficiency of business entities.

In turn, within the framework of the theory of organization and the theory of organizational behavior, we conducted a study of internal problems of a business entity through the prism of organizational relations, which allows us to find a way to solve them through organizational and constructive team work.

The institutional approach involved in the study makes it possible to trace and note the peculiarities of the institutional development and formation of consulting activities in the sphere of conflict management in Russia and abroad for a deeper understanding of these categories due to possible features of their application in practice.

Also, taking into account the specifics of the scientific problems being solved, a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to the study of the specifics of the consulting activities implementation in the aspect of conflict management is involved in the writing of the paper.

3 Results

Issues of conflict management are becoming more topical in the sphere of consulting. In our opinion, this is due to the fact that each conflict, like a person, is unique in its own way, and thus requires an individual approach of a specialist on conflicts. It should be noted that in addition to consulting companies, conflict management services are provided by business schools, training and psychological centers.

To date, consulting companies offer the following methods and techniques for managing conflicts: thematic trainings; coaching sessions with heads of organizations and units; training seminars and individual conversations, supervisions; corporate training; master classes.

It should be noted that in the conflict, actors of interaction often have polar interests and goals and at the same time apply different strategies and means for their implementation. In turn, the "third" party which is not interested and not involved in the conflict, organizes the process of settling the contradiction that has arisen, preventing the destructive contradiction, and also helping to clarify the conflict situation as a whole (translates the view of the problem "from the outside").

It is also necessary to emphasize that a conflict is largely constructive and manageable when it carries a rational character, while the discretion of the participants in the relationship, the desire and ability to negotiate is important. In a conflict situation, co-ordination and joint efforts of employees and

management personnel are needed, since the skillful conduct of business is inconceivable without effective interpersonal interaction, and, consequently, without conflicts. Assist in the implementation and development of interaction between the subjects of a conflict, direct joint efforts is one of the tasks of consultants working in the field of conflict management.

4 Discussion

Analysis of scientific literature has shown that there are many studies on the topic of conflict management in an organizational environment, as well as the content of the concept of "consulting", on consulting activities, as these institutions are actively developed in the social sciences.

Among the theoretical works on conflict prevention and resolution, the works of the representative of positive functionalism, L. Kozler, are known for his scientific development of the social conflict theory and the concept of conflict as a starting point for strengthening consensus (Coser, 1968), and are of particular value.

L. Krisberg made a significant contribution to the development of ways to practical application of the theory of conflict in the political and economic spheres (Kriesberg, 2007; Kriesberg, 2009). Note that L. Krisberg was engaged in advising government and non-governmental organizations on conflict resolution issues. In general, in his works of the above-mentioned foreign theorists, one can trace the idea that conflicts are natural and often necessary for social changes.

The American mathematician and economist of Russian descent I. Ansoff who studied modifications of the special control method for intermittent changes called "control by circumstances" (Ansoff, 2015), closely dealt with the problems of strategic management of crisis phenomena in organizations at the end of the 20th century in the United States.

Valuable source of scientific research for us was the practice of F. Glazl, who was the author of numerous publications in the field of conflict management and management consulting, engaged in the search for mechanisms of institutionalization of conflicts and formation of constructive attitudes among the conflicting parties (Glazl, 2002).

Among Soviet theoreticians of the Soviet period, we could distinguish A.I. Kravchenko, who paid much attention to the methodology and methodics of conflict research. At the same time, we could note the Russian researcher A. K. Zaitsev, the creator of the Kaluga Institute of Sociology and Counseling (KaIS-K), who studied the practical resolution experience for various kinds of conflicts, mainly in the conditions of enterprises (Kravchenko, 2005).

In the late XX - early XXI centuries, a special place in the concept of conflict management is occupied by scientific research L.N. Choi. He believed that the concept of conflict management should include not only regulation, but also regulation of the process of unleashing the conflict, as well as activities to manage it and increase the intensity (Tsoy, 2001).

The study of the consulting activity basics is presented in the works of T. I. Grable and A. V. Tolstikov, in which a scientific interest is paid to the problem of establishment of the institution of counseling and the question of its integration into other spheres of social life (Jones, 2008).

In the foreign scientific literature on the problems of counseling, we note D. Meister, who focused his field of research on the coordination of managerial processes in the organization (Rozdolskaya, 2014). In turn, M. Kipping considers consulting as a field of knowledge production requiring deep systematic studies (Grabelnykh and Tolstikova, 2012).

Thus, we determined that at the present stage of the scientific knowledge development in the scientific research, the consulting activity content as a mechanism of positive impact on conflicts

is not fully disclosed. Nevertheless, regarding the problems posed by the authors in this paper, we believe that there is a need for a comprehensive review of management technologies, conflictological and psychological methods of conflict management in business entities through consulting institutions with a view to creating a positive impact on the dynamics of enterprise development in general.

At the same time, the scientific literature did not receive due coverage of the consulting as a social institution, insufficiently defined mechanisms for using conflictological knowledge in the complex of providing consulting services aimed at managing conflicts in business entities.

5 Summary

We believe that conflicts often have a positive function and, having used methods and techniques of competent prevention and settlement it is possible to achieve high results in terms of qualitative and quantitative development of business. It is also necessary to take into account that the application of this or that method must be based, among other things, on the type of conflict. For example, if there is a subjective interpersonal or intergroup conflict accompanied by a high emotional background, then the application of the following methods will be appropriate: empathetic listening, questioning techniques, excluding social discrimination, sharing merit, and others. At the same time, the institutionalization of conflict relations can play an important role in stabilizing and improving the interaction between the parties. The research interest was attracted to the "open door" technique used to consolidate its position in tough negotiations, when an opponent is aggressive, expects active resistance and cannot manage the situation rationally.

This series of methods is useful for reducing emotional tension and preventing direct aggression, toughening of the struggle, and it is also applicable to maintaining and strengthening cooperation at all levels of organizational interaction in the prevention of conflicts. It is interesting that considering a conflict as a source of individual and organizational development, one can conclude about the maturity or unpreparedness of the individual, the group and the entire organization on the basis of results of the conflict settlement process analysis.

In the event of a fair conflict in an organization, that blocks normal activities and provokes a number of subjective contradictions, consultants resort to project activities within the framework of conflict management. In essence, a complete diagnosis of the customer organization is performed. Based on its results, a draft of changes is drawn up to remove the organization from the "crisis development zone". For example, if the problem initially was that there was a conflict between the supply department and the sales department at the enterprise, then, according to the diagnostic results, it turned out that there are technological problems in which solving IT specialists, logistics specialists and commodity experts are involved.

Proceeding from the fact that conflict management seems to be an effective form of rationalization of production management based on the use of effective methods and best practices, it can be assumed that the use of conflict management knowledge and technologies is one of the most effective in resolving conflict situations and increasing the competitiveness of business entities.

Conflicts are unavoidable in the process of social and economic interaction, and with good governance they promote transition of an organization to a qualitatively new level, and its comprehensive development (Jones, 2008). In this regard, a consultant, being a mediator in the conflict, requires the availability of appropriate competencies and confident possession of methods for positive settlement of contradictions.

Today, consulting activities are becoming a key and most knowledge-intensive branch of economic activity. In this regard, consulting is an instrument for increasing competitiveness and

transforming the element of the modern economy. Moreover, such indicator as the state of consulting, the level of its demand, the complexity of the tasks facing the consultants, as well as the level of methods of analysis, and qualification of specialists are those of the many existing indicators of economic growth (Rozdolskaya, 2014). Thus, the role and prestige of the consulting institute is unusually high in countries with developed economies.

6 Conclusions

As noted in the foreign scientific literature, the joint efforts of the organization, people and goals are needed to achieve systematic business success (Shane, 2008), And this is the primary target of the consulting.

The rapidly changing conditions of the external environment, and at the same time, the intensification of competition in all sectors of the economy, impose high demands on the human resources management supporting business objectives (Kibanov, 2016). In particular, the staff with its professional qualities and experience is one of the main competitive advantages of the company in the market.

Those managers who cannot focus on a conflict situation and take an unprejudiced position, often instinctively try to prevent conflict, or delay resolution of the situation. That exacerbates the current situation and threatens virtually complete loss of control over them (Proksch, 2016). In this regard, we believe that the role of the manager in matters relating to the settlement of conflict situations in an organization should be performed by a specialist with all the necessary competencies and skills, and which, due to their practice, are purposefully perfected as a conflict manager.

At the same time, it is necessary to emphasize that the process of development of an organization should be comprehensive, integrated and uniform. Otherwise, in the era of global changes and the rapidly changing economic environment, companies that are not developed in proportion to the economic, technical, personnel effectiveness can expect serious difficulties.

Thus, it can be concluded that the competent application of skills in the field of conflict management in combination with the individual and scientific and practical approaches operated by consulting allows a quick answer to the evolving challenges of our time.

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