

Is negotiation the best alternative solution to resolve conflicts in the food industry?^{1, 2}

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ABSTRACT

As conflicts are part of everyone's life and seem impossible to avoid, why don't just try to learn the best possibilities to deal with disputes? The purpose of this paper is to analyze the most common causes of disputes in the food industry in order to better understand their roots and find alternatives to reduce, or at least manage at best, these conflicts. Several feasible alternatives of conflict resolution have been compared thanks to conscientiously chosen attributes and with the help of multi-attribute decision making methods to establish the best process of dispute resolution. We found out that the most pacifist alternatives appear to be the best ones; conversely to private binding and litigation, prevention and negotiation score much higher based on compensatory model techniques.

Key words: Disputes, Food Industry, Causes, Conflict Resolution, Project Management, Work Environment, Negotiation

INTRODUCTION

The apparition of new professions such as « chief happiness officers » (CHO)³ can leads us to question the evolution of the current professional world. What need-s this amusing job title is supposed to answer to? A number of studies show the importance of well-being at work, making

¹ Editor's note: Student papers are authored by graduate or undergraduate students based on coursework at accredited universities or training programs. This paper was prepared for the course "International Contract Management" facilitated by Dr Paul D. Giammalvo of PT Mitratata Citragraha, Jakarta, Indonesia as an Adjunct Professor under contract to SKEMA Business School for the program Master of Science in Project and Programme Management and Business Development. <http://www.skema.edu/programmes/masters-of-science>. For more information on this global program (Lille and Paris in France; Belo Horizonte in Brazil), contact Dr Paul Gardiner, Global Programme Director, at paul.gardiner@skema.edu.

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³ LesEchos.fr (June-2017) – *Le bien-être au travail incite les salariés à s'engager*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lesechos.fr/thema/030382984838-le-bien-etre-au-travail-incite-les-salaries-a-sengager-2095725.php>

us more productive in our job⁴. The idea is to provide a better understanding of the evolving working environment in which we are living, in order to better deal with it. One of the obvious causes of unhappiness at work is conflicts; they are numerous and vary depending on the industry you are working in. In gathering information from different sources and articles to apprehend the multiples causes of disputes in the food industry, and crossing data to understand better the major points of conflicts, their causes and consequences, it is possible to learn how to deal with these disputes in the best possible way.

Considering the definition of a project being “an investment that requires a set of logically linked and coordinated activities performed over a finite period of time in order to accomplish a unique result in support of a desired outcome”⁵; a project for a food services manager is a meal served. Each meal served come from ingredients bought by the manager, that has been cooked by cooks hired by the manager, and served by waiters also hired by the manager, the overall in a defined amount of time and so, meets the definition of a project.

Let’s now have a look at the definition of asset, program and portfolio, applied to the food industry:

⁴ Oswald, Andrew J., Proto, Eugenio and Sgroi, Daniel. (2015) – University of Warwick – *Happiness and productivity*. Retrieved from:

https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/63228/7/WRAP_Oswald_681096.pdf

⁵ Planning Planet (Nov-2015) – *Guild of Project Controls Compendium and Reference (CaR) – 1 Controls*. Retrieved from:

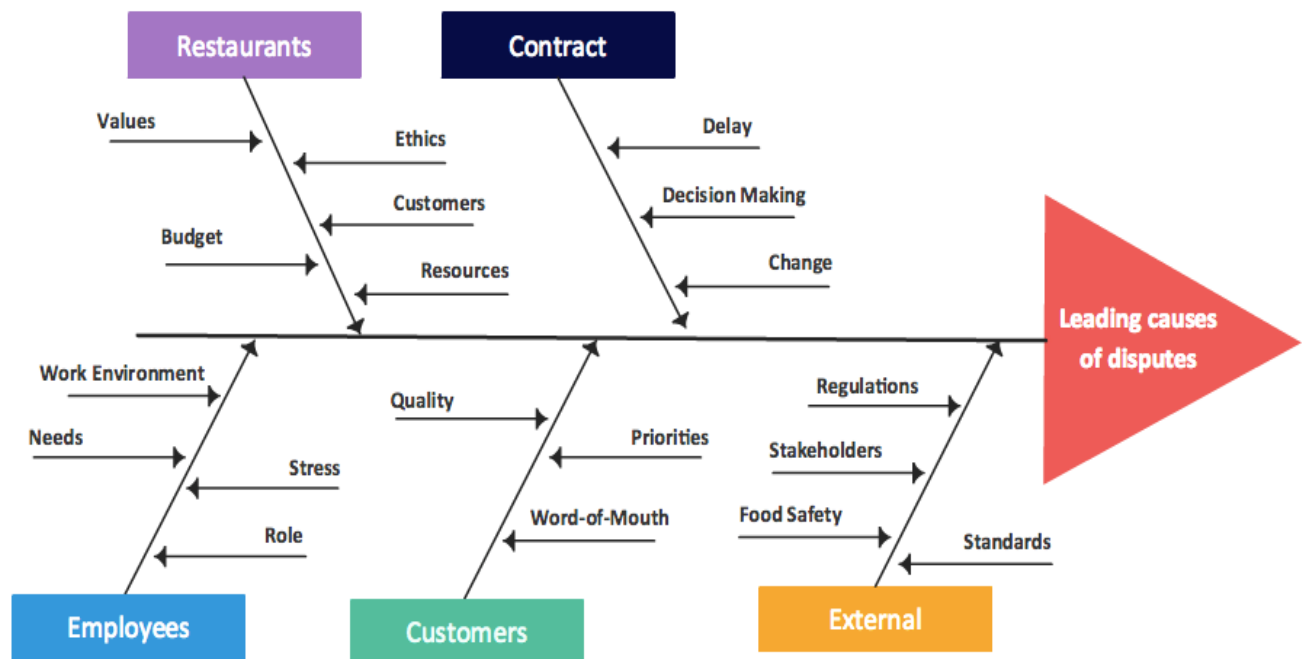
<http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/introduction-to-managing-project-controls>

	Definition	Application for a Food Service Manager
Programs	The general purpose of an operational program is to "deliver assets and benefits that are critical to the sponsoring organizations day to day operations."	Here the program can be the overall food service in the restaurant. As each meal is a project aiming at the same goal (deliver benefits) serving all of the meal is a program, reflecting the restaurant day to day operation.
	A strategic program aims at "delivering assets and benefits that are directly linked to attaining the sponsoring organization's future state."	In the food industry, the development of a new product line as a menu for example, can be considered as a strategic program.
	A multi-project program intend to "achieve synergies from projects with common traits such as shared resources, similiar clients or products technology."	A multi-project program in a restaurant would be having different types of the same product/meal, for example, having several types of cake. Each cake would be a program, and consequently the whole set of cake would be a multi-project program.
Assets	"A tangible or intangible resource with economic value that an individual, corporation or country owns or controls with the expectation that it will provide future benefit." There is 5 type of assets : Human assets, Physical assets, Information assets, Financial assets, Intangible assets	In this area, the employees (human assets), the stocks (financial assets), the ingredients (physical assets) and any resource with economic value as said, is considered an asset.
Portfolio of Projects	A "portfolio of projects is no different than any investment portfolio, the objective being to minimize the risk and maximise the return. Any organization, be it Owner or Contractor has a portfolio of assets (resources) available to dedicate to projects, with the objective being to develop the best "mix" of projects which will generate the most favourable return on those assets."	Here, the portfolio includes the meal served, but also the employees recruited, the suppliers chosen for the ingredients, etc. Each of them are an independent project that the food manager link together in order to "minimize the risk and maximise the return"
Portfolio of assets	The definition of portfolio of assets is the same as any investment portfolio as expressed in the definition of portfolio of project. Only, instead of regrouping different projects, the portfolio of assets contains several types of assets, as follow : Human assets, Physical assets, Information assets, Financial assets, Intangible assets	The portfolio of assets is the mix of assets that the food manager uses, as said above : the employees, the ingredients, the equipments, the inventory, the cash, and so on.

Table 1: assets, program and portfolio definitions⁶

The definitions of Program, Assets and Portfolio of Project have been retrieved from: Planning Planet (Nov-2015) – *Guild of Project Controls Compendium and Reference (CaR) – 1 Controls*. Retrieved from: <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/introduction-to-managing-project-controls>

⁶ By Author



Fishbone Diagram: Root Cause Analysis based on ASQ :
<http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/cause-analysis-tools/overview/fishbone.html>

In today's food industry, quality professionals are confronted with growing challenges that can be attributed to "the dynamic nature of the food industry". It means the permanent change of regulations and standards, the impact of the globalization, and the "demanding customer and consumer expectations"⁷. Success in the food business is particularly complex and fragile because it lies in handling together many factors at once, the most crucial being food safety and quality.

The aim of this paper is to create a better understanding of the main disputes in the food industry and companies' relationships. The purpose is to find how to prevent and, when unavoidable, solve disputes through the use of suitable tools, mainly for project managers, who are at the heart of conflictual relationships in their everyday job. To avoid conflicts or at least their escalation to disputes we need a better definition of the role, and required skills and knowledge in the conflict resolution field. The causes of such situations are numerous, the most commons are based on resources, perceptions, and values⁸. Even though "not all conflicts and differences

⁷ Institute of Food Science + Technology (March-2017) – *Leading and managing conflict resolution in the food industry*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ifst.org/food-safety/blog/leading-and-managing-conflict-resolution-food-industr>

⁸ Pressbooks – *Working in the food service industry* – Conflict Resolution. Retrieved from: <https://opentextbc.ca/workinginfoodserviceindustry/chapter/conflict-resolution/>

can be resolved”⁹, the purpose is for project managers to find a way to avoid the maximum amount of conflicts so they don’t have to handle their resolution which is a huge loss of time, energy, and money. The expected result is a more sustainable approach to the project manager role in this industry – and more widely, a more sustainable management of personal, interpersonal, functional and organizational conflicts. In other words, we aim to answer the following question: how to resolve conflicts in the food industry? One of the hypothesis is that the best way to do so is to take the problem upstream and learn how to avoid conflicts and disputes. Thus, we all know that the complete avoidance of conflicts in such complex context and relationships is clearly utopist. Another way to answer this question would be the depiction of best-s behavior and reaction to adopt in case of conflicts, in order to handle the situation quickly and properly. The objective here is to get an overall understanding of the most common causes of disputes in the food industry and find the best possible way-s to deal with it through the exploration of different means.

STEP 1:

As described in the first part of this paper, the idea is to find the best method-s to resolve, or even avoid, conflicts between the actors of the food industry. To do so, an upstream analysis of the prevalent causes of disputes in this field is needed, leading to a greater understanding of their consequences and how to handle them. The objective here is to consider the different feasible alternatives that could be put in place to answer the big question of the conflict resolution in the food sector.

STEP 2:

The feasible alternatives solutions that have been identified¹⁰ for this problem are the following:

⁹ Pressbooks – *Working in the food service industry – Conflict Resolution*. Retrieved from:

<https://opentextbc.ca/workinginfoodserviceindustry/chapter/conflict-resolution/>

¹⁰ Planning Planet (Nov-2015) – *Guild of Project Controls Compendium and Reference (CaR) –*

12.Claims. Retrieved from: <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/formal-disputes-resolution>

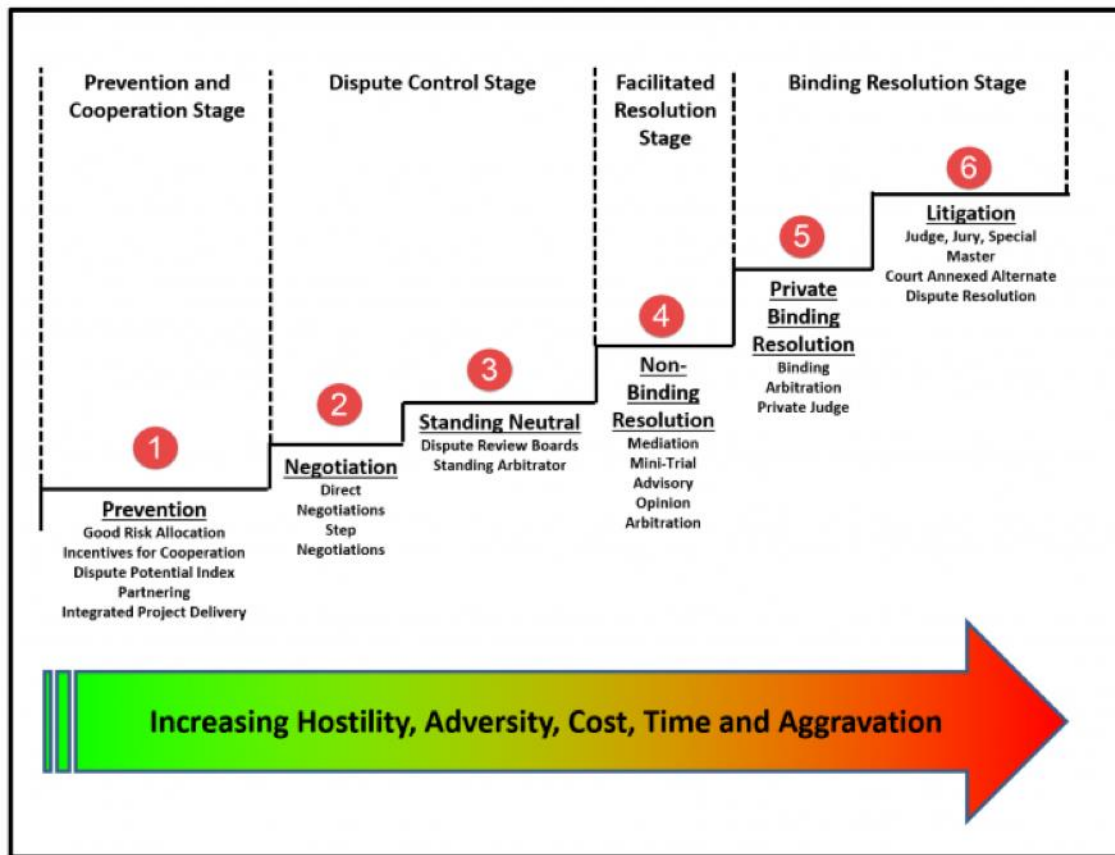


Figure 1: Illustrating the Escalations Steps in the ADR Process¹¹

- **Prevention:** "prevention is the best form of conflict resolution and supports several 'best practices' that help reduce problems in projects."¹² The undeniable first option to manage conflict resolution is certainly to prevent this type of situation from happening. In handling properly the key elements to a favorable work atmosphere, disputes are less likely to arise.
- **Negotiation:** in other words, "discussing problems and resolving them consensually by focusing on the legitimate interests of both parties"¹³. A negotiation is an important

¹¹ Planning Planet (Nov-2015) – *Guild of Project Controls Compendium and Reference (CaR)* – 12.Claims. Retrieved from: <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/formal-disputes-resolution>

¹² The National Academy Press (2007) – *Reducing Construction Costs: Uses of Best Dispute Resolution Practices by Project Owners: Proceedings Report – Chapter: 3 Brief Review of Typical Dispute Prevention and Resolution Best Practices*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nap.edu/read/11846/chapter/4>

¹³ The National Academy Press (2007) – *Reducing Construction Costs: Uses of Best Dispute Resolution Practices by Project Owners: Proceedings Report – Chapter: 3 Brief Review of Typical Dispute Prevention and Resolution Best Practices*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nap.edu/read/11846/chapter/4>

approach to conflicts resolution, it helps to understand the other and arriving at a win-win situation in the best case when people adopt cooperative behaviors.

- **Standing Neutral:** “is a trusted, independent expert advisor (or a panel of three advisors) chosen by contracting parties to help resolve any disputes that arise between them during the contractual relationship”¹⁴. This method is favored for a peaceful conflict resolution where it is important not to hurt the existing relationship between the parties. It can help to avoid the escalation of the conflict and prevent negative outcomes.
- **Non-Binding Resolution :** when the conflict is, for some reason, impossible to be dealt with internally or when, as the person in charge – project manager, for example, you do not want to take sides with one of your employees, then the intervention of a third party can be appropriate to find the right solution. These kinds of procedures aim at helping and assisting the parties involved to reach an agreement.¹⁵ The non-binding resolution allows the parties involved to get advice on the dispute and also regarding the law, but this action has no legal power and the parties are not forced to adopt the suggested solution.¹⁶
- **Private Binding Resolution:** “Binding arbitration means that the parties waive their right to a trial and agree to accept the arbitrator's decision as final”¹⁷. This method is processed the same way that the Non-Binding Resolution, except that as its name indicates, the final decision taken by the arbitrator has to be accepted by the parties involved.
- **Litigation**¹⁸ : this alternative solution is the escalation of the previous ones. For problems too important to be solved easily and internally, then you can go to court to find an end solution to the dispute. This method is a bit aggressive and would, of course, be avoided as much as possible; even if sometimes, there is no other choice.

¹⁴ The Mediation and Conciliation Network – Definition – *Standing Neutral*. Retrieved from:

<https://mediationhub.org/expertise/dispute-resolution-services/standing-neutral/>

¹⁵ International Labour Organization – *Labour dispute prevention and resolution*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/areas-of-work/labour-dispute/lang-en/index.htm>

¹⁶ Arts Law Center of Australia – Information Sheet – *Alternative Dispute Resolution – Binding and non-binding*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.artslaw.com.au/info-sheets/info-sheet/alternative-dispute-resolution-binding-expert-determination-and-non-binding-e/>

¹⁷ Planning Planet (Nov-2015) – *Guild of Project Controls Compendium and Reference (CaR) – 12.Claims*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/formal-disputes-resolution>

¹⁸ Program on Negotiation – Harvard Law School (Jul-2018) – *What are the Three Basic Types of Dispute Resolution? What to know about Mediation, Arbitration, and Litigation*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/dispute-resolution/what-are-the-three-basic-types-of-dispute-resolution-what-to-know-about-mediation-arbitration-and-litigation/>

Now that we have been through the identified feasible alternatives solutions to answer our problem, let's focus on the attributes¹⁹ that we are going to use to measure, assess and evaluate each one of them.

- **Freedom to Choose a Neutral and Competent Decisionmaker:** the freedom to choose can be decisive in the outcome of the dispute.
- **Cost:** as one of the principal resources of all projects, the budget is something to consider in every taken decision. Going through conflict resolution can be money consuming.²⁰ The cost of the chosen solution to resolve a dispute is something to take into consideration and that matters for the persons involved.
- **Speed:** conflicts and in particular their resolution can be time-consuming. As time is another precious resource, this attribute has to be considered regarding the fact that the less long a conflict is lasting, the better. On top of that, when a conflict is happening, people tend to be more focused on what is going on than on their job, this inevitably affects their productivity.²¹
- **Confidentiality:** confidentiality can weight in the choice of the method to resolve a conflict. Some conflicts can have negative consequences and are better-kept secret between the persons involved.
- **Flexibility of process:** the way to resolve a dispute can range from very informal to very formal. It depends on the context and the persons involved. Sometimes, dealing with a conflict informally can lead to a quicker resolution and can help handle the situation if the involved parties show good faith. On other occasions, resolving a dispute based on rules and regulation can lead to better outcomes. This attribute is important because there is not just one universal method to resolve a conflict so the flexibility of the chosen process matters.

¹⁹ Peter Sherwin, Ana Vermal, Elizabeth Figueira – Proskauer.com (2016) – *Ch. 19 The Decision to Arbitrate – I. Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of International Arbitration*. Retrieved from: <https://www.proskauerguide.com/arbitration/19>

²⁰ Stewart Levine – Mediate.com – *The Many Costs of Conflict*. Retrieved from: <https://www.mediate.com/articles/levine1.cfm>

²¹ Sandy Smith – EHS Today (Oct-2008) – *New Study Details Effects of Workplace Conflict on Businesses*. Retrieved from: https://www.ehstoday.com/safety/management/NewStudy_WorkplaceConflictonBusinesses

- **Absence of appeal:** when one – or both of the parties are not happy with the final solution of the conflict resolution process adopted, it is sometimes possible to appeal this decision, and sometimes not. Both have pros and cons.
- **Enforceability:** this attribute will help us evaluate the enforceability of the chosen method as is it crucial in conflict resolution that the final solution is actually applied/adopted.
- **Potential need for Court Intervention.**

STEP 3:

Among the multiple existing tools and technique allowing to rank the possible solutions we developed above, we will focus here on a non-compensatory model using disjunctive reasoning. Through this approach, we “take a look at all the attributes and conduct a Pair-Wise comparison to determine which attributes are the most important by asking “which is more important?” and we give a score of 1 to the winning option and a score of 0 to the losing option.”²²

²² Planning Planet (Nov-2015) – *Guild of Project Controls Compendium and Reference (CaR)* – 10.3.3.7 Multi-Attribute Decision Making. Retrieved from: <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/managing-change-the-owners-perspective>

Attribute	Freedom to Choose	Cost	Speed	Confidentiality	Flexibility	Absence of Appeal	Enforceability	Potential Need for Court Intervention	Total
Freedom to Choose	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Cost	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	3
Speed	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
Confidentiality	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Flexibility	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	5
Absence of Appeal	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Enforceability	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Potential need for Court Intervention	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2

Table 2: Non-Compensatory Model using Disjunctive Reasoning²³

Considering the table above, the most important attribute or the “best” one is the freedom to choose, followed by the enforceability of the chosen alternative. The “worst” attributes are respectively the confidentiality and the absence of appeal.

As said in the attribute description, freedom to choose and flexibility are important because all conflicts are different, therefore, they have to be dealt with differently. The time and the money spent on conflict resolution are everyone's matter, it is always desirable for all parties involved that the dispute is solved the fastest possible and at the lowest price. Regarding confidentiality, it is also an important point, but not for all conflicts. It can be crucial that the conflict stay private, but this is not always the case, as well as the concern of "absence of appeal" that doesn't apply for all conflicts as an appeal is not always wanted/needed.

This approach is based on subjective criteria as the attributes are ranked from the best one to the worst one but we cannot really compare them relatively to one another in terms of score. We defined that flexibility is more important to consider but we cannot estimate how much better it is to consider an alternative based on its flexibility than based on its cost for example.²⁴

²³ By Author

²⁴ Planning Planet (Nov-2015) – *Guild of Project Controls Compendium and Reference (CaR) – 10.3.3.7 Multi-Attribute Decision Making*. Retrieved from: <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/managing-change-the-owners-perspective>

STEP 4:

To complete this reasoning, the final step will be to select the top alternatives solutions that we will continue to analyze. In order to designate those alternatives, we will now consider a compensatory model, using a non-dimensional scaling technique. Each alternative solution will be evaluated from “excellent” to “poor” – considering “good” and “fair” – as regards to the previously chosen attributes (the top five):

	Freedom to Choose	Enforceability	Flexibility	Speed	Cost
Prevention	Excellent	Fair	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Negotiation	Excellent	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent
Standing Neutral	Excellent	Fair	Excellent	Good	Good
Non-Binding Resolution	Fair	Good	Good	Fair	Fair
Private Binding Resolution	Fair	Excellent	Fair	Fair	Poor
Litigation	Poor	Excellent	Poor	Poor	Poor

Table 3: Analyze of the alternatives solutions based on a Compensatory Model²⁵

The ultimate step is to calculate the relative weight of each attribute: “Excellent” worth 3, “Good” worth 2, “Fair” worth 1 and “Poor” worth 0

	Freedom to Choose	Enforceability	Flexibility	Speed	Cost	Total
Prevention	3	1	3	3	3	13
Negotiation	3	2	2	3	3	13
Standing Neutral	3	1	3	2	2	11
Non-Binding Resolution	1	2	2	1	1	7
Private Binding Resolution	1	3	1	1	0	6
Litigation	0	3	0	0	0	3

Table 4: Analyze of the alternatives solutions based on a Compensatory Model²⁶

²⁵ By Author

²⁶ By Author

In regard to the results delivered when applying the Multi-Attribute Decision Making (MADM) method to our case, we can observe that our previously determined feasible alternatives rank from a minimum score of 3 to a maximum score of 13.

We will set the minimum acceptable level to keep analyzing these alternatives at 10: any alternative that has scored under 10 will not be considered anymore. Considering the table above, the three following alternatives: prevention, negotiation, and standing neutral will be developed in further details in the next steps.

STEP 5:

The logical progression of our analysis leads us now to establish the link between the two previous steps; we are going to compare our selected alternatives using the weight we granted to our attributes. In order to do so, we will use an additive weighting technique²⁷, still based on a compensatory model. This method will allow us to compare the three best alternatives, namely “prevention”, “negotiation”, and “standing neutral” between them, to see how much better – or worst – one alternative is relatively to the other ones.

	STEP 1	STEP 2	Prevention		Negotiation		Standing Neutral	
Attribute	Relative rank	Normalized weight (A)	(B)	(A) x (B)	(C)	(A) x (C)	(D)	(A) x (D)
Freedom	5	0,33	3	1,00	3	1,00	3	1,00
Enforceability	4	0,27	1	0,27	2	0,53	1	0,27
Flexibility	3	0,20	3	0,60	2	0,40	3	0,60
Speed	2	0,13	3	0,40	3	0,40	2	0,27
Cost	1	0,07	3	0,20	3	0,20	2	0,13
Sum	15	1,0	Sum	2,47	Sum	2,53	Sum	2,27

Table 5: Additive weighting technique²⁸

Thanks to this method, we can now rank the solutions relatively and differentiate “prevention” from “negotiation” that has both scored 13 using the previous method. With this weighting technique, we observe a slight difference between those two alternatives: “negotiation” scores 2.53 whereas “prevention” scores 2.47. The “standing neutral” alternative is the “worst” one, with a score of 2.27, as its first ranking shows in the precedent analysis.

²⁷ Planning Planet (Nov-2015) – *Guild of Project Controls Compendium and Reference (CaR) – 10.3.3.7 Multi-Attribute Decision Making*. Retrieved from: <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/managing-change-the-owners-perspective>

²⁸ By Author

STEP 6:

Let's define and develop a bit more the three preferred alternatives in order to understand their implementation and operation.

Prevention is defined as "the act of stopping something from happening or of stopping someone from doing something"²⁹. Prevention is happening before the actual conflict in order to ensure a minimum risk of disputes happening. Great prevention can shape the future progress of a project: by establishing rules and regulations based on prevention or simply by applying the rules already set by the standards of your industry, you can reduce conflict appearance. You can do prevention in facilitating the understanding and communication between the different actors of your business, and also with you. It can be implemented thanks to clear rules and defined processes as said above, but also by being more careful to conflictual situations and taking the time to analyze before making decisions so it is possible to avoid the escalation into a more serious dispute. Many tools³⁰ can be used to set up prevention in your business : establish clear, common and defined vision, mission and principles : "clearly defining the purpose and common ground for your work is a huge step towards preventing [...] and can also serve as an important reference point and grounding point to put a conflict in perspective."³¹. Also, the use of procedural documents (regulations, laws...) can help prevent conflicts as well as encouraging direct communication and establishing non-escalation agreements or guidelines.

Negotiation: the aim of negotiating is to find a common ground. Conflicts roots are coming from differences in interests, values or simply in the way of perceiving things. In understanding the reason for the conflict and the different point of view involved, it will be easier to find a solution suiting every concerned party. There is many ways to negotiate and many possible outcomes, also depending on each part style of negotiating and if a third party (as your boss or the HR manager for example) is involved. As exposed on Program on Negotiation from Harvard Law School website³², several strategies exist to address a negotiation process, for example: "considering interests and values separately", "engage in relationship-building dialogue", "appeal to overarching values" or "confront value differences directly".

²⁹ "Prevention" in Cambridge Dictionary online. Retrieved November 12, 2018, from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/prevention>

³⁰ The Center for Community Organization (.org) (Aug-2012) – *Tools for conflict prevention and resolution in community groups*. Retrieved from: <https://coco-net.org/tools-for-conflict-prevention-and-resolution-in-community-groups/>

³¹ The Center for Community Organization (.org) (Aug-2012) – *Tools for conflict prevention and resolution in community groups*. Retrieved from: <https://coco-net.org/tools-for-conflict-prevention-and-resolution-in-community-groups/>

³² Program on Negotiation – Harvard Law School (Sept-2018) – *Four Conflict Negotiation Strategies for Resolving Value-Based Disputes*. Retrieved from : <https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/dispute-resolution/four-negotiation-strategies-for-resolving-values-based-disputes/>

Standing Neutral is a third party, represented by one person or by a board, who is appointed by the involved parties to help to solve the conflict. The standing neutral has to be an expert in the field or point concerning the conflict in order to provide the parties with the best solution and gain the respect of the involved stakeholders.³³ This alternative makes sure that the conflict is managed in an objective manner, and that all elements are being considered by the expert.

These three alternatives are more than interesting, they all allow to deal with conflicts in pacifist and sustainable ways and all aim to reduce the number of conflicts and disputes arising. Taking into account the results of step 5, the preferred alternative would be the negotiation one. As said, the three of them are stimulating ways to deal with conflict and should be considered. Whereas prevention happens upstream disputes, negotiating can still be needed in case of conflicts. Also, when it is, for some reason, too complicated to deal with the conflict just between the involved parties, the negotiation process can evolve or just be replaced by the standing neutral solution. The three methods are a logical suit for dealing with conflicts, and the preferred one is the negotiation.

STEP 7:

When working in the food industry, relationships are important. This is a field in which you look for sustainable relations with your suppliers and employees for obvious reasons. As conflicts can't be avoided, it is vital to think upstream about:

- First, your way of dealing with conflicts and how you would like to build your relationships. Think about your style of negotiation and how you can adapt to the other different styles.
- You then have to think about the kind of persons you would like to work with: it is important to choose the right persons for the right jobs and try to make sure they will be as cooperative as possible.
- Finally, you have to reflect on the best solution to avoid disputes with your different stakeholders: suppliers, employees, customers... Even if opportunities can sometimes come out conflicts, it can also hurt your business and you should work on a way to prevent such thing.

³³ Google books, retrieved from: Joseph A. Demkin – American Institute of Architects (2008) – *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*. Retrieved from:

https://books.google.fr/books?id=ISzC_3inw7cC&pg=PA1025&lpg=PA1025&dq=%22standing+neutral%22+definition&source=bl&ots=adFVZRWeuG&sig=ScYfpmSWvVYCW_MUUh6I7gk_J9w4&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjhn5m-o8_eAhXszlUKHXdCCKMQ6AEwDHoECAIQAQ#v=onepage&q=standing%20neutral&f=false

Of course, there is no universal rule to apply the three methods seen above (prevention, negotiation, standing neutral), you have to adapt each of them to your business and find the best possible mix or balance. People are negotiating in different ways and the best to do is to learn how to adapt to each style and react to such conflict management. Learn about these alternatives will for sure provide a sustainable dimension to your project or company.

CONCLUSION

The initial question was "how to resolve conflicts in the food industry"? We went through the problem, after analyzing the causes of disputes: unshared values or perception of things, miscommunication or even absence of communication, bad conflict management, etc. We then analyzed the most suitable ways to deal with conflicts: prevention, negotiation, standing neutral, non-binding resolution, private binding resolution, and litigation. We evaluated them thanks to different dimensions as the flexibility of the process, cost, speed, confidentiality, and more. We were then able to determine the best solutions to develop: prevention, negotiation, and standing neutral. The three of them have clear and visible benefits that we talked about. Prevention plays a huge part in conflict resolution and avoidance, and still, negotiation is the best way to actually deal with the conflicts once there. When it is or becomes impossible to find a solution, the intervention of a third party, expert in the field of the conflict in question, can be helpful. It is now up to you to find which method suits best your project, and it will probably be a mix of all of them, according to each particular situation.

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