

## How to Collaborate on Issues and Prevent Conflicts in the Network?

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**Abstract:** Public managers in the network realize that they need coordination and mediation between more than organizations to solve the problems which may be solved in a single organization but it seems unlikely to solve those in multiple organizations, and they are usually associated with the public. In the choice of the ways and approaches of collaborative problem-solving, negotiations based on the interests is much more effective than that based on the positions and principles. The problem-solving method based on the interests can solve problems collaboratively and design management structures to prevent conflicts.

### 1. Complexity of Network Conflict and Collaborative Management

The most important skills managers need today are negotiation, negotiation, collaborative problem solving, conflict management and conflict resolution. However, in such a world of power sharing, many public managers find that they are extremely lacking in the corresponding knowledge and skills. Therefore, this requires the addition of important practical tools to managers in the network.

### 2. Complexity of Network and Network Conflict

A network is a structure that involves multiple nodes-organizations and institutions-for multiple associations. Therefore, the public management network is a management structure that includes the development of public policies, the planning, design, production, and provision of public welfare services. Such network structures can be formal or informal, and they usually function in a cross-sectoral and inter-governmental manner under a policy or a policy area. That is, representatives of government or non-governmental organizations work together, exchange information, formulate and implement policies, play a role together, and implement them through action.

In collaborative networks, managing and resolving conflicts is not easy. Network is a complex combination of different organizations and individuals, many characteristics increase the complexity of network conflict, including: network members are numerous; network members have the same and different cooperation; network organizations have different organizational cultures; network organizations have different ways of operation; Network members have different interest groups and funders; network members have different levels of power; often there are multiple problems at the same time; there are many decision-making channels; networks are both inter-organizational and inter-individual; there are multiple management structures that can be applied to the network; The network will encounter conflicts with the public.

### 3. Collaborative Management and Its Paradox

(1) Collaborative management. Network management is collaborative, and organizations that collaborate in the network are likely to collide because of collaboration. Collaborative management is a concept that describes the process of coordinating and functioning across multiple organizations to address issues that cannot be resolved or easily resolved in a single organization. Collaborative public management may include participatory management, in which citizens actively participate in government decision-making processes<sup>[1]</sup>.

(2) Collaborative management paradox: Collaboration can lead to conflicts. Connelly, Zhang and Faerman argue that managers may be involved in conflicts in collaborative management. As managers, they should not only take into account the network and its own organization, but also face many challenges different from traditional management, which require managers to have different skills. Collaborative management faces many contradictions in collaborative networks [2]: the work of collaborative managers is independent and interdependent; collaborative managers and their networks have both common goals and different goals; Collaborative managers have fewer working members but the differences between groups are larger and more expanding; collaborative managers are both participatory but authoritative, with authority and authority, and how collaborative managers deal with conflicts. In the above, the choice of arbitrariness and cooperation is relevant (Figure 1); collaborative managers must see both trees and trees; collaborative managers must maintain their own organizational interests and achieve optimal network benefits.

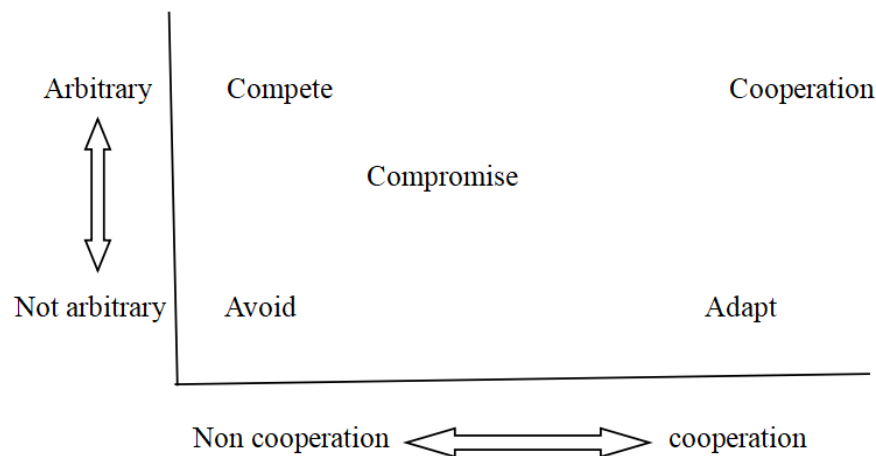


Fig.1. Collaborative manager's conflict management choice

Connelly, Zhang and Faerman emphasize that these contradictions should be accepted, accommodated and transcended in collaborative networks, rather than resolved. These contradictions also take into account the basic challenges inside and outside the network. Collaboration may lead to conflicts. Managers need to be aware that conflicts inevitably arise and conduct conflict management forward-looking. Carpenter and Kennedy proposed a spiral escalation map [3]. That can be directly applied to network conflicts (Figure 2).

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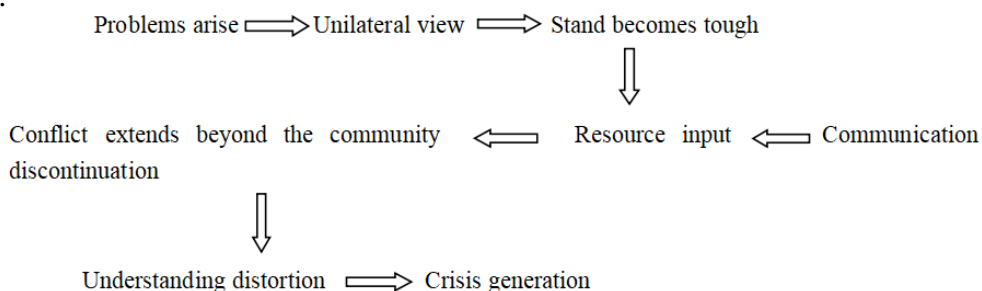


Fig.2. Conflict development spiral

#### 4. Interest-based Negotiation

“Interest negotiation” is a term that includes cooperative negotiation, also known as win-win negotiation. It refers to the negotiation process of exchanging opinions on common problems and seeking solutions for mutual benefit. It is different from position negotiation, confrontational negotiation, competitive negotiation and hostile negotiation [4]. Negotiators often get caught up in a series of arbitrary positions and ignore what their real needs and interests are under dispute. This position-based negotiation approach is difficult in collaborative networks. Standpoint negotiation is

the elaboration of the desired results expressed by people and the anticipated solution. Interest-based collaboration is that it constantly reveals what is most important to the stakeholders, while allowing people to explore and adopt creative solutions to solve the original difficult problems. The interest negotiator tries to identify the other party's interests through asking questions, and also considers the importance of the specific negotiation result of the other party to identify its interests. Interest-based negotiations focus on interests rather than positions (considering people's basic needs, security, well-being, recognition, autonomy or control over the environment), seeking a win-win situation by stimulating innovation, and applying objective criteria when solving problems (in the event of a stalemate, Professional, legal, ethical or ethical perspectives, based on interest-based criteria).

Positional negotiations are often satisfied by one or more parties, others are disappointed and angry and consider retaliation, or the parties are not satisfied with the compromise. Solving problems based on interest-based collaboration provides the possibility to create creative solutions that meet the process's needs in terms of process, substance, or relationship (psychological), often referred to as “satisfaction triangles”, meaning satisfaction for all parties. Output must balance the balance of process, substance, and relationship (Figure 3). Focusing only on one side of a triangle, such as substance, is often extremely difficult to reach agreement because the benefits are not fully met.

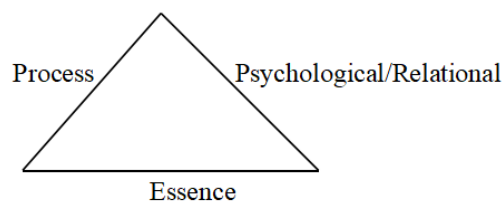


Fig.3. Satisfactory triangle

Collaborative problem solving is very necessary in the daily work of public administration. A study on cooperative evolution shows that cooperative negotiators in teams or groups can gain an advantage by isolating competitive negotiators [5]. This also shows that competitive negotiation in the network may be more difficult to succeed. Because there are many participants in each network negotiation, it is difficult for either party to achieve the goal by using competitive or hard negotiation strategies. Other parties can form a coalition to resist competitive negotiators and force them to stop adopting this strategy. The most effective way is to openly and honestly discuss and try to satisfy the interests of all parties based on interests rather than power or will, and to make innovations in order to reach an agreement (see Table 1). Interest-based negotiation is the basic skill of a collaborative public manager.

Table 1 Comparison of negotiation methods [6]

Position based	Interest-based collaboration
See your opponent as your opponent	See each other as a negotiating partner
See negotiation as a struggle between death and death	Seeing Negotiations as Joint Overcoming Challenges
Emphasis on Value Acquisition	Emphasis on Creating Value
Achieving the preset plan is victory	To achieve the goal of satisfying the interests of all parties
In the process, we firmly believe that we must peddle or impose positions.	Reflected in the process, we firmly believe that people are kind and creative.
Relying on salesmanship, manipulation or lies	New capabilities and ways to meet common interests
There may be a choice of force between relations and substantive objectives	What's important to you?
Forced to give in under pressure	Let all parties pay attention to the relationship and substance
Usually the result is loss-win, loss-lose or compromise.	Voluntary change of position when there are good choices

## **5. How to Collaborate to Solve Problems**

### **5.1 Definition problem**

In position negotiation, the parties usually regard each other as competitors for a fixed number of goods, services, resources and results, and each other as “troubles”. In the process of interest-based collaborative problem solving, parties need to regard each other as partners, and differences or conflicts are challenges to be solved by collaboration. To encourage participants to participate willingly in the collaborative problem-solving process, a very effective way is to express the problem with the “how” sentence, plus the expected results of the action words and actions.

### **5.2 Inform the other party of your interests: be open, listen, ask questions**

The temptation here is eager to provide a solution. In fact, the initial solution often has strong positional assumptions due to insufficient understanding of the real needs of the parties. An effective strategy is to look at the proposed solution from the outset, focus on understanding the benefits – what are the “motivations” behind their ideas, and openly discuss the interests around them. By doing so, negotiators can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the concerns and needs of stakeholders without jumping into the debate over solutions. This requires gathering enough information to prepare for negotiations, which should be objective, not just unilateral.

### **5.3 Make a Big Pie: Create Value before Request**

The toughest negotiation is one on a single topic. People often mistakenly think that the most urgent thing is the current deal, which is limited in quantity, “If you get one yuan, I will lose one yuan”. This is the basic distributive negotiation. But most negotiations are non-bundled, and they can be split and grouped into many sub-projects. Because the understanding of the importance of the same problem is often different, priority is always changing, which creates opportunities for sub-projects. Once these sub-projects are realized, it is equivalent to the participants making big pies and creating value. In addition, each member may have different choice tendencies or be subject to different time constraints, which may enable them to achieve goals that may not be achieved before; the risk tolerance of each party and the assessment of the probability of occurrence of some events are Differences, these are also sources of value creation.

### **5.4 Stimulate more candidates**

This step is usually achieved through a “no-attack brainstorming session”, but the key is open, non-linear, and streamlined thinking. The more imaginative the better, but the programs that violate the basic interests of others tend to collaborate. Eliminated in the process. In the process of collaborative problem solving, participants began to realize the possibility of solutions to the problem, what are the possible elements of the agreement, and almost all non-fixed pie negotiations can be regarded as negotiations between different elements. This requires a strong ability to integrate information. It is necessary to extract the interests of all parties to make big pies. In the process of negotiation, multiple factors can be satisfied and benefited together. This is the key to brainstorming, called “inspire selection to seek win-win” <sup>[7]</sup> or “win-win technology” <sup>[8]</sup>. In collaboration in network scenarios, participants must work in the same direction to solve common problems and try to come up with all possible solutions that can satisfy their interests and solve problems. Participants are not allowed to discuss or evaluate the merits of the scheme, and they do not need to self-evaluate the merits of the scheme. They only need to make as many suggestions as possible that may meet the interests and needs of all parties. The advantage is that when various parties put forward different ideas, they will inevitably know more about the interests and requirements of others at the same time, which in turn promotes new ideas and more effectively suits the interests and concerns of others.

### **5.5 Evaluate candidates**

After the “Attack-Free Brainstorming Conference”, participants can view creativity as a candidate for further evaluation. Fisher, Ury and Patton point out that to translate ideas into specific

options to be evaluated, they can be considered from different perspectives or from different strengths. Considerations can be long-term or temporary, substantive or procedural, comprehensive or one-sided, unconditional or conditional<sup>[7]</sup>. The charm of brainstorming is to fill the process with all possible combinations.

It is time to evaluate these candidates and determine how well they meet the needs of all parties. It is a crucial step to resist the tendency to think “all or nothing” in resolving differences or conflicts. All aspects of this phase will be tempted to induce them to return to the original default solution, either because they feel manipulated by some organizations or because of a very creative solution. In order to avoid such situations and to protect all possible options, a timely determination of the evaluation criteria is necessary. Possible assessment criteria include: can most or even all of the basic interests be met? If so, can we succeed? If so, can you get the approval and support of your key supporters? If so, can you obtain the resources necessary for implementation? After completing the above process, several options (or parts of different options) are generally considered desirable by all parties. These options can then be considered for inclusion in the next overall planning step, or prioritized as preferred or alternative.

Fundamentally speaking, for network members, what they want from collaboration is as important as how negotiations are conducted. Network members need to understand that other members are negotiating with them in a friendly, fair and helpful way. The method of solving problems based on interest cooperation provides us with the possibility of improving the level of satisfaction, whether it is the essence of negotiation, negotiation or negotiation.

## **5.6 Conflict prevention through design of management structures**

Logically speaking, the design of network management structure is the first. This requires a step-by-step model of how to achieve consensus in the network governance structure based on negotiation theory.

## **5.7 It is necessary to identify the consent of network members**

In some cases, it consists of a network of organizational definitions with statutory status or some form of decision-making power. Sometimes the network is initiated by important members or powerful organizations. The network may also be formed voluntarily through the process of identity self-identification. The key point of network management is to ensure the participation of important members. Moor suggested that participants should include: those who have the power or prestige to make decisions; those who have the ability to influence or even destroy the negotiators (if they are not involved in the negotiations); those who understand and understand the disputes; those who have negotiating skills; those who know how to control emotions; Recipients of other parties; those who have demonstrated or have a strong willingness to collaborate; have supporters of support, the goal is to ensure that those who have the ability to perform network tasks can participate in the negotiation process and recognize the form of network management<sup>[9]</sup>.

## **5.8 Basic Negotiation Provisions**

There are many negotiation conventions that can be used for reference by collaborative networks. Discussions can be made on how to collaborate to solve problems based on interests in order to improve the quality of dialogue; on how to formulate task Tables and agree on action plans with a view to reaching transitional agreements; on how to share information with the public and the media; and on the time frame of tasks. Another topic is whether the discussion group can communicate outside the network without undermining the trust relationship or generating speculation, which is sometimes referred to as a cadre meeting. There are various typical basic rules that can be adopted in multi-party negotiations.

## **5.9 Managing the exchange of views in negotiations**

There are many innovative ways to encourage more effective communication among network members, rather than the monotonous traditional meetings in which each side takes turns to speak on a given topic or only one speaks generously in a group. Brainstorming and vision description are

a series of processes that allow participants to share information and ideas simultaneously and consciously. The key here is to stimulate creativity and information exchange through non-linear and open processes, which not only attract people's attention, but also save time. The network can also be supplemented by online forums, as well as from outside the network, but this may require consensus on how to identify and get help. The management structure should also include consideration of public voices.

## **6. Decision Rules for Negotiating the End of Tasks**

Robert's rules of procedure are usually adopted by public organizations with many members, but Robert's rules have their limitations, and the network does not have to adopt Robert's rules. Susskind and Ruikshank propose another alternative process through which participants can strive to reach consensus or almost no agreement. This process consists of five steps: membership convening, role and responsibility allocation, coordination of problem solving, reaching agreement and fulfilling commitments<sup>[10]</sup>. The network operation process begins with the concentration of all major members for training based on interest-based negotiations. In the process of centralized training, the collaborators have to negotiate a draft on how to deal with issues and conflicts. They need to not only identify the main contacts in the conflict, but also the conflict resolution mechanisms.

## **7. Once the decision-making of no different form or consensus is selected, the mechanism of how to deal with the deadlock is determined.**

If there is a deadlock, it is necessary to seek advice from experienced third parties. As a last resort, network members may need to turn to outside experts to break the deadlock. The network can use the method of fact checking to make decision. What evidence and information should be enriched in the process of network decision-making? Fact verification requires active listening and fact-based investigations rather than arbitrary decisions. If the network member wants to hear someone's opinion on an important decision, in this case, the decision is provided by a third party, but the decision is unbound and serves only as a basis for further discussion and negotiation by network members. If you still can't reach an agreement, you may have to put it into binding arbitration. However, this situation is rarely used for public sector policy decisions, as it is sometimes criticized as granting the private sector a seemingly legitimate policy-making power, which is extremely inappropriate. But it is widely accepted and applied to external disputes that are essentially trial-like, such as whether a party violates the contract.

Discussing these issues provides network members with an opportunity to build trust and enhance trust, while providing a means of constructively addressing difficult issues. The method of problem-solving based on interest cooperation can be applied to design collaborative network management structure, and can also be applied to decision-making collaborative network management regulations. In addition, it can be used as a preferred method to deal with conflicts in all aspects of the network process. It can also be innovatively applied to various forms of public participatory democracy, because collaborative networks usually undertake the basic mission of public management.

## **8. Conclusion**

To be an effective problem solver in a collaborative network, members should work harder on preparations, treat web conferences with an open mind, and collaborate with other members to brainstorm and motivate choices. This means that the interests of the organization must be clearly defined in advance, and the needs and interests of the other party should be investigated and considered before the negotiation; It also means paying attention to creative solutions. We strive to meet the needs of all parties in process, substance and relationship (or psychology).

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