

DEALING WITH  
**CONFLICT**

ONLINE INSTRUMENT



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### Note Regarding the Optional Use of 360-Degree Feedback

You may have elected the option to receive feedback on your conflict-handling style from your peers, managers, subordinates, clients, and other individuals with whom you interact on a regular basis. You can review observer feedback by logging into your assessment account, clicking on "View Summary Results", and then clicking on "Observer Graphs". This additional information will provide insight into how others perceive you when resolving conflicts.

## Introduction

Welcome to the *Dealing with Conflict Instrument (DWCI)*. This report contains the results of your self-assessment.

### Interpreting Your Results

Your scores on the *Dealing with Conflict Instrument* can give you a better understanding of your own conflict behavior and help you improve your performance by becoming more competent and confident in conflicts. The path to increased mastery of conflict situations is through self-awareness. Your scores will help you become more aware of how you typically react in conflicts.

Approximately three-fourths of the people who take this assessment have one dominant style. However, it's possible to have a tie, or even a three-way tie, for your dominant style. People whose scores are distributed more evenly across multiple styles tend to be more flexible in their approach. This is beneficial, as it allows them to more easily adapt their style to the needs of the situation rather than over-using one dominant style. Over time, as you acquire additional conflict-handling skills, your profile score will most likely shift toward a more balanced distribution.

### Learn about the Five Conflict Handling Styles and When Each Style Is Most Appropriate

This instrument examines your use of the five different conflict-handling styles. (Detailed descriptions of the five styles begins on page 5.) The style(s) you selected the most often in the assessment are your preferred conflict handling styles. Sometimes your preferred style is the best style for the situation; however, for other situations, another style would be more effective. By increasing your mastery of all five styles and recognizing when they are best deployed, you will be better able to handle conflicts in the most productive way.

In addition to the style descriptions, this report of your results includes tips and techniques to help you implement each style more effectively. These are designed to increase your level of comfort in using each style and give you greater control over conflict processes and outcomes.

### Collaboration: The Most Important Way of Handling Conflict

Although the collaborative approach is not appropriate for all conflict situations, its “win/win” outcome is the most satisfying for everyone involved. Collaboration is the most difficult of all the styles to achieve because it requires the participation and cooperation of both parties. It also is the most time consuming and should, therefore, be reserved for matters where the outcomes are of high importance to both parties and a satisfactory resolution is worthy of the time and energy invested.

A special section on ***Creating Collaboration*** is provided on page 13. This section will give you more in-depth information on the collaborative process. Studies have shown that effective collaboration is an essential ingredient in higher levels of employee motivation, job satisfaction, creativity, and productivity. Collaborative approaches to conflict are not used in many cases where they would have been beneficial, so make sure to study the information about when and how to use the collaborate style. You should also note that each of the five styles is relevant in certain circumstances, so it is helpful to study the information about all the styles.

## The Five Conflict-Handling Styles

The following is an overview description of each of the five conflict-handling styles.

### Accommodate (I Lose, You Win)

When you accommodate, you put aside your needs and desires and acquiesce to the other person's requests or demands. This style is appropriate when one party places a high value on the relationship with the other party.

### Avoid (I Lose, You Lose)

When you avoid conflict, you side-step or withdraw from the conflict situation. When you prevent or postpone the conflict, the conflict remains unresolved and neither party wins. It is often wise to avoid any conflict in which you think the other party is dangerous.

### Compromise (We Both Win, We Both Lose)

When you compromise, you resolve the conflict quickly and efficiently by seeking a fair and equitable split between your positions. With compromise, each side concedes some of their issues in order to win others. The compromise style is most appropriate when the outcome is of low to medium importance and the relationship is of high to medium importance.

### Compete (I Win, You Lose)

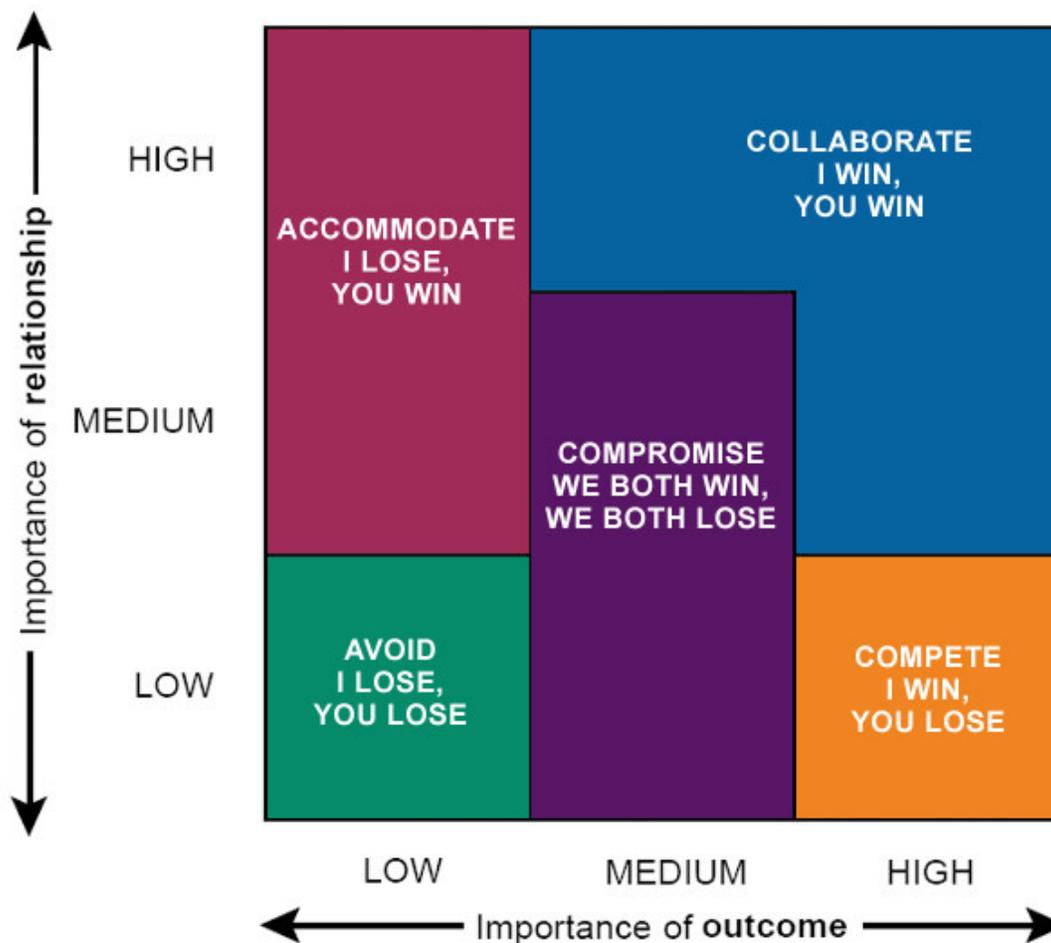
When you compete, you seek to win your position at the expense of the other party losing theirs. Competing is the appropriate style when only one party can achieve their desired outcome. It is best used when the outcome is extremely important and the relationship is of relatively low importance.

### Collaborate (I Win, You Win)

When you collaborate, you cooperate with the other party to try to resolve a common problem with a mutually satisfactory outcome. Each side must feel that the outcomes gained through collaboration are more favorable than the outcome they could achieve on their own. Collaboration is best used when both the relationship and the outcome are of medium to high importance.

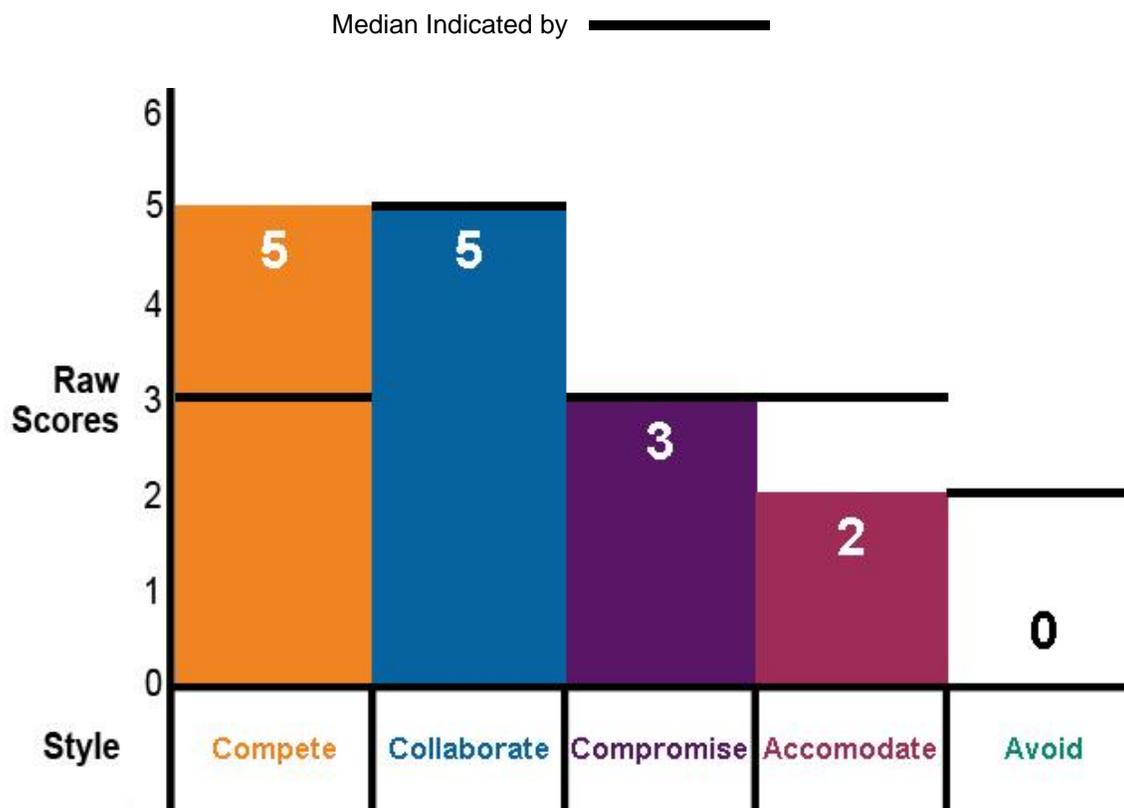
## The Five Conflict-Handling Styles (concluded)

The grid below will help you visualize the range of conflict-handling styles and the characteristics of each.



## Your Conflict-Handling Profile

The graph below displays your conflict-handling styles according to the frequency in which you selected the style in the questionnaire. Your dominant or most often used style is the style(s) with the highest raw score. When you score above or below the median score (middle) for a conflict style, this may indicate a tendency on your part to overuse or underuse that style, relative to the scores of other people.



### Your Approach to Conflict Resolution

Your most frequently-selected conflict styles were **Compete** and **Collaborate**.

You may often prefer to **compete** when faced with conflict. You are willing to debate or advocate your position in conflicts regardless of the importance of the situation or outcome. You may tend to have strong beliefs about most things and be certain that your way or solution or view is the right way. You may see compromise as giving in and in effect, compromising the integrity of what you believe. You may not take conflicts personally but your approach may sometimes leave the other party feeling that they lost.

You also often tend to **collaborate**. You view conflicts somewhat dispassionately and impersonally in favor of attacking the issue as a problem to be solved. When you don't personalize the conflict, you stay open to the ideas of others and try to focus on the best resolution to the conflict based on the most important merits or values coming into play. You realize that some problems are difficult and may require a creative approach to make the situation work for all parties involved.

## Recognizing When Each Style Is Best

### Accommodate (I Lose, You Win)

**Your score of 2 means that you occasionally consider making use of this style.**

You use this style less often than most other people.

When you accommodate, you put aside your needs and desires and acquiesce to the other person's requests or demands. This style is appropriate when one party places a high value on the relationship with the other party. It is also appropriate when the outcome of the conflict is of low importance to you, but of high importance to the other party.

**Best Practice:** Don't be too quick to use the accommodate style. Refrain from using statements such as *"It doesn't matter to me"* or *"Whatever you say."* In order for both parties to feel good about the outcome, you should feel that you have given up something of value in order to resolve the conflict. This will allow you to be viewed as cooperative, rather than weak. You will also have paved the way for requesting that the other party be just as responsive to your needs in a future situation.

### Avoid (I Lose, You Lose)

**Your score of 0 means that you almost never consider making use of this style.**

You use this style much less often than most other people.

When you avoid conflict, you side-step or withdraw from the conflict situation. When you prevent or postpone the conflict, the conflict remains unresolved and neither party wins. However, sometimes conflicts resolve themselves when left alone. For instance, people who are angry might try to initiate arguments with you over silly things that they will not care about later on. It is also wise to avoid any conflicts in which you think the other party is dangerous, either because they might escalate to destructive conflict, or because they are simply too powerful for you to negotiate with on a level playing field.

**Best Practice:** Avoidance is often the best initial response to conflicts when you are unprepared for them. Use it as a short-term strategy for buying time and figuring out how to handle the conflict. For example, ask to schedule a meeting in the future to discuss the situation, thereby providing additional time to consider your approach or to improve your negotiating position. If the other person has a deadline, your avoidance puts you in a better position over time. People are more likely to be reasonable and willing to collaborate or compromise when a deadline is at hand.

## Recognizing When Each Style Is Best (continued)

### Compromise (We Both Win, We Both Lose)

**Your score of 3 means that you sometimes consider making use of this style.**

You use this style about as often as most other people.

When you compromise, you resolve the conflict quickly and efficiently by seeking a fair and equitable split between your positions. With compromise, each side concedes some of their issues in order to win others. The key to effective compromise is that both parties are flexible and willing to settle for a satisfactory resolution of their major issue. The compromise style is most appropriate when the outcome is of low to medium importance and the relationship is of high to medium importance.

**Best Practice:** True compromising involves honesty and reasonableness. Stating an exaggerated opening position in order to retain as much “bargaining room” as possible may be viewed as a challenge to the other party to do the same. This will cause both parties to distrust the real motivation of the other and the resolution process will quickly change to a competing style. The compromise style works best when there is a degree of trust between both parties and/or the facts of the real needs of both parties are mutually understood.

### Compete (I Win, You Lose)

**Your score of 5 means that you consistently consider making use of this style.**

You use this style much more often than most other people.

When you compete, you seek to win your position at the expense of the other party losing theirs. Competing is the appropriate style when only one party can achieve their desired outcome. It is best used when the outcome is extremely important and the relationship is of relatively low importance.

Many different situations require that the competing style be used in order to be resolved effectively. Situations where there can be only one “winner”, or when making a quick decision is crucial, are appropriate for the compete style. For example, if two car salespeople were “competing” for your business, *compromising would not be* an acceptable resolution; i.e. purchasing half a car from each of them. Similarly, it would not be appropriate (or ethical) for our favorite sports team to “accommodate” the opposing team by allowing them to win. Emergency situations that require split second decision making are often appropriate for a competing response.

**Best Practice:** By definition, the competing style is not negative and has many appropriate uses. It can, however, have a detrimental effect when it is overused—adopting a “winning at all costs” strategy regardless of the appropriateness of the situation. The compete style takes time and energy. It is, therefore, advisable that you “pick the right battles” and believe that the outcome justifies the investment of your time and energy.

## Recognizing When Each Style Is Best (concluded)

### Collaborate (I Win, You Win)

**Your score of 5 means that you consistently consider making use of this style.**

You use this style about as often as most other people.

When you collaborate, you cooperate with the other party to resolve a common problem to a mutually satisfying outcome. Both parties compete against the situation instead of each other. Each side must feel that the outcomes gained through collaboration are more favorable than the outcome they could achieve on their own. Collaboration requires a trusting relationship with the other party and a situation in which creative problem solving will indeed benefit both parties. It also requires a high level of communication and problem-solving skills.

Using the collaborative style requires the highest investment of time and energy of any of the conflict-handling styles. It should be used when both the outcome and the relationship are of high importance to both parties. It should not be used when a quick resolution is necessary because the process of true collaboration usually takes time. Pressure to come to a decision will cause frustration to both parties and often force them to use a less appropriate style.

Collaboration is the most satisfying style because each party feels that they have achieved their desired outcome and the relationship is unaffected or improved. This style takes work, but it is worth the investment in creating long-term satisfaction and building successful relationships.

**Best Practice:** In a genuine collaboration, each party starts by trading information instead of concessions. Each side must offer insight into their situation—what their concerns and constraints are. The collaborative process requires keeping an open mind, temporarily setting aside our own priorities and considering many different approaches.

Although it is tempting to think that the positive outcomes of successful collaboration make it the best choice for all conflicts, there is a danger in overusing this style. Certain situations require expedient solutions: where to go for lunch, what brand of paper to use in the office copier, etc. People who seek to collaborate on all situations might be wasting their time and avoiding taking responsibility for their actions.

## Job Aid: How to Determine Which Style You Should Use

**Directions:** This job aid is designed to help you determine the optimal conflict resolution style to adopt in a given situation. Its underlying premise is that different conflict resolution strategies are preferred in different situations. Apply this tool to a real-life conflict to see how it works.

1. Think of a real conflict you had to deal with.
2. Below are 10 pairs of statements you should relate to your choice of a real conflict. Circle the letter of **the one statement from each pair** that you think fits your particular conflict situation best. (Don't worry about the meaning of the letters right now; that will be discussed later.) Even if neither statement fits your situation exactly, **you must choose one statement over the other**. Weigh the statements as accurately and honestly as possible.

Situation Assessment Statements	
P	I don't really care what the other party thinks of me after the conflict is over.
R	It is important that I have a good relationship with the other party once the conflict is over.
M	It won't be the end of the world if I don't resolve this conflict.
O	I have vital interests at stake in resolving this conflict.
P	I don't have a significant personal or business relationship with the other party.
R	My relationship with the other party is important for business or personal reasons.
M	The time and trouble needed to resolve this conflict may not be worth it.
O	I expect the resolution of this conflict to be worth my while if it goes reasonably well.
P	In my relationship with the other party, there is very little sharing of feelings and information.
R	My relationship with the other party is based on sharing feelings and information.
P	I don't expect resolving this conflict to affect future dealings with the other party.
R	I won't be surprised if resolving this conflict sets the pattern for many future conflicts.
P	My communication with the other party has been quite limited.
R	My communication with the other party has been quite extensive.
P	I will not feel any worse about myself if I end up thinking I lost the conflict.
R	I won't feel really good unless I do well in this conflict.
P	I am not dependent upon the other party.
R	We have common interests because of the ways in which we are thrown together.
P	The issues at stake here are clear and straightforward.
R	I suspect there are important hidden factors at stake in this conflict.

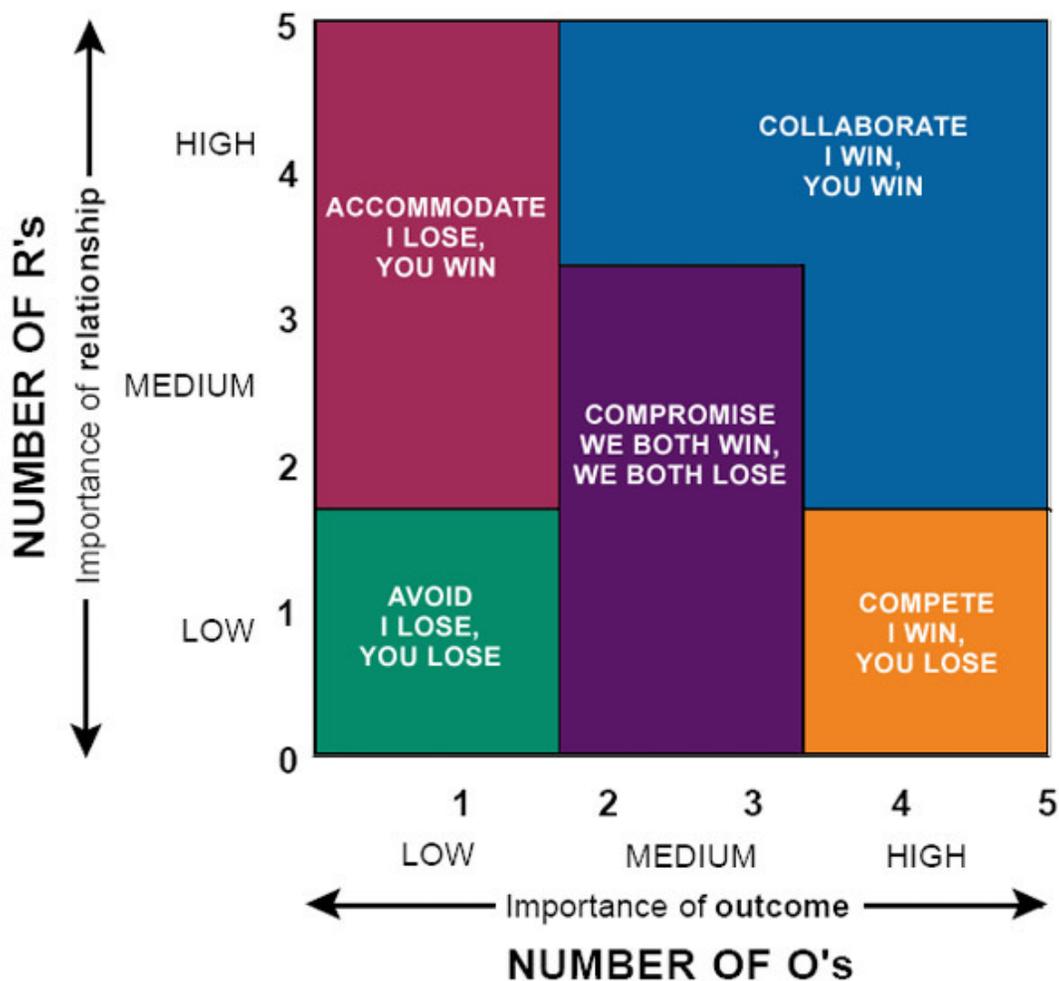
### Conflict Situation Selector: Which Style Should You Use? (continued)

Scoring Sheet	
Please count your letter scores and fill in the blanks below.	
How many R's did you circle? _____	R's
How many O's did you circle? _____	O's

### The Five Conflict Resolution Strategies

Using the graph below, plot your scores using your judgment to determine the conflict strategy that best matches your situation.

### Conflict Situation Selector



## Conflict Situation Selector: Which Style Should You Use? (concluded)

### Interpretation: Selecting a Strategy

You have now assessed a specific conflict situation in terms of the importance of your long-term relationship (R's) with the other party, and the importance of the outcome (O's) of the conflict. Select your strategy by using The Five Conflict Resolution Strategies grid on page 12, or by finding the best match among the following descriptions:

- A situation in which neither outcome nor relationship matter to you calls for an **Avoid** strategy.
- A situation in which outcome and relationship are both very important calls for a **Collaborate** strategy.
- A situation in which outcome is important but relationship is not calls for a **Compete** strategy.
- A situation in which outcome is not important but relationship is calls for an **Accommodate** strategy.
- A situation in which outcome and relationship are both somewhat important to you calls for a **Compromise** strategy.

## Creating Collaboration: The Best Style to Use Most Often

*“It takes two to collaborate.”*

On average, about 47% of people rate themselves as collaborators in conflict situations, and 25% to 33% of people are rated as collaborators by others. ***This means that in the majority of conflicts, at least one of the participants is not a collaborator by instinct.***

You will often encounter conflicts in which collaboration is not the other party's (or your) dominant style. However, in most situations, collaboration is the most productive style. Your challenge is to shift the conflict to make it collaborative.

When the other party does not collaborate, your efforts to collaborate make you vulnerable. It truly takes two to collaborate, and many people complain that their efforts to turn conflicts into collaborations fail because of the other person's use of another conflict-handling style. This problem is important because in any situation where you care about both the outcome and the relationship, collaboration is the optimal style. Other styles will not produce as positive an outcome.

Since the odds are that neither party has collaboration as a dominant style, you will need to recognize this and consciously work toward a collaborative approach. It will take energy, cooperation, and time, but the results will lead to greater satisfaction and success.

The following is a list of collaboration-building techniques to help you create a framework for successful collaboration:

1. **Make sure the other person shares his or her needs and objectives.** Understanding the other party's needs and objectives is essential to successful collaboration. Keep asking the other party what they need and want and keep explaining what you need and want. Restate each party's needs and wants to make sure that they are met.
2. **Stimulate information sharing.** To collaborate, you must share information freely, yet in most conflicts, people react defensively and do not share information fully. Signal your intent to collaborate by being open and honest with the other party. Explain that you want them to understand your position fully and ask the other party to share information about their situation with you. Remind the other party that you are more likely to be able to help them if you fully understand their situation. Always ask for information in the context of helping each other.
3. Offer many alternatives. Collaborations only work when you explore creative options. Signal your intent to find new and better ways to resolve the conflict by voicing many options. Make it clear that you are not attached to any one option, but simply want to find a solution that works for all. Your behavior will encourage the other person to also consider novel approaches to the conflict.

4. **Insist on a collaborative process before discussing solutions.** If the other party presses you for a commitment before engaging in open information sharing and joint problem-solving efforts, refocus the process. Explain that you are not ready to consider offers or close a negotiation until you have had a chance to collaborate with the other party in exploring the problem more carefully. Make it clear that you have faith in collaborative conflict resolution and believe that a collaborative approach will benefit both parties.
5. **Refuse to interact when emotions are high.** Collaborations require an open, cooperative, friendly environment. Anger, frustration, suspicion, and other strong emotions disrupt or prevent collaboration. Recognize that heated approaches to conflict lead to hasty solutions or escalations, not cooperative problem solving. When conflict escalates, ask for time for the parties to cool off. State your desire to sit down on the same side of the table and try to work cooperatively on the problem and wait for the other person's emotions to settle. In most cases, your emotional leadership will bring the other person around and collaboration will become possible. Remember, it takes patience to manage emotions!
6. **Take a creative problem-solving approach.** When you both agree to collaborate, remember that you need to work together to better understand the problem and generate creative alternatives. Only when you have some real insights into the problem and you have generated better alternatives should you switch gears and worry about exactly which solution to adopt.

Start the collaborative process by exploring the problem together. A suggested format for creating a collaborative environment is presented below.

**STEP 1: Explore the problem.** Exactly what is the problem from each of your perspectives? Have either of you overlooked aspects of the problem, exaggerated the problem, or confused one problem for another? When you both commit to discussing and thinking about the problem itself, you often find new and better ways to look at it.

**STEP 2: Create lots of options.** After exploring the problem, you must now explore possible resolutions of the problem. Since you are in conflict, you will have competing views of how to resolve the problem. Disagreement tends to cement these views, blinding you to alternatives. But are there other ways of thinking about the problem or the solution that might lead to noncompetitive ways to solve it? Can you think of three more viable alternatives? How about six, or ten? When you apply your creativity to the solution, you can often come up with new options that give both parties better outcomes and are also better for the relationship between them.

**STEP 3: Agree to implement the best option.** Collaboration ends when both parties feel pleasantly surprised at the way in which they have discovered an "out" or a better approach that ends their conflict. When everyone agrees on a new and better approach, then you are ready to resolve the conflict for the benefit of all.

We hope this information will help you create positive and satisfying outcomes. Through developing our range of conflict-handling skills, we can approach each situation with the awareness and techniques that will lead to the desired resolution.

# Advanced Conflict Topics

## Coaching Tips to Improve Key Conflict Resolution Skill Areas



### **Creativity:**

- Take a creative approach to conflicts
- Develop lots of alternatives before making any decision
- Look for innovative solutions to problems
- Probe to find out what the underlying issues and constraints are so that you can work with them

### **Communication Skills:**

- Communicate with other people during a conflict
- Draw people out to find out what's really bothering them
- Know what to do and say in tense social situations
- *Listen*

### **Emotional Detachment:**

- Keep a clear head when others are excited, angry, or upset
- Do not let your emotions get the better of you in conflicts
- Don't lose your temper when dealing with others
- Be an active thinker, especially when involved in problems or conflicts

### **Extroversion:**

- Be comfortable and confident when interacting with other people
- Enjoy interacting with others
- Do not be afraid to express yourself in front of others
- Take a genuine interest in other people's situations

## **Peace-Making Skills:**

- Reduce the level of conflict between people
- Reach out to defuse anger by apologizing and showing concern
- Cool people off when they get angry
- Recognize the other person's position and explain your position to them

## **Independence:**

- Be assertive and self-assured in conflict situations
- Don't worry too much about what others think of you
- Take a leadership role
- Do not be persuaded by others' ideas unless they truly make sense

## **Planning:**

- Focus on objectives and how to achieve them rather than get caught up in the short-term aspects of conflicts
- Think and talk about the ultimate objectives of each party
- Take the time to approach conflicts thoughtfully
- Spend time planning your approach

## **Knowledge:**

- Become knowledgeable about conflict-handling styles and methods
- Be aware of your own style tendencies and study the other party's style and approach
- Analyze a situation to identify the optimal style and approach

## Improving Motivation and Morale by Reducing the Use of Compete and Increasing the Use of Collaboration

The level of conflict between employees and their managers or the organization as a whole is not very important to motivation. Motivation can be high when conflict is high, and it can also be high when conflict is low. You do not need to eliminate all conflict in order to motivate your people. That is not a realistic goal, anyway, because there are often conflicting needs or points of view in any dynamic workplace. In fact, conflict is often a healthy thing.

How conflict is handled does affect motivation to a significant extent. Specifically, constructive, considerate approaches to conflict generally boost employee job motivation levels, while other approaches tend to hurt motivation levels.

You can boost motivation levels by encouraging the use of collaboration and compromise in your workplace. With more frequent use of these styles, you will see a gradual increase in job motivation. When you encourage your employees to use these styles, increased job motivation should be even more pronounced.

When managers recognize that employee motivation is sometimes influenced by the way a conflict is being handled (style), they will start looking at a conflict as an opportunity to build employee motivation.

Here is how conflict-handling style generally affects motivation:

Style	Impact on Job Motivation
Compete	Negative
Accommodate	Negative to Neutral
Avoid	Negative to Neutral
Compromise	Neutral to Positive
Collaborate	Positive

Managers who want to increase employee motivation should focus primarily on reducing the use of the Compete style and increasing the use of the Collaborate style.

## Explaining the Relationship between Conflict Style and Motivation

Employee motivation is affected by the way a person deals with a particular conflict because the styles—Compete, Accommodate, Avoid, Compromise, or Collaborate—helps determine the amount of structure and consideration in the employee's job environment. Both structure and consideration are powerful drivers of motivation levels.

**Structure** is the rational context for the work. It is provided when we define the task, the goals, and the feedback. It is "high" structure when employees know what to do, how they are doing, and why their work is important. Managers who simply delegate broad or vague responsibilities fail to provide enough work structure. When employees and managers have conflicts, taking a collaborative approach will lead to higher structure, which thereby leads to more effective performance. Avoiding the conflict or taking a competitive or adversarial approach will not help employees clearly understand what is expected of them.

**Consideration** is the emotional context for the work. It is provided by appropriate interpersonal relations, empathetic supervision, and employee control over outcomes. It is high when employees feel good about what they need to do and are optimistic about their ability to perform meaningful work well. Managers who ignore the personal side of their relationships with employees, or who are unsupportive, negative, abusive, or rude, fail to show that they care about their employees. When employees and managers have conflicts, a collaborative approach leads to higher consideration and thereby supports the employee's emotional frame effectively. Other conflict-handling styles have a neutral or even negative impact on consideration.

## Profiting from the Relationship between Conflict Style and Motivation

Manager-employee interactions need to be modeled on the Collaborate conflict-handling style in order to maximize the amount of structure and consideration employees receive directly from their managers. That, in turn, boosts employee job motivation, which leads to significantly better individual and organizational performances.

Employees can also provide a significant amount of structure and consideration for each other by shifting more toward the Collaborate conflict-handling style. Busy managers can shift some of the burden of providing motivational management to their employees by encouraging them to use the Collaborate style.

When managers model Collaborate conflict-handling behavior in their interactions with employees, they help employees learn to use styles that involve collaboration. ***Conflict-handling styles can be taught by example!***

# Managing Conflict in Negotiations Involving Anger

Let's take a look at what is involved in effectively managing conflict in negotiations involving anger.

1. **Get the RED out.** RED stands for the rules, expectations, and demands that we often bring to a negotiation. Some are obvious and appropriate, such as the right to expect that the other party will not resort to physical intimidation or violence. However, other REDs might be unreasonable. For example, a person might enter a salary negotiation with the RED that he or she should get as big a raise as a friend did, even though the friend works at another company. The boss, who does not share this perspective, might violate this RED without realizing it.

People often “frame” a negotiation with REDs that the other party does not know about or expect. That means that the other party is likely to violate these REDs, and people often get angry when their REDs are violated.

## So, how do you get the RED out?

- First, be aware of your own REDs before you begin negotiating. Try making a list of them.
  - Next, ask yourself whether you should eliminate any because they are irrational and won't help in the negotiation.
  - Then, make sure that the remaining REDs are clear to the other party.
  - Finally, analyze the other party's REDs. Ask questions and find out how the other party expects you to behave in the negotiation.
2. Resolve anger outside of the negotiation. Your negotiation should always focus on the *appropriate issues*, and anger is not an appropriate issue for a negotiation. When people get angry, their anger needs to be resolved. However, this is a different process from resolving a conflict of interest through negotiation. You can't resolve anger through negotiation. You need to use different strategies to resolve anger issues. Deal with the anger and then go back to negotiating, or keep an anger-defusing strategy going on the side. Don't mix the two goals—dealing with anger and negotiating don't mix.

How do you resolve anger? By reaching a point of catharsis. Catharsis is the emotional relief and balanced good humor you feel when you “get over” your anger. To reach catharsis, you can either

- 1) Express your anger, or
- 2) Allow yourself a cooling-off period.

These alternatives are referred to as cathartic behaviors. Burying the anger is not effective in the long term because the anger often resurfaces worse than before. When you release the anger, you get rid of it for good.

Now comes the complex part. Some cathartic behaviors are more productive than others. Venting behaviors are particularly a problem. Expressions of anger such as shouting at others, cursing, and complaining to a friend might seem to be valid forms of emotional release, but they tend to rehearse the anger, actually increasing it rather than releasing it.

Venting often provokes anger in others, which can set off a cycle of anger between two parties. These cycles or catharsis traps do not get anyone anywhere but, instead, tend to increase tempers.

This does not mean that we should not vent our anger. Venting can be helpful to a degree, and for many people it's a natural response to conflict. However, we should be aware that there are more productive ways of expressing anger, and venting should be done apart from the others.

What if the other party is the angry one?

Take precautionary measures: Always go into a negotiation prepared to deal with the other party's anger. Mentally separate managing anger from the negotiation itself. Try to find out beforehand how the other party behaves when angry, or simply be on the lookout for it during the negotiation. If the other party becomes angry, help them use this behavior productively.

### Guidelines for Productively Expressing Anger

- Direct the anger at the true source.
- Make sure the anger is appropriate, not excessive or unfair.
- Gain the other party's acceptance. Your expression of anger won't anger them if they agree that your anger is *justified*.