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Conflicts as Springboard for Metallica's Success

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Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to understand how Metallica has utilized conflicts in creating changes in the music industry and growing as the biggest heavy metal band of the world and sustained in this position for 25 years. The study was conducted as a qualitative and longitudinal case study. The study confirmed that conflicts have been a crucial factor in Metallica's success. The interpersonal conflicts and the conflicts between the band founders have been pivotal. The duo has competed and collaborated against and with each other, and this way urging Metallica to better achievements. The same type of action has extended to collaboration with other inner circle members of Metallica. Different kinds of conflict stimulation techniques have been used to increase conflicts. Many dysfunctional outcomes have also arisen but Metallica as a band has nearly always been above them. The ways of handling conflicts have changed during the band's lifecycle. In the introduction phase, competing was emphasized; in the growth phase, collaboration increased and in the current mature phase, compromising and accommodating have strengthened. Nowadays, Metallica is still a relevant band with huge number of fans, but the best creative power has run dry.

Keywords: conflict, conflict management, conflict handling, conflict stimulating, competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, product lifecycle, personality, innovation, success factor, Metallica, thrash metal, heavy metal, music industry

1. Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable part of life. Individuals have their own opinions, ideas and sets of beliefs. They have different ways of looking at things and they act according to what they think is proper. Hence, people often find themselves in conflict in different scenarios; may it involve other individuals, groups of people or a struggle within their own selves [1, 2]. From traditional view, conflicts should be avoided because they result in negative dysfunctional

outcome such as low performance. The interactionist view proposes that conflict can be a positive force in a group but also necessity for group to perform effectively. This view encourages conflict because it provokes innovation and change. Groups, whose members have different interests and means tend to produce higher quality solutions to a variety of problems than do homogeneous groups [3, 4].

The conflict management involves doing things that limit the negative outcomes of conflict and increase the positive ones. When conflicts are constructive, they enhance relationships, create an environment for self-growth, enable individual, group and organization to achieve goals, solve problems and enhance self-esteem. Properly managed conflict also improves learning by increasing the amount of questions asked and encourages people to challenge the status quo. Conflict handling is an essential part of conflict management including five methods: competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating and compromising. Groups with collaborative conflict handling styles are usually more effective than groups with a competitive style. Compromise method usually prevent to achieving the best possible outcome, because it reduces the pressure to create new together [2, 4–7].

Conflict handling involves dynamics. When the parties of the conflict interact with each other, the intended conflict handling methods and outcomes may change. From this point of dynamism, there is already a lot of knowledge available. The dynamism has been studied much less in a longer period, that is, how the conflict handling and its outcomes change within the lifecycle of the product or organization. Lifecycle is divided into four main phases: introduction, growth, maturity and decline. To go through the lifecycle can take years or even decades—especially when the product or products are improved incrementally or radically. At that point we can talk about the lifecycle of the community or organization, where the vitality of the whole community in the long run is in focus. Radical product innovation means that new product lifecycle will take place, and causes discontinuity compared to earlier product lifecycle [4, 8–11].

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. How conflicts can act as a springboard to create great success?
2. How conflicts are handled in a highly successful community during its lifecycle?

To focus on the phenomenon profoundly, the study concentrated on one single community. The band Metallica was chosen as the subject of the study. The criteria were that the band had been innovative in its sector by first creating a new genre, thrash metal, and by later rising to the world's biggest heavy rock band and keeping that position to this day. The band has sold approximately 110 million albums, and it holds a world record in the continuing number one places in Billboard 200. Metallica is like a large enterprise, which operates worldwide and employs a large amount of people, as well as manages its wealth and investments. Metallica has not gone with the rules of the music industry, but nevertheless or because of it, it has succeeded. Running against the wind has not been an easy way. Metallica has gone from one conflict to another. Its 36 year career includes changes in musical style, success and failure and conflicts that have almost led to the breakdown of the band [12–15]. Therefore, Metallica

case offered high success, long timespan and much dynamics regarding the conflicts to get answers the study questions. Furthermore, there was plenty of documented material available about the band, which provided rich research data.

The next section presents the research methodology, after which Section 3 concentrates on state of the art. Section 4 analyzes how conflicts have helped Metallica to succeed, but also what dysfunctional outcomes have resulted from conflicts. Research results are discussed in Section 5, after which the article is closed with conclusions and need for further studies.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted as a qualitative and retrospective longitudinal one case study to understand profoundly how conflicts helped Metallica to achieve “the best in the world” level and sustain it. Longitudinal study is a research design that involves repeated observations of the same variables over long periods of time. This study used existing data about Metallica over the period 1976–2017. The band was formed 1981, but its founders, Ulrich and Hetfield, were examined 5 years before, to understand their motives, backgrounds and intrapersonal conflicts. The study focused on the inner cycle of Metallica that included members of the band and a few outsiders who got inside the band. Conflicts were studied at intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup level. During its career, Metallica has also had a lot of conflicts with external stakeholders, such as press, fans, record companies, other bands and producers, but these groups were limited out of the scope. This is because, in order to understand external conflicts, one must first understand the conflicts of the core group.

In the study, the narrative method was used that is appropriate when real life problems are examined. The goal of narrative and qualitative study is the understanding of the phenomenon. The study questions are mostly of the kind “what” and “how”. The narrative study includes three main phases: narrative inquiry (narrative as data), constructivism (story construction from narrative data) and interpretivism (interpretation of story to understand the studied phenomenon).

The data sources used in the study included almost 3000 pages of text from biographies, newsletter, magazine, Internet articles and Metallica song lyrics, as well as 10 hours of video footage and audio interviews of Metallica. The data gathering concentrated on contents where the following words or expressions were used: conflict, anger, fight, battle, compromise, nervous, tease, pester, accommodate, aggression, hatred, avoid, collaborate, compete, harmony, debate, lose temper, get offended, arbitrate, negotiate, diplomat, challenge, different opinion, collision, disharmony, dispute, disagreement and agreement. In the analysis of the video footage, the attention especially focused on the scenes where emotions emerged. Research data were collected until the saturation point was achieved. This narrative inquiry phase produced 70 pages of narrative data concerning the studied phenomenon. After this, the constructed story presented in Section 4 of this chapter was created. Finally, this story was interpreted to answer research questions.

The conflict management, Big five personality model and product lifecycle were utilized as theoretical knowledge in studying how Metallica has succeeded in turning conflicts as a success factor during its life cycle. These theories helped in outlining, analyzing and interpreting the studied phenomenon.

3. State of art

3.1. Conflict management

Definition of conflict includes the different conflicts people experience in organizations, such as incompatibility of goals, differences in interpretations of facts and disagreements based on expectations. Conflicts can be classified into intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, intergroup, intraorganization and interorganization conflict types [1, 2, 4].

Intrapersonal conflict occurs within an individual. The experience takes place in the individual's mind. Sources of these conflicts are thoughts, values, principles emotions, needs and motives. Intrapersonal conflict can be difficult to handle if person cannot decipher his inner struggles. It may lead to restlessness, uneasiness or even depression. Eventually, when an individual finds himself out of the situation, he can become more empowered as a person. Thus, the conflict evokes a positive change which will help him in his own personal growth. Interpersonal or intragroup conflict is an expressed struggle at least two interdependent individual within same group who perceive a situation differently or have incompatible goal, are competing for scarce resources, or perceive interference for other party in achieving their goals. Conflict occurs whenever disagreements exist in a social situation. People have varied personalities, which usually results to incompatible choices and opinions. Intergroup conflict takes place when a misunderstanding arises among different teams within an organization. This is due to the varied sets of goals and interests of different groups. This is also an example of intraorganizational conflict. Interorganizational conflict occurs between two or more organizations, for example, when they compete against one another [1, 2, 16, 17].

Conflicts may have negative/destructive or positive/constructive effects on performance of group. The first one is named as dysfunctional conflicts and the later one as functional conflicts. From the traditional view, conflict should be avoided because it indicates a malfunctioning within the group or organization. Conflict is seen as a dysfunctional outcome resulting from poor communication, a lack of openness and trust between people and the failure of managers. The interactionist view proposes that conflict can be a positive force in a group but also necessity for group to perform effectively. This view encourages conflict because it provokes innovation and change. It does not allow the group to passively rubber-stamp decisions that may be based on weak assumptions, inadequate consideration of relevant alternatives or other debilities. Groups whose members have different interests and opinions tend to produce higher quality solutions to a variety of problems than do homogeneous groups [3, 4].

When conflicts are constructive, they enhance relationships, create an environment for self-growth, enable individual and group achieving goals, enable problem solving and enhance

self-esteem. On contrary if conflicts are destructive, they result in stress, which may lead people to become more close minded and adversarial. Other outcomes are poor communication and information sharing, ignorance of other side's point of view, low trust and performance, fighting and even the destruction of the group. The conflict management involves doing things to limit the negative aspects of conflict and to increase the positive aspects of conflict. The aim is to enhance learning and group outcomes such as performance. Properly managed conflict increases learning by increasing the amount of questions asked and encourage people to challenge the status quo. The best projects and organizations have an invisible power among stakeholders, which helps in conflict situations. In the conflict management, the development of reactive and conciliatory methods is not the most important, but the development of the proactive dialogical culture for the work community. The better the latter succeed, the less the first one is needed [2, 4–6, 18–20].

Conflict may be related to task, relationship, process or status. Task conflict relates to the content and goals of the work. Relationship conflict focuses on interpersonal relationships. Process conflict relates to how the work gets done. Status conflicts relate to responsibility and power, and they occur especially in flat organizations. Studies demonstrate that relationship and status conflicts are often dysfunctional. In contrast, low levels of process conflict and low to moderate levels of task conflict can be functional. Moderate levels of task conflict in the early development stage can increase creativity in groups. Task conflict leads to positive outcomes only when all members share the same goals and have high levels of trust. Groups performing routine tasks that do not require creativity do not benefit from task conflict. Task conflicts may escalate into relationship conflicts. Contrary to the task and process conflicts, the relationship and status conflicts are not directly related to performing the group's function [4, 21–28].

Conflict handling methods have a central impact on the outcome of the conflict. **Figure 1** represents different methods using two dimensions: cooperativeness (the degree to which one party attempts to satisfy the other party's concerns) and assertiveness (the degree to which one party attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns). There are five conflict-handling methods: competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating and compromising [4, 7].

Collaborative conflict handling in group with common goals is more effective than competitive style. In the collaborating style, the pie is expanded so that different parties are satisfied (win-win), while in the competing style a party tries to get as much of the pie as possible (win-lose). The collaborating is suitable for long-term relationship while the competing applies to short-term relationship. When both parties are focused on learning and understanding the other side tends to yield higher overall outcomes than situations in which parties are interested in their individual outcomes. An open discussion makes it easier to develop a shared perception of the problems at hand and allows group to work toward a mutually acceptable solution. Shared goals should be emphasized, so people who disagree with each other do not become too entrenched in their points of view and start to take the conflicts personally. Compromise method usually prevent to achieving the best possible outcome from conflict, because it reduces the pressure to create new together. No one gets what they really want. Accommodating is an unselfish way to solve conflicts, and avoiding does not engage participants to solve them [4, 7].

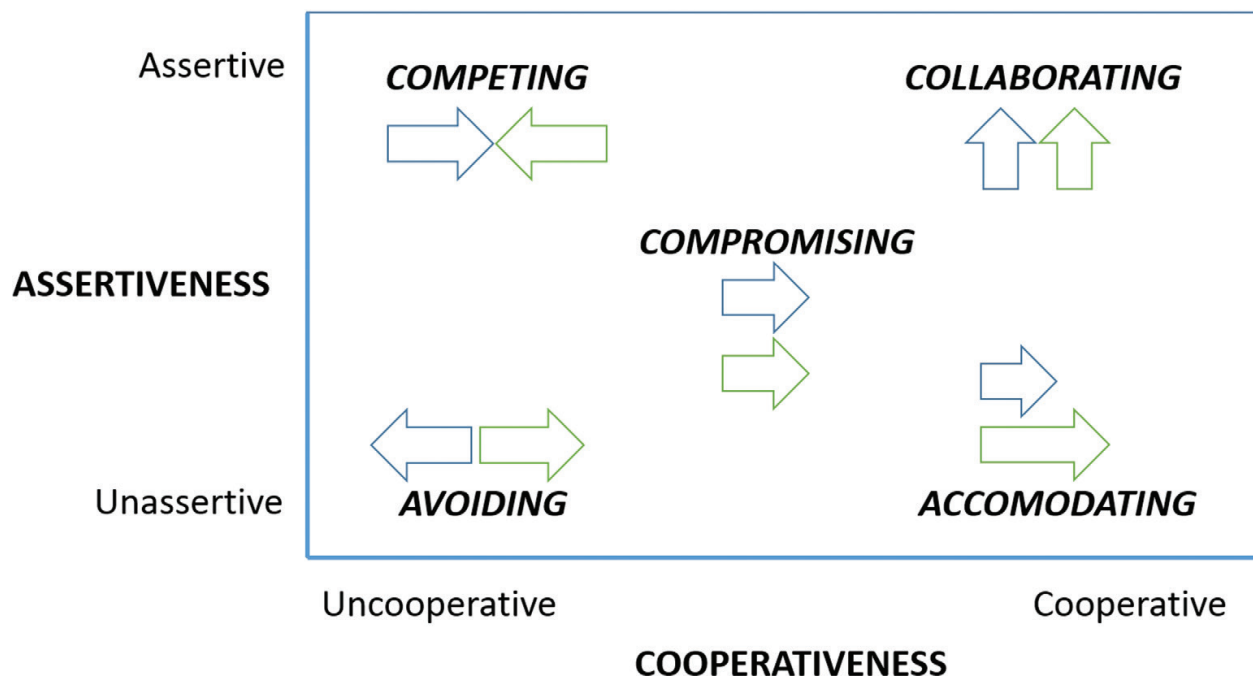


Figure 1. Dimensions of conflict handling methods [4, 7].

The conflict management has a dynamic nature, because stakeholders and their influence change over time. When interaction occurs between the stakeholders, the conflict handling method may change, when a conflicting party see the other's point of view or respond to the other's behavior. Furthermore, the conflict develops either to the functional or to dysfunctional direction. In best case, the conflict provokes innovation, and in worst case it escalates and become highly destructive. The most serious outcomes of conflicts are physical attacks or efforts to destroy the other party [3, 4, 7, 29–33].

Conflict stimulation techniques increase conflicts to improve innovativeness. Techniques include communication (using ambiguous or threatening messages), bringing in outsiders (adding people to a group whose backgrounds, values, attitudes or working methods differ from those of present members), restructuring the organization (e.g. realigning work groups, altering rules and increasing interdependence) and appointing a devil's advocate (designating a critic to purposely argue against the majority positions held by the group) [29].

3.2. Big five model: personalities that promote innovativeness

Psychologists measure personality with so-called Big five model (**Figure 2**), which includes the following factors: openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extroversion and neuroticism. From these five factors, the innovators and revolutionaries have distinctive mixes of openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness. Innovators must be open-minded. They can imagine things that others cannot, and so they challenge conventions. On the other hand, they are conscientious. Discipline separates them from dreamers. The decisive

thing is that innovators do not want to please others—in other words, agree with them. Instead of empathy and collaboration, they are selfish and even aggressive. Their thoughts and actions can cause deep disapproval in other people. Typically, people seek approval from others by pleasing them, while innovators cause a strong distortion to this harmony. They take social risks and even offend others' feelings [34–37].

3.3. Product and organization life cycle

The product lifecycle or S-curve (**Figure 3**) predicts the general trend that successful products or services will follow during their lifetime. It includes the introduction, growth, maturity and decline as stages. Usually, the most critical point is to reach the growth stage. Point of diminishing returns locates between the maturity and decline stages [8, 9].

Once a product has reached maturity it runs that risk of being discontinued by newer innovation or technologies. Since the previous product reaches a phase of maturity, there is an opportunity for a new product to appeal to the innovators that will start a new product life cycle and S-curve. New S-curve can be divided into two curves (**Figure 4**). Movement up an “S” curve is

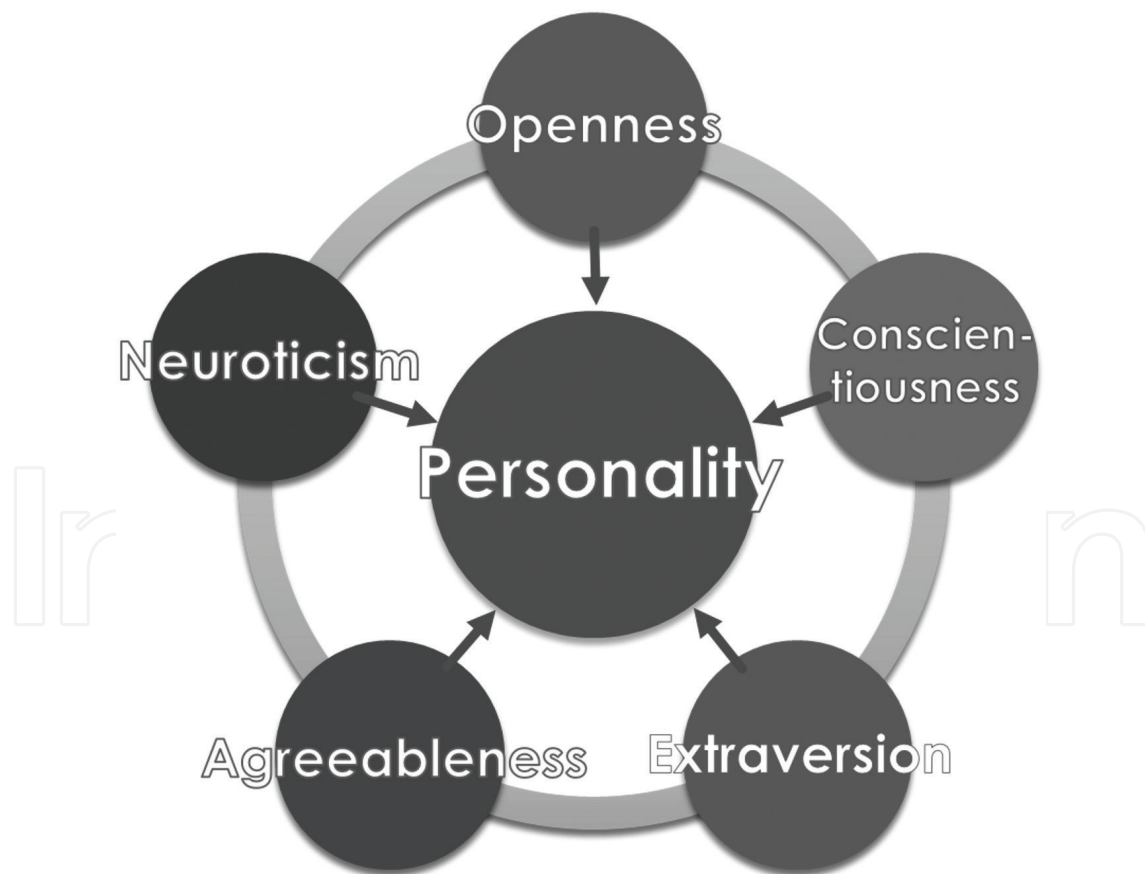


Figure 2. Big five model [34, 35].

sustaining or incremental innovation while stepping down on a lower new “S” curve can lead to radical or disruptive innovation, as the new “S” curve surpasses existing “S” curve. Compared to current business there is discontinuity [10, 11].

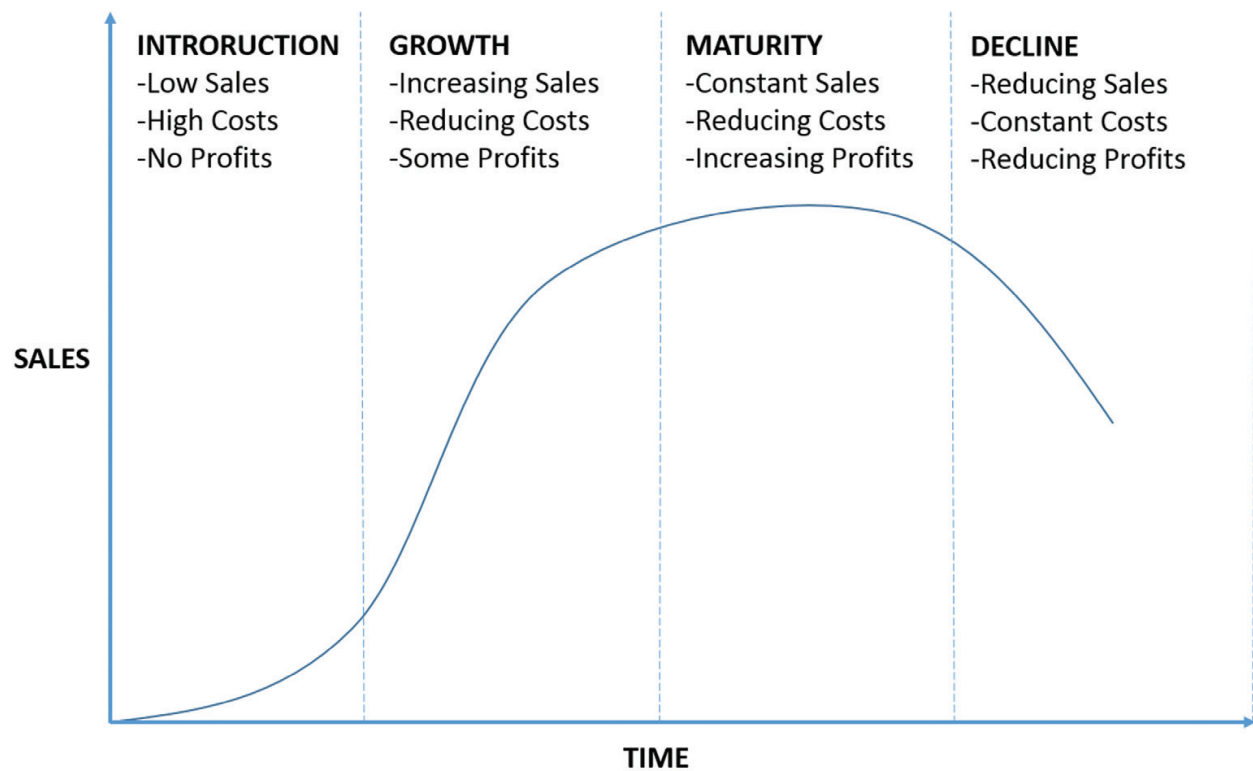


Figure 3. Product life cycle [8, 9].

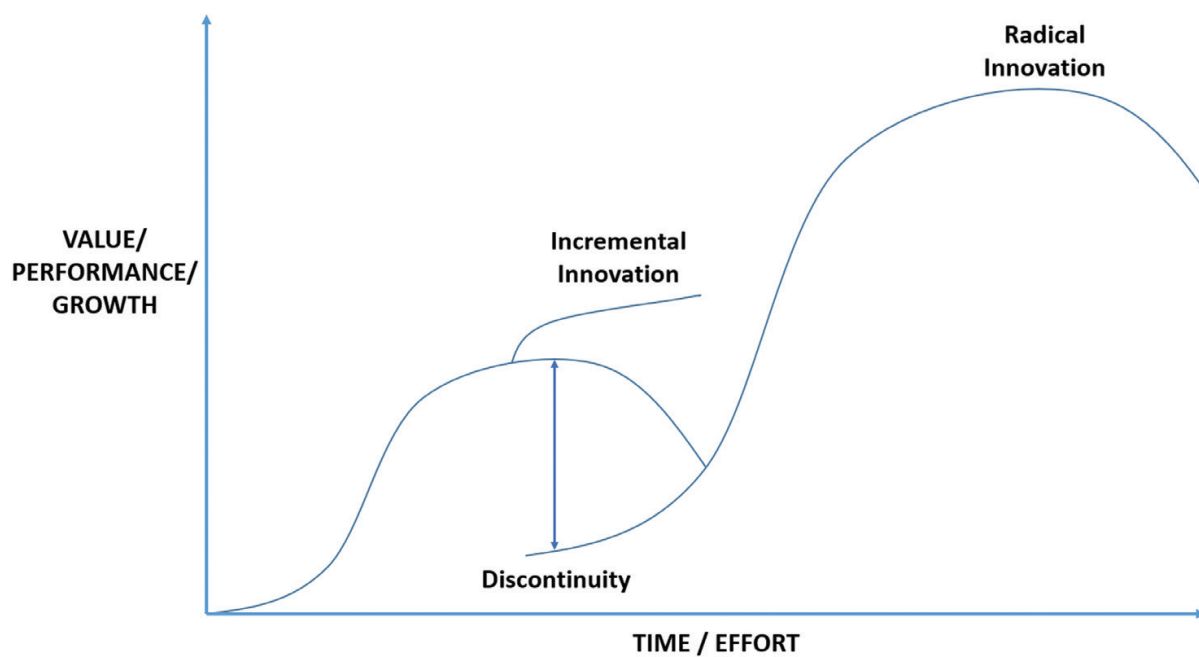


Figure 4. S-curve of innovation [10, 11].

4. Case Metallica

Metallica is an American band that has sold approximately 110 million albums and is the world's most widely sold heavy music band. Drummer Lars Ulrich and guitarist James Hetfield founded the band in 1981 in Los Angeles and have been in the band all the time. The current lineup also includes guitarist Kirk Hammett and bassist Robert Trujillo. Other members of the band have been guitarist Dave Mustaine and bassists Ron McGovney, Cliff Burton and Jason Newstedt [15].

During its 36-year career, Metallica has released 10 albums, of which the latest, 2016 published *Hardwired... to Self-Destruct* rose to the top of the lists in 57 countries, was among the top 3 in 75 countries and top 5 in 105 countries. It means that Metallica is still a very relevant band. Metallica's music style has changed a lot during its career. The band started with their *Kill'em All* debut as a thrash metal band, and has been recognized to be the main contributor to this genre. In the 1986, the release of their third album, the *Master of Puppets*, the band became known to the general public, which meant that music magazines, managers and record companies became more interested in Metallica. After their *...And Justice for All* album, the band simplified and slowed down their music toward hard rock. This resulted in the 1991 *Black Album*, which made Metallica mainstream. It is the band's most successful album selling over 30 million worldwide. It was also Metallica's first album, which won the Billboard 200 selling approximately 600,000 copies in the first week. Until *Black*, the band's music sales went up by leaps, so the audience liked Metallica's changes. Even though some of the fans were lost as the band's music softened, they were replaced by new audiences. Controversial *Load* and *Reload* albums released in 1996 and 1997 sold well in comparison with other artists, but very little compared to *Black*'s sales figures. After *Reload*, the band returned to its thrash and heavy metal roots with the releases *St. Anger*, *Death Magnetic* and *Hardwired... to Self-Destruct* albums in 2003, 2008 and 2016, respectively. During their career, Metallica has received nine Grammy Awards. In 2009, Metallica was nominated to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame [12–15, 38, 39].

Metallica's rise to the top has not been easy. At the beginning of the 1980s, nobody was interested in the band that was against conventions of the music industry and the popular music of the time. Metallica was the underdog that lived outside the box. Nothing was given to Metallica on a silver platter. Many other bands surrendered by ending or adapting their music under external and internal pressure, but for Metallica, these struggles have been an asset to do their own business [12–14, 38, 40]. Although the band has been close to breaking down, it has created a success recipe by exploiting conflicts. Let us start from the intrapersonal conflicts of Metallica's founders, Lars Ulrich and James Hetfield, because the Metallica spirit arises from their internal interests, values and demons.

4.1. Ulrich's and Hetfield's intrapersonal conflicts

Metallica is especially about the dreams of Ulrich and Hetfield. Ulrich wanted to build the world's biggest band, and Hetfield wanted to get rich by making music. In the beginning,

these were distant dreams or more like jokes. They just wanted to set up a band and play their favorite music. They liked the same kind of music and worked hard for their passion. Furthermore, they wanted to differ musically from other bands. Both Ulrich and Hetfield want to control their own life. They are stubborn personalities that have also been called control freaks. Ultimately controlling has been one of Metallica's most prominent success factors. In addition to common features, the duo also has significant personal and background differences [12–14].

According to Ulrich, Hetfield was the only person in the United States who was inspired by the same type of music at the beginning of 1980s. In addition, Ulrich saw Hetfield's talent and passion for music. On the other hand, he regarded Hetfield as the shyest person he ever had met. Ulrich felt immediately the connection and thought they fit together because they complement each other. Hetfield did not warm up so quickly because of Ulrich's inadequate drummer talents, but he also understood they shared the same taste for music, and Ulrich's huge energy and great networks [12, 14, 39].

4.1.1. *James Hetfield*

Hetfield was raised to believe in Christian science, in which God cares for everything, and doctors are not needed. People started talking about him being different. Hetfield grew a silent child who wanted to be alone and forget about the surrounding world. He was a misfit and did not want to belong to any group. Listening to music and later playing it helped him. On the other hand, music also helped Hetfield to come out of his shell. It became his escape, therapy and rescue. He tells that without music he would probably be dead or in prison [12, 14, 41, 42].

James's father left the family in 1976, and his mother died of cancer in 1979 after refusing to believe the doctors and taking medicines. Hetfield's next of kin left him either by their own will or by their death. This increased his need to try to control things and people around him. Hetfield felt fear and hatred of authority because they could take control of him. He has admitted having the habit of suffocating his loved ones: Do not go anywhere, do not leave. Hetfield lost trust in people and started treating everyone as possible enemies. He was seen as a rude and stubborn introvert, who came out of his shell only when drinking. He did not want to talk about his own past, but his creativity came from internal anxiety. Hetfield was controversial even in the sense that on stage he was fierce and extroverted, but very cautious outside the stage. His stage persona was his protection and security. He could hide behind it. Later it became clear that alcohol had greatly contributed to this, but at the same time gave him the wrong feeling of power. Hetfield had a lot of unsolved stuff from his childhood and he started to live again as someone else [12, 14, 38, 41–45].

At the beginning, Hetfield thought that he did not have the voice, appearance or charisma needed by the lead of Metallica. This could be influenced by the extroverted, social Ulrich and guitarist Dave Mustaine, who left Hetfield in their shadow. The band was looking for a new singer until Hetfield's self-esteem began to rise in 1984 with the release of the gig and record

sales after the release of the second album, *Ride the Lightning*. Everything else but the music was of little interest to Hetfield—for example, he could fall asleep during a business negotiation. Even though Hetfield had advanced ideas, in many things, he was seen as reserved and even conservative [12, 41, 46].

To better understand Hetfield's personality let us look at Metallica's lyrics that are mainly written by him. The lyrics usually tell a story from an individual's point of view—a small man's struggle with the government or some other oppressor. In Metallica's debut, *Kill'em All* 1981, the lyrics of many songs emphasize the power of the negative feelings and the attitude of winning. *Ride the Lightning* album's songs, declare “we ordinary people versus those faceless politicians” and “freedom versus dictation”. The corresponding themes are also present on the *Master of Puppets* and *...And Justice for All* albums. Until the *Black* album, Hetfield told stories in the third person, but after that began a more open and honest self-study line. In *Load* and *Reload* albums black and white, right versus false, and I know-it-all attitude toward life began to soften. Hetfield tried to find the roots of hatred and its consequences. He told that anger was still a big part of his life—and that it is easier to find things to hate than to like. Hetfield's personal emotional reflection continued in lyrics of *St. Anger*'s 2003 release. He sings that anger is both a positive and negative thing. In 2008, with the *Death Magnetic* album Metallica returned to its roots, that is, to say to the 1980s music and the 1990s lyrics, namely handling life and loss as the sources of anxiety and terror. Even the latest album, *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct*, released in 2016, is a very dark-hearted journey to Hetfield's twisted mind [12, 38, 45–48].

4.1.2. *Lars Ulrich*

Just like Hetfield, Ulrich also fought strongly against the authorities, which he picked up from his father who loathed them. Ulrich has defined his life's philosophy as controlling his own life and destiny rather than allowing someone else to do it, which is very much the same as Hetfield's “live freely or not at all”. Ulrich's parents of Danish descent belonged to the Danish elite. Ulrich had no siblings but grew up with adults. His father was involved in many progressive and experimental issues, which led Lars to meet a lot of artist from different fields. He also traveled around the world due to his father's tennis training. Through this, he developed an adventurous, curious, enthusiastic and open-minded worldview, which later played a part in his desire to experiment with music as well. He was never brainwashed with ideologies, but instead, he was free to experience and find answers himself [12, 14, 49, 50].

After having moved to the United States, Ulrich was shocked about all strict rules after the freedom in Denmark. Furthermore, he was nobody after the move to the United States, while in Denmark everybody knew him because of his father. Ulrich had to re-emerge in one way or another, and this happened to be rock and Metallica. Ulrich grew into a dream partner in the music industry, a good speaker and a person who would be welcome in any band. He charms and observes all those present naturally and sincerely. On the other hand, if something is kept secret from Ulrich, he feels threatened and uncertain. He does not want to be excluded.

He wanted to show his own ability to his very successful father. Besides of his father, Ulrich's competitive edge also comes from his tennis player history. Ulrich works spontaneously and quickly when he is excited about something. He will not be stopped by anything before he gets what he wants. He is confident and grasps each chance without the fear of rejection. With most bands it was "if we get a record deal". With Ulrich it was "when we get a record deal". The word "no" bears little meaning to Ulrich. He lives in the moment. The America's goal-oriented thinking was strange for him [12–14, 38, 41, 46, 48, 51].

Ulrich had the clearest view of Metallica at the beginning of the band. He has been the engine for Metallica's ambition. Ulrich wanted Metallica to spread everywhere. He eats, sleeps and breathes Metallica. According to him, the only way to progress was to write and record an album that was bigger and more bombastic than the last. Satisfaction kills the progress. Ulrich's enthusiasm is likely to stem from his childhood—he was free to go to different gigs among other things, but he had to earn his money and lift there [12, 38, 42, 45, 52–54].

Hetfield's and Ulrich's common ground is the struggle against the authorities, a strong desire for control, the need for constant progress, and love for heavy music. These four factors form the "Metallica spirit" that stems from Ulrich and Hetfield's intrapersonal conflicts. This spirit has not only enabled Metallica to succeed, but it has also kept the band alive in the midst of quarrels. Metallica has been regarded as a deranged self-centered band due to Ulrich and Hetfield's strong desire for control, which has caused considerable conflicts both within the band and with external stakeholders. Let us examine Metallica's conflicts within its inner circle that consists of artists, and producer Bob Rock and performance coach Phil Towle, who have managed to get into inner circle.

4.2. Interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup conflicts within Metallica's inner circle

Although the dissimilarities have complemented Ulrich and Hetfield as human beings, and have created Metallica's innovation power, differences have also caused also remarkable disagreements between them. There has been a brotherly love-hate relationship, where creativity has been based on constant conflicts. Although they have had a lot of conflicts, they have supported each other in hard places. Furthermore, guitarist Kirk Hammett has been the middle man for Hetfield and Ulrich many times. His role has been important for the survival of the band. Hetfield says that he has competed with Ulrich from the first day on. This has made Metallica what it is. It has pushed the band to progress—"We did not just want to be better than every other band. We wanted to be better than each other". Thus, selfish individual interests have helped Metallica to progress. This has been an exhausting path, but it has produced results. Hetfield usually develops most of the riffs and Ulrich puts them together as songs. Typically, in their creative process, after Hetfield tells his view, Ulrich provides an opposite opinion—or vice versa. They say that this is not intentional, but the view on the same thing is different. Thus, whatever Metallica produces, it has been a constant tug of war and struggle. For this reason, Metallica uses the 80% of the total time to the first 10% of album. The band has experienced this as painful practice because visible results have to

wait a long time. Metallica calls this delay as “Metal-time”. The dispute ultimately ends up with a compromise that everyone can adapt to. Although the band speaks of compromises, it seems that in the 1980s and the early 1990s it was more a question of handling conflicts in a manner that combined competition and collaboration that resulted in completely new perspectives [12, 38, 41, 51, 53]. Let us examine more specific what conflicts have occurred within Metallica's inner circle during the band's lifecycle, and how these conflicts have been handled.

4.2.1. Years 1981–1986: through the struggles to the ideal line-up

The tensions within the band started already before the release of the first album in 1983, and even though the tensions contributed to creativity, the band also came close to splitting. No one was safe in the band; everyone was under the thread to be kicked out. Metallica's first lineup included drummer Ulrich and vocalist-guitarist Hetfield, lead guitarist Dave Mustaine and bassist Ron McGovney. As McGovney felt that others were not honoring him, he resigned in 1982. He later admitted that he was not fully committed to Metallica. This was not okay for Ulrich and Hetfield—especially when McGovney was not a very skilled bass player. Ulrich and Hetfield were perfectionist who did not allow themselves to be comfortable. They demanded the same attitude from other band members and also from external stakeholders. They challenged Metallica to make everything as good as it could be. Ulrich and Hetfield found what they hoped for, Clive Burton as the new bassist. Metallica was like a speeding car without brakes. When Burton joined in the band it got a professional driver to better control energy [12, 38, 42, 53].

Hetfield and Ulrich thought that Metallica would not succeed with Dave Mustaine either. More versatile players were needed. There were other problems with Mustaine as well. He became unpredictable when drinking. The last drop was Mustaine driving their tour bus drunk into a ditch and endangering the whole band. Mustaine was kicked out from Metallica in 1983. According to Ulrich, Metallica was more important than relationships. Without kicking Mustaine out, Metallica would probably have died in internal conflicts. Metallica's charm was based originally on Mustaine. Ulrich did not like Mustaine's and Hetfield's macho-attitudes. When Mustaine was around, Hetfield paid less attention to Ulrich. After Mustaine left, Hetfield was able to take on his role in Metallica and was no longer shadowed by Mustaine. Mustaine was replaced by Kirk Hammett, who was a more easy-going than Mustaine. This dramatically changed the band's dynamics [12, 40, 42, 46, 53].

At the time of the Ulrich-Burton-Hetfield-Hammett line-up, the band had four completely different powerful and individual personalities with totally different philosophies. When all the different ideas and characters were merged, the result was the most acclaimed line-up of Metallica. In addition, members of the band were influenced by very different types of music. The progress of Metallica's music was based on this equation. Metallica's second album, *Ride the Lightning*, was more sophisticated than its predecessor and began separating Metallica from other thrash bands. This immediate shift in musical maturity is widely credited to the talent Burton. Hammett also brought new musical dimensions to the band. Metallica's good

pace was cut off by Burton's death in a bus accident in the fall of 1986, and that almost was the end of Metallica, too. The months preceding the tragedy were a golden age of Metallica. It was unstoppable both creatively and on stage. Many appreciate the *Master of puppets* released in 1986 as the Metallica's best album [12, 38, 42, 51, 52].

4.2.2. Years 1987–1999: growing the biggest heavy metal band of the world

Metallica's members dealt with Burton's death so that Burton himself would have wanted Metallica to go on. However, the band made their decision too fast and tried to drown their grief in work. Communication and soul-searching would have been needed. Before Burton's death Metallica was indestructible. Nothing bad could happen. The band escaped the reality, but Burton's death made things real. Death touched most Hetfield, to which Burton was like a big brother. Again, an important person for him died. Metallica's image and internal dynamics changed again greatly. Ulrich, Hetfield and Hammett used bullying their new bassist Jason Newstedt as a questionable form of therapy. Newstedt did not bring Metallica new the same way as Burton. This led to Newstedt being understated, which was most apparent in making and mixing ...*And Justice for All* album in 1988, when the Newstedt's bass was muted almost inaudible [12, 38, 42, 46, 53].

On the stage, things went smoothly, but the behind the scenes the band members started to get annoyed with each other. During the *Master of Puppets* tour, egos grew especially with Ulrich and Hetfield, which concretized as a weak production and overly long songs in ...*And Justice for All* album. The album made under the terms of Hetfield and Ulrich, and no one else inside or outside the band was listened to. However, the album sold well, and the audiences on the tour continued to grow. Metallica changed its style remarkably for the 1991 the *Black* album. Ulrich's comment after *Black*'s release describes well the mentality of renewing the band: "As long as there is fun and challenge, we will continue. It is cool that we try not to get stuck on the same tracks. We get easily bored. We were experimenting on the new album a bit. As soon as it feels like working on an assembly line, the result is shitty" [12, 45, 46, 53, 55].

When Metallica was making *Black*, the band members fought with each other, but also with the producer Bob Rock. Rock started to question Metallica's music and the way of doing it. He whipped out Metallica's best potential. At this time, the sounds were important and invested on. In addition, the songs were simplified, shortened and slowed down compared to previous albums. Rock also got Hetfield to believe in his hidden vocal abilities. Rock was a perfectionist and their interests matched as Metallica wanted to become the biggest band in the world. Rock was the first outsider to enter the band's inner circle. All of them had their own ideas of ways to achieve a common goal, which naturally caused conflicts. The life for Rock was distressing with the stubborn and arguing Ulrich and Hetfield. According to Rock, the album was not easy or fun. Finally, he told the members of the Metallica that he would never work with them again. Later, however, it became clear that collaboration between Rock and Metallica would continue for more than 10 years. The *Black* album has sold around 30 million copies, which made Metallica a mega band. At this point, popularity

began to affect Metallica's members, as their lives were economically secure. On the other hand, egos grew even bigger than before. It was followed by pretending and talking bullshit [12, 13, 42, 45, 46, 51].

After the *Black* album and its tour, Metallica has taken such daring and even senseless risks that have not been seen in the rock history. Whatever one thinks about *Load* and *Reload* albums in 1996 and 1997, and image changes, one thing is sure: Metallica has not chosen the safe path. However, it is generally acknowledged that *Load* and *Reload* contain several weak songs for the first time in Metallica's history. The musical fall is estimated to be because they did not have anything to oppose for the first time during their career. Until *Black*, they always had something to rage against. They were outsiders, but they won the war, and they did not have anything to conquer anymore. Furthermore, the band started experience friction about the changes in the looks of band members. Ulrich and Hammett were excited about abstract art and also dressed completely differently than before. Hetfield considered that the musical change was okay but did not accept the change in imago. For him and Newstedt, this period did not seem natural for Metallica [13, 42, 45, 53].

In the late 1990s, Newstedt saw that the previously cohesive Metallica started to grow apart. According to him, earning money for 10 years had begun to drag the band into a vicious circle, and they were forgetting why Metallica exist. In addition, other members had other important things in life, such as families. They spent less time playing music together. Newstedt's Echobrain band was an essential reason for friction. Especially Hetfield disapproved Newstedt starting his own band alongside with Metallica. Newstedt stated that Hetfield's iron grip on Metallica was suppressing. Hetfield's response "other kinds of arrangements can be made" maddened Newstedt as the last straw. Newstedt left Metallica in 2001 [13, 42, 45].

4.2.3. Years 2000–2006: on the brink of a break-up

In the millennium, Metallica's internal relationships had been in bad shape for a long time. The hidden mourning of Burton's death had been buried inside the band members and inflamed 15 years later to the point where Metallica was falling apart. The lone wolves did not work well together. Every band member wanted solitude. Unhandled issues that had been numbed for with various intoxicants started to surface. Rudeness, misunderstandings, jealousy and competition tore Ulrich and Hetfield apart when they argue whose band Metallica was. At this point, the conflicts had led Metallica's in a state that threatened the existence of the band. Metallica's manager Q Prime got external help for the arguing band. Phil Towle, a performance coach, was hired for the job [12, 42, 45, 51].

Towle achieved a close and deep partnership with the members of Metallica. Hetfield was initially the most cautious about Towle's group therapy, and even suggested firing him. He felt uncomfortable when Towle was too involved with Metallica's work. Later he told that Towle was like an angel to him—a missing father who made him think of things. Towle managed to make the members of the band tell one another about their feelings daily. Ulrich

was irritated that every emotion had to be analyzed and no results seemed to come—“1.5 years of this already and it does not lead to anything”. Ulrich also threw Towle sarcastic comments from time to time. As such, Ulrich’s childish remarks can be understood because Towle was rather a rigid persona, did not fit in the Metallica’s world. Ulrich also made a blunt statement that “20 years of hate sold 100 million records ... look at us (and this shit of psychiatry)” [13, 41, 51].

Hetfield went to his personal rehabilitation after the group therapy and the recording of the *St. Anger* album started. He wanted to have a break during which he could evaluate both his professional and private lives. He did not tell the others when or whether he would come back. Metallica had previously succeeded in going ahead with Ulrich’s endless energy as a counter force to the stubborn Hetfield, but now they were up against a brick wall. During Hetfield’s rehab, the other members realized his significance for the band. This was a tough place, especially for Ulrich. He is easily frustrated if things do not go ahead and there is uncertainty. Eventually, Hetfield’s absence made Metallica’s members closer to each other because of the threat of Metallica splitting. Metallica’s manager Cliff Burnstein commented on Metallica’s difficulties that the lives of Metallica’s members would not change greatly whatever they decided to do. They have reached the top, why should they work hard anymore—they have families, money, houses, etc. [12, 41, 46, 51].

When returning from the rehab, Hetfield tried the things he learned in practice, but the old control freak and stubbornness surfaced again. He said he only works in the afternoon for 4 hours, and the others should restrain from editing music at others times when he is not there. This annoyed the other members—especially Ulrich, as he was more of a night person. Ulrich attacked heavily against Hetfield’s principles by cursing him. However, Hetfield did not give up, and so the band was forced to learn a new way to work. Hetfield’s personal rehabilitation and group therapy eventually helped the band to get through the worst disputes. Metallica would probably have died without the therapy. Ulrich and Hetfield’s attacks on each other tapered off. They also reflected on what had happened and recognized that they had changed for the better. There are fewer conflicts, as members of the band have learned to appreciate their fellow people more as they. Earlier, in conflicts, the tendency was to irritate the other even more. This conflict stimulation technique was double-edged sword, because it simultaneously improved creativity and caused bad feelings. Hetfield said that after personal rehab and group therapy his macho image vanished. Before that, he rebelled strongly against society, himself and everything. He questioned everything and drowned his problems in drinking. Then he became a father who started protecting his family and loving his life. He saw that the meaning of his life was be a role model and show what Metallica’s members have experienced during their career. In other words, Hetfield solved his intrapersonal conflicts [13, 41, 42, 51, 53].

All in all the recording process of the *St. Anger* album was challenging. As such, the album was an attempt to return to the band’s rough garage days, but the “family” was not as coherent as it was then. The album released in 2003 was not a master piece, but the band had to go through this to become stronger. In 2003 Robert Trujillo, a new bassist joined in the band. From him, Metallica found a bassist with whom the band can do the same things as they used

to do with Burton. On the other hand, Trujillo was a cheerful, which made him fit to the current situation of Metallica [42, 45, 53].

Some Kind of Monster documentary about Metallica was made around the making of *St. Anger* and Towle's coaching. When the documentary came out in 2004, it showed the human side of the band for the viewers. According to Ulrich, the cameras prohibited them from doing in conflict situations as they used to do: joke and lie. Cameras made things a little bit more real. Hammett pointed out that people usually see and hear Metallica's glamor. As the document was now behind the scenes, the whole picture was balanced. In documentary, people saw Metallica as a team that makes humane errors, not as gods. It changed the opinion of Metallica for many overnights. Metallica is the first mega band in the world that is also mega human [13, 41, 45, 51].

4.2.4. Years 2007–2017: a new rise in harmony

In 2007, Hetfield said he loved Ulrich, but there is still constant disagreement. Their chemistry matches even though it is hard to notice due to all squabbling. Conversations are intense, disagreements surface and sparks flow. The relationship is still tricky, although today they are better able to listen to one another, and are able to take feedback from one another. In 2011, Ulrich told that he and Hetfield were in better terms with each other than ever before. Hetfield got gradually rid of his precise rules he adopted in the rehab, and there are not anymore time limits to his creativity. This can be heard on *Death Magnetic* album released in 2008, which was a clear return to their thrash metal roots of the 1980s. At the same time, the responsibility of composing was shared among all members of the band. All members are marked as contributors for all 10 songs in the album. Unseen harmony seemed to have reached the band [12, 13, 45].

Metallica may have lost more money in 2010–2016 than it has earned. The band did not release any Metallica albums in this period, and they toured very little in the United States, which the band justified as a general fall in demand for rock. Metallica would not have given up like this in any case at the beginning of their career. The "war" seemed to be over, but Metallica was being well. In 2016, 35-year-old Metallica is no longer in any hurry, but instead, is doing various projects depending on their own feelings and schedules. The chemistries work well together, and the team spirit is good. The band members can discuss things in a civilized manner, and they really like working together. They no longer need to defend their territory like wolves, but the band members is listening to others' proposals and adapting them to their own ideas. When making the *Death Magnetic*, the band thought about Metallica's deepest essence, while *Hardwired ...to Self-Destruct* published in 2016, was spontaneously done without wondering what Metallica would sound like in 2016. The album was not made in the traditional speed mode, but depending on the feelings. Many critics value *Hardwired ...to Self-Destruct* the best Metallica album since *Black*. On the other hand, for the first time, the band seems to have done compromise to please fans. The band members say that Metallica can continue working together for the next 20 years, if physics permits [14, 48, 56, 57].

5. Discussion

Metallica’s success is based the power duo of Ulrich and Hetfield. Their common ground is the strong desire for control, the struggle against the enemies, the need for constant progress and love for music. These factors form the Metallica spirit, stemming from Ulrich and Hetfield’s internal conflicts. In addition to enabling Metallica to succeed, these four factors have kept the band alive in the midst of quarrels. The most important Metallica’s success factor seems to be the desire for control. Ulrich and Hetfield hate the idea that authorities or gurus would steer the Metallica ship. In practice, Ulrich and Hetfield have avoided conflicts with other stakeholders by strong control. The need for controlling springs from different sources for Ulrich and Hetfield. Ulrich has little or no tolerance for uncertainty and obscurity, the latter has a fear of loss regarding the personal freedom and running out of creative force. Therefore, the will to fight that arose from negative emotions has defined a lot the success of Metallica. On the other hand, there has been passionate love for music.

Table 1 shows Ulrich’s and Hetfield’s personalities based on available information. From the factors that provoke innovativeness, Ulrich’s personality is emphasized by openness, while Hetfield’s strengths are conscience and lack of agreeability. Furthermore, Ulrich has concentrated more on big picture while Hetfield has focused on the details, and Hetfield is great on stage while Ulrich dominates off-stage. Although the difference has complemented Ulrich and Hetfield as human beings, and have created Metallica’s innovation power, differences have also caused lots of destructive conflicts between them. One of the reasons for this is their very different backgrounds. Their families were far apart geographically, culturally and economically. It should also be noted that although extroversion and neuroticism are not the most important factors for innovativeness, personal differences in these factors have also created conflicts. For example, with regard to extroversion, Hetfield has remained silent and shy, and often in Ulrich’s shadow who is a talkative, which was bad for Hetfield’s self-esteem especially in the early days of Metallica. Ulrich and Hetfield’s most dramatic personality features have leveled off since the beginning of Metallica. Especially Hetfield, who has grown considerably as human being and got rid of many destructive intrapersonal conflicts.

The good handling of task and process conflicts helped the band create great music up till 1991 the Black album, yielding functional outcomes. Under the surface, however, bad emotions smoldered and escalated for the first time to a longer dysfunctional state as the band nearly

Personality factors in Big five model	Lars Ulrich	James Hetfield
<i>Openness to experience</i>	more inventive/curious	more consistent/cautious
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	more easy-going/careless	more efficient/organized
<i>Agreeableness</i>	more friendly/compassionate	more challenging/detached
<i>Extroversion</i>	more outgoing/energetic	more solitary/reserved
<i>Neuroticism</i>	more secure/confident	more sensitive/nervous

Table 1. Personalities of Ulrich and Hetfield.

broke up in the early 2000s. Bad emotions started to accrue since Burton died year 1986. This extremely destructive conflict was handled with avoiding it for 15 years. Furthermore, several new conflicts emerged from this conflict. Conflicts were hidden by humor and numbed with alcohol and drugs, until all the feeling bad came out at once. In consequence, relationship and status conflicts exploded. Even task and process conflicts were getting dysfunctional, the fact that we can hear in the mediocre albums *Load*, *Reload* and *St. Anger*.

As the fear, anger and love for music helped in achieving the band the status of world's greatest heavy rock band, the maturing as people and a more positive outlook on life helped to keep the band alive and continue to make still relevant music. The newest album, *Hardwired ...to Self-destruct* in 2016, is a good example of a more harmonic Metallica. There are conflicts within the band, and with external stakeholders, but they are less frequent than before and they are handled better. The worst rebelliousness is over, but new experiments and striving for one's freedom have continued. A good example of the first is the very controversial *Lulu* album in 2011, and of latter the same year established own record company, with which Metallica has full control of its actions.

The ways of handling conflicts have changed during the band's career. **Figure 5** shows Metallica's progression at roughly level album by album, and the prevalent conflict handling method or mix of them. Figure show also the biggest spots of musical discontinuity between albums.

If you want to lift one conflict handling way above others in Metallica, it is competing. Especially at the beginning, the members concentrated on competing against each other. The competition provoked the personal creativity and at the same time Metallica advanced musically.

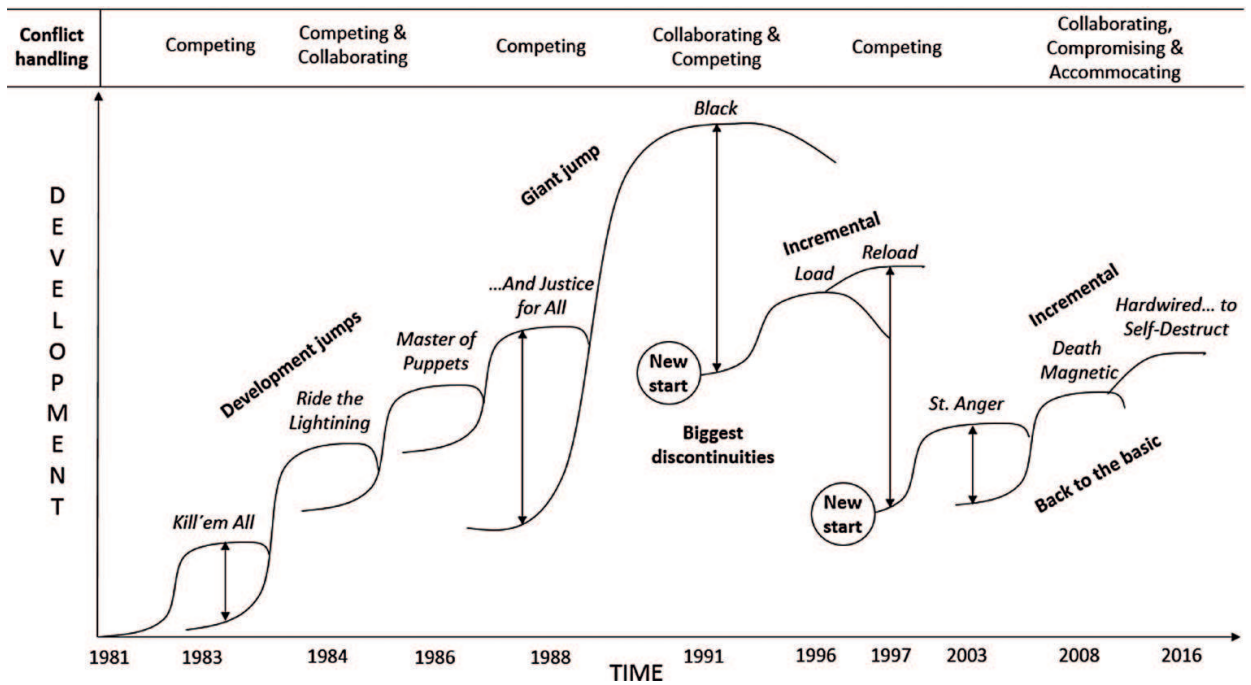


Figure 5. Conflict handling methods and innovation discontinuity during the Metallica life cycle.

The main thing was to win a conflict without caring for the other parties. In the external competing, the band overcame the hindrances that were in its way. In the competing method, one concentrates on its or his own problems. Metallica and its members were exceptionally devoted to its cause and not caring about the critique. However, as a conflict handling method, competing has its risks in the long term, as shown in the Metallica crises.

Alongside the competing, the collaborating strengthened as the conflict handling means during the 1983–1986. Metallica's "Metal-time", the delayed composing practice is good example of collaborating. After this, the unexpected death of Burton and the egos had been growing since the success of the Master of Puppets album. During this period, the competing returned to the main conflict management method. Collaborating strengthened again when making the Black album. However, with the great success of this album the vanity really started get to them, and the most confused time of the band started. This can be heard in the albums Load, Reload and St. Anger. At this period Ulrich and Hetfield were first time in different camps. They compete with each other who is the leader in Metallica. So Metallica itself became the cause of the conflict, when before Metallica spirit had been an invisible power that bound the band members together. Hammett has also been pivotal role as he has acted as a peacemaker and diplomat between Ulrich and Hetfield. Burton and Burnstein have been in same role. In conflict situations, they usually used the unselfish accommodating method.

Making the album St. Anger the band had a crisis that was the biggest in its career that only with the help of therapy it was able to solve. Also, the role of cameras, that filmed Some Kind of Monster documentary, cannot be diminished. The cameras prohibited the band members from doing in conflict situations as they used to do: joke and lie. After the therapy, the performance coach Towle told that the band is no more afraid of conflicts, but holds the tension caused by them as an asset. In conflict situations one is no more in one's shell, but opens up to others. They trust that something good will come out of it. You could say that the band has started anew after the crisis, as more mature. Members of the band were able to appreciate to each other. The corrective maneuver in attitude was very important and brought the band lots of more years to live. After the crisis, the collaborating, compromising, and even accommodating were used as conflict handling methods. An example of the last one is the band showing their esteem to the old band members and partners by inviting them to the band's 30 year party and paying for it all. Metallica is at its most harmonic state ever, and members enjoy work together. Metallica does not make music that is opening new paths anymore, but it has sustained the status of world's biggest heavy rock band.

The methods which Metallica has handled conflict have changed with the years, as have the musical styles. They have not gone with reinventing the wheel if not counting the albums Reload, Death Magnetic and Hardwired... to Self-destruct. The band tells its music has progressed its natural path. When compared to other bands the musical style changes have mostly been so big, that we can say radical changes instead of incremental improvements. The most radical change happened before Black album, when the band created the biggest discontinuity compared to its earlier music. The Death Magnetic album is a return to the

Metallica's music in the 1980s, and then again *Hardwired... to Self-destruct* is a cross-section of the band's whole career. The harmony of the band and its trait for compromises can well be seen in its music. The band has started thinking how to please others.

Metallica has also utilized successfully conflict stimulation techniques such as communication (e.g. Ulrich's and Hetfield's provocation), bringing in outsiders (e.g. Burton as a new skilled artist) and even devil's advocates (Rock and Towle). Conflict stimulation has been balancing with the double-edged sword. As a summary, Metallica has handled and stimulated conflicts exceptionally well during its career. Literature says that competition does not yield as good results as does collaboration. Metallica's skill has been to create an optimal mixture of competition and collaboration in the critical phases of its career. **Figure 6** summarizes the essential things at Metallica case from the point of conflict management. Left side of figure describes the functional conflicts and right side the dysfunctional conflicts.

Although the record sales are nowadays not nearly as good as it used to, the fan base has been growing in the 2000s. In the 2010s, however, there has been a decline, and it may well be that the band has been unprofitable for the first time since 1980s. On the other hand the 2016 album *Hardwired... to Self-Destruct* seen to bring some help to this. A more reconciling attitude in conflict situations seems to fit the matured band, when it balances on the border of the mature and decline stages of its life span. It is interesting, that competing has risen as a conflict handling method to the surface, from time to time. If history keeps repeating itself, Metallica has the next battle ahead and it involves strong competition. Maybe it is competition toward the decline.

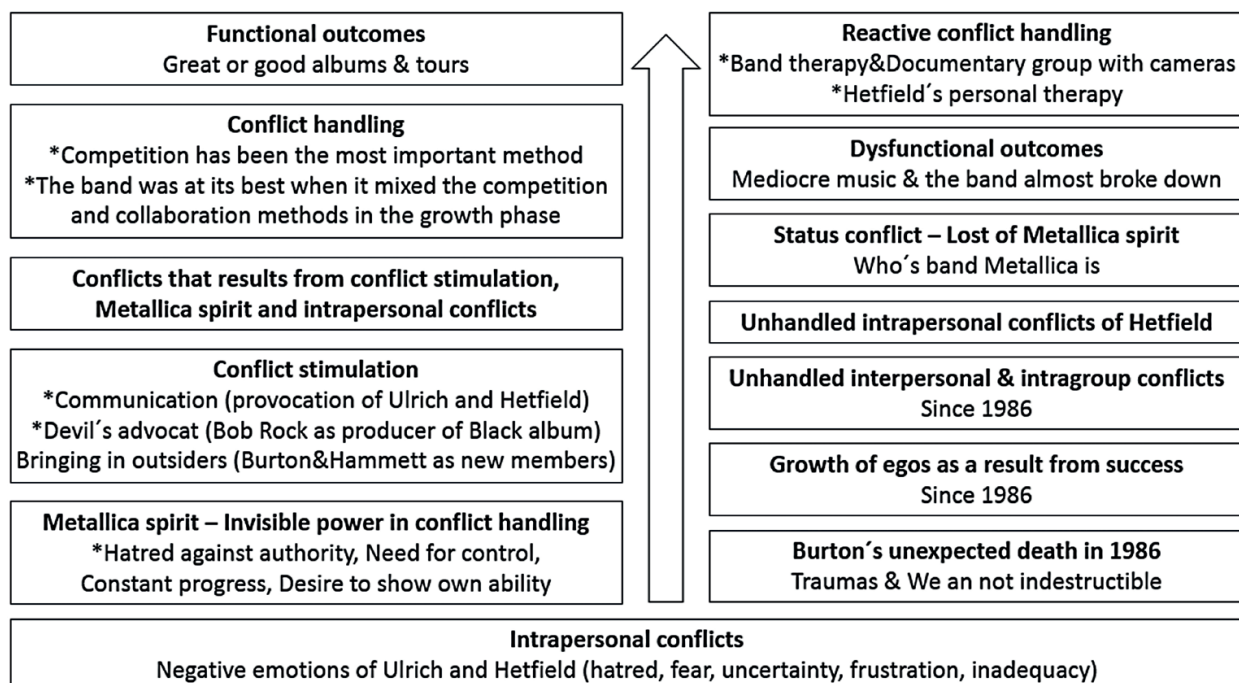


Figure 6. Summary of conflicts and their handling at Metallica case.

6. Conclusions and further research

Conflicts have absolutely been a springboard for Metallica's success. Without Ulrich's and Hetfield's intrapersonal conflicts Metallica would not have even been born. Their negative emotions and love for music have been fuel for Metallica's growth path. They desired passionately to show their ability, and knock down their skeptics and rivals—and even each other. On the other hand, their opposite personalities have led to numerous destructive conflicts. However, their common love, the band Metallica, has been above these conflicts. This was forgotten in the mid-1990s and the result was almost the death of the band in the millennium. Only therapy saved Metallica.

The success of Metallica was born and sustained from the desire for control, the invisible power of Metallica spirit, and the appropriate mix of different conflict handling and stimulating methods in different stages of the band's lifecycle. The combination of competition and collaboration methods made Metallica a mega band at the beginning of 1990s. The breakthrough of the band may be crystalized in two sentences.

- Ulrich: 20 years of hate (toward authorities and the system) sold 100 million records.
- Hetfield: We have been competing with Ulrich since day one. That has made Metallica what it is. It has driven us forward. We have had our fights, but in the toughest situations we have supported each other. We wanted to progress despite obstacles, and make it.

On the other hand, the slowdown in progress is also understandable. Metallica's manager Burnstein was probably right when he assessed the reasons for the diminishing effort of the band in the mid-1990s. He stated that the life of the members of the band does not change that much no matter what they do. It has no more battles to win.

The limitation of the study is focusing on one case, so results cannot be further generalized. It would be interesting to do a similar study concerning other bands that have managed to make a long and successful career. In the genre of heavy rock, for example, AC/DC and Iron Maiden have accomplished a similar career, but they have taken less creative risks than Metallica. On the other hand, the results of the study should not be applied only to music bands and other artists, but they are probably possible to apply to other business types as well. This should, however, be studied more, since the harsh actions, as done by Metallica, maybe frowned upon in more traditional industries. There are exceptions, however. For example, the birth and the actions of Apple have features reminding of Metallica case. Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak started in a garage with an attitude of nerds, they complemented and competed against each other, they saw what others did wrong, they hated authorities, they believed passionately what they were doing and kept the control to themselves, they demanded a high standard of performance, they were unpleasant toward others if there was cause to, and they fought the victory through many hard conflicts [58]. A good question to study further is this formula of success still valid. Furthermore, it would be interesting to continue Metallica's research by studying its conflicts with external stakeholders such as press, fans, producers, managers, record companies and other bands.

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