

Running Head: FRENKEL

The Design of a Conflict Resolution System
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Abstract

Now more than ever, conflict is a recognized aspect of daily life. Today, people seek to address conflict in a productive and efficient manner. However, though attitudes towards conflict have changed in recent years and people are more willing to address difficult issues, it cannot be expected that they know how to do this appropriately. Especially in the workplace, dealing with conflict in a suitable, professional manner is extremely important. Organizations that do not address conflict, or do not help their employees address conflict properly, suffer. The results of this can be, but are not limited to inefficiency, poor productivity, poor employee relations, and a negative work environment. In this paper, the theories and processes involved in designing an organizational conflict resolution system are reviewed. Based on that review, and through process consultation, a system is designed for Year Up, Inc., a community-based organization in Boston, Massachusetts. This system will assist the organization in dealing with conflict, which has previously not been handled properly, and has negatively affected their professional work environment.

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Finally, Gerald Chertavian and Hank Tarbi of Year Up. Without their belief in me, and their trust, I would not have had the opportunity to work with Year Up and to complete this project. I have received many wonderful life lessons working with them and Year Up, and I look forward to continuing my involvement in such a wonderful organization.

Conflict in Organizations

The image of conflict in organizations has changed in recent decades. In the 1960's and 1970's, conflict was seen as dysfunctional and taboo. Towards the 1980's, addressing it became accepted as a healthy process. The need to properly manage conflict through various interventions has been recognized and developed in order to maintain a status quo of functionality for any organization (Kolb and Putnam, 1992).

Every organization has a method of dealing with conflict, whether it is recognized or not. These methods can be implicit/explicit, formal/informal, or proactive/reactive. How a company chooses to initiate conflict resolution is an important factor in determining success. There are multiple methodologies for approaching organizational conflict. An organization and the system designer (if one is utilized) must work as a team to weigh the variables and decide which methods to use.

Year Up

A conflict resolution system will be designed for Year Up, Inc. After critical analysis of several theories and qualitative research, which will provide an understanding of the needs and culture of Year Up, a conflict resolution model will be presented for implementation. An understanding of Year Up's goals, structure, and culture is necessary to provide a basis for understanding the research and design.

Year Up offers a one-year training program that provides "at risk" inner city young adults (age 18-24) with technical computer skills, as well as general professional guidelines that are imperative for survival in the business world. After six months of training, students are placed in a paid internship with corporations and institutions in the area.

Year Up is expanding at a rapid pace. Started in October of 2000, it has already established offices in Boston and Cambridge. Currently, it is opening offices in Providence, Rhode Island and New York City. Students are accepted based on an application process in which they must go through two interviews. All students have their high school diplomas and 95 percent are African American, Latino or Asian.

Year Up differs from other programs, providing assistance in all aspects of life. This includes, but is not limited to, housing, insurance, day care, and transportation. They recognize that shelter, food, and child care concerns often get in the way of successful skill acquisition. Therefore, Year Up provides “life assistance” to support and encourage those with drive and commitment. Students receive a stipend that is prorated and distributed as a paycheck. In addition, college-level credits are available in conjunction with completion of the curriculum. Students are assigned a volunteer professional mentor as well as an academic adviser. Presumably, as a result of this support system, 85 percent obtain jobs upon graduation, 80 percent are still working (compared to the 55-55 percent for government funded job training, according to Year Up’s documentation), in which the average salary is \$30,000, and 65 percent have applied to college.

Students are expected to dress and act in a professional manner. The expectations are laid out for candidates before they enter the program and a comprehensive contract is reviewed and signed by each participant. The contract includes the penalties for breaking the rules, such as demotion in the program or dock of stipend pay. Those students who continuously break the rules are asked to leave. In Year Up’s terminology, they “fire themselves” because it is their chosen behavior that has brought on their failure to

succeed in the program. The contract stipulations offer students the opportunity to learn to take responsibility for their actions and provide personal experience of success in the workplace.

Current Status/Need for Conflict Resolution System

Year Up currently has no standard operating procedure or otherwise explicit method for dealing with conflict. In recent years, Year Up has experienced several escalated situations. They have arisen mostly between students, but the organization believes there are also conflicts between students and staff, and staff members.

Having no explicit model, instruction, or satisfying implicit means of addressing conflict, members of the organization have been left to deal with conflict of their own volition. However, Year Up students come from an inner city, at-risk background, and may not have appropriate skills for dealing with conflict in the professional environment (Pinderhughes, 1997). They frequently use harsh language, threats, and violence as a means of seeking resolution. With this population, pride and satisfaction from physical toughness often creates admiration and respect. Members of the urban youth communities may feel they need to be tough in order to gain respect and make friends (Pinderhughes, 1997).

Year Up management seeks to gain a better understanding of conflict within this context and to learn how to work towards effective resolution. They recognize that “properly designed, [conflict resolution] can meet some of the same needs for emotional venting served by fighting.” (Ury, et al. 1988, p. 50). Together, we feel Year Up could benefit from a “How to” guide for dealing with conflict. This project will serve to

provide avenues for the successful approach to conflict, leading to the resolution of many of the conflicts at Year Up.

I have been invited by Founder/CEO Gerald Chertavian to complete this project as an outside consultant on a volunteer basis. Mr. Chertavian understands that this consultancy and system design will serve as my Masters Project in the University of Massachusetts Boston Dispute Resolution Graduate Program. This project is thus mutually beneficial, providing well-needed services and opportunities for both parties.

Conflict Resolution Services

Elangoven (1995) suggests conflict should be addressed in organizations with a focus on settlement effectiveness, timeliness, and disputant commitment. Based on these varying priorities, models have been suggested for implementation by various authors.

In this section, several organizational conflict resolution models are reviewed. A description of their key points and means of execution is followed by a cost/benefit analysis in which the pros and cons of each model, especially as they pertain to Year Up, are described. While several of these models are theoretically effective, they often ignore or do not anticipate the costs of use or other potential shortcomings. This will be considered and addressed in the analytical section, though by no means have they been covered in their entirety.

Skill Training for Self Help

Enabling individuals to deal with their own conflicts has been suggested (Rowe, 1990). Programs have successfully provided participants with the skills necessary for addressing and resolving personal issues as well as how to act as a productive third party.

This includes courses in negotiations, active listening and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

Letter writing. Rowe (1990) claims dealing with an offender directly has the potential to produce better outcomes than going through Third Party systems. “Direct negotiation is especially useful for people dealing with harassment or with other interpersonal difficulties.” (p.30) Rowe (1990) suggests letter writing to help the disputant separate his/her facts from feelings. Letter writing is capable of empowerment because it provides a forum for the acknowledgment of emotion, which can be cathartic.

Cost/Benefit Analysis. Educating members of an organization is potentially one of the most effective ways to foster growth and empowerment (Rowe, 1990). In doing so, individuals can approach and resolve their own conflicts privately, without involving management or other outside assistance. Furthermore, a direct approach creates opportunity for clarification and casual resolution before involving formal channels.

However, if members of an organization are to be expected to *productively*, *efficiently*, and *successfully* resolve their own conflicts, an extensive curriculum of training and experience may be necessary. This can be costly, and may still prove unsuccessful. Some participants may not fully grasp the theory, or may be incapable of utilizing the concepts in their own attempts at personal conflict resolution, especially considering the difficult processes involved in citing injustices during conflict (Sheppard et al, 1992).

Finally, if this self-help model were solely implemented, it would fall short of universal applicability. Further assistance may be necessary when the direct approach

fails to reach resolution. While useful and empowering, this model can only be used in combination with others that provide greater support for conflict situations.

Peer Mediation

In peer mediation programs, members of an organization (often schools) are available to help their peers deal with conflict. After considerable training, peer mediators act as voluntary neutral third parties, assisting the disputants in reaching a resolution. A director/coordinator is responsible for the program, trainings, and supervision of the mediations. Peer mediation systems teach specific ADR skills while offering opportunities to learn sensitivity/empathy, tolerance, respect, and appreciation for diversity (Tolson & McDonald, 1992). The success of these systems has been recognized mostly in schools; they continue to be implemented across the state of Massachusetts as well as the rest of the country. (Abbanatt, 2003)

Cost/Benefit Analysis. The benefits of peer mediation programs for the participants are well documented (Tolson & McDonald, 1992). They offer first hand experience for learning practitioners in a casual, low-pressure environment. They are also cost effective and efficient because of voluntary student involvement. Although, as stated, a professional is required, once the program is in place, the students provide many of the work hours.

Peer mediation programs have further societal advantages as well. Besides establishing venues for conflict resolution, they provide youth with experience and understanding of ADR skills at a young age. This promotes leadership, confidence, maturity, critical thinking, problem solving, and public speaking skills. Additionally,

they foster skills in successful communication, negotiation, and productive interpersonal behavior.

However, for several reasons, it is often difficult for in-group members to bring private affairs to the attention of peer mediators (Theberge & Karan, 2004). Young adults know the difference between going to a professional to discuss their personal issues, and going to their peers. It can be difficult to disclose personal information to someone who they interact with outside of the process. In a small organization, in which students interact regularly outside of this system, “carry over” of emotions or issues can take place. Will participants be fearful of expressing “weak” emotions such as fear or sadness? The opportunity for full candor in the peer mediation system must come into question.

Further, peer mediation systems require extensive time for skill development and experiential training. In Year Up, students are only involved for one year, and only directly involved in the training phase for six months. They cannot be expected to successfully gain and implement these skills in such a short amount of time. It also seems unfair to end participation in a peer mediation program before they develop comfort in the process and ample skill development.

Hierarchical Systems

A hierarchical system of conflict resolution utilizes the structure of an organization that already ranks its members in terms of seniority, influence, and responsibility. This organizational structure is, in and of itself, a conflict resolution system. Group members recognize their position and can clearly point to those members

“lower” or “higher” than him/her (Elangovan, 1995). However, this does not mean that the system is used properly.

In conflict, members turn to the next rung up on the hierarchical ladder for consultation or decision-making, and it is the responsibility of that member to provide the subordinate with direction. If it cannot be handled appropriately, the dispute moves up the ladder for assistance. Often, disputes tend to be carried up the hierarchical chain and dealt with by upper management (Elangovan, 1995).

Conflict intervention by management. Elangovan (1995) suggests a manager should choose between multiple styles of conflict intervention, based on criteria laid out along a spectrum of intensity. This provides a manager with multiple options and clear bases for determining approach. He/she takes into account the usefulness of controlling the process or the outcome, as well as measuring levels of dispute importance, time pressure, the nature of the dispute, the relationship between the disputants, commitment probability, and disputant orientation.

Cost/Benefit Analysis. A hierarchical system for conflict resolution is an efficient use of an organization’s existing structure. It offers a linear flow of steps to follow when experiencing conflict, which is both helpful and supportive. Group members recognize the appropriate individual to seek when they are experiencing a difficult situation. If one level is incapable of solving or properly addressing the problem, it is clear where to go and what to do next.

An inside manager has his/her finger on the pulse of the organization. They inherently understand the culture, the relationships involved, and potentially the dynamics of the conflict since they are at the core of the organization. An outsider needs

to either take disputant information at face value, always wondering if they fully understand the dynamics properly, or conduct intensive time consuming data collection to draw his/her own conclusions (Schein, 1988)

However, there are many problems inherent in this system. First, it depends on an individual within the system to manage conflict. It is possible for a manager to have stake in the issue, which renders him/her partial to the outcome. If the problem is with structure or an organizational system, perhaps he/she designed it, is unable to change it, or cannot see that it is part of the problem because he/she is operating from within. Second, while being fully capable of running his/her own department, a manager may not necessarily have the appropriate skills to properly address conflict or mediate between disputants. Lewicki and Sheppard (1985) state that often, managers do not handle conflict effectively because they “rarely assume an open, confronting, problem-solving approach to their disputes” (p.49). Third, staff members with already demanding positions may not have the time to devote to the successful resolution of conflicts. Fourth, similar to peer mediation systems, in-house managers are often incapable of offering an opportunity for candor with their employees. Perhaps the conflict has to do with the manager, and an employee does not feel comfortable sharing those issues for fear of resentment or even retaliation (Lipskey, Seeber, & Fincher, 2003).

Finally, Year Up does not necessarily operate under a recognized hierarchical format. Although management has stated that there is a hierarchical system in place, most staff do not acknowledge this. Instead, their understanding is one of structural equality in which roles and levels of hierarchy are poorly defined. This is a clear case in

which employer/employee perceptions do not coincide, and represents the reasoning behind the methods of the study, which are described below.

In-House Ombudsman

An In-House Ombudsman works within the corporation, yet usually remains outside the polity and hierarchy within an organization. They have access to authority, yet are perceived to be neutral due to a lack of “stake” in actual resolution (Rowe, 1995). The individual who fills this position is generally capable of handling multiple types of conflicts. However, periodically, cases involving judicial matters such as harassment or discrimination may be routed through more formal channels, such as the law.

Listening, providing and receiving information, reframing issues, developing options, offering reference to information and functions, facilitating, investigating, and providing instruction are all essential skills in this job. Further, an ombuds can frequently point out overarching negative trends and patterns within an organization. Since conflict is funneled through one office, the individual addressing the issues is in a better position to recognize repetitive problems or patterns and potentially bring them to light or suggest solutions that otherwise may have gone unnoticed (Rowe, 1995).

Cost/Benefit Analysis. An In-House Ombudsman offers many practical solutions to the problems with the previously mentioned ADR Systems. He/she is available with the appropriate time, energy, skills, and experience necessary to effectively engage organizational conflict. Existing outside of the hierarchical structure of any organization, they are capable of assisting in all types of conflicts regardless of who is involved. They are also engrained in the culture and understand the dynamics of the organization (similar to a manager) without potential conflicts of interest.

Furthermore, this position is capable of offering well-needed services for a corporation such as Year Up.

“Many ombudspeople teach or facilitate in training programs to help prevent certain kinds of problems and to help teach principles of ethical management relevant to the given organization. Some are especially active with respect to diversity training.” (Rowe, 1995, p. 110)

The negative aspect of hiring an In-House Ombudsman is cost. An organization such as Year Up operates on a very tight budget and struggles to meet financial needs. They do not necessarily have the resources to hire an individual specifically for this task. However, incorporating services such as teaching professional communication and negotiation skills may be a way for Year Up to make this a viable option.

Extra-Organizational Specialist

Extra-Organizational specialists are hired on an “as needed” basis. They do not work for the organization but are hired as outside consultants for their specific services. They can come from various backgrounds and can be chosen based on the specific needs of each situation. This option offers a wide pool of professionals who can be, but are not limited to process consultants, mediators, arbitrators, social workers, or psychologists (Lipsky, et al. 2003)

There are numerous private practices in the above listed professions. The opportunity to utilize the large numbers of available practitioners can be beneficial. Chosen based on circumstance, a relevant specialist can be counted on to contribute to the efficient resolution of the situation.

There are also numerous volunteer pools in these fields. Local universities (and there are a number of them) offer courses in these professions and often look for opportunities in which their students can gain experiential knowledge while doing community service. There are also several local firms who might offer their assistance, pro-rata, for a community based organization such as Year Up.

Year Up can potentially develop partnerships with these organizations and foster mutually beneficial relationships. Utilizing position with local businesses, Year Up can also potentially solicit services from *their* ombuds/conflict resolution specialists on a volunteer basis. These are only a number of the ways Year Up can utilize its position in the community to gain much needed services at lower costs.

Cost/Benefit Analysis. If an organization experiences highly volatile situations fairly infrequently, hiring outsiders may be a viable option. Furthermore, if the type of conflict or the needs of the situation tend to vary, demanding one individual have an unusually large skill set (who would also be expensive to retain), the organization can choose outside interveners based on the specific needs of each situation. Additionally, if for some reason the first person chosen proves unproductive, others with varying styles and approaches can be utilized.

As previously mentioned, outsiders further the potential for full candor. He/she has no stake in the organization, the outcome, or the disputants. Dealing with strangers who will be leaving the workplace upon resolution may offer an opportunity for true honesty and candor that is otherwise stifled when conflict is approached in-house (Lipsky et al. 2003). In my experience with Year Up, this was certainly the case. Focus group

participants opened up and appreciated the opportunity to discuss their issues with someone outside of the organization.

However, not being engrained in the culture of the organization does have its drawbacks. It may be truly difficult for the outsider to properly assess the situation, or the context in which it occurs. Furthermore, full time employment creates the opportunity to develop trust, honesty, confidentiality, and fairness. Without daily interaction, the disputants may suffer from distrust of the outsider, and distrust in a process they are unfamiliar with (Schein, 1988).

The cost to hire outside specialists as consultants may be high, especially if the actual number of conflicts exceeds what is expected. As discussed above, there is potential to call upon volunteers. This is an option that requires further exploration. Are there enough situations per semester to warrant a partnership with a conflict resolution training program? If the majority of volunteers are students, will they be capable of handling Year Up's most difficult cases? If drawn from local businesses, Year Up must evaluate the relationship, accessibility, and the dynamic of the exchange.

Conflict Resolution Models

The above listed methods for approaching conflict resolution in organizations represent fairly isolated services. For the most part, they are more useful and successful in one type of situation over another and cannot cover the spectrum of conflict an organization is likely to encounter. Therefore, the goal is to provide versatility through a combination of approaches.

In a conflict resolution model, the designer looks at several successful aspects of ADR approaches and combines them into an entire system that meets the needs of the

organization. One must consider the organizational culture, including how people feel and react to conflict. “There is a good deal of variety in the scope of issues actually included in workplace systems.” (Lipskey, et al, 2003, P. 156)

Based on these considerations, and focusing on meeting the needs of the organization through data collection, a system is created. The system will potentially offer a model for dealing with conflict, a statement to members about the organization’s attitude towards conflict, a place for members to discuss/vent certain issues, and a concrete understanding of appropriate behavior.

Universal Aspects of Successful Systems

There are several components inherent in most successful organizational conflict resolution systems. These are either pre-existing aspects of the organization or are intentionally introduced through the system.

Voluntary participation. The voluntary use of a conflict resolution system is essential to the success and durability of any resolution.

“The use of the system or of any path offered it—or outside it—must remain an option to be chosen voluntarily. Individuals should be informed about their options, should feel empowered to select from among them and should find themselves free to make a choice, without pressure, regarding how to resolve their conflict.” (Lipskey et al. 2003, p. 162)

Open Door Policy. Meglio (2000) (in his study on ADR systems within Forbes’ 100 Best Places to Work) concluded that “an open door system for managing conflict was identified as the mechanism most widely used for the reporting and the resolution of disputes.” (p.9) An open door policy suggests that the conflict resolution specialist keeps

his/her door open to receive group members at any time, pertaining to any matter. Appointments are not necessary. This offers an informal atmosphere in which conflict can be addressed and suggests “management’s accessibility and a certain ‘organizational openness’ to the management of conflict.” (Meglio, 2000. p. 21)

Congruency Between Stated Values and ADR Systems. The values of an organization seem to correlate to the usefulness of ADR systems. Those known to highly value their members are likely to take the time, money, and effort necessary to create an approachable, successful conflict resolution system (Meglio 2000). There is recognition within these organizations that the members are their most valuable assets. Honesty and integrity are also highly valued.

Meglio goes on to suggest that when congruity between organizational values and system design exists, group members may work together with less trouble, and may more easily understand and carry out organizational goals. Based on these criteria, Year Up is an excellent candidate for a successful ADR system.

Anonymity. Avenues for complaint about a situation or the organization itself without connection to any specific individual can be valuable (Lipskey et al, 2003). Anonymity is often a desired aspect of an ADR system. This provides a sense of security for those uncomfortable with openly airing grievances, while offering an opportunity for the restructuring and reformation of potential organizational problems.

Protection of Privacy. In order to ensure trust in the process, privacy must be protected. Participants must not fear that information they reveal will be shared or they may not feel comfortable utilizing the system. Every use of this process, besides those with legal consequences, must remain confidential (Lipskey, et al, 2003). This is difficult

to ensure, yet the organization can make certain efforts to promote confidentiality. Staff members involved in the disputes can guarantee confidentiality, students can work on honor code, or deterrents can be built into the system. However, ultimate confidentiality is difficult to guarantee due to an inability to foresee potential circumstances in which confidentiality must be breached, or to control other parties.

Considerations in Designing a System

There is a lot to consider in the overall design of a conflict resolution system. Answers to these questions help determine the content and the structure of the implemented system.

Eligibility. The system must be designed with eligibility in mind. Who might desire access? Who might the organization want (or not want) to have access? Low power group members, higher power group members, partner corporations, faculty/staff, family/community members, competitive organizations, rejected applicants, and graduates are only a list of people associated in some way with the organization that may need access to the system at one time or another (Lipskey, et al, 2003).

Linear Vs. Flexible System. In a linear system, participants need to follow a sequential order of steps. In a flexible system, participants can move back and forth, “looping back” to a particular phase that suits their needs. Lipskey et al. (2003) suggest that the needs of various participants differ as well as their conflict styles. Flexibility in the system offers versatility in order to accommodate multiple personality types, and creates a more welcoming, fluid process rather than one of rigidity. Options for action are also appealing to system users. A design that has multiple routes to success, gives disputants a sense of procedural justice (Lipskey, et al, 2003, Ury et al, 1988). Thus,

while a linear system offers a structured predictable flow for assistance, a properly designed flexible system will provide options and satisfaction with the process that can better serve the community.

Introducing Systems to Existing Organizations

Regardless of whether change will benefit group members or not, there is a natural inclination towards resistance inherent in all organizations (Lipskey, et al, 2003). Resistance is possible from all levels within an organization. This includes low power group members such as students and employees, supervisors, managers, executives, and human resources.

The nature of a formal system for addressing conflict can be quite scary and unapproachable. Kolb and Putnam (1992) have suggested that formal systems are infrequently utilized in organizations due to fear of negative consequences such as retaliation. Change in office protocol or culture, shifts in power from key decision makers, and providing vehicles for voice and further change within an organization may also contribute to resistance.

Strategies

Lipskey et al. (2003) suggest that resistance can be overcome through participant buy in, extensive communication, and use of an organizational change model. Burke (1982) suggests that people do not tend to resist change; rather they resist what it represents. Specifically, change implies the loss of known, tried patterns and loss of personal choice.

“The people involved are exchanging the known for the unknown; certainty for uncertainty...in psychological terms, newness and the need to cope with it

constitute stress...The degree of ease and success with which an organizational change is introduced is therefore directly proportional to the amount of choice that people feel they have in determining and implementing the change...The more people are involved in decisions that directly affect them, the more they will be committed to implementing those decisions.” (p.52-53, the last statement as cited in Lewin, 1958)

Utilizing the following strategies may help keep these important points in mind.

Anticipation of Resistance. Simply recognizing potential for resistance within all factions can be beneficial. Having answers, reasoning, and suggestions on hand can prove that this was a well thought out endeavor and can ease the struggle. Designing the system with these objections in mind can help ensure a program’s successful implementation.

Buy In. Including group members in the design of the new system, and incorporating their ideas and comments can strengthen support for implementation of an unfamiliar program (Lipsky, et al, 2003). Studies have shown that simply feeling one’s voice has been heard (providing a sense of procedural justice) is enough to promote satisfaction in the decision, regardless of the actual outcome (Sheppard et al, 1992).

Lewin (1948) starts at the bottom rung on the power chain for input.

“The group lowest in...hierarchy is made the foundation for the fact-finding...To gain their wholehearted co-operation later on it seems best to start the detailed fact-finding here, and it is also necessary to have the first suggestions for the new rules...worked out by this group.” (Lewin, 1948. p. 31 CP)

Since the higher authorities automatically have veto power and will be consulted for final acceptance of new ideas, it is logical to have the consent of those on the bottom rung established. Beyond gaining acceptance, input from the bottom levels helps root the changes in “fairness,” offering an atmosphere of full cooperation and confidence. Since the new rules are developed by the lower ranking members, resistance should be minimized (Lewin, 1948).

Focus Groups

Accepting data given by management without observing the culture first hand or discussing the data with other group members sets the new system up for failure. Group members may have a distinctly different (and often more accurate) view of the organization, and it is imperative to discover those differences (Schein, 1988) The goal is to have individuals share their perceptions of the organization, its culture, and conflict with the system designer. This also provides an opportunity for the designer to better understand trends and costs of conflict (Lipsky, Seeber, & Fincher, 2003)

Data collection in and of itself affects group behavior. The presence of an observer alters the behavior of the group and accounts for intervention dynamics. According to Schein (1985) the intervener:

“must be sensitive to how best to probe without arousing defensiveness, inducing superficial explanations, or exhausting the insider to the point of wanting to terminate the relationship...this activity usually takes place when both parties are relaxed.” (p. 116)

Furthermore, perceived power imbalances between low group members and an authoritative specialist in conflict may be enough to keep pressure high and relaxation

levels low, leading to a poor environment for open communication (Schein, 1988). How can the opportunity for sharing and learning be optimized, when time is of the essence and trust levels are low?

Lewin (1948) suggests utilizing focus groups to obtain valuable, honest information from group members. He claims group discussion fosters more open, honest, and detailed descriptions than the secretive quality of private interviews. This further helps to reduce a sense of power or role imbalance with the interviewer.

“The group provides the stimulus to bring out what is ordinarily hidden, and outsiders attending the discussion can observe the behavior of group members from the point of view of the very assumption being analyzed. In other words, where opportunities to make unobtrusive ethnographic observations do not exist, one can still observe a great deal of the culture in action by creating and observing group meetings at which cultural issues are discussed.” (Schein, 1985. p. 127)

Balch and Mertens (1999) address the usefulness of focus groups to “describe in-depth issues that are not well known or understood by the researcher.” (p. 26) The focus group environment stimulates and supports conversation, providing cost effective, rapid learning, and offers ease of communication for sensitive issues.

Methods

Burke (1982) describes the “Generic Model for Organizational Change” that will be used in this project. This model is characterized by the use of an outside consultant or change agent, the gathering of information/data, and the collaboration between consultant and organization for system implementation and institutionalization of change.

Organizational Observations

Initially, casual observations took place at both Year Up sites. Attending classes and other meetings provided a more thorough understanding of the culture and atmosphere. This casual interaction, which began three months prior to the Focus Group sessions, helped promote trust, and eased entry into the population through familiarity (Schein, 1988). No concrete observations were made during these visits. However an understanding of the relaxed, open atmosphere that Year Up strives to maintain was achieved.

Focus Groups

After gaining approval from the University of Massachusetts Boston Institutional Review Board (with “exemption”), focus groups were conducted to accumulate data. Four sessions were held, each having representation from mixed ethnicity, age, and gender. In Cambridge, the student group consisted of eight participants, and the staff/faculty group consisted of five. In Boston, both the student group and the staff/faculty group consisted of four participants. In an effort to portray anonymity, less specific details about the participants were recorded because the personal details of each participant, which could be used to identify who participated and contributed specific ideas, were less important than the quality of contribution.

Input from focus group participants was recorded in the form of hand written notes. All relevant information was written down and evaluated for content specific to each session as well as patterns across sessions. The data reported are the overwhelming themes that were represented in the greater majority of all focus groups.

Participation was completely voluntary and food and beverages were provided in appreciation of recognized contributions. A copy of the full procedures for recruiting focus group members is included in the attached IRB application (Appendix A).

Reality Test

After completion of the focus groups, evaluation of the data and formulation of the results, various potential aspects of a conflict resolution system were drafted. These options ran along a spectrum of possibilities. The factors considered were cost, efficiency, ease of introduction, ease of implementation, and estimated probabilities of success based on Year Up's structure and needs. Resistance was also heavily considered.

Separate meetings with the CEO/founder and the Chief Academic Coordinator were held to discuss these options and their implications. Possible approaches and aspects of the system design were evaluated to determine the best overall design. Based on the results of those conversations, the final product was designed.

Results

The focus groups at Year Up revealed important facts about conflict within the organization. Some themes maintained common threads with the original information provided by management, while others were surprising. The focus groups proved invaluable to the process of data collection. While each session had a unique atmosphere and dialogue, several themes arose consistently throughout all sessions.

No Defined Steps

There is no defined order of appropriate steps to follow when experiencing conflict. Without explicit guidelines, Year Up members are left to deal with conflict

without guidance. Without assistance, it may be difficult to recognize and properly utilize the appropriate style in certain circumstances (Kolb & Putnam, 1993).

No Established Grievance Channels

There is no designated person available for the airing of a grievance. Year Up is a rapidly growing organization with fuzzy role definition and changing hierarchical structure. This promotes vague understandings of position, and whom members report to. This may act to fuel certain fires, and also does not help the situation once underway. Both staff and students are made to believe that there is no hierarchy. The only place to go to for resolution is upper management. However, people do not want to be seen as complainers and choose to remain quiet.

Although students have advisers to help them with difficult situations, that adviser may not be the optimal person from whom to seek assistance. What if the issue is with the adviser? What if the adviser seems partial in this situation?

Training/Understanding. At some point, the conflict resolution skills of all members of this organization are tested and taxed. Staff and students are required to handle situations with professionalism and tact. Yet, they often lack training in these areas. How is a teacher supposed to assist in a conflict between students without any understanding of conflict resolution technique? Furthermore, how can the students be expected to act professionally without any training or skill development?

Check In. The members of Year Up would like to be checked in with a period of time after a situation has been “resolved.” Too often, though a situation seems to have been dealt with, it resurfaces in some form. Focus group participants feel that if they

were consistently approached after the initial resolution for reassessment, they would be able to revisit any unsettled issues in a productive manner.

Year Up's System

Based on conversations with both the founder/CEO and the Chief Academic Coordinator, many approaches were combined into one inclusive model. This model was derived from the skill acquisition/self help, hierarchal conflict management, and external conflict resolution practitioner models.

The Founder/CEO, Gerald Chertavian, was receptive to both the findings of the study as well as the recommendations towards resolving the issues. Beginning with the findings of the focus groups, potential changes/solutions that would address those findings were then discussed. Mr. Chertavian voiced his concerns when he felt certain ideas were unattainable or not suitable for Year Up at this time, such as an in-house Ombudsman (for budgetary concerns); the final solutions are a direct result of his input.

However, meeting with the Chief Academic Coordinator, Hank Tarbi, proved to be a different experience. Though approached in the same manner and with the same information as Mr. Chertavian, Mr. Tarbi struggled to understand and agree with the focus group results. Even though he was informed that the results presented were overwhelmingly consistent throughout both sites (staff *and* students), Mr. Tarbi would often object or question the relevance of these findings. He insisted the findings were indicative of either Boston or Cambridge, staff or students and would not accept the universal nature of the results. He also questioned the inaccessibility of staff and the group member's denial of recognizing hierarchical structure, insisting that both he and Mr. Chertavian were constantly addressing issues and conflict in the workplace.

Only after explaining to Mr. Tarbi that it is neither appropriate, efficient, or productive to have upper management consistently receiving organizational conflict did he become receptive. In Year Up there are other levels within the hierarchy that can and should be utilized in the event of conflict before it is brought to upper management for resolution. This occurs because there is no clear recognition of middle management structure.

Maintaining persistence and explaining the details of the results allowed Mr. Tarbi to move forward in the process towards hearing the proposed suggestions/solutions. Though initially rejecting the results, Mr. Tarbi was enthusiastic about the options presented. Specifically, he was receptive to the designation of an administrative staff member to work without advisees in order to hear grievances or assist in conflicts with an open door.

Procedure in the Event of Conflict

In the event of conflict, Ury, Brett and Goldberg (1988) recommend a sequence approach. “In multi-step procedures, a dispute that is not resolved at one level of the organizational hierarchy moves to progressively higher levels.” (p.45) In this section, the framework for how to address conflict in Year Up will be detailed.

Step 1- Direct, open communication between disputants in a private, respectful manner. Year Up members will be encouraged to work out disputes on their own, without direct assistance. Instances of harsh language, violence, threats, or other inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and will not be considered a plausible attempt at reconciliation. This first step utilizes the Self Help approach and offers group

members the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions, pursuing reconciliation without alerting higher authorities to the issue.

Since many individuals may not have concrete understandings of how this is to be done properly and effectively, proactive training in communication, problem solving, and negotiations skills may be useful. This skill set would benefit each and every group member, whether or not they become directly involved in conflict. This training is highly beneficial, particularly for a program seeking to provide appropriate skills in the professional world.

Step 2- Utilizing the hierarchical structure, disputants will bring the conflict to the attention of an appropriate individual and seek assistance/guidance. As previously mentioned, group members, both students and staff, believe that role expectations as well as hierarchical structure is undefined. However, the founder/CEO and the Chief Academic Coordinator have clear understandings of the organizational structure of Year Up. Year Up actually has a defined hierarchy that is understood and recognized by management, yet alludes faculty and students.

In order for Year Up to utilize its existing hierarchy, it must make the hierarchical structure recognized and accepted throughout the organization. Everyone must know who to report to and who is in their charge. Once this becomes accepted, Year Up can begin to make use of this structure in handling conflict. The current hierarchical structure has been included in Appendix B.

In recognition of organizational growth and change, two more organizational structures have been drafted. The first (Appendix C) represents an intermittent structure that will be utilized as Year Up expands, but is not yet fully developed. The final draft

(Appendix D) represents the ultimate goal of hierarchical structure envisioned by current management. Year Up members should have no trouble viewing this hierarchy tree and recognizing appropriate channels in the event that conflict must be reported to a superior.

Since there are many hierarchical levels in Year Up, students and staff can use that to their advantage in the resolution of conflict. Students are provided advisors and staff report to supervisors. In the event that a particular conflict cannot be successfully addressed privately, disputants will seek the assistance of an appropriate individual.

In turn, the advisor has options. If he/she feels that there is still potential for resolution in Step 1, he/she can advise the disputant how to properly readdress the situation and attempt reconciliation. However, if the advisor acknowledges the challenges towards resolution, he/she can become directly involved. At this point, the advisor/other will conduct a meeting/mediation with the disputants (and potentially their respective advisors).

The task of mediating a dispute can be daunting and unfamiliar. Providing guidelines for successful mediation techniques along with skill-building training sessions is recommended. The more exposure to, and experience with, mediation styles and techniques, the more an individual is likely to be successful in resolving conflicts.

Step 3- Gaining professional assistance. In the event that resolution is difficult to achieve (for many possible reasons), it is often beneficial to seek the assistance of a conflict resolution specialist. Year Up currently uses volunteer social workers from the community for assistance with their program. It is possible to utilize similar assistance for dealing with conflict. It is also possible for Year Up to establish partnerships with conflict resolution education/training programs. Often, as is the case with successful

volunteer mediation training programs, a relationship can be mutually beneficial. While Year Up will have access to trained conflict resolution specialists, those specialists in turn have the opportunity to gain experience, something often difficult to obtain without partnerships. This service can be utilized in the event that Year Up experiences more complex conflicts either in house, between staff or sites, or externally, between partners or competitors.

System flexibility/loopbacks. As established previously, flexibility in a conflict resolution system is essential for the success of the program. At any time in the process, students should be capable of returning to an earlier step, also known as looping back, and working towards resolution without negative consequence. However, skipping steps is also necessary if we are to truly call this enterprise “flexible.” Participants will be allowed to skip steps in the process, provided they support their action with written explanation. Such explanation must sufficiently describe why skipping a step is warranted and must be approved by the individual who supervises the next step.

This opportunity to skip a step through sufficient written explanation serves two functions. First, it portrays the well thought out intentions of the disputant and the extent of their thoughtfulness through the problem towards resolution. Second, it improves written communication (especially in times of stress and conflict), an articulated goal of the program.

Additional Features of the System

Besides a step approach towards resolution, there are several possible structural additions that can help alleviate tension and conflict. These structural components can promote good will and a positive work environment based upon mutual respect.

Impartial and available third parties. It is a strong recommendation that there be one administrator at each Year Up site who does not have advisees. This person would be available with an open door policy to hear grievances and assist with situations. The proper individual for this position would need appropriate conflict resolution skills, good rapport with Year Up members, and would be sufficiently removed from daily contact with students.

Anonymous Box. In the search for anonymity, Year Up site leaders can choose to place an anonymous comment box on site. This box would offer group members the opportunity to voice their comments/concerns without fear of retaliation or recognition. Productive comments can be read during organization meetings such as Feedback Friday. It is important that this be done in a public setting so that those who submit comments will know they have been heard. Furthermore, comments can be addressed and explained, so that the submitter will understand why the existing structure is in place, or how it can be changed to better suit group members. This is an important step so that those needing/using the box will recognize that their opinion carries weight.

However, negative results are also possible with an anonymous comment box. Individuals can learn to use this feature as a crutch, halting direct and open communication. In this way, they avoid responsibility for their actions and hide behind anonymity, which goes against the pedagogy of Year Up. Furthermore, the feature might be taken advantage of as students/staff make unproductive comments to manipulate the system.

It is imperative for the success of the anonymous comment box that guidelines for proper use are provided, along with consequences for taking advantage of the system. If

there is continuous improper use of the comment box, it is advisable that site leaders remove the box and encourage direct communication. Similar to students “firing themselves” upon failing to fulfill contractual obligations, this offers students consequences for their actions and ownership of the process. They can “dismiss” the comment box as well.

Student body representatives. Establishing student body representatives is another option. This would provide the students a unified voice and means of gaining recognition/support. Several types of student body representations are possible.

At the beginning of the term, students may be invited to elect a representative body. Another possibility allows students in the second half of their tenure at Year Up, those placed in internships, to form a student body representative group that advocates for the incoming class. Having successfully completed the program, they have earned the respect of all parties. The combination of experience and success may create a strong voice for the student body that can benefit the student group and staff. Additionally, they are capable of providing honest feedback and imparting advice and wisdom from the perspective of successful graduates. This is not otherwise offered to students in the first half of the program.

Contract

The contract is an ideal opportunity for Year Up to both introduce students to the policies and procedures of the system, and to establish an agreement to adhere to the guidelines towards appropriate, professional, and successful conflict resolution. As with all other contract stipulations, the addition of the Conflict Resolution clause would

establish the use of these guidelines under rules of conduct and behavior as well as establishing the penalties for breaking the rules and not following appropriate steps.

Skill Training

It is strongly recommended that Year Up begin training and skill acquisition in ADR techniques. These can take the shape of skill workshops for both students and staff. Eventually, Year Up can employ a professional conflict resolution skills instructor who can fulfill many of the roles suggested in this report.

Anticipation of Resistance

Efforts were made to reduce resistance by involving the members of Year Up in data collection and system design. All members had the opportunity to voice their opinions and contribute to the process. This should help with the successful implementation of a new system since many of the issues addressed, as well as many of the suggestions made, were the product of these focus groups.

However, it is still important to anticipate resistance and to plan for this accordingly. With objections in mind during design as well as introduction, we can preemptively address resistance to minimize negativity while preparing responses to those issues that might draw resistance, but were deemed worthy and useful. It should be stated that though this section attempts to predict various levels of resistance, it is impossible to predict all avenues.

Students. It is possible that the students will resist on many levels. First, this conflict resolution system involves commitment to more policies and procedures, as well as more action and bureaucracy. Second, this system means that the organization will be more attune to manifest conflict and will not be so willing to ignore it. Third, since many

students are not comfortable with direct, open communication (as I observed in Feedback Friday) including written, potential resistance is likely.

However, the aspects of the system that may provoke resistance are necessary both for the successful nature of the system, as well as the professional skills Year Up is working towards. They have been implemented based on the submissions of students themselves and should work to benefit this group.

Faculty/Staff. Faculty and staff may also resist on several levels. Foremost, these new steps increase their potential workload and establish guidelines for the necessary involvement of faculty and staff in the conflicts of others. Furthermore, resistance may arise because the system provides students with more opportunity for voice and rejection of organizational policies. With suggestions for an anonymous box and student body representatives, students are more empowered to fight the system and abuse privileges. In focus groups, many felt that the students were already overly empowered to fight structure, and that the organization was unclear about whether the students were the boss (teachers are there to serve them and fulfill their needs) or the employee (students must perform tasks and seek the approval of the staff).

However, these empowering aspects are necessary for students to feel a sense of procedural justice. Hopefully, with these aspects of the system that may provoke resistance from the faculty and staff, the benefits will outweigh the costs. Through guidance, I believe Year Up can teach proper use of tools of empowerment.

Management. I do not expect much resistance from management since it is this group that recruited my services. They are capable of rejecting any aspects of the system

that they do not agree with, blocking implementation. Furthermore, they have been consulted with concerning the acceptability of the proposed system.

However, many of these group members have been involved from the outset of Year Up and were an integral part of the establishment of the current systems. It is possible that certain changes will be made that directly affect other aspects of the program in an unforeseeable manner. Also, with the system being hierarchically based, certain protracted conflicts will eventually fall on the shoulders of management for resolution. This increases stress and duties to an already busy team. It is also possible that management envisioned certain changes differently. Perhaps these changes render a new idea that they were working on more difficult to implement or even obsolete. It is impossible to predict such complications.

Considering the philosophies of the program and the commitment of management and the rest of the staff, what is best for the organization should be recognized and supported. Regardless of increased stress and workload, I believe changes that are good for the program will be welcomed and supported.

Trade Offs and Compromises

In the design of any practical system, trade offs and compromises must be made as the available options are meshed with the realities of the situation. The limitations of funds, as well as the time constraints based on the length of student commitment created interesting dynamics. The sacrifices made affect the immediate implementation of many parts of this system. A focus was made to create a durable, transferable, and effective design that will improve with experience and time. While there are some drawbacks to

the current design, with full commitment towards implementation, it will be fully functional and successful.

This system creates an opportunity for Year Up to understand how to better address conflict situations. However, it is incomplete as a “turn-key” system. The design utilizes much of what Year Up has in place in the search for cost effectiveness. It calls for the development of specific skills and techniques that take time to acquire and enhance. Further design of relevant curricula may be necessary to gain full use of this system and to be able to depend on organization members to handle the situations that become their responsibility.

If the current status of the organization allowed for greater expenditure, the acquisition of fully trained full time staff would benefit the program immensely. Hiring an experienced ombudsman (even for a temporary period) would benefit the company for several reasons. It would transfer much of the responsibilities of handling conflict resolution onto the shoulders of a trained, experienced specialist. This eliminates the time lapse between training current staff in these skills and successful implementation. It would also establish a professional to create trainings and skill workshops, allowing skill development to take place throughout the organization; therefore, the position would serve as a guest instructor and an ombuds. Eventually, through training, the staff would become self sufficient, no longer needing these services fulltime.

Final Thoughts/Suggestions for Further Work/Research

This project has established a set of guidelines and structural suggestions for dealing with conflict in the context of Year Up. While these steps may be useful as a response to manifest conflict, it is also possible to restructure the existing organization in

order to minimize the occurrence of conflict. Several of the steps taken in this project have attempted to do this, such as providing voice systems, empowerment opportunities, and adding vehicles for feedback which can be received long before conflict might become evident.

A by-product of the focus groups were a list of common complaints about the current existing structure, policies, and procedures. It is possible to address these issues through small adjustments to the structure. However, with the current status of the organization, pre-conflict resolution system implementation, many of these issues remain stifled, without a vehicle for them to surface and promote change.

It is my recommendation that Year Up embark on a second project, in which these issues are addressed. There is a tremendous amount of data relating to this topic in the notes from the conducted focus groups. This second consulting project would be able to piggyback off this project. As a member of the community who cares a great deal about Year Up and its goals, I feel there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done in order to streamline Year Up as an organization, minimize workplace conflict, and ensure that issues with organizational structure are addressed and dealt with appropriately.

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APPENDIX A
APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

RATIONAL

The ultimate goal of this project is to design a conflict resolution system for Year Up, Inc., a community based program. Year Up works with inner city high school graduates, or those with a GED, in order to help them prepare for a career in IT. In this study, I will conduct focus groups with both students and faculty of Year Up in order to obtain answers about Year Up. Specifically, how it deals with conflict and what the members of the organization feel might be more useful and successful approaches to conflict.

METHODOLOGY

The research will be conducted by Stephen Frenkel, a Masters student in the Graduate Program in Dispute Resolution. I have offered my services to Year Up on a volunteer basis for the purposes of this project, and have assumed no positions of authority. Rather, I am acting as a consultant, remaining outside of the organizational structure. I have been coordinating the efforts of this endeavor with Year Up since September, 2004, and have been on campus getting introduced to staff and students casually, while attending and observing class sessions and staff meetings in order to gain familiarity with the program and so that the organization can gain familiarity with me. No conversations, interviews, or focus groups about the project goals or outcome have been conducted thus far.

I will be conducting 4-6 focus groups which will either be made up of 4-8 students or faculty, but they will not be mixed and participants will not be allowed to participate in more than one session. Approximately 30-50 people will voluntarily participate in this study. This study will only include members of this organization and will be chosen based on a volunteer basis and availability. For student recruitment, approximately one week before focus groups are conducted I will attend a class and introduce myself (though they have already been introduced to me during observations). I will explain the project, my involvement, and the need for voluntary cooperation in the focus groups. I will be conducting these focus groups during the student's lunch hour and, as incentive, will offer free pizza and soda to those who participate. If more students volunteer at one time than can fit into that session, I will operate on a first come first serve basis. Faculty and staff will be approached during a staff meeting in a similar manner and, after explanation of the project, will be asked to participate voluntarily. There will be no forced or required participation.

Prior to data collection, each member of each focus group will sign an informed consent form (attached). Focus group questions will be open-ended and are not of a sensitive, personal nature therefore I have described the risk level as minimal. The focus groups will last no more than 60 minutes and will occur in a private setting on one of Year Up's campuses, either in downtown Boston or in Cambridge. I have obtained written permission to conduct this study of Year Up organization members on Year Up property and have enclosed that letter with this application. My data will be in the form of hand written notes taken by myself. The analysis will focus on key aspects of Year Up's

culture that deal with conflict. This includes how conflict is currently dealt with, as well as how organization members feel conflict can be dealt with beneficially in the future. I will be the only individual with access to the data collected, and there will be no connections between the data collected and the individuals themselves. I will keep the signed consent forms in a locked drawer. Data will be reported with pseudonyms to conceal the identity of participants and in no circumstances will real participant names be used in the report.

HIPPA COMPLIANCE INFORMATION

I will not be using health-related data for this project.

PARTICIPANT DATA

The focus population will be both students and faculty of Year Up, Inc. The study will include those ages 18 and over, males and females, and mixed ethnic groups.

PROCEDURES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

No individuals in this category will be interviewed for this research project.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

The risks of participating in this research are no more than would be encountered in daily living or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examination or tests. I acknowledge that in small organizations such as this, though I will not be using names in my data report or collection, some data is attributable to certain individuals, sometimes accurately and sometimes falsely. I will make all efforts to avoid this possibility in the reporting of my data and the writing of my paper. Therefore, I classify the risk as minimal. Benefits of the research will be increased understanding of the factors facilitating and hindering the utilization of certain conflict resolution models and approaches in a system by the members of Year Up, Inc. This study seeks to understand the culture of conflict in Year Up and to design a system that will benefit the organization by providing a means to successfully deal with conflict. It will be immensely useful and educational to the population. Though not a benefit, as incentive, I will be providing pizza and soda to the participants.

INFORMED CONSENT

I will utilize an informed consent form that the participants of the study will be asked to sign prior to participating in the focus group.

VIII. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Can you tell me about a time when you or someone you know was in conflict here at Year Up?

Did you know where to go, who to go to or what to do for help?

Is there anyone in any position that you might feel comfortable going to for help?

If someone was made available to you to help you deal with your conflicts, what would you need to know about them to make you feel comfortable going to them?

RECRUITING STRATEGIES

Students and staff will be recruited to participate in these focus groups on a voluntary basis. One week prior to these focus groups I will attend either staff meetings or class sessions in order to reintroduce myself to the group members, announce the opportunity to participate, and offer food and refreshments (pizza and soda) as incentive. Each member of Year Up will only be approached once for recruitment. Though a teacher may be exposed to me asking the students for volunteer participation, they will not formally be invited to participate until I meet with the staff at a staff meeting.

Script:

“Hello everyone. I am sure a lot of you have seen me around Year Up in the past month or so. My name is Stephen Frenkel and I am a graduate student at UMass Boston in the field of Conflict Resolution. I am a volunteer here at Year Up working on a school project. I will be helping to create a system for Year Up to deal with conflict better. In order to do this, I am conducting a research study that will give me the information I need to help out.

Over the next week or so I will be offering you the opportunity to volunteer to participate in focus groups (I will tell them the exact dates when the time comes). In these sessions there will be 4-8 of you and myself in a room having a conversation. I will ask you several questions about your experiences at Year Up, specifically related to conflict.

I want to assure you that participation in these groups is 100% voluntary and no one has to be involved if they don't want to be for any reason. Also, any one can choose not to participate at any time, even once we have begun the sessions. The discussions we have will be strictly confidential and I will not be reporting back to any person any of your specific answers. The sessions are only designed to help me better understand what Year Up's needs are and how best to design the system.

Are there any questions? Please feel free to discuss this project or anything else related to this project with me at any time, either before or after these groups are held, whether you are a participant or not.

I am really looking forward to this opportunity with you. Also, for those who participate, I will be providing free pizza and soda after the meetings, since we have scheduled these meetings during your lunch hour. If we have more people interested in participating than we have room for, I will choose people on a first come first serve basis, and will try to hold more than one meeting so that those who have not been able be a part of the first one can have other opportunities to participate.

Thanks for listening and I will see some of you soon.”

INFORMATION FORM – CONFLICT RESOLUTION SYSTEM FOR YEAR UP

Graduate Program in Dispute Resolution
University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125-3393

You are asked to take part in a research project that is studying conflict at Year Up. The researcher, Stephen Frenkel, is a graduate student at UMass Boston in Dispute Resolution. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions; Stephen will be glad to discuss them with you. Should you have questions later, his telephone number is (617) 287-4800. Professor David Matz, project adviser, is also available for further questions at (617) 287-7376.

These groups will help Stephen collect data about conflict at Year Up so that he may better develop a Conflict Resolution system. Approximately 40 members of Year Up will take part as participants in this study from both Year Up campuses. Participation in this study will take 30-60 minutes. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a casual conversation with fellow students/staff (not mixed) and Stephen. The conversation will focus on conflict in Year Up and how it is dealt with or not dealt with. Afterwards, Stephen will use that information to understand what Year Up's needs are and he will design a way for you to deal with conflicts you are experiencing. To thank you for your participation, pizza and soda will be provided after the session.

There is minimal risk to those taking part in this study and participants are at no greater risk than in normal daily tasks. However, if anyone feels being a member of these groups has been stressful for them, they can feel free to speak with Stephen.

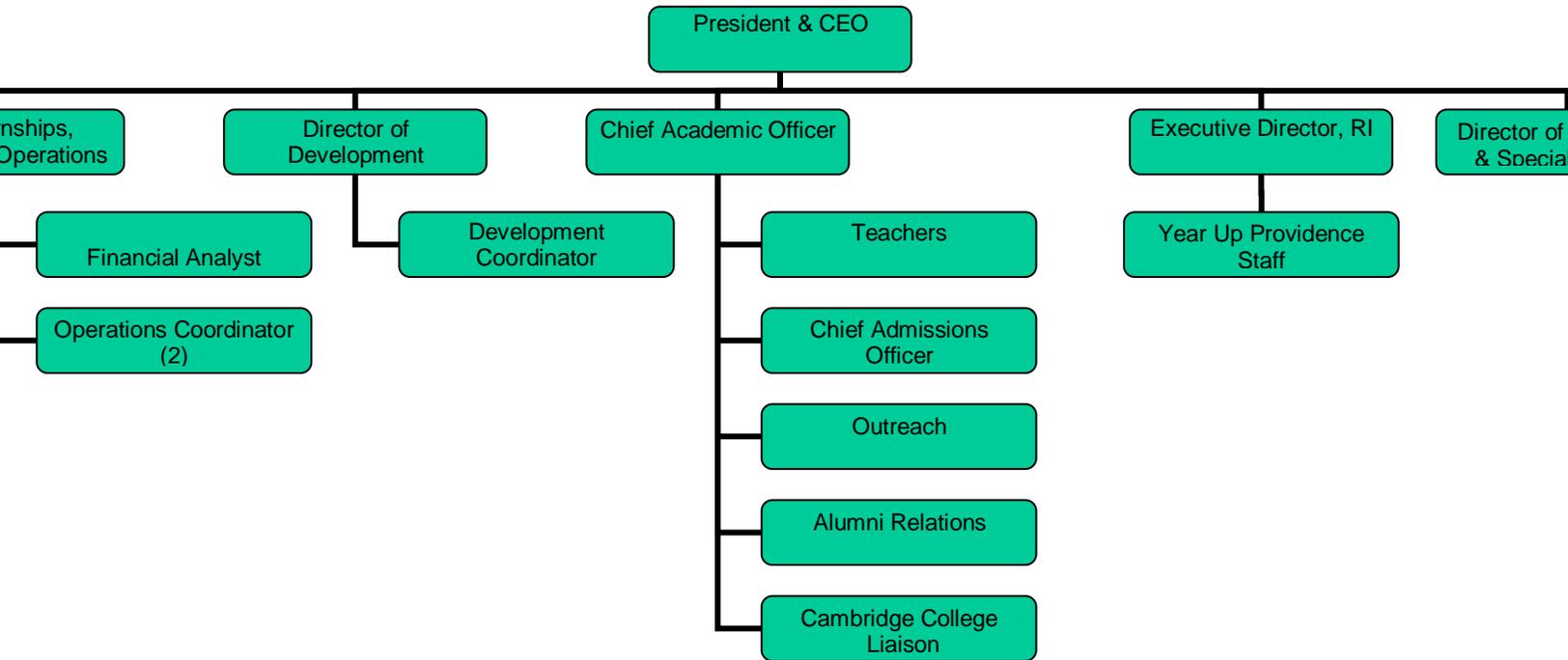
This study will be confidential. The researcher will not connect comments with names, nor will he present data in his final report connected to any individual.

Participation in this project is 100% voluntary. If you choose to participate, *you may end your involvement at any time without consequence and no penalties whatsoever.*

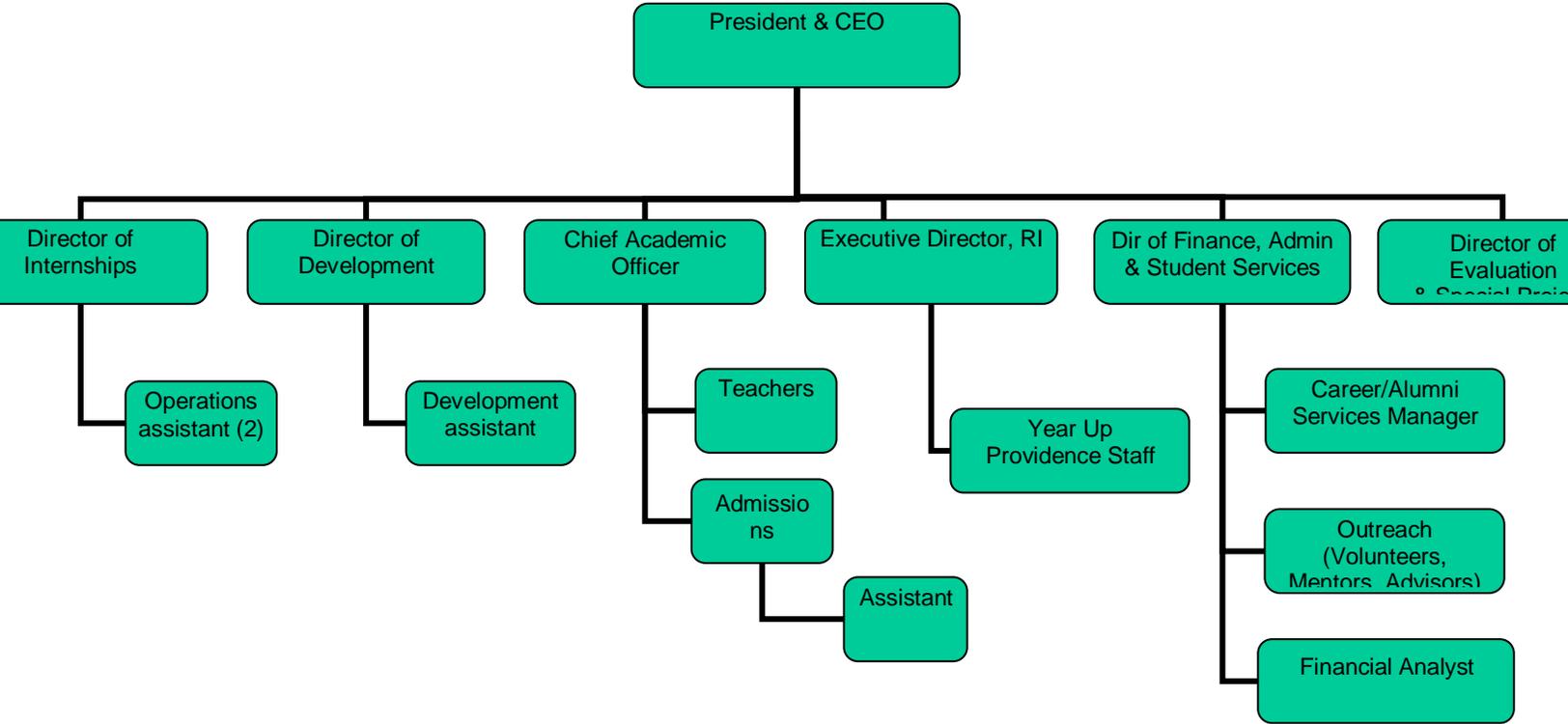
Services available to you through Year Up will not be affected whether or not you decide to participate in this study.

Before, during, or after this study, or in the event of any injuries related to this research you have the right to contact Stephen Frenkel at (857) 204-3377 or his adviser, David Matz at (617) 287-7376 for questioning. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board of UMass Boston, which oversees research involving human participants, at (617) 287-5370, human.subjects@umb.edu, or at IRB, Quinn Administration Building-2-015, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393.

APPENDIX B
CURRENT YEAR UP HIERARCHY



APPENDIX C
INTERMITTENT YEAR UP HIERARCHY



APPENDIX D
FUTURE NATIONAL YEAR UP HIERARCHY

