

CONFLICT AND TIME

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Abstract

Research conveyed in 2016 – 2017 in privately owned companies in the Czech Republic shows there are conflicts in the companies and take time to be solved. Though primarily parties involved (employees) are able to handle most conflicts effectively themselves as they are purely of work nature and / or personality differences matter, when it comes to more serious issues or long-term conflicts they seek help from their superiors should be their direct superior or human resources manager or members of top management. On average superiors spend 10 – 20% of their working time solving disputes of their team members. Although conflict management is part of their job, it is striking how much time they have to dedicate to it and therefore losing time, money, energy on more important things that could lead to better results of their company.

Key words: conflict, management, time, mediation

JEL Code: J52, J53, M54

Introduction

Conflict is a part of life. It belongs to human nature. People are different and differences sometimes bring clashes. Some conflicts at workplace are good as their result may be better idea, new idea, unique solution. However there are conflicts which are far from benefit, in fact some may lead to unpleasant work environment, loss of time, money, energy, zero work efficiency needed on more important things that could lead to better results of company, tribunals (both employment and business). In either case they must be managed and dealt with.

1 Conflict at a workplace

The growth of corporate conflicts has become one of the most widely spread tendencies in business environment in recent years. (Erahtina, 2011) The primary goal of an organization is to be successful. To achieve organisation's goals, employees are required to work in harmony.

Leadership is a critical determinant of actions of employees toward the achievement of the organizational goals. (Saeed et al., 2014) One part of leadership is to recognize when conflict is or isn't good for organization. This means reducing anxiety and anger among employees, promoting optimism, confidence, developing people and their skills, helping them manage conflict, building trust in and across teams and so ensuring achieving the best possible organizational aims and objectives (Michie and West, 2004). This puts management in a challenging role as they have to not only run the operation itself but also master communication, negotiation and mediation. (Gosling&Mintzberg, 2003) Mediation also holds out a realistic promise of a reduction in dispute cycle time and related costs, coupled with more creative, durable solutions and relatively minor risks. (Stipanowich, 2010)

The organisational factors that demonstrate strong potential for supporting productive conflict responses are mainly individual training, work-group focused civility and conflict resolution interventions, and workplace mediation programs. (Oore et al., 2015) Culture also moderates the relationship among the conflict resolution styles of the co-workers themselves. (Posthuma et al., 2006) In global times used language as such - its distinctive properties, neural representation, characteristic uses including use in communicative contexts, variation, growth in the individual, and origin. (Everaert et al., 2015)

Workforce changes, millenials see things differently than previous generations and it manifests in superior-subordinate intergenerational conflict, namely task conflict, relationship conflict, and procedural conflict. (Zhu et al, 2016) This may either modify the HR best practices or apply new approaches. (Dvořáková, Langhamrová, 2013)

2 Mediation Research

2.1 Research

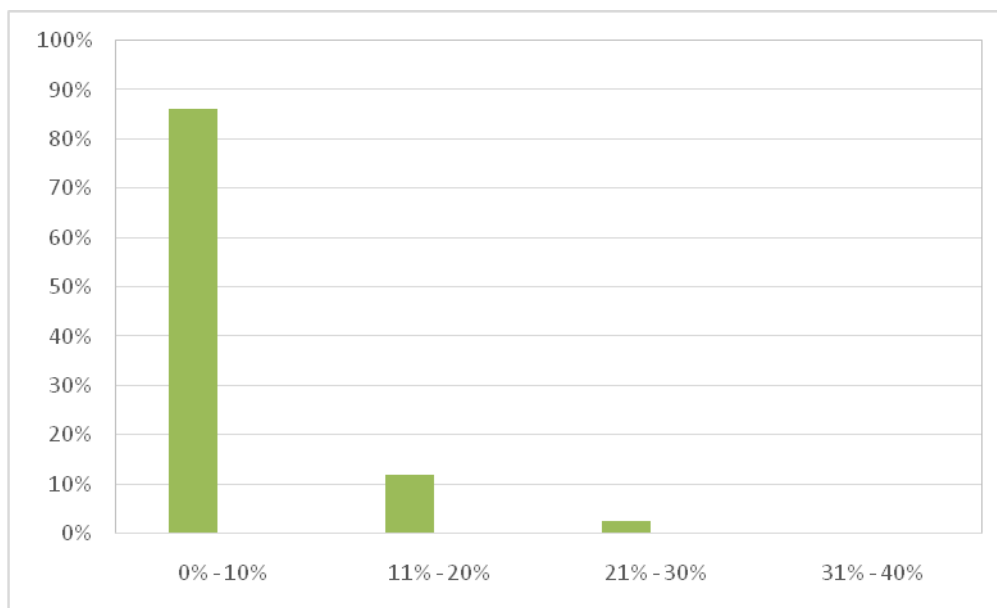
The research on mediation was conveyed in 2016 – 2017 in privately owned companies in the Czech Republic within 120 companies of Czech and internationally ownership. The companies cover all industries and regions. Chief executive officers, human resources professionals and members of management were sent an on-line questionnaire via LinkedIn with a set of thirty questions on size of company, ownership (local vs. international), industry, demographics of company (gender, age, employees country of origin), internal process or policy for disputes, types of conflicts and means of their solution and use of mediation and time spent on conflict solutions.

2.2 Findings

Primarily parties involved (employees) are able to handle most conflicts effectively themselves as they are purely of work nature and / or personality differences matter. When they fail because it is more serious issues or long-term conflict they seek help from their superiors or other members of management.

There were 5 time options in questionnaire: 0 – 10%, 11 – 20%, 21 – 30%, 31 – 40% and 41 – 50% from which managers could choose. 87% of respondents spend 0 – 10% of their working time solving disputes of their team members. 11% respondents deal with conflict 11 – 20% of work time and 2% of managers even spend 21 – 30% of their time not being mediators – see chart below. Conflict management is part of their job description, yet the time could and in fact should be spend on things that are considered productive and deliver better results for their company.

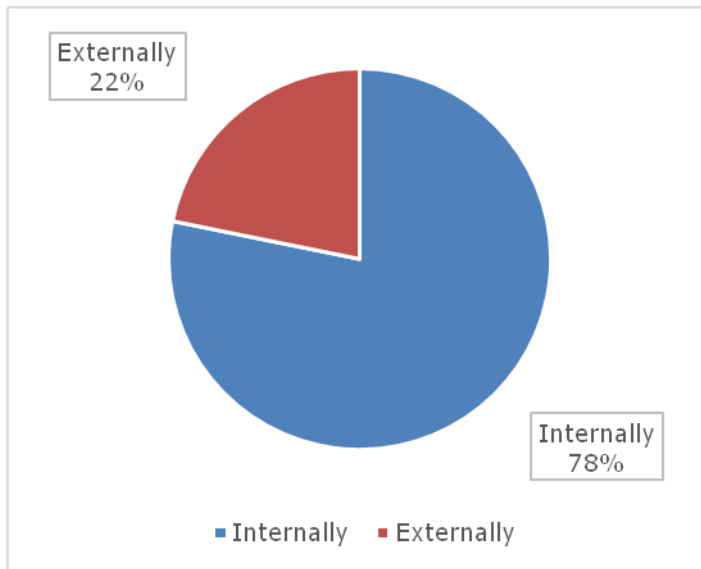
Chart 1: How much of your work time do you spend on solving conflicts?



Source: own calculations

Research also showed strong preference of in-house solution of conflicts compared to external ones as those are even more time consuming and more expensive. 78% of conflicts are dealt with and resolved internally, 22% are tended externally – see chart below.

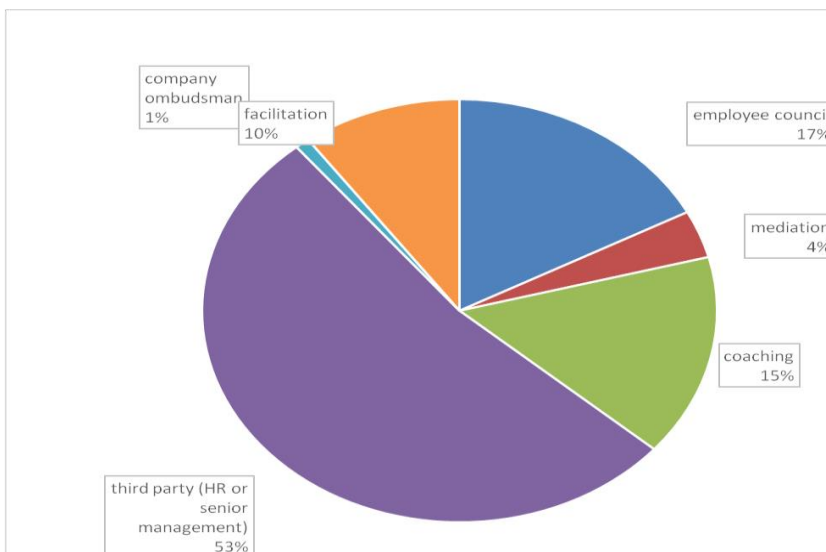
Chart 2: Internal and external conflict solutions



Source: own calculations

When parties lose control over their conflict and need help, there are 6 main conflict solutions. Most popular is to ask for help their superior, human resources manager or other members of top management – 53%, followed by employee council 17%. Third is coaching 15% which supervisors chose for their team members as personal development tool, they want to help their subordinates to learn techniques to be able to handle conflicts better themselves, or even better not to enter them. Facilitation is 10%, mediation 4% and company 1%.

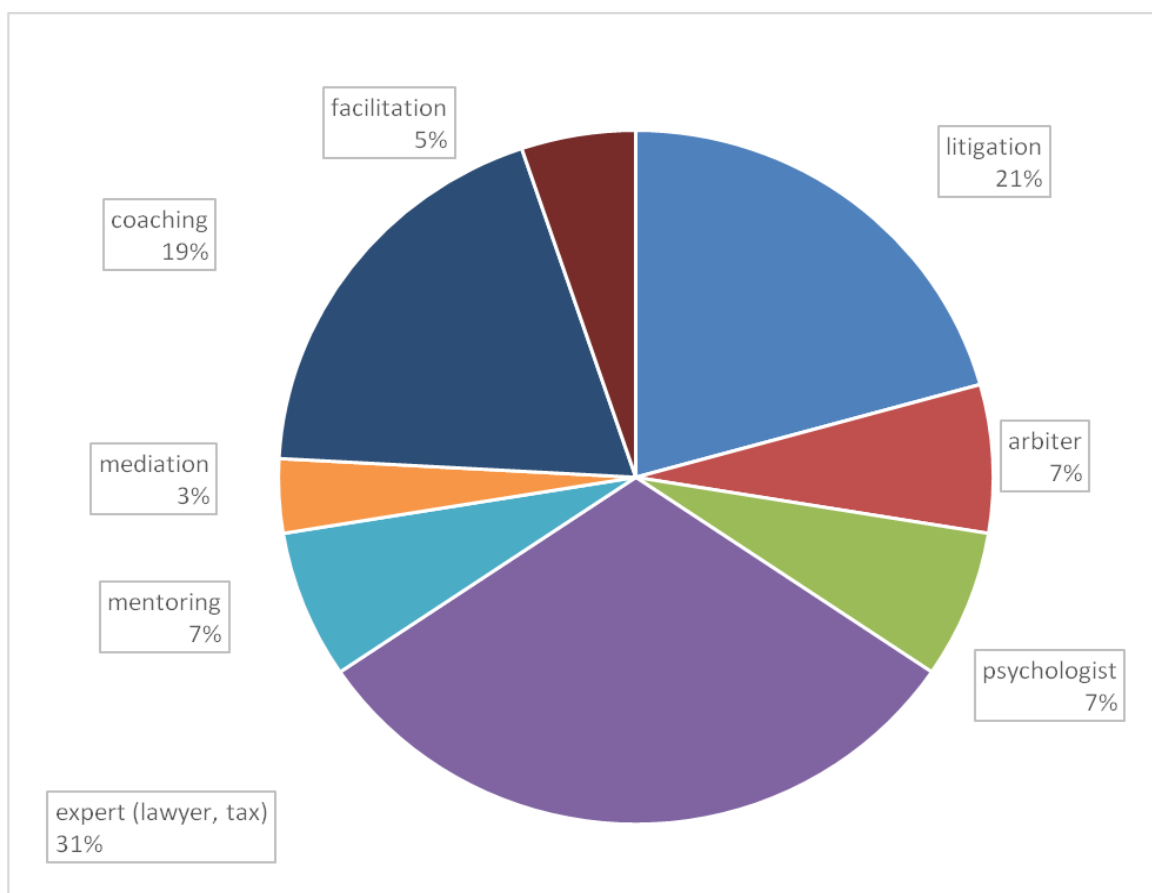
Chart 3: Internal solution of conflicts



Source: own calculations

Chart 4: External solution of conflicts

There are conflicts that escalate so much external professional help is needed – see chart below. Both companies and employees seek help from experts, most common are lawyers, tax advisors and the likes – 31%. Second most popular is court decision as 21% chose litigation. Third is coaching for the same reason as internal solution – 19%. Some companies do not have internal coaches or prefer external one for special cases. Same 7% goes for arbiter, psychologist and mentoring. Facilitation is 5% and least popular is mediation with 3% as it is still not widely spread among HR professionals and top managers.



Source: own calculations

Conclusion

Research helped to quantify time spend on conflicts in the Czech Republic. Most managers invest 0 – 10% of their time on conflict resolution. Human resources professionals play a major role in conflict resolution process. When conflict comes to major existence and employees can not handle it themselves, majority of companies try to solve it internally. Only

if they fail they go for external solution. Though one of external options is mediation it is still used infrequently.

So far companies do not measure conflict resolution process, they do not know how much time, money and work force they lose because of conflicts. Most do not have formal procedures for conflict management, neither formal training for both managers and employees that all would benefit from as it would give them tools how not to enter conflict, or how to make it professional, quick and zero involvement of other people. Further research will show whether it is because they do not see it important or simply because they do not pay attention to it.

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