

MARKETING: A POTENTIAL TOOL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract:

The occurrence of the various types of conflicts amongst individuals and or, groups in contemporary organizations is inevitable. Conflicts are of different dimensions and magnitudes, and could have various consequences. While conflicts are often perceived as having destructive and disruptive effects on organizations, it has been established that they equally have potentially productive and constructive consequences. In effect, what matters is not the occurrence of conflicts but how effectively they could be managed. Evidently, however, the conventional approaches that have often been employed for conflict resolution have proved to be mere palliative. It was therefore, proposed here that the existing traditional or conventional methods of conflict resolution could be made more effective and acceptable by adopting and employing the marketing tools to compliment the process, and make the results permanent or long lasting.

Keywords: Conflict, Dispute, Conflict Resolution, Contemporary Organizations, Potential Tool, Social Marketing

Introduction:

Conflict occurs between people in all kinds of human relationships and in all social settings. Because of the wide range of potential differences among people as Fisher (2000) explains, the absence of conflict usually signals the absence of meaningful interaction.

Conflict situations are an important aspect of the workplace. A conflict is a situation when the interests, needs, goals or values of involved parties interfere with one another. A conflict is a common phenomenon in the workplace. Different stakeholders may have different priorities; conflicts may involve team members, departments, projects, organization and client, boss and subordinate, organization needs versus personal needs.

Development, whether at the macro or micro level, can only take place or be enhanced in an atmosphere of peace. The prevalence of conflict within and between organizations is a negation of this principle and philosophy. Hence, effective management and resolution of conflicts in contemporary organizations would most likely contribute significantly to enhancing national development. Conventionally, a myriad of methods which have often been prescribed and employed for the resolution of conflict include Compromise, withdrawing (avoiding), accommodation (smoothing), problem solving (collaboration), bargaining, power plays, and so on. However, none of these methods and techniques is known to have succeeded in assuring permanent or long lasting results. The thrust of this paper therefore, is that adoption of marketing principles and techniques to compliment anyone of the conventional methods would

most likely enhance and, or ensure effective management and resolution of conflicts.

Organizational Conflict - Concept and Nature:

Wikipedia (2011) views organizational conflict as a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests between people working together.

Consador (2011) defined organizational conflict as the discord that arises when the "goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and those individuals or groups block or thwart one another's attempts to achieve their objective"

Sullivan (2010) says that conflict is inevitable whenever two or more people interact, whether in the workplace or at home, and that conflict can occur between two or more individuals, two or more groups, and an individual and a group.

Conflict takes many forms in organizations. As Johnson (1976) explains, there is the inevitable clash between formal authority and power and those individuals and groups affected. For example, there are often disputes over how revenues should be divided, how the work should be done and how long and hard people should work. There are jurisdictional disagreements among individuals, departments, and between unions and management. Besides, there are subtler forms of conflict involving rivalries, jealousies, personality clashes, role definitions, and struggles for power and favour. There is also conflict within individuals between competing needs and demands to which individuals respond in different ways. Poduska (cited in Brennen, 2011) says that an interpersonal conflict may be any form of confrontation or interaction between groups that hinders the achievement of group goals.

Conflict thus occurs between people in all kinds of human relationships and in all social

settings. Because of the wide range of potential differences among people, the absence of conflict usually signals the absence of meaningful interaction. Hence, Fisher (1990) sees conflict as an incompatibility of goals or values between two or more parties in a relationship, combined with attempts to control each other and antagonistic feelings towards each other. The incompatibility or difference however, may exist in reality or may only be perceived by the parties involved. Nonetheless, the opposing actions and the hostile emotions are the very hallmark of human conflict.

Conflict by itself is neither good nor bad. However, the manner in which conflict is handled determines whether it is constructive or destructive (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000). Conflict, as Kriesberg (1998) stressed, has the potential for either a great deal of destruction or much creativity and positive social change. Therefore, it is essential to understand the basic processes of conflict so that attempt can be made to maximize productive outcomes and minimize destructive ones.

In general, however, the term "conflict" (or "dispute") is used in a variety of ways including tension, opposition, competition, fighting, incompatible interests, violence and problem solving (Derr, 1975)

Sources and or Causes of Conflict

Scholars have made attempts to identify a number of schemes for describing sources or types of conflict (Fink, 1968; Mark and Snyder, 1958). Katz (1965) created a typology that distinguishes three main sources of conflict:

1. **Economic Conflict:** it involves competing motives to attain scarce resources. Each party wants to get the most that it can, and the behavior and emotions of each party are directed toward maximizing its gain. Union and management often have as one of its sources the incompatible goals of how to slice up the "economic pie".

2. **Value Conflict:** It involves incompatibility in ways of life ideologies - the preferences, principles and practices that people believe in. For instance, international conflict (e.g. the cold war) often has a strong value component, wherein each side asserts the rightness and superiority of its way of life and its political-economic system.
3. **Power Conflict** which occurs when each party wishes to maintain or maximize the amount of influence that it exerts in the relationship and the social setting. In this case, it is impossible for one party to be stronger without the other being weaker; at least in terms of direct influence over each other. Thus a power struggle ensues which usually ends in a victory and defeat, or in a "stand-off" with a continuing state of tension. Power conflict can occur between individuals, between groups and between nations, wherever both parties choose to take a power approach to the relationship. Power also enters into all conflict since all parties are attempting to control each other.

Fisher (2000) however explains that most conflicts are not of a pure type, but involve a mixture of sources. For example, union-management conflict typically involves economic competition, but may also take the form of a power struggle and often involves different ideologies or political values. The more sources that are involved, the more intense and intractable the conflict usually is.

Fisher (2000) furthermore identified **ineffective communication** as another source of conflict. It was explained that miscommunication and misunderstanding can create conflict even where there are no basic incompatibilities. In addition, parties may have different perceptions as to what are

the facts in a situation, and until they share information and clarify their perceptions, resolution is impossible. Self-centeredness, selective perception, emotional bias, prejudices, etc, are all forces that lead us to perceive situations very differently from other party. Lack of skill in communicating what we really mean to other party in a clear and respectable fashion often results in confusion, hurt and anger, all of which simply feed the conflict process. However, whether the conflict has objective sources or is due only to perceptual or communication problems, it is experienced as very real by parties involved.

Escalation of Conflict is yet viewed as a final source of conflict which is more additional than basic, in that it comes in after the conflict has started. Conflicts have a definite tendency to be intense and hostile, and to develop more issues, i.e. what the parties say the conflict is about. Therefore, escalating conflicts become more difficult to manage. The process of escalation feeds on fear and defensiveness.

Major Causes of Conflict

According to the literature (Brooklyn, 1975; Fisher, 2000; Brennen, 2011), there are innumerable origins of organizational dispute and each produces its own variety of effects. In general, there are six major sources:-

1. The interpersonal disagreements that arise when one person is experiencing *individual stress*.
2. The problems resulting from *role conflict*, a condition that occurs when there is a clash over one's role in the organization.
3. The *power struggle* that pits persons and groups against one another to achieve their own selfish objectives.
4. The misunderstandings and disagreements form differentiation i.e. the clashes that arise because people approach common problems from different orientations.
5. The interdependence requirements for collaboration which, if not extensive and balanced between the parties, cause communication and interaction

- breakdowns which in turn, if critical, lead to more intensive conflicts and
6. The external forces from forces outside the enterprise that breed internal pressures as the system seeks to adapt but not to disrupt its internal order.

Some reasons for conflicts enumerated by Brennen (2011) include:

- Cognitive dissonance A conflict between convergent and divergent thinking.
- Status When there is a need for status, such as the “wrong” person being promoted.
- Economics Insufficient remuneration.
- Leadership Styles Differences in leadership styles in administration.
- Stress Conflicts from stress emanating from external sources; i.e. functional or dysfunctional situations.
- Power struggle Conflict from power struggle when all want to lead and none want to follow.
- Inappropriate assignment of administrative leadership Conflict resulting from someone of less status leading a more qualified and experienced worker.
- The application and interpretation of rules and policies.
- Assessment of employee performance.
- Allocation of resources and privileges.

Types of Conflict in Organizations

Sullivan (2010) identifies types of conflict that can occur in any organization to include unclear definitions of role responsibility, conflict of interest, lack of or inadequate resources, and interpersonal relationships within the workplace. In this vein, Gareth R. Jones and Jennifer M. George in their book “Contemporary Management”, mention four types of organizational conflict (Consador, 2011):

1. **Interpersonal Conflict:** the conflict between individuals of the organization.
2. **Intra-group Conflict:** the conflict within an internal group, team or department.

These are conflicts that typically involve more than one person within a group.

3. **Intergroup Conflict:** this is the conflict between different groups, teams and departments. It arises in a situation when different groups are pitted against each other.
4. **Inter-organizational Conflict:** this is the conflict that arises across different organizations. An example is when different businesses are competing against one another.

In addition, Fisher (2000) identified three other types:

- a. **Role conflict** involves very real differences in role definitions, expectations or responsibilities between individuals who are interdependent in a social system. If there are ambiguities in role definitions in an organization or unclear boundaries of responsibilities, then the stage is set for interpersonal friction between the persons involved.
- b. **Multi-Party Conflict** occurs in societies when different interest groups and organizations have varying priorities over resource management and policy development. These complex conflicts typically involve a combination of economic, value and power sources.
- c. **International conflict** occurs between states at the global level. Competition for resources certainly plays a part, but value and power conflict are often intertwined and sometimes predominate.

Conflict has its negative consequences even for individuals. In the view of Brennen (2011), conflict can cause stress, frustration, hostility, impaired or bad judgment, restriction of freedom, use of valuable energy, the influencing of other workers negatively, lack of confidence in superiors and managers, as well as distraction from the attainment of goals and objectives.

Some Conventionally Prescribed Conflict Resolution Methods

If a conflict must be productive and beneficial to the individuals and or groups, it must be effectively managed, and or resolved. Ordinarily, there are many ways a people deal with conflict:

- Give in and accept the changes someone wants.
- Do nothing; hoping the problem will go away.
- Avoid the person or the situation.
- Pretend the problem does not bother you when it really does.
- Go to a higher authority.
- Go to court or arbitration.
- Fight and argue.
- Talk things over with the other person (in private or with a mediator)

(Centre for conflict Resolution, 2010)

In effect, some of the steps that could be followed to resolve conflict are:

- a. **Talk to the other party.** Surprisingly, many people complain of impossible difficulties about their problem without ever once trying to talk with the person who could solve the problem. It is most appropriate and desirable that two disagreeing parties should first try to make an honest effort to discuss their points of view and work things out on their own.
- b. **Try Mediation:** If efforts to talk things out fail, either party may request mediation service of a third party. The third party will attempt to mediate by discussing the problem with both sides and, if necessary, by bringing both parties together in a mediation conference. The mediator remains neutral and impartial and helps the parties work out what they think would be the best solution.
- c. **Arbitration or Court:** When disputing parties fail to reach a settlement through mediation, they may carry it on through

arbitration process or the public judicial system. Arbitration is a private adjudicatory process similar to a court of law and its decisions are legally binding. In this case however, the disputants give up the power to create their own solution and place control of their problem in the hands of a neutral third party, called an arbitrator.

Remarkably, literature is resplendent with a number of methods and procedures that have been traditionally employed for the management and resolution of conflict. Different authorities, writers and scholars have thus prescribed varieties of conflict resolution techniques and methods, and whereas they are interwoven and not mutually exclusive, none has presented an all-inclusive list.

Approaches for Managing Dispute

Centre for Conflict Resolution (2010) proposed three major conflict management approaches:-

1. **Collaboration:** This theory maintains that people should surface their differences (i.e. get them out in the open) and then work on the problems until they have attained mutually satisfactory solutions. This approach assumes that people will be motivated to expend the time and energy for each problem-solving activity. It tries to exploit the possible mutual gains of the parties in the dispute and views of the conflict as a creative force pushing them to achieve an improved state of affairs to which both sides are fully committed.
2. **Bargaining:** This mode of managing conflicts assumes that neither party will emerge satisfied from the confrontation but that both, through negotiation, can get something they do not have at the start, or more of something they need, usually by giving up something of lesser importance.

One party generally wins more than the other, by the skilful use of tactical trades; he can get the maximum possible from the other side. Sometimes the tactics used in trading are underhanded and create bad feelings. In the end, when an agreement is reached, it is usually enforced by a written contract with sanctions in case of non compliance. In the event no agreement is reached, a third-party mediator may be employed to bind the sides to eventual arbitration.

3. **Power-Play:** This mode differs from the other two approaches because it emphasizes on self-interest. Whereas in collaboration and bargaining, the two sides come together to try to resolve their problems, when power is the dominant mode, the actions are unilateral or in coalitions acting unilaterally. All of the power technician's resources are unleashed against his opponent to win on a given issue or a long-range program. He gives neither internal commitment nor does he agree to external sanctions guaranteeing compliance to joint decisions.

Collaboration is the most preferred strategy for the good of the enterprise because: (1) it promotes authentic interpersonal relations; (2) it is a creative force for innovation and improvement; (3) it enhances feedback and information flow; and (4) it has a way of ameliorating the climate of the organization so that there is more openness, trust, risk-taking and good feelings of integrity.

Bargaining is the second most preferred alternative. It is an approach that at the least brings the parties together and it can lead to binding them together to joint decisions. It gets the substantive issues out on the table where they can be better understood and acted upon. It allows for interaction on the problem.

Power-Play is the least desirable method for organizational effectiveness (although it may

be the most desirable approach for an individual who has the potential for winning). Generally, aggressive and hostile feelings exist between those locked in a power struggle, shutting off communication and interaction. Vicious gossip may ensue, causing rumours and otherwise distorting information. All of this tends to drive information underground so that the organization and the parties involved cannot learn from their experience since there is little honest feedback. A large amount of sabotage and non-compliance takes place which harms the system. People acting in their own self interest often subvert the organization (Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2010).

Similarly, the United States Office of Personnel Management (2011) presented a list of seventeen existing Alternative Dispute Resolution methods and techniques that are most commonly used in the Federal Government to include the following:

1. **Binding Arbitration:** It involves the presentation of a dispute to an impartial or neutral individual (arbitrator) or arbitration panel for issuance of a binding decision. Unless arranged otherwise, the parties usually have the ability to decide who the individuals are that serve as arbitrators. In some cases, the parties may retain particular arbitrator (often from a list of arbitrators) to decide a number of cases or to serve the parties for a specified length of time (this is common when a panel is involved).
2. **Conciliation:** Involves building a positive relationship between the parties to dispute. A third party or conciliator (who may or may not be totally neutral to the interests of the parties) may be used by the parties to help build such relationships.
3. **Cooperative Problem-Solving** is one of the most basic methods of dispute resolution. This informal process usually does not use the services of a third party and typically takes place

when the concerned parties agree to resolve a question or issue of mutual concern. It is a positive effort by the parties to collaborate rather than compete to resolve a dispute.

4. **Dispute Panels** use one or more neutral or impartial individuals who are available to the parties as a means to clarify misperceptions, fill in information gaps, or resolve differences. These recommendations may be procedural in nature or they may involve specific substantive recommendations, depending on the authority of the panel and the needs or desires of the parties.
5. **Early Neutral Evaluation** uses a neutral or impartial third party to provide a non-binding evaluation, sometimes in writing, which gives the parties to a dispute an objective perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of their cases. Under this method, the disputing parties will usually make informal presentation to the neutral third party to highlight their respective cases or positions.
6. **Facilitation:** It involves the use of techniques to improve the flow of information in a meeting between parties to a dispute. The techniques may also be applied to decision-making meetings where a specific outcome is desired (e.g. resolution of a conflict or dispute).
7. **Fact Finding:** This is the use of an impartial expert (or group) selected by the parties, an agency, or by an individual with the authority to appoint a fact finder in order to determine what the "facts" are in a dispute. The rationale behind the efficacy of fact finding is the expectation that the opinion of a trusted, impartial and neutral third party will carry weight with the disputing parties.
8. **Interest-Based Problem-Solving** is a technique that creates effective solutions while improving the relationship between the parties. The process separates the person from the problem, explores all interests to define issues clearly, brainstorms possibilities and opportunities, and uses some mutually agreed upon standard to reach a solution. Trust in the process is a common theme in successful interest-based problem-solving.
9. **Mediated Arbitration:** this is a variation of the arbitration procedure in which or neutral third party is authorized by the disputing parties to mediate their dispute until such time as they reach an impasse. As part of the process, when impasse is reached, the third party is authorized by the parties to issue a binding opinion on the cause of the impasse or the remaining issue(s) in dispute.
10. **Mediation** is the intervention into a dispute or negotiation of an acceptable, impartial and neutral third party who has no decision-making authority. The objective of this intervention is to assist the parties in voluntarily reaching an acceptable resolution of issues in dispute.
11. **Mini-trials** involve a structural settlement process in which each side to a dispute presents abbreviated summaries of its cases before the major decision makers (for the disputing parties) who have authority to settle the dispute. The summaries contain explicit data about the legal basis and the merits of a case. The rationale behind a mini-trial is that if the decision makers are fully informed as to the merits of their cases and that of the opposing parties, they will be better prepared to successfully engage in settlement discussions.
12. **Negotiated Rulemaking:** This approach brings together representatives of various interest groups and a Federal agency to negotiate the text of a proposed rule. If

the committee reaches consensus on the rule, then the Federal agency can use this consensus as a basis for its proposed rule.

13. **Settlement Conferences:** It involves a pre-trial conference conducted by a settlement judge or referee and attended by representatives for the opposing parties (and sometimes attended by the parties themselves) in order to reach a mutually acceptable settlement of the matter in dispute.
14. **Non-Binding Arbitration** involves presenting a dispute to an impartial or neutral individual arbitrator) or arbitration panel for issuance of an advisory or non-binding decision. This method is generally one of the most common quasi-judicial means for resolving disputes and has been used for a long period of time in the United States of America to resolve labour/management and commercial disputes.
15. **Ombudsman:** These are individuals who rely on a number of techniques to resolve disputes. These techniques include counseling, mediating, conciliating, and fact finding. Usually when an ombudsman receives a complaint, he or she interviews parties, reviews files, and make recommendations to the disputants. Typically, ombudsman does not impose solutions. The power of the ombudsman lies in his or her ability to persuade the parties involved to accept his or her recommendations.
16. **Partnering** is used to improve a variety of working relationships, primarily between the Federal Government and contractors, by seeking to prevent disputes before they occur. The method relies on an agreement in principle to share the risks involved in completing a project and to establish and promote a nurturing environment. This is done through the use of team-building

activities to help define common goals, improve communication, and foster a problem-solving attitude among the group of individuals who must work together throughout a contract's term.

17. **Peer Review** is a problem solving process where an employee takes a dispute to a group or panel of fellow employees and managers for a decision. The decision may or may not be binding on the employee and/or the employer, depending on the conditions of the particular process. The principal objective of the method is to resolve disputes early before they become formal complaints or grievances.

Evolution in the Application of Marketing Tools

Marketing was initially conceived as a device for selling goods and services. It was seen by some scholars as "the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer or user". Evolution in the conduct of business and marketing activities over time has led to changes in the definition of marketing. Marketing has thus expanded in scope from a discipline concerned with business transactions in an economic market place, through a discipline concerned with any organization that can be said to have customers, to a discipline concerned with all organizations in their relationships with all their publics, not just their customers (Graham, 1993). In effect, marketing has in contemporary times (in addition to product) been used to market such other entities as services, events, experiences, persons, places, properties, organizations, information, and even ideas (Kotler and Keller, 2009; Ferrell and Hartline, 2005). The modern shape of marketing has the exchange process and the transactions that make up that process as its focus (Bagozzi, 1975; Kotler, 1984). Kotler (1988) states that exchange is the defining concept underlying marketing, and defines exchange as "the art of obtaining a desired product from someone by offering something

in return". However, for exchange to take place, Kotler believes the following five conditions must be satisfied:

1. There are at least two parties.
2. Each party has something that might be of value to the other party.
3. Each party is capable of communication and delivery.
4. Each party is free to accept or reject the offer.
5. Each party believes it is appropriate or desirable to deal with the other party (Kotler, 1988)

Increasingly over time, marketing has extended in its coverage to include issues that are not in any way commercial. In its highest form, marketing is now considered a social process, composed of human behavior patterns concerned with exchange of resources or values. And so, it is no longer a mere function used to increase business profits (Serrat, 2010). Tellingly, in the 2010s, as Serrat points out, the attention of public sector agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector is increasingly drawn to the potential of social marketing. In an age of climate change, environmental destruction, natural resource shortages, fast population growth, hunger and poverty, as well as insufficient social services, the nagging question is "what contributions might marketing make?" Expressly, some even ask whether the tools of marketing can be used to promote public goods in areas other than public health, the traditional area of social marketing. Its applications might, for instance, help encourage wider socially and environmentally beneficial behavioural changes, promote protective behaviours, prevent risky behavior, increase use of community services, or facilitate the formulation and adoption of new policies and standards? Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to effect behavioural change. It is a concept, a process, and application for understanding who people are, what they desire, and then organizing the creation, communication, and delivery of products and services to meet their desires as

well as the needs of society, and solve serious social problems (Serrat, 2010). Social marketing thus involves changing seemingly intractable behaviours in composite environmental, economic, social, political, and technological circumstances with (more often than not) quite limited resources. In effect, if the basic objective of corporate marketer is to satisfy shareholders, the bottom line for social marketers is to meet society's desire for improved quality of life. This requires a long-term planning approach that moves beyond the individual end user to groups, organizations and society. Without any doubt, conflict resolution is a desirable goal and its end results would not just be beneficial but should be capable of making invaluable contribution to "improved quality of life". Hence, the need to engage social marketing as a device for complimenting conflict resolution efforts, and thus make positive outcomes more sustainable.

Prospect for the Application of Marketing Tools to Conflict Resolution

Marketing, as Kotler and Keller (2009) point out, is about identifying and meeting human and social needs; needs are basic human requirements. The ultimate goal of marketing is the satisfaction of human needs. It is presumed that the target of marketing action (the buyer and or, consumer) seeks to get a problem solved; his involvement in the purchase decision process is aimed at deriving potential benefit(s). Consumer purchase process thus starts when the buyer recognizes a problem or need triggered by internal or external stimuli. In effect, companies/marketers address needs by putting forth a value proposition, a set of benefits that they offer to customers to satisfy their needs.

The parties to a conflict, no doubt, has a problem and the resolution of the conflict is of a potential value – the prospect for restoration of a state of harmony between the feuding parties which is the service being offered by the mediator or conciliator. Rathmell (1966) defined

services in broad terms as "acts, deeds, performances, or efforts". Services are thus offered as "solutions" to prospective customers' needs. In essence, the mediator is engaged in social marketing, and choosing the right goal or objective for a social marketing programme is critical (Kotler and Keller, 2009). As these scholars elaborate, social marketing campaigns have objectives related to changing people's cognitions, values, actions, or behaviours. The range of possible objectives include,

- Cognitive campaigns Explain the value and importance of a social marketing programme.
- Action campaigns Attract and motivate people to embrace the programme.
- Behavioural campaigns De-motivate undesirable behaviour.
- Value campaigns Alter ideas that are negative and change attitudes.

Although conflict is more often than not seen in the negative sense as being destructive, it can as Brennen (2011) points out have constructive outcomes when properly handled. Conflict can, among other things, (1) provide greater interest in the topic of discussion, (2) stimulate greater feelings of identity, (3) cause attention to be drawn to the existing problems, (4) cause diffusion of ideas for the solution for other problems, (5) promote understanding, (6) motivate one to work more efficiently. However, as Brennen (2011) explains, *the choice of an appropriate conflict resolution technique depends on a number of factors including (a) why the conflict occurred, (b) the relation between the conflicting parties, and (c) the relationship between the superior or manager and the conflicting parties. Most of these techniques rest on one model which consists of four steps:*

1. **Identifying or clarifying the issues** - Identify the problem by getting both sides to understand what the other's position(s) and argument(s) is/are and to recognize that they can solve the problem.

2. **Searching for shared values** - Explore the problem by looking at the underlying values, needs, and interests of each party, identifying what each has in common, and then exploring the best case-worst case scenarios regarding the consequences of not reaching a resolution.
3. **Exploring possible solutions** - Develop solutions by listing all possible solutions and then exploring the options in terms of which solutions satisfy common interests (O.P.T.I.O.N.S.: only proposals that include others' needs succeed).
4. **Selecting the solution that satisfies those who have (that is, are parties to) the conflict** - Select and implement a solution by negotiating a winning solution that will generate full support now and in the future, and not ending without laying out procedures to follow if what is worked out worsens or, for whatever reason, the agreement reached is not working.

As was earlier pointed out, a number of traditional/conventional methods and techniques have hitherto been proposed and, in fact employed for conflict resolution; it is doubtful if the ultimately desired results were ever obtained. *Howbeit, an effective dispute resolution and settlement should ensure that parties to the dispute are satisfied with the decisions and the conflict was not likely to resurface. On the contrary, more often than not, either or both parties used to discover pitfalls in earlier decisions and agreements, and use that as an excuse for seeking renegotiation or, in fact (at times) resuming hostility.*

Based on the foregoing, our proposition here is that marketing tools and techniques can be deployed in the process of effecting conflict/dispute resolution as a complimentary tool to any of the conventional method, so as to ensure a long lasting or permanent result/solution. A question that

may readily nag the reader of this paper is: "how relevant is marketing here and in what way(s) can it be applied?"

Marketing is about identifying and meeting human and social needs. The ultimate goal of marketing is to ensure that parties involved in an exchange-deal experience, and possibly, express satisfaction. The basis for satisfaction is the value derived from the deal. As Kotler and Keller (2009) stress, the buyer chooses between different offerings based on which she perceives deliver the most value. Value, of course, reflects the sum of the perceived tangible and intangible benefits and costs to customers. It is primarily a combination of quality, service and price ("qsp") it increases with quality and service and decreases with price, although other factors can also play an important role in a party's perception of value. As Kotler and Keller (2009) acknowledge, value is a central marketing concept and so, marketing can be viewed as the identification, creation, communication, delivery, and monitoring of customer value. In effect, satisfaction reflects a person's judgment of a product's or service's perceived performance (or outcome) in relationship to expectations. If the performance falls short of expectations, the customer is dissatisfied and disappointed. If it matches expectations, the customer is satisfied. If it exceeds them, the customer is delighted.

With the involvement of the marketing tools in the process of resolving conflicts, an attempt should be made by the third party engaged to effect dispute resolution to first carry out marketing research with a view to appreciating the issues underlying the conflict, as well as measures that are considered fundamental or germane to its resolution. Marketing managers often commission formal marketing studies of specific problems and opportunities; it is the job of the marketing researcher to produce insight into the customer's attitudes and buying behavior. Marketing insights provide diagnostic information about how and why

we observe certain effects in the marketplace, and what that means to marketers (Kotler and Keller, 2009). In essence, the deployment of marketing research would enable the third party to appreciate the concerns of the respective disputants. Furthermore, appropriate communication tools should be employed with a view to bringing into focus the various dimensions of the issues underlying the conflict, and subsequently persuade the two parties on the need for and the benefits that would accrue to them from conflict resolution.

In addition, getting the disputants to embrace the process and the approach for resolving the conflict might involve the use of the elements of the marketing mix **product (service), price, place (or channel) and promotion.** The desirability of conflict resolution should be hinged on the *benefits (value) that are potentially derivable by the parties.* The parties should also be made to appreciate that *the sacrifices that would be involved (the opportunity cost) or the price to be paid for peace* would be mutually equitable. In terms of place or channel, *the venue for meetings as well as the third party involved should be conducive, friendly and thus made acceptable, and the third party should be seen as an unbiased and impartial umpire.* The mediator should be a reputable figure with high level of credibility and respectability in the perception of the parties to the conflict. Beside, he should have a sound knowledge of the issue at stake in the conflict. Furthermore, *the language of communicating with the feuding parties as well as the terms of settlement should be simple, concise and unambiguous.* There should be provision for *subsequent follow-up to ensure proper implementation of the settlement terms, and compliance* with the specific provisions of the agreement to forestall possible breach. Furthermore, periodic review and evaluation of the implementation process would (in no small measure) most likely guarantee the cooperation of the parties to the dispute.

Conclusion

The foregoing discourse has revealed that the occurrence of conflict in contemporary organizations is inevitable. Fisher (2000) however, posits that if efforts are made to understand and manage conflict effectively, there can be improvement in both the satisfaction and productivity of social relationships. The challenge facing managers and others in position of authority and leadership is therefore, how to minimize the potentially destructive effects of conflict and explore every opportunity to make conflicts productive and constructive. As Brennen (2011) posits, conflicts can have constructive outcomes when they are properly handled. They can (i) provide greater interest in the topic of discussion or, issue in dispute, (ii) stimulate greater feelings of identity, (iii) cause attention to be drawn to the existing problems, (iv) cause diffusion of ideas for the solution of other problems, (v) promote understanding, (vi) motivate one to work more efficiently. The adoption and employment of marketing techniques in the management of conflict as well as the process for its resolution would likely produce results most acceptable to the parties to the dispute and, perhaps forestall the prospect of a re-occurrence.

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