



How to manage core conflict: A Practical Approach

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Abstract:

Conflict is a part of professional and personal lives. Some thinkers believe that a low dose of controlled conflict is in fact good for the system. The resolution of conflict can be managed by understanding the root cause and dealt them intelligently. Conflict can never be fully resolved but it can be minimized or can be used for the benefit of organization. There are several mini conflicts within an overall conflict. And they are inter-related.

Key Words: Challenges In Managing Core Conflict, Conflict Resolution using the Evaporating Cloud technique of E Goldratt.

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Introduction

Defining Core Conflict:

Core conflict can be defined as a clash between individuals or groups with opposing viewpoints, interests, or objectives. These differences may stem from various sources, including personal values, professional goals, or organizational priorities. Core conflict often arises when team members perceive their needs or beliefs to be incompatible with those of others, leading to tension and disagreement.

Understanding the Nature of Conflict:

Conflict within teams is multifaceted and can manifest in various forms, ranging from minor disagreements to more significant disputes. It is fueled by miscommunication, misunderstandings, and divergent interpretations of shared goals. Moreover, conflict can be both constructive and destructive, depending on how it is managed. When addressed effectively, conflict can stimulate creativity, innovation, and growth within the team. However, if left unmanaged, it can escalate, causing division, resentment, and decreased productivity.

Managing Conflict

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Effective conflict management is essential for fostering a positive team environment and promoting collaboration. It involves several key components:

Conflict Resolution Skills: Team members must develop the ability to address conflicts directly and find mutually acceptable solutions. This may require negotiation, compromise, or consensus-building techniques.

Self-Awareness: Understanding one's own conflict management style and tendencies is crucial for navigating disagreements effectively. By recognizing their preferences and biases, individuals can adapt their approach to conflict resolution and communication.

Conflict Communication Skills: Clear and respectful communication is essential for resolving conflicts constructively. Active listening, expressing concerns assertively, and seeking common ground are fundamental aspects of effective conflict communication.

Establishing Structure: Establishing clear processes and protocols for managing conflict can help prevent disputes from escalating. This may include regular team meetings to discuss issues openly, setting ground rules for

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communication, or appointing a mediator to facilitate resolution when necessary.

Absolutely, conflict is a natural part of any team dynamic. It often arises due to differences in perspectives, priorities, or goals among team members. However, conflict doesn't have to be detrimental; it can be an opportunity for growth and positive change if managed effectively.

Conflict management encompasses a range of skills and strategies aimed at resolving disputes and fostering constructive communication within a team. This includes:

Conflict resolution skills: These involve techniques for addressing conflicts directly and finding mutually acceptable solutions. This might involve negotiation, compromise, or collaboration.

Self-awareness about conflict modes: Understanding one's own tendencies and preferences when it comes to handling conflict can be crucial. Some people may tend to avoid conflict, while others may confront it head-on. Recognizing these patterns can help individuals adapt their approach to different situations.

Conflict communication skills: Effective communication is key to resolving conflicts. This includes active listening, expressing oneself clearly and assertively, and maintaining a respectful tone even in the face of disagreement.

Establishing a structure for conflict management: Having clear processes and protocols in place for addressing conflicts can help prevent them from escalating. This might involve regular team meetings to discuss issues openly, establishing ground rules for communication, or designating a mediator to facilitate resolution when needed.

By developing these skills and implementing effective conflict management practices, teams can navigate conflicts more successfully and maintain a positive and productive working environment.

Objective of study

- (a) To assess the type and probable cause of conflict.
- (b) To develop the practical approach to identify the conflict and the solution using

generic Evaporating Cloud Technique of E. Goldratt.

Methodology of conducting the study

Following methodology has been adopted to carry out the study to gather the data.

- (a) Secondary source: Information collected from E. Goldratt evaporating cloud technique and then practical approach has been develop using a specific scenario..
- (b) The study on the subject was carried out after the analysis of compiled data, the final finding is based on own perception and knowledge.

Major Results

The major results of the study are;

- (a) Approach to identify core conflict using CRT and then finding the solution to those using assumptions.
- (b) General guide line to practice CRT and judge the efficacy of the proposed technique to manage core conflict.

Core conflict

Like the core muscles of the body or like the main trunk of the tree, there is a core conflict and there are subsidiary mini conflicts.

Core conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. Conflict on teams is inevitable; however, the results of conflict are not predetermined. Conflict results because of miscommunication between people with regard to their needs, ideas, beliefs, goals, or values. Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in environment.

Depicting Core Conflict

The core conflict is depicted through Conflict Resolution, using the Evaporating Cloud technique of E Goldratt. The Evaporating Cloud is one of the six thinking in the Theory of Constraints initially developed by Eliyahu. M. Goldratt to enable the focused improvement of any system (especially business system). The Evaporating Cloud is suited to finding a solution to conflict between two parties or two points of



view. The method requires the participants to find 'win-win' solutions because it emphasizes that both parties are trying to reach the same ultimate goal

The above technique describes two views of reality or two arguments depicted by the two rows. Thus with a common aim, there are two ways to get there. The beliefs may or may not be compatible with each other but the actions are definitely not (if they were, there wouldn't be any conflict).

Introduction

Management to conflict

Conflict is a part of professional and personal lives. Some thinkers believe that a low dose of controlled conflict is in fact good for the system. The resolution of conflict can be managed by understanding the root cause and dealt them intelligently. Conflict can never be fully resolved but it can be minimized or can be used for the benefit of organization, and are there several mini conflicts within an overall conflict. And they are inter-related. Each one is continuously learning by experience (of self and others) how to manage his personal/organizational conflict.

Core conflict

Like the core muscles of the body or like the main trunk of the tree, there is a core conflict and there are subsidiary mini conflicts.

Core conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. Conflict on teams is inevitable; however, the results of conflict are not predetermined. Conflict might escalate and lead to nonproductive results, or conflict can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final products. Therefore, managing conflict is

integral to a high-performance team. Although very few people go looking for conflict, more often than not, conflict results because of miscommunication between people with regard to their needs, ideas, beliefs, goals, or values. Conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but managing conflicts can decrease the odds of nonproductive escalation. Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in your environment.

Managing core conflict has following benefits:

1. Listening, oral communication, interpersonal communication, and teamwork rank near the top of skills that employers seek in their new hires
2. When effectively manage and resolve conflicts with others, then more opportunities for successful team memberships are available to you.
3. If we manage this highly probable event called conflict (average five conflicts per day), then there are less apt to practice destructive behaviors that will negatively impact the team. Although conflict may be misunderstood and unappreciated, research shows that unresolved conflict can lead to aggression. Most of us use conflict skills that we observed growing up, unless have made a conscious effort to change conflict management style. Some observed good conflict management, while others observed faulty conflict management.

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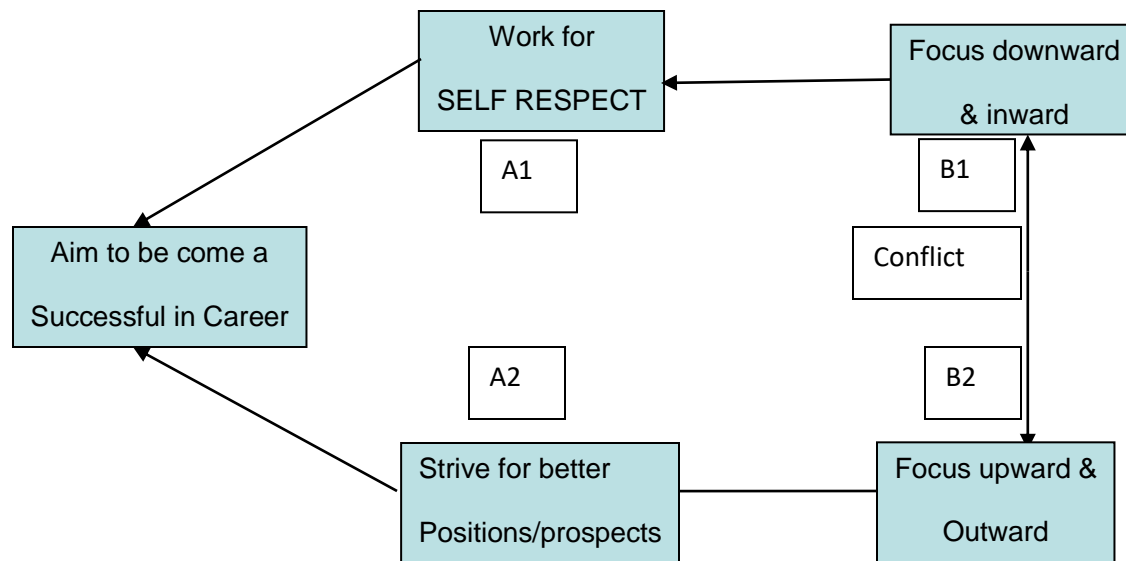


Figure 1: Depicting Core Conflict

Ingredients

Aim is depicted to the left, **beliefs** are in A1 and A2 and their corresponding **actions** are in B1 and B2 which are conflicting. The figure is read from left to right prefixing in order to..

Top Row.

In order to become successful in career, one must work for self-respect and must focus downward and inward (One relentlessly work for organization and the task at hand by subordinating own individual goals to organizational goals. While doing so, the organization prospers and his own contribution is also recognized).

Bottom Row

In order to become a successful in career. One must work and strive for better positions and higher prospects, in order to do that one must focus upward and outward (To achieve this one must persistently strive for personal excellence to obtain good positions and promotion by pursuing his individual goals. While so doing, he prospers and organization too is benefited).

Explanation

The above technique describes two views of reality or two arguments depicted by the two rows. Thus with a common aim, there are two ways to get there. The beliefs may or may not be compatible with each other but the actions are definitely not (if they were, there wouldn't be any conflict). What are hidden are the assumptions that lie underneath the arrows in the diagram.

Managing Conflict

The conflict once depicted it has to be analyzed then it has to be managed The Core Cloud Conflict is an Evaporating Cloud that emerges from analysis of a Current Reality Tree, which is one of the thinking process introduced by Eliyahu M. Goldratt's .

Current Reality Tree (CRT)

The current reality tree describes the system, as it is today, to help find the core conflict, which is a root cause of many undesirable effects (UDE). The CRT process with UDEs (list of all those things that really bothers about the current reality for instance, it really bothers managers, when due to competition they have to perpetuate zero error syndrome), two or three UDEs to be selected to develop the core



conflict, by developing each UDE conflict and then combining the conflicts to discern the underlying generic conflict that leads to them. Continuing this step wise, the CRT derives the core conflict that leads to most (and usually all) of the UDEs, A core conflict being an important conflict and therefore a high leverage place to focus on changing the process.

Analogy

An analogy of a tree with its root, trunk and branches would be in order. To find a series of cause effect relationships as we have to progressively move down the tree from the leaves to the root. If the branch is healthy then the leaves are healthy. Moving downward, if the trunk is healthy, then the branches are healthy and so on. CRT then is read bottom up as a series of If – then statements depicting cause effect relationships. The strength of these relationships can be conveniently classified as strong medium and weak so as to priorities intervention later. Quite simply put, if the root is healthy then the entire tree is healthy since the root of the tree is at the root of all cause effect relationship. Constructing the CRT requires patience (for several attempts) and clarity of thought (to focus on cause effect relationships).

Scenario's CRT (Refer Figure 2)

UDEs 1 and 2 Due to the core conflict (as explained in Figure 1) depicted at the bottom of the CRT (analogous to the root of the tree), two UDEs occur as follows :-

UDE 1 Managers cannot prioritize between developments of subordinates, Versus self-development. (This is a focusing problem between B1 and B2 of Figure 1 – it is difficult to simultaneously focus at a near object and a far object).

UDE 2 Leads to zero error syndrome for the allotted tasks (since mistakes by self and/ or subordinates are perceived as a threat to one's career. Theoretically nothing should ever go wrong under one's command)

UDEs 3, 4 and 4. The causes of UDEs 1 and 2 lead to the effects of UDEs 3, 4 and 5 as follows :-

UDEs 1-3 If the managers cannot prioritize between the development of subordinates under him versus self-development, **then** they find it difficult to reconcile personal commitments of subordinate under him in view of organizational commitments.

UDEs 1-4 If the managers cannot priorities between development of Subordinates under him versus self-development, **then** their cost benefit analysis of interest in global affairs tends to be more profitable than interest in organizational affairs.

UDEs1-5 If the managers cannot priorities between development of Subordinates under him versus self-development, **then organization** training commitments suffer due to sundry administrative duties (some of them mischievously designed).

UDEs 2-5 If managers propagate zero error syndrome for the allotted tasks **then** organizations operations commitments suffer since gladiators (those few well trained personnel who commit few or no mistakes) are developed and sustained who create a false front to deceive seniors, inspectors and clients.

UDEs 6,7 and 8. The **causes** of UDEs 3 and 5 lead to the **effects** of UDEs 6,7 and 8 as follows :-

UDEs 3-6. If managers find it difficult to reconcile personal commitments of his subordinates, then even their self-development suffers (preparation for mandatory training and professional courses) because of Improper time management and short sightedness of organization.

UDEs 5-7 & 8. If training commitments suffer, then individual professional standards



deteriorate (due to reduced organizational demand with little self-control on luxurious life style).

UDEs 9. The causes of UDEs 4, 7 and 8 similarly lead to the effect of UDE 9 i.e. managers clamor for external recognition and awards in comparison to intrinsic ones.

The Culminating Effect, UDE 10

The causes of UDEs 6,4 and 9 finally lead to the culminating effect of UDE 10, i.e. the annual appraisal reports consciousness dominates one's mind and the long term perspective is sacrificed, (one tends to increasingly think about one's actions as perceived by one's current reporting officers)

Mini Conflicts

When we drill down the various UDEs we notice mini conflicts which have to be identified in the CRT construction stage so that focused intervention is facilitated later. We will examine two of them

Mini Conflict 2 : Zero Error Syndrome

Refer Figure 3 at page 12 the top row reads as in order to enable unit to do well I must delegate responsibility to subordinates (belief A1) and in order to do that one must accept their mistakes (action B1). The bottom row reads as In order to enable organization to do well, one must efficiently complete assigned tasks (belief A2) and in order to do that one must not accept their mistakes (action B2). B1 conflicts with B2.

Mini Conflict 7: Professional Competence

Refer Figure 4 at page 12. The top row reads as in order to lead a good life, one must live up to the expectations of the seniors and in order to do that one must strive for professional competence(B1). The bottom row reads as in order to lead a good life, one must enjoy and relax (A2) and in order to do that one need not strive for professional competence (B2). Action B1 necessary for long term motivation conflicts with action B2 of short term gratification.

To find a solution to conflict, we look underneath the arrows of the core conflict to find the assumptions on which conflict diagram have been created.

Assumption of the Core Conflict

The assumption here is that "a successful manager is a good leader". When life is thought to mean climbing the ladder being on top, in positions of power, being influential being right and competing with all others then effort is directed towards personal career to be successful. We can now divide managers into four quadrants good leader and successful (1") good leader but not successful (2"), successful but not good leader (3") and neither successful nor good leader (4"). There is no problems with the 1" and the 4" types the former being ideal and the latter being undesirable. The conflict is between the 2" and 3" given a choice between the two which one to be preferred. If answer is 2" it will be able to manage the conflict of this scenario but if answer is 3" one will have to work out the CRT again (This article is not about giving a solution it is one of the solution, it is to suggest a technique to manage conflict at personal/ organizational level. Note we have ignored the overlap of good and successful characteristics in each quadrant what is meant here is the predominant characteristic in that particular quadrant.

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Injections and Future Reality Tree (FRT)

FRT describes what to change to injections are the changes one will make to the system. FRT connects one's injections to the desirable effects of future reality (Des are opposites of UDEs) having deliberately constructed the CRT and the core conflict it shouldn't be very difficult to devise multi pronged injections delivered simultaneously to the system in controlled doses. What is left hereafter is monitoring and feedback which are equally important.

Practice CRT



Before judging the efficacy of the proposed technique to manage conflict one is to attempt a CRT of the practice core conflict attempted earlier. Say the UDEs which one's organization encountered in the first six months were inability to grasp new complacency in management. Low performance in induction training tendency of organizations to assign challenging tasks to other department and not one's generating us versus them and 'I know you don't know' syndromes unable to measure performance for comparison etc. If it is not managed, this organizational conflict the user will not believe in the system and a parallel system will be developed neither system will work very well.

Conclusion

Experience demonstrates that effective leadership and a good implementation plan are the critical success factors. If beliefs are not changed, one is unlikely to succeed in changing behavior for the long term. This may cause a temporary impact but the system will over time swing back to where it was started. Don't underestimate the cultural resistance that will occur. Plan to counter the resistance but don't harm the resisters. Frequently the greatest resisters become the biggest champions once they have understood and tried the new approach.

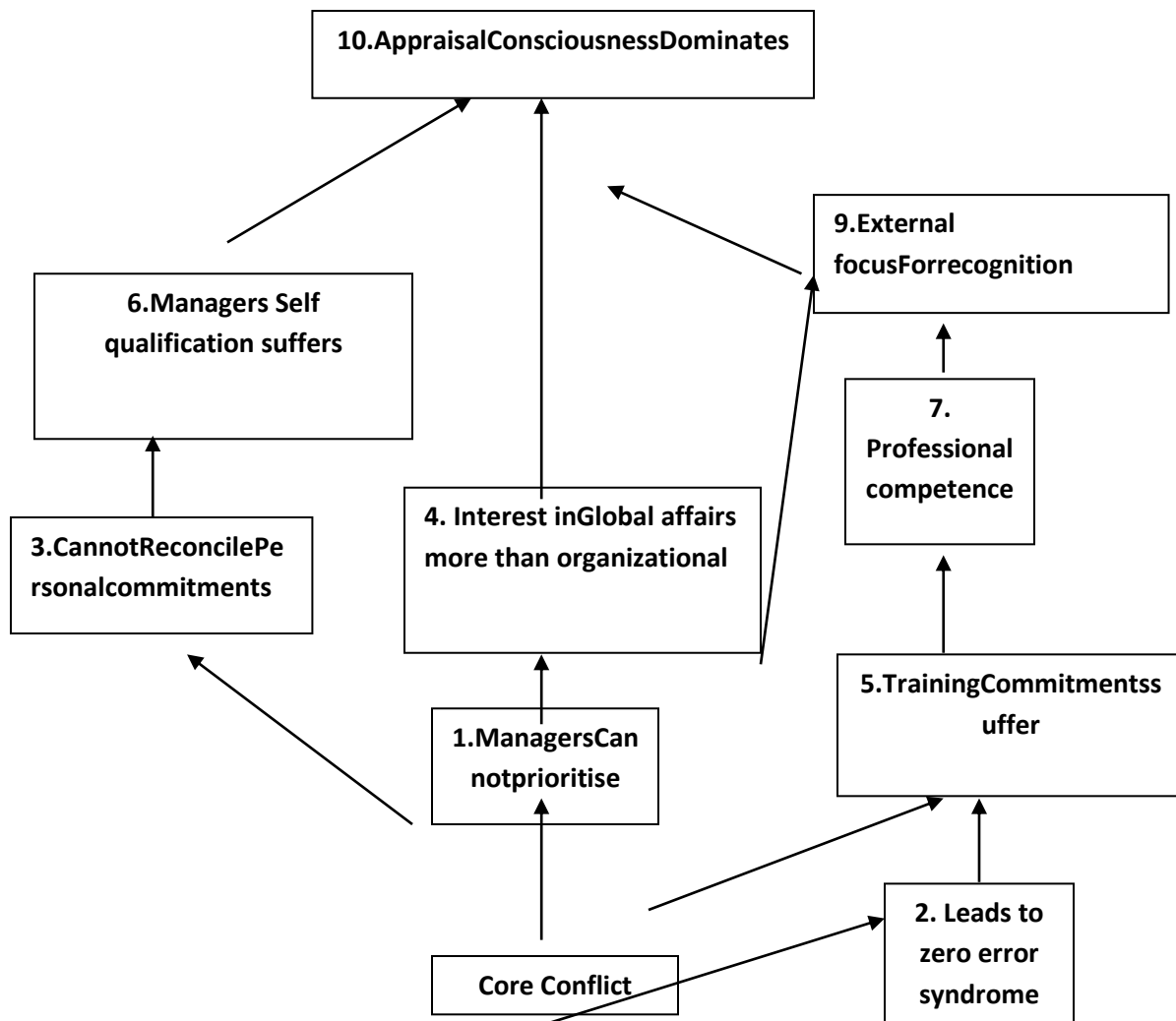


Figure 2: Current Reality tree



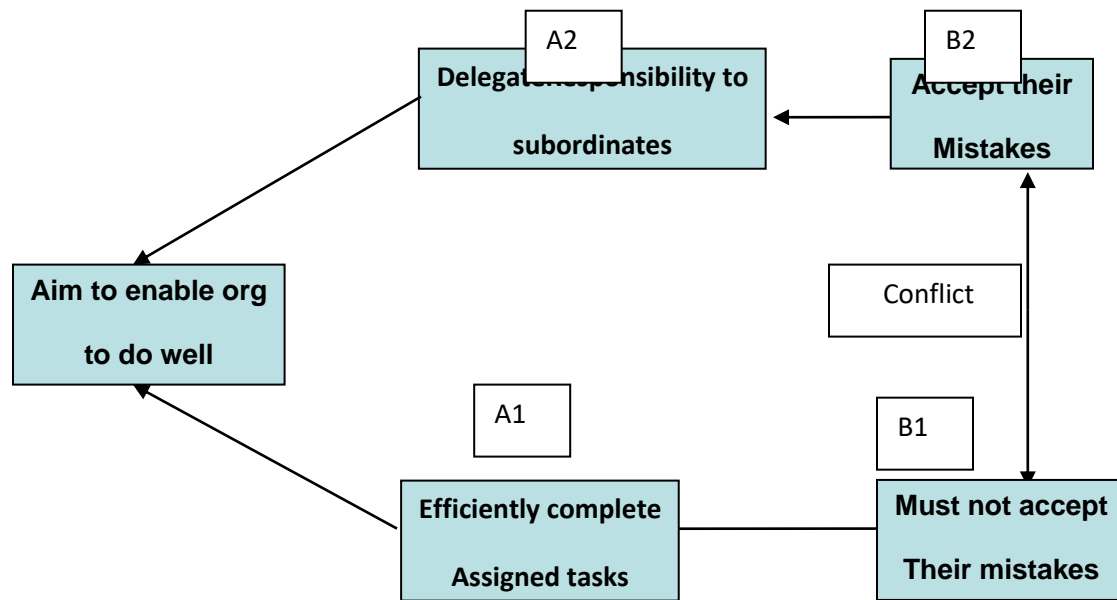
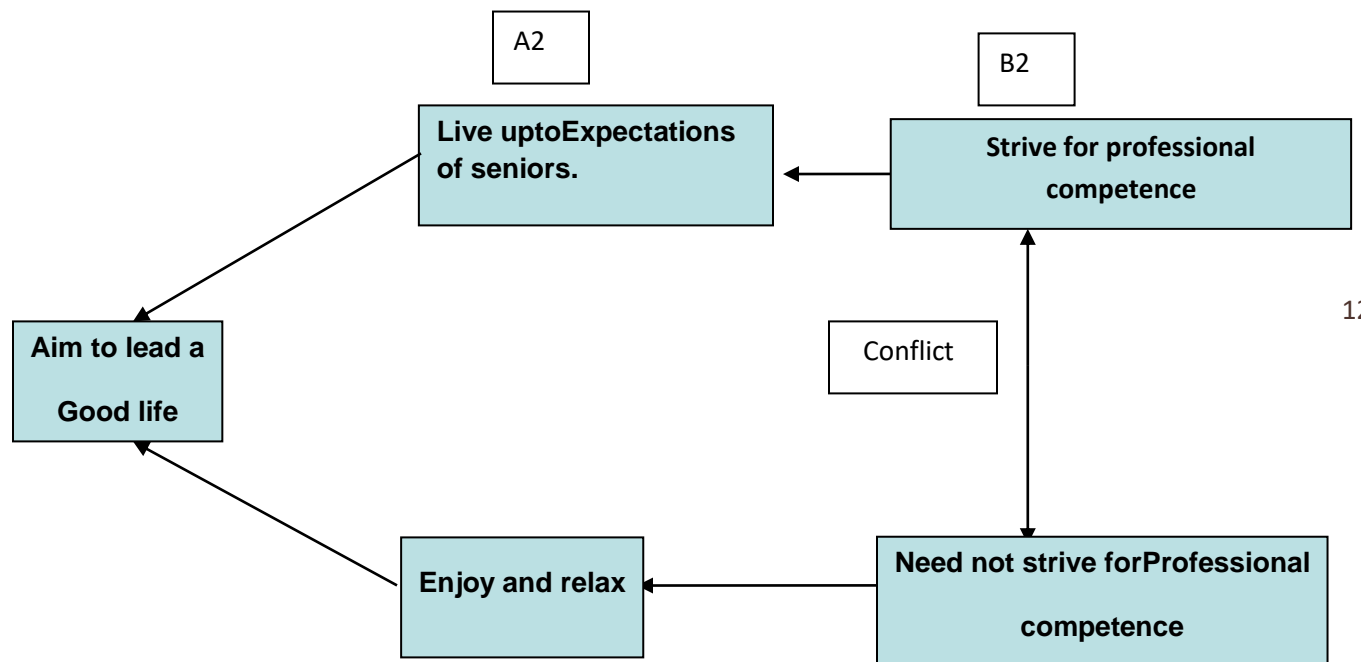


Figure 3 : Mini conflict 2 : Zero Error Syndrome



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Figure 4 : Mini Conflict 7 : Professional competence

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