

Chapter 8

Conflict Management in Leader Development: The Roles of Control, Trust, and Fairness

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In the twenty-first century, leaders must engage a wide range of challenges that emanate from sets of increasingly complex and rapidly changing factors within and outside of their organizations. In confronting these challenges, leaders can no longer rely on traditional levers of authority. Instead, they must develop their capacities to encourage, influence, and intrinsically motivate their employees to commit to and cooperate with them in the achievement of organizational goals. As this “new reality” has evolved over the past several decades, leader development initiatives have become an evermore important part of how organizations equip their leaders with the sensitivities and competences needed to empower employees to achieve a wide array of performance objectives (Day, 2001; Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014).

This chapter contributes to leader development research and practice by directly examining a key and fundamental leader competence: the capacity to effectively address conflicts with their employees. The leader-employee conflicts described in this chapter emerge when employees see (i.e., or anticipate that they will see) their leaders failing to effectively address their performance and interpersonal needs or anticipate that they will fail to do so. When employees see their leaders failing to address their performance needs, they view them as making decisions that compromise their capacity to achieve desired instrumental (e.g., compensation, promotions) and relational (e.g., status, personal recognition) objectives. Leader-employee conflicts may also manifest when employees see their leaders failing to adequately address their interpersonal needs by not acknowledging, understanding, or showing a willingness to protect their personal interests and values (Baird & Kram, 1983; Perrow, 1986). Because conflicts can significantly compromise their legitimacy and authority, it is incumbent on leaders to develop the skills and knowledge to

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effectively deal with both real and potential leader-employee conflicts that occur within their sphere of influence (Long, 2010).

To understand how these challenges can be engaged by authorities, this chapter presents a theory describing how leaders can effectively address leader-employee conflicts by integrating and balancing the controls they apply with their attempts to promote organizational trust and fairness. It builds on over a quarter century of research that demonstrates how leaders can motivate high levels of employee cooperation and commitment when they apply controls in ways that their employees view as trustworthy and fair. This theory specifically shows how leaders who balance their efforts to apply controls, build trust, and promote fairness are able to address a range of employee concerns that emerge from leader-employee conflicts. By presenting a multifaceted approach to addressing these issues, the framework presented in this chapter can be used to train leaders on how to direct their employees in ways that they will view as credible, equitable, and worthy of their willing participation, cooperation, and commitment.

The discussion of these ideas proceeds as follows. After outlining relatively limited perspectives on conflict management presented by existing control, trust, and fairness research, some definitions and descriptions of control, trust-building, and fairness-promotion activities as well as the roles they play in conflict management are provided. After outlining a series of propositions describing how particular control, trust-building, and fairness-promotion activities can reduce specific leader-employee conflicts, I outline how this theory can be used to enhance leader development efforts.

8.1 Theory

Scholars have identified three forms of conflicts that can develop between leaders and their employees: goal, task, and personal conflicts (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jehn, 1994, 1995; Jermier, 1998; Yukl, Guinan, & Sottolano, 1995). *Goal conflicts* describe disagreements between leaders and employees over desired outcomes. *Task conflicts* refer to disagreements between leaders and employees regarding how organizational work is performed, how resources and responsibilities are allocated, and how policies are developed and implemented (Janssen, Van de Vliert, & Veenstra, 1999). *Personal conflicts* encompass “socio-emotional disagreements not directly related to the task” (Jehn, 1995, p. 258) that can arise from identity- or value-based incompatibilities between leaders and their employees that foster high levels of mutual animosity.

Research has shown that because leader-employee conflicts are persistent and influential factors in organizations, leaders devote significant amounts of their time and attention to actively managing these conflicts or preventing these disagreements from increasing in scope or intensity (Bies, 1989; Tjssvold, 1989; Williamson, 1975). Leaders expend this time and energy because leader-employee conflicts may decrease their employees’ willingness to cooperate with them in achieving performance

objectives (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975; Zelditch & Walker, 1984). While an unwillingness to cooperate alone is a problem, leaders actively address these conflicts because if they do not they may also motivate their employees to be insubordinate and “opportunistically” misrepresent their abilities (i.e., information asymmetry) or work efforts (i.e., moral hazard) in ways that can severely compromise organizational functioning (Levinthal, 1988; Williamson, 1975).

8.1.1 *Organizational Controls*

Building from assumptions that employees are self-interested, opportunistic, and motivated primarily by the promise of financial rewards (Ghoshal & Moran, 1996), traditional management theorists have argued that leader-employee conflicts can largely be ameliorated through the use of organizational controls. The act of exerting *controls* in an organization has been defined broadly as the collection of processes by which leaders “direct attention, motivate, and encourage organizational members to act in desired ways to meet an organization’s objectives” (Long, Burton, & Cardinal, 2002, p. 198) and has been identified as one of the four primary functions of management [the others being organizing, planning, and coordinating] (Fayol, 1919; Merchant, 1985). Studies have investigated how leaders implement various types of *control mechanisms* to provide employees with information about performance standards, resources necessary to pursue those standards, and rewards or sanctions based on how closely employees’ contributions align with those standards (Eisenhardt, 1989; Ouchi, 1977, 1979; Snell, 1992).

Theorists commonly distinguish forms of control by the element of the production process to which leaders target their application (Cardinal, Sitkin, & Long, 2004, 2010; Long et al., 2002; Merchant, 1985; Ouchi, 1977, 1979; Snell, 1992). For example, *output controls* in the forms of incentives, targets, and goals are generally applied after work is completed to ensure that employees attain desired result-based standards (Ouchi, 1977, 1979). *Process controls* (rules, norms, SOPs) are applied as individuals perform work tasks to ensure that employees use prescribed production methods. Alternatively, *input controls* such as selection mechanisms, socialization methods, and training programs are applied at the beginning of work processes to ready human and material resources for their roles in production efforts (Arvey, 1979; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1980).

Controls may be applied formally or informally. While most control theorists have tended to focus on how leaders apply formal (i.e., written) controls to employees in the forms of contracts, monetary incentives, direct surveillance, and monitoring systems, controls can also be applied informally as unwritten but commonly understood norms, values, beliefs, and routines that direct employee actions (Ouchi, 1977, 1980; Eisenhardt, 1989; Snell, 1992). Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) point out that informal controls are important for directing employee work activities because leaders who implement them motivate employees to develop common perspectives using “shared frameworks, language, and referents.” Leaders who use

informal controls motivate employees to work in ways that are consistent with commonly understood values, routines, and activity-based norms (475).

Control theorists suggest that by employing control mechanisms such as incentives and elaborated monitoring systems they can motivate employees to pursue organizational objectives while, at the same time, limiting the development of leader-employee conflicts (Barney & Hesterly, 1996; Donaldson, 1990; Williamson, 1975). For example, Eisenhardt (1989), Levinthal (1988), and Ouchi (1980) each focus on the mitigation of goal conflicts to argue that leaders can apply organizational controls in ways that motivate employees to accomplish desired objectives and restrict their capacities to misrepresent their abilities (i.e., moral hazards) and work efforts (i.e., information asymmetries).

It is important to note, however, that effectively applying controls requires leaders to maintain a delicate balance. While controls are necessary for organizational functioning, leaders who rely too much on them can signal that they distrust their employees and are actively seeking to constrain their personal autonomy (Enzle & Anderson, 1993; Sitkin & Bies, 1993). When this happens, the threats to their self-determination that employees feel may comprise their perceptions of their leader's legitimacy, reduce their willingness to commit themselves to pursuing organizational goals, and actually increase the forms of leader-employee conflicts that their supervisors are attempting to ameliorate (Blau & Scott, 1962; Enzle & Anderson, 1993; Kim & Mauborgne, 1993; Ghoshal & Moran, 1996). Both Ghoshal and Moran (1996) and Sitkin and Bies (1993) caution that a cycle of using increasingly restrictive controls to motivate employees and diffuse conflicts can result in the development of "pathological spiraling relationships" where "surveillants come to distrust their targets (i.e., employees) as a result of their own surveillance and targets, in fact, become unmotivated and untrustworthy" (Enzle & Anderson, 1993, p. 263).

8.1.2 Legitimacy and Authority

Thus, while scholars continue to focus a substantial amount of their attention on how leaders can use controls to diffuse leader-employee conflicts, "important questions have been raised about this set of ideas" (Barney & Hesterly, 1996, p. 128) and the efficacy of controls alone for managing these disagreements. For example, Ghoshal and Moran (1996) express concerns that the focus scholars have placed on control-focused theories often ignores things that leaders do to foster positive relationships with their employees. In leadership research, transformational leadership theory shows leaders how they can move away from a reliance on more transactional, contingent, and control-based ways of leading to enact more empowering and motivating leadership behaviors (Bass, 1985).

Leader-employee conflicts play a critical role in the life of leaders because they directly impact how they develop, maintain, and exercise their authority (Long, 2010). This is important to recognize because a leader's authority comprises the central mechanism that they use to direct, influence, and motivate their employees to coop-

erate with them in doing work (Barnard, 1938; Pfeffer, 1981; Weber, 1918). While governing structures and policies can augment some facets of leader authority, a more fundamental and arguably more effective way for leaders to build and maintain their authority is to think and act in ways that their employees view as legitimate or “desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574; see also Barnard, 1938; Dornbusch & Scott, 1975; Tyler & Lind, 1992).

When employees perceive that their leaders are acting legitimately, they will tend to endorse their choices, more willingly comply with their directives, and be more motivated to cooperate with them in doing work (Long, 2010). This is because employees in these situations believe that their leaders are acting appropriately and in ways that are instrumental to realizing their personal interests. On the other hand, the presence of leader-employee conflicts is potentially problematic for leaders because these disagreements signal ways that employees are questioning the legitimacy of their decisions and actions, challenging their authority, and, as a result, may be less motivated to both comply with their directives and cooperate with them in pursuing organizational objectives (Pfeffer, 1981; Zelditch & Walker, 1984).

These observations have led scholars to focus significantly greater attention on the benefits that leaders can achieve when they apply controls in ways that generate employee perceptions that they are trustworthy and fair. Over more than the past quarter century, researchers have repeatedly shown that when leaders promote organizational trust and fairness, they enhance the quality of their employees’ contributions and their capacity to achieve organizational objectives. Leaders who promote organizational trust and fairness may also increase levels of voluntary employee compliance with their directives, thereby reducing the time and effort necessary to measure and monitor their employees (Frank, 1988; Jones, 1995; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Moreover, by using trust and fairness to increase commitment to organizational goals, leaders are able to encourage their employees to participate in problem-solving and decision-making activities that can generate efficiencies and competitive advantages for their organizations (Barney & Hansen, 1994).

In order to evaluate the roles that leaders’ efforts to promote organizational trust and fairness play in resolving leader-employee conflicts, the discussion below describes the concepts of *trust building* and *fairness promotion*. These concepts identify categories of actions that are distinct from each other and from leaders’ applications of organizational controls in their composition, and in the explicit outcomes that leaders hope to achieve through their implementation (Long, Sitkin, & Cardinal, 2014).

8.1.3 *Trust-Building Activities*

Trust is defined as “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another” (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p. 395). When undertaking trust-building

activities, leaders focus on developing aspects of their relationships with individual employees by increasing their confidence that they will act reliably in their best interests.

Consistent with the work of Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), it has been shown that leaders are able to foster employee trust in them by demonstrating their own *ability, benevolence, and integrity*. When demonstrating their ability, leaders actively display their capacity to manage the tasks employees perform and by enhancing employee confidence that their leaders “know what they are doing” in generally managing them and directing their task activities (Mayer et al., 1995; Sitkin & Roth, 1993). In *demonstrating their ability*, leaders may, for example, detail information about their task experience by actively communicating their extensive knowledge of organizational procedures or by displaying a developed capacity to understand and perform production tasks. In *demonstrating their benevolence* leaders work to convince employees that they share their values and are focused on attending to their individual needs. Leaders do this by taking an active interest in their employees’ personal welfare, by accommodating their employees’ personal interests when they take actions or make decisions, and by advocating for their employees’ interests with higher authorities. Through *demonstrating their integrity*, leaders make sure that they are actively displaying their reliability by fulfilling promises and commitments they make to their employees, by linking their words and actions, and by acting in ways that communicate their predictability and consistency (Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998).

Leaders’ trust-building activities include a range of formal and informal actions that leaders undertake to promote situationally relevant forms of employee trust. For example, in highly formalized environments, leaders may try to build and maintain their employees’ willingness to reliably complete organizational tasks by redesigning formal organizational policies and institutional training mechanisms (Sitkin, 1995; Sitkin & Roth, 1993). Alternatively, in contexts where strong relationships matter, leaders may deploy elaborated but informal downward influence tactics and build trust by creating interpersonal connections with employees to engage them in joint problem-solving activities (Rousseau et al., 1998; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998).

8.1.4 Fairness-Promotion Activities

Research also supports the importance of justice in organizational activities (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Scholars suggest that when employees perceive their leaders as acting fairly, they are more likely to voluntarily comply with their directives (Lind & Tyler, 1988), view leaders as legitimate authorities (Tyler & Lind, 1992), exhibit extra-role behaviors, less frequently engage in illegal or violent activities in the workplace (Greenberg, 1990), and more willingly embrace organizational goals (Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990). Leaders use *fairness-promotion activities* to increase employees’ perceptions that they are being treated fairly in terms of the rewards they acquire, the procedures they enact, the decision-making processes they engage, and the interpersonal treatment they receive. Leaders do this

by promoting equity, consistency of treatment, voice, and civility across the groups of multiple employees that they manage.

The notion of fairness promotion described here builds from over four decades of research that has outlined three primary forms of fairness that impact organizational functioning. *Distributive fairness* exists when employees perceive that organizational rewards and responsibilities are distributed consistently with fair allocation procedures (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975). *Procedural fairness* exists when organizational processes and norms either provide employees some control over their leaders' decisions and decision processes or permit employees to attain high group standing (Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975, 1978; Tyler & Lind, 1992). *Interactional fairness* exists when decision makers exhibit sensitivity and respect for employees through their actions and words (Bies & Moag, 1986).

When undertaking fairness-promotion activities, leaders make explicit attempts to equitably distribute rewards and responsibilities (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975), provide control over decision processes (Leventhal et al., 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975), and/or promote high levels of dignity and respect across multiple employees that they manage (Bies & Moag, 1986). In undertaking fairness promotion, leaders focus specifically on assuring individuals in the groups they manage that the treatment they receive is appropriate (i.e., fair or just) in absolute terms and equitable when compared to treatment received by their referents (e.g., peers or coworkers).

Similar to both control and trust-building activities, leaders may use a wide range of formal and informal mechanisms to build positive perceptions of organizational fairness. For example, in an organization where a "pat on the back" is highly valued, leaders attempting to simultaneously promote distributive fairness and interactional fairness may openly but equitably provide employees with words of encouragement and appreciation. Under different circumstances, leaders hoping to build perceptions that they are procedurally fair may focus on designing formal dispute resolution procedures that encourage employee voice by inviting their participation in decision making across a range of organizational concerns (Bendersky, 2003).

Figure 8.1 summarizes this discussion by outlining the core attributes of leaders' control applications, their trust-building activities, and their fairness-promotion initiatives as well as the roles that each of these activities play in managing leader-employee conflicts.

8.2 Addressing Multiple Concerns with Multiple Responses

While organizational control, trust-building, and fairness-promotion activities represent distinct categories of leader actions, an essential part of the argument put forth in this chapter is that the efforts leaders make to apply controls, build trust, and promote fairness constitute complementary mechanisms for managing leader-employee conflicts. The conception of complementarity used here aligns with Bendersky's (2003, p. 644) description of "the interplay among the components (i.e., activities) which enables each type of component to influence individuals'

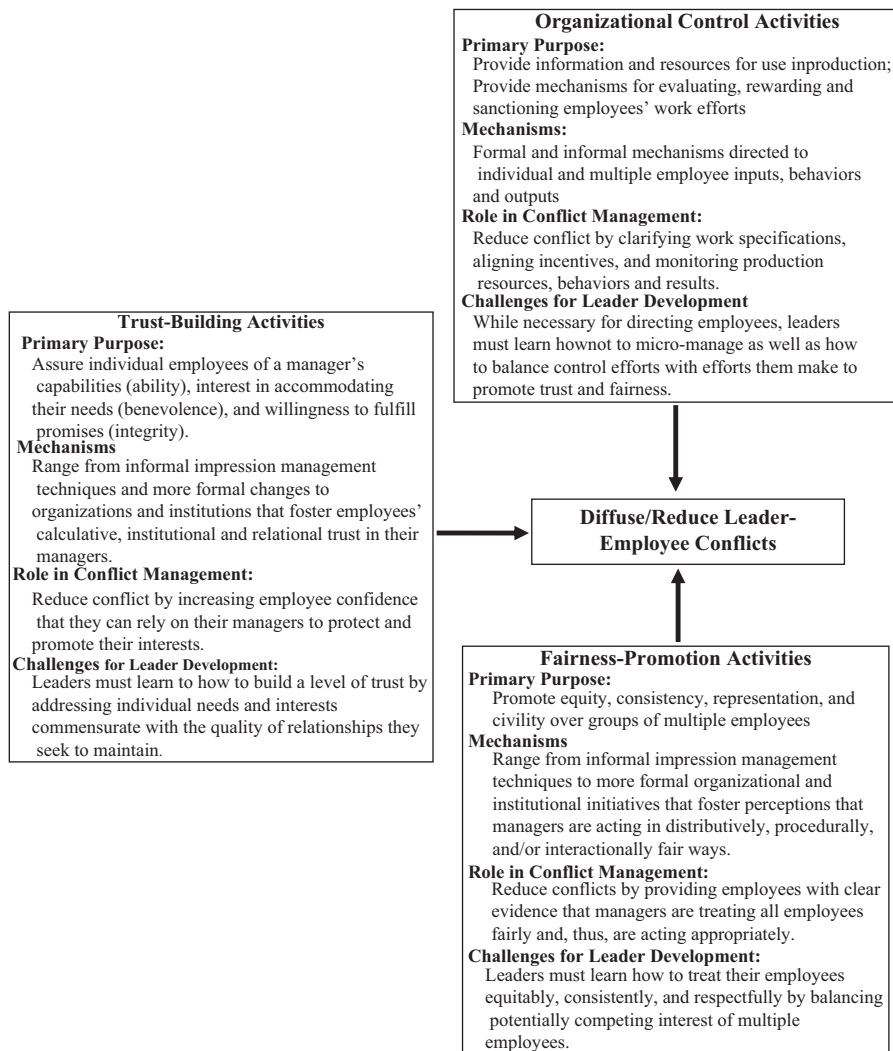


Fig. 8.1 Descriptions of the roles that organizational control, trust-building, and fairness-promotion activities play in conflict management

attitudes and behaviors more significantly than it could without reinforcement from the others.”

This perspective is supported with research on power-use strategies that highlights the general importance of multiple activities in fostering employee control and cooperation in resolving leader-employee conflicts (Boyle & Lawler, 1991; Lawler, Ford, & Large, 1999). According to this research, leaders who unilaterally initiate efforts to forge positive leader-employee relationships by engaging in trust-building and fairness-promotion activities decrease the severity of the conflicts they

experience with lower powered exchange partners (i.e., employees) by rendering them less willing to undertake retaliatory behaviors and exit from negotiations (Molm, 1984, 1987, 1990, 1991).

Because complementarities between organizational control, trust-building, and fairness-promotion activities exist, leaders can jointly deploy these activities to diffuse the leader-employee conflicts they encounter. For example, when leaders apply organizational controls while also demonstrating that they are trustworthy, employees will tend to believe that their leaders are acting reliably and with integrity, are generally competently leading them, or are addressing their personal needs and interests through the efforts they make to assert their authority (Ghoshal & Moran, 1996; Sitkin & Stickel, 1996). On the other hand, if leaders apply controls while also working to promote fairness, they can foster perceptions among their employees that they are fairly allocating responsibilities and rewards (Deutsch, 1975), that they are providing employees sufficient voice over decision-making processes (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975), and that they respect their employees (Bies & Moag, 1986).

These combined actions are important and research has increasingly shown how leaders who effectively integrate their efforts to promote control, trust, and fairness produce complementary effects on employee perceptions, attitudes, and work behaviors. For example, Long, Bendersky, and Morrill (2011) describe how employees will exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction when they observe their leaders applying organizational controls in ways that they view as fair. This happens because employees in these situations are more confident that their leaders are giving them a reasonable and credible chance to achieve important instrumental and relational objectives. In addition, research on relationships between control, trust, and performance within organizations describes how when leaders apply controls in ways their employees perceive as trustworthy, those employees are more willing to comply with their directives, cooperate with them in performing tasks, and commit to the goals their leaders are asking them to achieve (Mayer et al., 1995; Sitkin & Roth, 1993; Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999).

8.3 Different Conflicts, Different Activities

The ideas below build from this discussion to develop the argument that particular control, trust-building, and fairness-promotion activities are not equally effective for addressing any form of conflict (Sitkin & Roth, 1993). Instead, because goal, task, and personal conflicts each provide employees with specific motivations to disregard the directions of their leaders and behave opportunistically, leaders seeking to effectively address these disagreements must couple their applications of certain types of organizational controls with specific forms of trust-building and fairness-promotion activities.

Control theorists present evidence consistent with this perspective. They show that when leaders direct employees in ways that align with their task demands, they

can reduce potential conflicts and mitigate perceived value incongruencies between themselves and their employees. Sitkin and Roth (1993), for example, show how formal process control mechanisms can be used to manage leader-employee conflicts in highly institutionalized environments while Cardinal et al. (2004) describe how leaders in highly social, clan environments can most effectively reduce interpersonal conflicts between themselves and their employees by implementing informal input controls.

The ideas presented here are also consistent with researchers who suggest that leaders' efforts to build trust and promote fairness are most effective when they address situational contingencies. For example, Wicks, Berman, and Jones' (1999) theory of "Optimal Trust" suggests that because "trust is good-but a conditional good" (Wicks et al., 1999, p. 99), leaders can most effectively build deeper, more trusting relationships with their employees when they redress important sets of situational contingencies through their trust-building activities. For example, when leaders build forms of trust that are consistent with the goals they seek to achieve and the relational constraints they face, they demonstrate to their employees that they understand their concerns while they are working to motivate them to achieve desirable organizational outcomes. This perspective also aligns with the work of fairness researchers who contend that leaders who promote forms of fairness that effectively redress specific employee grievances are able to ameliorate employees' feelings of resentment and deprivation and establish an environment where their employees are motivated to pursue desirable organizational outcomes (Lerner, 1977; Leventhal et al., 1980).

Figure 8.2 builds from this general discussion to outline how leaders can effectively address leader-employee goal, task, and personal conflicts by combining applications of controls with specific and related forms of trust-building and fairness-promotion initiatives. These ideas are presented to provide developing leaders with a road map that can help them understand where they need to focus their efforts to deal with a range of leader-employee conflicts they encounter. Over the next section, these relationships are described in more detail and outlined in Propositions 4.1–4.3.

By shedding light on particularly important combinations of multiple, complementary activities, the propositions outlined below can be used to encourage leaders to economize their efforts in duffusing various forms of leader-employee disagreements.

8.4 Propositions

8.4.1 *Addressing Goal Conflicts*

Disagreements between leaders and employees over goals constitute arguably the most fundamental form of conflict that a leader can encounter. For example, within a sales organization goal conflicts can manifest in something as simple as conflicting aspirations about what sales figures employees should strive to achieve to more

Relationships between Leader-Employee Conflicts and Organizational Controls, Trust-Building, and Fairness-Promotion Activities

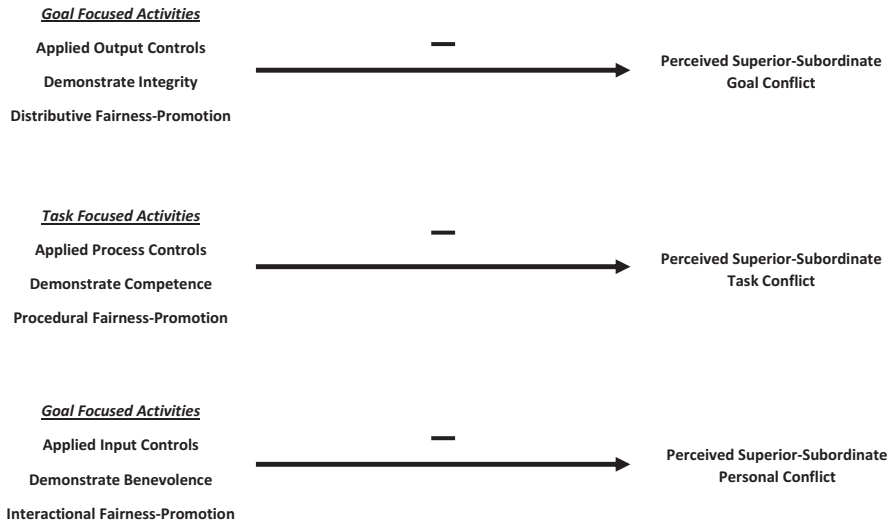


Fig. 8.2 Relationships between leader-employee conflicts and organizational controls, trust-building, and fairness-promotion initiatives

complex differences of opinion about what types of customers sales representatives should target. The key issue in these cases is that employees are not effectively being directed and motivated to attain the goals that their leaders want them to achieve. Of particular concern to leaders in these situations is that employees have reasons to misrepresent both their abilities (i.e., information asymmetry) and work efforts (i.e., moral hazard) (Eisenhardt, 1989; Levinthal, 1988) in order to create the conditions where they can pursue the outcomes they desire to produce.

Research by Ouchi (1979, 1980) and other control theorists (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989; Levinthal, 1988) builds from the principles of agency theory to argue that in response to goal conflicts, leaders should direct their employees by applying output controls. Using output controls, leaders can directly deal with “goal incongruencies” by implementing clearer and unambiguous results-based standards that definitively explicate the goals that their employees are required to pursue. Because “probably the best vehicle for increasing the level of perceived identification is the creation of joint products and goals” (Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992, p. 372), leaders may use output controls to more actively encourage their employees to pursue organizational goals. By doing this, leaders allow for “some employee discretion yet provide both the incentive and responsibility for results that benefit the employing firm” (Snell, 1992, p. 296). By clarifying desired end-state contributions, leaders are able to motivate their employees by both shifting production risks to them while, at the same time, providing them clearer pictures of the rewards and other incentives

they may receive for their production achievements (Eisenhardt, 1989; Kirsch, 1996; Ouchi, 1977, 1979).

When leaders face employees who disagree with them about desired outcomes, the efforts they make to demonstrate their integrity can help them to diffuse these goal conflicts. In demonstrating their integrity, leaders may, for example, make personal efforts to ensure that their employees are rewarded for their achieved performance with increases in salaries, bonuses, and promotions or publicly embrace institutional mechanisms that constrain their ability to exploit employees (Sitkin, 1995). Through these actions, leaders provide verifiable “proof source(s)” (Doney, Cannon, & Mullen, 1998) that both assure their employees that they will protect their interests while communicating to them that there are clear benefits for adhering to the organizational standards they have set (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998; Sitkin & Bies, 1993; Tyler & Lind, 1992). As this provides employees with confidence that they can further their instrumental interests by pursuing the goals that their leaders have directed them to achieve, employees will be more likely to conclude that the goal conflicts through which they enact their general distrust of their leaders are unfounded, unnecessary, and counterproductive.

In environments where employees are directed to complete goals, leaders are also well advised to examine their allocation decisions and procedures. Both Leventhal (1976) and Lerner (1977) suggest that when leaders choose to implement fair allocation mechanisms and equitable reward distributions, they establish an environment beneficial to the pursuit of organizational goals. Because employees in these situations feel fairly rewarded for achieving the results leaders are asking of them, they are less apt to exhibit feelings of resentment and deprivation. In addition, by “strongly reinforce(ing) those individuals whose contributions are most useful and beneficial to the group product, while at the same time deliver(ing) a lower degree of reinforcement to poor performers” (Chen & Church, 1993, p. 30), leaders who foster distributive fairness are able to create a sense of coherence where employees see their leaders enforcing acceptable performance evaluation norms that demonstrate clear benefits to cooperating with them in pursuing organizational objectives (Greenberg, 1987).

Proposition 4.1: *Leaders can diffuse goal conflicts between themselves and their employees by applying output controls, demonstrating their integrity, and promoting distributive fairness.*

8.4.2 Addressing Task Conflicts

Task conflicts refer “to disagreements about the work to be done including issues such as the allocation of resources, the application of procedures, and the development and implementation of policies” (Janssen et al., 1999, p. 122). Task conflicts are important for leaders to recognize because they provide evidence that employees

disagree with them about how work should be performed and prefer production methods that differ from those that leaders are specifying. As a result, these employees may misrepresent their abilities or production efforts so that they can perform jobs using the work processes that they prefer (Arrow, 1974; Eisenhardt, 1989; Jehn, 1995, 1997; Sitkin & Roth, 1993).

Leaders may be able to partially alleviate leader-employee task conflicts by directing employees using process controls (Sitkin & Roth, 1993). In order to improve intra-organizational coordination, leaders can utilize their knowledge about how employees should perform tasks to detail their process-based specifications. For example, leaders can attempt to clarify work norms to ensure that employees are properly instructed in job-related tasks. In addition, leaders may create procedural manuals or elaborated work routines that outline task performance procedures. They may supplement these efforts with information systems to gather performance data that can help them closely monitor their employees' work efforts and ensure that they are implementing procedures in ways consistent with process specifications (Snell, 1992).

Through demonstrations of their ability, leaders can further diffuse task conflicts by providing their employees with evidence that their best chance of achieving their personal and professional goals lies with their acceptance of management's explicit instructions. Using demonstrations of their competence, leaders can show employees how the procedural directives they are implementing enable them to efficiently and effectively complete their organizational tasks (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 400). By displaying their experience using prescribed task completion procedures, leaders enhance employees' confidence that the methods they have outlined are both legitimate and appropriate (Sitkin, 1995; Sitkin & Bies, 1993). Moreover, by demonstrating the benefits of performing work tasks in the ways they describe, leaders can use their detailed knowledge of organizational operations to bolster their own legitimacy as leaders and the legitimacy of the procedures they are seeking to implement.

In environments where leader-employee task conflicts exist, leaders are also well advised to pay special attention to the fairness of the decision-making procedures they employ. This is because task conflicts stimulate their employees to critically evaluate their leaders' decisions. In this context, the six components of procedural fairness (i.e., consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correctability, representation, ethicality) initially identified by Leventhal (1976; see also Colquitt, 2001) comprise critical mechanisms that leaders can employ to increase perceptions that work processes are being fairly administered. For example, by implementing procedural directives in ways that are consistent, accurate, and free of bias, leaders are able to demonstrate that they are directing their work using clear, predictable, and objective means. In addition, by providing employees with ways to correct and voice their opposition to the elements of the procedures they see as faulty, leaders are able to incorporate employees into their decision-making processes while encouraging employee compliance through mechanisms that promote decision control (Leventhal, 1980; Sheppard & Lewicki, 1987).

Proposition 4.2: *Leaders can diffuse task conflicts between themselves and their employees by applying process controls, demonstrating their competence, and promoting procedural fairness.*

8.4.3 Addressing Personal Conflicts

Leader-employee personal conflicts are identified by the presence of “tension, animosity, and annoyance” (Jehn, 1995, p. 258) that communicate to leaders that employees dislike them and may compromise the successful completion of organizational tasks. Research suggests that employees who maintain personal conflicts with their leaders exhibit a reduced willingness to process new information, to accept new ideas, and to cooperate by increasing the likelihood that employees will make hostile attributions about their leaders’ intentions and behaviors (Baron, 1991, 1997; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Jehn, 1995). To address personal conflicts, leaders should focus their control mechanisms as well as their trust-building and fairness-promotion activities towards helping their employees strongly identify with them and with their organization because individuals who perceive themselves to be part of “the same group tend to behave in a more trustworthy manner toward each other” (Shapiro et al., 1992, p. 371).

While personal conflicts provide leaders with strong evidence that their values are incongruent with those that their employees hold, they may be able to partially alleviate these conflicts by exerting informal, more “subtle forms of control such as humor, kidding, and hinting” (Jaworski, 1988, p. 27) or by using stories, rituals, and legends to communicate norms of social interaction through their organization’s culture. Building from Mayo’s (1945) observations, Ouchi (1979) points out that these less obtrusive, informal control mechanisms create “few problems of alienation” and can be quite effective in leading employees to desire “that which serves the organization” (65). To discourage opportunism for employees who express personal conflicts towards their supervisors, leaders may use input control mechanisms to refocus and align their employees’ preferences with organizational values and motivate employees to more closely identify with the firm. Snell (1992) suggests that these initiatives may help to “prevent performance problems” (297) by encouraging employees to understand, accept, and embrace organizational goals and values.

Demonstrations of their benevolence can also assist leaders in diffusing leader-employee personal conflicts. By expressing a genuine care and concern for the welfare of their employees, leaders communicate that they believe in their employees and want to deepen their interpersonal connections with them (McAllister, 1995, p. 26). Showing that they will take their employees’ interests into account through their words and actions helps leaders forge stronger value congruencies between themselves and their employees as they actively instill their employees with “a greater level of faith” (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 400) in themselves and their intentions as a leader (Shapiro et al., 1992).

Personal conflicts often develop as a result of what individuals say to one another (Jehn, 1997). Because of this, leaders focused on diffusing personal conflicts should become much more careful about the general quality of their personal interactions with their employees. Bies and Moag (1986) introduced the concept of interactional fairness to describe the effects of interpersonal treatment on perceived fairness in relationships. In attempting to diffuse personal conflicts, leaders should focus on increasing the quality of their personal interactions with their employees through efforts to display respect (i.e., politeness) and propriety (i.e., the use of context-appropriate language) towards their employees (Colquitt, 2001). This builds directly from evidence in the business communication and impression management literatures that describes how leaders can improve the impressions of themselves they impart to employees through healthy, interpersonal interactions. By more aggressively policing both the potential offensiveness of what they say and the ability (or inability) of their words to promote relationship building, leaders can deepen the interpersonal connections they forge in ways that can ameliorate personal animosities between themselves and their employees (Bies & Moag, 1986).

Proposition 4.3: *Leaders can diffuse personal conflicts between themselves and their employees by applying input controls, demonstrating their benevolence, and promoting interactional fairness.*

8.5 Discussion

This chapter describes a framework that outlines how leaders can efficiently and effectively address leader-employee conflicts (goal, task, personal) by applying certain controls (output, process, input), building trust in particular ways (demonstrate integrity, ability, and benevolence), and actively promoting specific forms of fairness (distributive, procedural, interactional). By appropriately attending to key aspects of leader-employee relationships, it is argued that leaders may achieve greater levels of employee commitment and cooperation with their directives, increase their capacities to efficiently and effectively manage organizational tasks, and enhance their efforts to achieve organizational goals (Baron, 1991, 1997; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Jehn, 1995; Yukl, Falbe, & Youn, 1993; Yukl et al., 1995).

8.5.1 *Enacting These Perspectives Through Leader Development Initiatives*

These concepts and the relationships between them described in this chapter broaden traditional perspectives of leader attention and action as they refine and extend current theory, practice, and pedagogy on how to develop effective leaders (Popper, 2005). In arguing that leaders should integrate their organizational controls

with trust-building and fairness-promotion initiatives, this chapter outlines three categories of activities that differ in the primary purpose they serve for leaders, as well as the conflict management objectives that leaders can accomplish through their implementation. Moreover, by describing how leaders can address multiple forms of leader-employee conflicts, this chapter places the decisions leaders make about directing their employees within a broader strategic and relational context than is commonly addressed in control, trust, or fairness theories because these perspectives typically focus only on the implementation of one type of activity at a time (Eisenhardt, 1989; Ghoshal & Moran, 1996; Levinthal, 1988).

However, important questions remain regarding how we can use this set of ideas to focus leader development initiatives in ways that can provide leaders with the tools and skills that they need to maintain positive and effective relationships with their employees. Over the next section, we begin to engage this set of issues by considering several relevant concerns that should be addressed in leader development initiatives. This discussion highlights how the ideas contained in this chapter can be deployed in ways that effectively challenge current assumptions undergirding leadership education and training and suggest some ways that leadership development initiatives can incorporate the perspectives presented here.

As we explore implementation issues, it is important to communicate that the ideas contained in this chapter can be imparted to leaders through the wide variety of training platforms, programs, and techniques. Because pedagogical approaches vary a great deal, those focused on leader development should work to foster an understanding of these perspectives through multiple delivery mechanisms such as formal training programs, practice-based development activities, and even self-help-focused platforms. Utilizing multi-focused learning systems that can deliver and reinforce content through a variety of means may be the most effective way to impact how leaders manage conflicts to help them transform these potentially dangerous and corrosive situations into opportunities to foster high levels of employee commitment and cooperation.

8.5.2 Adopting an Integrative View of Conflict

As Propositions 4.1–4.3 outline specific strategies for resolving goal, task, and personal conflicts with employees, those who seek to use this information in leader development initiatives should focus, first, on developing leaders' capacities to appropriately assess the conflicts they are engaging. Proper diagnosis of relational dynamics is essential for leaders to accurately evaluate the state of their interpersonal relationships and use that information to determine what types of controls, trust-building, and fairness-promotion initiatives they should emphasize.

Existing conflict management research suggests that different types of conflicts elicit distinctly different reactions from individuals who encounter them. Thus, educating leaders on the composition of various forms of conflicts may be an essential component of helping them think critically and logically about how to manage these

disagreements. For example, Jehn (1995) found in a comprehensive study of multiple conflicts that task conflicts can lead individuals to “critically assess information related to their job” in ways that may reduce “thoughtless agreement and complacency” and promote a “critical evaluation of problems and decision options” (275). In that same study, Jehn (1995) also found that personal disagreements between individuals in groups can cause “distress and animosity” that lead individuals “to redesign their work area or job in the group so that they no longer would have to interact with the others involved in the conflict (276).” This suggests that leaders who take conflicts too personally may fail to effectively engage these aspects of their relationships and less frequently initiate appropriate and helpful remedial actions (Bendersky, 2003; Lowenstein, Thompson, & Gentner, 1999; Thompson, Gentner, & Lowenstein, 2000).

While conflicts may often be viewed as situations to avoid, leader development initiatives should help leaders accept and embrace the opportunities that conflicts present them to improve the relationships they maintain with their employees. In addition to providing leaders with tools to accurately diagnose and objectively assess the full range of leader-employee conflicts that they may encounter, leader development initiatives could help leaders foster an integrative perspective on leader-employee conflicts. For example, by helping leaders accurately diagnose conflicts and choose actions that can help them efficiently and effectively address these disagreements, leaders may begin to use these disagreements to better understand their employees’ concerns. Then using specific control, trust-building, and fairness-promotion initiatives they can effectively address these concerns in ways they communicate to their employees that they share their interests and seek to foster a collaborative, cooperative set of working relationships.

8.5.3 Embracing One’s Dependence and Relative Power

A potential key to altering leaders’ perspectives on these issues may be to help leaders understand and embrace their dependencies and vulnerabilities. On this point, “power-approach theory” (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003) which explains how individuals’ perceptions of their power influence the ways they interpret, process, and address conflicts can be particularly valuable. Over more than the past decade, researchers (e.g., Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006) have built from this theory to demonstrate how individuals who perceive themselves to be powerful make self-serving attributions, engage in lower amounts of perspective taking, are more aggressive, and concentrate their decision making on how they may use others to achieve their personal objectives (Keltner et al., 2003). This theory also shows how individuals who perceive themselves to be less powerful are more sensitive to social cues, and focus their decision making on how they can work towards the ends of other more powerful individuals around them (Galinsky et al., 2006).

In situations where leaders face conflicts, issues of power are particularly salient because, under these conditions, employees are actively challenging their leader's authority and, thus, motivating their leaders to identify ways that they can achieve their desired objectives (Zelditch & Walker, 1984). If leaders in these situations embrace the notion that they are dependent on their employees, they will be more likely to acknowledge that each of their employees "makes a decision to grant authority to the person above him or her" (Perrow, 1986, p. 71). According to power-approach theory, leaders who do this will then be more focused on trying to understand how they can generate positive employee perceptions of them and their actions, on trying to accommodate those employees' needs, and on balancing and integrating their efforts to apply controls, build trust, and promote fairness to achieve the ends that their employees desire (Keltner et al., 2003).

8.5.4 Understanding the Limits of Organizational Controls

It is important to note how the ideas presented here refine and extend current perspectives describing how leaders can use controls to address leader-employee conflicts through close monitoring, aligning incentives, and rewarding good behavior. Building on assumptions that employees exhibit conflicts with leaders primarily because they are self-interested and opportunistic, these transaction-focused perspectives emphasize how leaders can use primarily formal (i.e., written) controls to contain and diffuse the negative aspects of conflicts by focusing employees' attention on pursuing their personal interests through the achievement of clearly defined sets of organizational objectives (Barney & Hesterly, 1996; Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999).

In arguing that leaders should use multiple activities to address leader-employee conflicts, the ideas presented here engage a broader set of issues describing how leaders' efforts to direct and control their employees also encompass the efforts they make to build trust and promote fairness (Cardinal, 2001; Long et al., 2002). By describing the importance of trust building and fairness promotion in this process, this chapter highlights ways that leaders can compensate for some of the strains precipitated by their efforts to implement controls that negatively impact their relationships with employees and the willingness of those employees to pursue organizational goals (Greenberg, 1987; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992).

Those focused on leader development can use the perspectives presented here to educate leaders about the relational benefits and potential costs associated with implementing various forms of controls. A key component of this will be to also coach and mentor leaders about how to effectively balance and integrate the efforts they make to implement controls, build trust, and promote fairness. A way to motivate leaders to embrace these ideas is to demonstrate how they can more efficiently and effectively direct the work of their employees, reduce exchange costs, and enhance their legitimacy and authority by balancing their attention across multiple, complementary activities (Bendersky, 2003; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998). In assessing how to do this, organizational architects might draw from the work of scholars

such as Cardinal et al. (2004) who outline leader motivations for promoting various forms of controls. They may also develop perspectives such as those presented by Whitener et al. (1998) or Long and Sitkin (2006) who outline potentially important collections of individual, relational, and organizational factors that incite leaders to act in trustworthy ways or Chen and Church (1993) who describe factors that motivate leaders to promote fairness (Long, 2016a; Long, 2016b; Scott, Colquitt, and Paddock, 2009).

8.5.5 Control, Trust, and Fairness

In highlighting important relationships between control and trust, this chapter outlines the particular forms of trust and fairness that leaders should develop in order to build positive and effective leader-employee relationships. Architects of development initiatives should be aware that leaders who work to create an environment where employees trust them and believe they act fairly often make what they often perceive as difficult, strategic choices (Leventhal et al., 1980; Wicks et al., 1999). This is because these activities, at least initially, appear costlier and riskier than more traditional mechanisms for leading employees (Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999; Wicks et al., 1999). These programs may appear costly because they may require leaders to expend time and resources fulfilling obligations to employees, ensuring that they consistently apply organizational policies, equitably distribute organizational opportunities and compensation, and fully address important employee concerns. They may appear risky because they require leaders to cede discretion and decision-making authority to lower echelon employees who exhibit different and often conflicting, interests, needs, and preferences (Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999).

All this strongly suggests that leaders should be trained in how to determine what quality of relationships they desire and to take actions to produce the types of relationships they seek (Shapiro et al., 1992). While leaders should be cautioned against micro-managing their employees, they should also be coached on how to avoid either over- or under-investing in trust or fairness. This is because leaders who over-invest in trust and fairness may waste valuable resources creating an overly collegial climate. On the other hand, leaders who under-invest in trust may neglect opportunities to build cooperative relationships that promote organizational commitment and substantially reduce agency and transaction costs (Bromiley & Cummings, 1995).

While this chapter suggests that trust-building activities comprise a distinct category of leader actions that are complementary to organizational controls, leaders should be coached and mentored on how to identify ways to link how they build trust and apply controls. For example, a sales leader can couple the implementation of a formal incentive program with demonstrations of their integrity to increase employee perceptions that they are focused on promoting their financial interests. In other cases, leaders should apply certain types of controls in order to build specific types of trust. Sitkin (1995), for example, explains how applications of formal process control mechanisms can be utilized to increase employee trust in authorities by

enhancing perceptions of their integrity and competence in ways that decrease employees' relational risk and uncertainty perceptions.

Similarly, leaders should be mindful of how organizational structures, policies, and cultures can impact the decisions they make to promote fairness (Folger, Konovsky, & Cropanzano, 1992). For example, developing leaders should be coached in how they may apply controls to foster specific types of fairness. As formal process control mechanisms require leaders to codify employees' responsibilities, they may naturally encourage leaders to promote procedural fairness by requiring them to manage consistently and in bias-free ways. Alternatively, to promote distributive fairness in ways that enforce output controls, leaders can be trained on how to develop incentive plans that explicitly outline the rewards their employees can achieve for satisfying, specific sales targets.

For this reason and because they must often contend with various complexities in managing groups of individual employees, leaders should be directed in how to efficiently generate the levels of trust and fairness they seek to promote (Meindl, 1989). Building from established research that closely correlates employee perceptions of trust and fairness, leaders should be aware of potential synergies that exist between employees' perceptions of how fairly they are treated and how trustworthy they believe their leaders are (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Knowing this may, for example, motivate leaders to take explicit steps to promote distributive and procedural fairness in the hopes of enhancing employees' perceptions of their integrity or ability. Alternatively, leaders may want to focus on building deeper levels of relational trust with employees in order to increase perceptions that they treat their employees in interactionally fair ways.

As they do this, leaders should also be trained in how to align their efforts to promote trust and fairness with elements of the particular organizational contexts within which they reside. While the trust-building and fairness-promotion activities described in this chapter can be executed in various ways from informal impression management techniques to more formal structural or procedural changes, the specific types of activities that leaders deploy will depend on the culture and norms of the particular organization of which they are a part. For example, although it seems obvious that leaders would demonstrate their benevolence by using informal impression management and socialization techniques, leaders in bureaucratic organizations may find it more effective to demonstrate their benevolence using more formal mechanisms. Similar questions exist for each category of trust-building and fairness-promotion activity and leaders should be encouraged to think carefully about how they can use formal and informal mechanisms to generate the levels of trust and fairness that they are seeking to generate.

In fostering trust and fairness, leaders should bristle against their natural tendencies to foster qualitatively different relationships with only certain members of their units (Bauer & Green, 1996; Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986; Schriesheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998). Because these dynamics can often compromise employee trust, leaders should be encouraged to adhere strictly to fairness principles when managing groups of their employees. The ideas outlined in this chapter display how when leaders direct their employees' work activities While also treating them equitably,

consistently, and respectfully, they are able to effectively ameliorate the more toxic elements that may emerge with in their relationships with employees that enable them to effectively foster robust forms of trust to generate high levels of employee commitment, cooperation, and empowerment.

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