

ENTERPRISING RURAL FAMILIES



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Why do we fight?!?

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As family members, partners, colleagues it is inevitable that we will eventually find ourselves in the middle of a conflict. Although conflict itself is not inherently bad, the effects of poorly managed conflicts can be disastrous for our relationships and our work productivity. In order to avoid unnecessary conflicts and best manage those that occur, it is helpful to understand the elements that must be present for conflict to happen and the main sources of conflict.

For conflict to occur there must be opposing interests between individuals or groups where the parties believe that their interests will not be met if the other party pursues their interests. For example, if two children are fighting over the last cookie, they both know that they can't both have the whole cookie. If they both believe that they have to have the whole cookie then neither of their interests are being met. The conflict over a cookie is not life or death and we recognize that the cookie can be shared, however, there are many other resources that we fight about that are much more importance to us and are not so easily split. Having opposing interests does not necessarily lead to conflict. Those opposing interests must be recognized and the parties must believe that the other side will actively work to prevent them from obtaining their interests.

Conflicts arise for a variety of reasons such as differences in goals, expectations, values, needs, and ideas but can be grouped into three main sources: economic/interest, value, and relationship conflicts.

Economic/interest conflicts are probably the most prevalent conflicts that we deal with day to day. They typically form the basis for children's squabbles but can also be the underlying reasons for more serious conflicts, even war. Economic/interest conflicts occur as a result of fighting over scarce "stuff." The individuals involved are operating under the assumption that there is a limited supply of what they are needing/wanting and engage in behaviors to ensure that they get what they believe they need. This "stuff" is anything that can be perceived as being limited in supply such as money, time, respect, power, or any other scarce resource. The previous example of the children

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By HikingArtist.com

fighting over the last cookie is a classic example of an economic/interest conflict.

Value conflicts arise when there are perceived or actual incompatible belief systems between individuals or groups. Values are a person's principles or standards of behavior as well as one's judgment of what is important in life. Values explain what is "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong," "just" or "unjust." Differences in values cause conflict when people attempt to force one set of values on others or lay claim to exclusive value systems that do not allow for divergent beliefs. Even when people share values it is still possible to have value conflicts if the parties prioritize their values differently and their top priority values are incompatible. Value conflicts can be some of the most difficult conflicts to manage and can be some of the most disruptive. Many of the political disagreements we experience in this country and with other countries can be attributed to value conflicts.



Relationship conflicts develop over interpersonal disagreements and differences between individuals or groups. They are characterized by strong negative emotions and can occur because of misperceptions, stereotypes, poor communication, or repetitive negative behaviors. Individual differences in culture, personalities, and attitudes can also result in relationship conflicts. If left unchecked relationship conflicts can spiral out of control and ruin families and friendships. At work relationship conflicts can have a detrimental effect on both employee performance and morale if not managed effectively.

Understanding the source of your conflict can provide clues into how best to approach managing and potentially resolving the conflict. For economic/interest conflicts it can be helpful to gain a greater understanding of the underlying needs behind the solutions that the parties are fighting over. In many cases there are more mutually acceptable solutions that can only be found by taking time to understand the underlying issues and needs. For value conflicts, first explore and focus on the areas where you do agree in order to build upon your relationship. Then you can confront the value differences directly and explore where you can grow and work to reconcile differences. Relationship conflicts are best resolved by first ensuring that you are not making assumptions about the other party's intentions and then by working on your communication skills to ensure that all parties fully understand each other and are respectful of each other's needs and feelings.

Whether the source of your conflict is economic/interests, values, relationship, or a combination of all three, understanding its origin is the first step in managing the conflict for improved relationships and work productivity.

Tip of the Month



Due Diligence

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Sherlock Holmes once remarked that: "It is my business to know what other people don't know."

If you are considering making an acquisition of some type, then there are many things you would like to know so that you can propose a sensible price and terms.

In short, you want to do due diligence: the investigatory process in which you try to determine whether there are any issues (legal, physical, financial, operational, *etc.*) that would make a purchase less attractive – i.e. you want to reduce surprises. Here are some tips.

- 1. Will the item meet your requirements and allow you to do what you want?** Think through what you need and what you want. Going into a negotiation without an idea of how the item or property will build on your capabilities is just asking to pay too much. If the item will need adapting, you'll at least have idea of what it would take to make it work.
- 2. Ask yourself, is what is for sale really what the seller says?** Ebay is a great marketplace for an informed buyer (as are auctions generally) – I've often seen items that the seller misidentified, and been able to snap up a good deal. It takes a watchful eye, being informed, and asking a few questions.
- 3. Get to know what's for sale.** Whether you come across a business opportunity or potential personal purchase, what the seller says on the sale bill is just the beginning. Find out the details of everything from ownership (who really owns it) to a conducting a thorough inspection. If you are thinking of purchasing an operating business, you should expect to get thorough information on the nature of the work performed, profitability, employees, tax liabilities, and sit side-by-side with the owner and tear apart the balance sheet and profit-and-loss statement. (Confidentiality will be top of mind for sellers (apart from whether you are qualified buyer!), so expect to be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement).
- 4. Ask, "What else?"** If you've noticed things that are a little off, then there are probably even more things to be concerned about. Don't ignore a queasy feeling in your gut. Ask more questions and do more investigating to try to uncover what other things may be out of kilter.
- 5. Think about the worst case.** Kelley Sanburg, a Montrose, Colorado rancher, has a cautionary tale to tell of Craigslist crooks (who promised good winter grass), stolen stock and unsigned contracts. Unfortunately a background check wasn't effective. You still have to protect yourself: she's says, "Don't let an animal off your property unless you have a written agreement. If they're going out of your possession, make sure you have legal channels to recover the value of the animals, to regain possession or in the worst case, to incriminate or arrest whoever took them."

Sales of land/property or businesses are more complex, so the due diligence can cover a tremendous range of topics and involve many experts. There are some helpful checklists for thinking through a property purchase (Google terms like "agricultural land due diligence") as well as getting into or expanding a business.

Final Thought

When you have completed your due diligence process, you should have two results. One is a very clear understanding of the potential risks associated with the purchase. The other is an idea of the added costs required to get the item or property up to your standard. Good due diligence means more cost and time up front, but if you give it short shrift, you increase the chance of finding unple