

Tool 37: Conflict Styles

Aim of the tool

Generate insight on how different conflict-handling styles affect interpersonal and group dynamics and empower people to select the appropriate conflict-handling style for any situation.

When to use it?

The co-creation stage. At this stage, this tool helps people to engage and collaborate effectively.

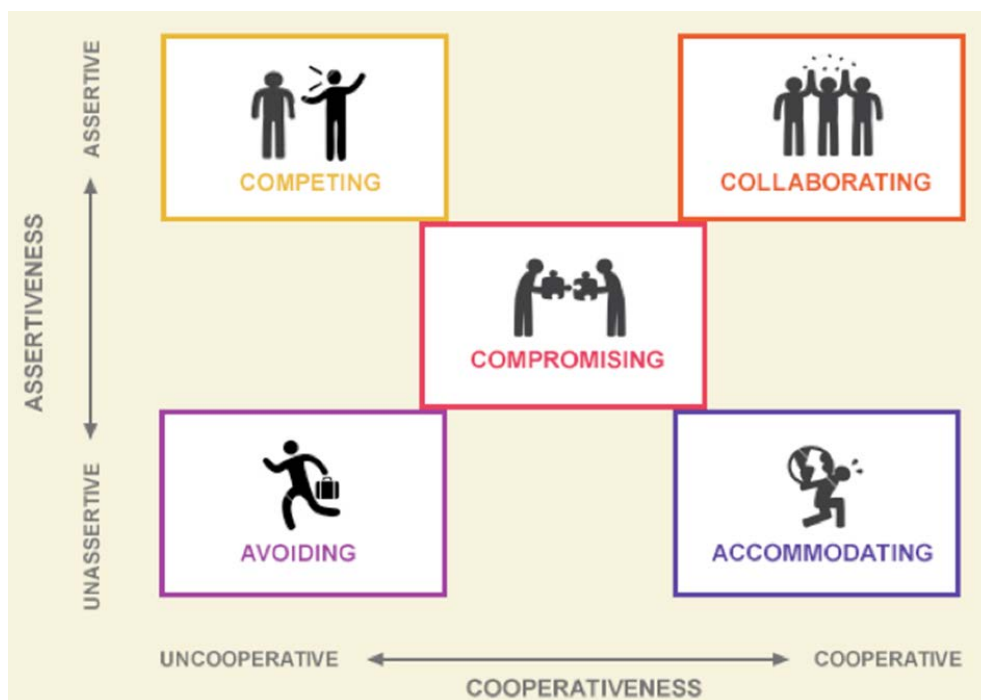
What is Conflict Styles?

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument assesses an individual's behaviour in conflict situations—that is, situations in which, two people's interests appear to be incompatible.

In conflict situations, we can describe a person's behaviour along two basic dimensions: (1) assertiveness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns, and (2) cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

These two dimensions of behaviour can be used to define five modes of dealing with conflict. They also provide detailed information on how to use these different conflict-handling styles effectively.

These five conflict-handling modes are shown below:



Source: CPP

Competing

You try to satisfy your own concerns at the other person's expense.

Collaborating

You try to find a win-win situation that completely satisfies both people's concerns.

Compromising

You try to find an acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies both people's concerns.

Avoiding

You sidestep the conflict without trying to satisfy either person's concerns.

Accommodating

You attempt to satisfy the other person's concerns at the expense of your own.

Why use this tool?

Although we all use different styles at different moments, people tend to feel more comfortable using one or two of the five conflict styles. This is influenced by a combination of personality, nature, upbringing, culture and work environment, among others. Strong teams tend to have a diversity of conflict styles to cope with challenges.

The Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument provides a test of 30 statement pairs, for a group to get insight into different ways in which people respond to conflict.

The added value of using this tool to facilitate multi-stakeholder processes is that once stakeholders are aware of their own conflict style, and have learned about other styles, they can make a conscious choice about which conflict style is most effective and appropriate in the given situation.

The results of this analysis can act as stepping stones for a facilitator to safely open up the discussion about conflict, reveal emerging patterns, and question the current displayed conflict behaviour.

Learn more

CPP: Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI™) www.cpp.com/products/tki/index.aspx. This test can be purchased at this website. You may find other pen-an-paper versions elsewhere on line, but this is the official one which gives you a Profile and an Interpretative Report.

A 3-minute introduction to TKI: [Four tips for managing conflict](#)

Thomas, K.W. & Kilmann, R, H. (2008). Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. Profile and interpretive report ([sample](#)).