

Application Analysis 10.2

Conflict Management at Ross & Sherwin (10th Edition)

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Identify and Describe the type of Change Intervention used here
and the key roles employees played.

In 2008 there was pressure from external environment to change the firm's strategy. (Pg. 278) IP litigation required that the firm have specific skill-set's possessed by only certain types of lawyers. Clients were also requesting that the firm charge lower hourly rates for basic transactional work. By the end of 2010 the firm had decided that they needed a new business strategy and they needed a new leadership structure. (Pg. 278)

In 2011 the managing partner, Andrew, retired and the first ever "co-managing" partners took over the firm. They differed greatly in style, Brad was conservative and Ron was a risk taker. (Pg. 278) Brad and Ron hired a consultant to help develop firm strategy. Brad and Ron were not aligned on the goal and did not discuss. In the first big meeting a partner named Dan, who only had interest in his group, attacked Ron and Dan and they both got defensive. (Pg. 279)

The business strategy consultant recommended an OD specialist who specialized in conflict resolution. Brad and Dan suggested to the OD professional that Dan was the problem that needed to be fixed. They ignored the problem that they faced, being strategically opposite of each other. Dan and Brad spent more energy complaining about each other to their partners than they did speaking to each other. (Pg. 279)

The OD practitioner suggested a **conflict resolution process**. Both Dan and Brad were very aware of the shortcomings of the other person's style but they were not self-aware of their own style. The first step was to gather information on how other people in the firm viewed them. (Pg. 279) Next, there was a day long meeting where the feedback was shared and Dan and Brad

had an opportunity to express their perspective and their vision for the future of the firm. (Pg. 279) Each co-partner drafted bullet points about their vision of the firm to identify common ground. (Pg. 279)

There was a **team building** exercise where they reviewed each other's bullet points. Both Brad and Ron were surprised to see how many of their goals aligned. They simply had different timelines and were a bit more aggressive with some goals. (Pg. 280) They naturally realized that they needed to have more regular meetings with just the two of them and not include the COO in all of their meetings. Both, Brad and Ron made commitment statements to themselves and each other and the OD consultant followed up with phone calls for the next 6 months to check in with them and their progress. They developed a contingency portfolio of cases that allowed the firm to take on more cases with higher risk only if they were successful in a certain percentage of the first cases. (Pg. 280)

There was a setback where “Dirty Dan” hijacked a meeting about a risky case. Brad should have stepped in as the conservative partner but he let Ron respond. This looked like Ron was speaking out of personal motivation and Ron felt abused. This episode came up in the next call with the OD consultant who explained that problems would still occur, and they needed to focus on common goals and the vision of the firm. (Pg. 280)

An additional **team building** exercise took place **off-site** away from the firm. They went stand-up paddle-boarding in the ocean. (Pg. 281) This liberating experience in a new **neutral environment** strengthened their relationship and allowed them to openly discuss the happenings in the last meeting. The result was that they both started to take more ownership for their actions. The consultant continued to introduce interventions that further strengthened their relationship. (Pg. 281)