



Conflict Management Inventory[©]

Personal Profile Report for
Joanne Sample

12 April 2013



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Why does conflict arise?	3
Managing conflict	3
The Dual Concern model of conflict resolution	4
Conflict management styles	4
Competing	5
Complying	5
Avoiding	5
Negotiating	5
Compromising - the 'middle ground'	6
Conflict Management Inventory [®] – interpreting your results	7
Your Conflict Management Profile	8



Introduction

At some point in the workplace, people will encounter disagreement and conflict. Disagreements and conflicts are part of any dynamic business organisation – a reality of working life. Research conducted in 2008 in Europe, including the UK, and the Americas showed that 85% of people will have to deal with some form of conflict in their working lives. The fact that conflict exists, however, is not necessarily a bad thing. As long as it is resolved effectively, it can lead to personal and professional growth, and can often make the difference between positive and negative outcomes.

If conflict is not handled effectively, the results can be damaging. Conflicting goals can quickly turn into personal dislike. Teamwork can break down. Talent may be wasted as people disengage from their work. In these situations it's easy to end up in a downward spiral of negativity, demotivation, and recrimination.

However, by resolving conflict successfully, you can solve many of the problems that the conflict itself has surfaced, as well as delivering benefits that might not, at first, be expected, for example:

- **increased shared understanding** – the discussion involved in resolving the conflict can increase peoples' awareness of the situation, giving them an insight into how they can achieve their own goals without undermining those of others
- **increased group cohesion** – when conflict is resolved effectively, team members can develop stronger mutual trust and respect, and a renewed faith in their ability to work together

Hence, gaining a better understanding of our typical response in situations involving conflict or disagreement, and developing personal strategies for dealing with conflict effectively, are important elements of self-awareness and self-management that contribute to our personal success.

And, it's helpful not only to understand, better, your own conflict style, but to appreciate the style that others around you are using.

Why does conflict arise?

Conflict can arise for a variety of reasons. Asking people what the main causes of conflict are at work, typically elicits a wide range of responses, for example:

- Personality clashes
- Warring egos or dysfunctions
- Heavy workloads and inadequate resources
- Poor leadership
- Lack of openness and honesty and other values
- Differing goals, priorities, responsibilities, or expectations
- Differing opinions, ideas, or interpretations

These responses are not surprising given the multitude of personalities present in any workplace, and the range of internal and external pressures that typify today's work environment. Conflict and disagreement arises because people have different experiences, skills, backgrounds and perspectives. Also, they often surface because people care and want to do their jobs well.

Managing conflict

The implication of the phrase "*conflict management*" is that there are different ways of handling conflict. Clearly, conflict often needs to be resolved. Other times it should be encouraged; for instance, it should be encouraged when discussion and debate can generate creative or innovative approaches to an issue or when taking a decision. Conflict is beneficial when the focus is on finding the best solution. It becomes destructive when the focus is on personal tensions, personalities, or egos – simply winning at all costs.

Research shows that highly effective people have a high level of self-awareness about their own conflict management style. Your goal should be to avoid win/lose situations and to ensure productive and effective handling of conflict. Handling conflict incorrectly can result in damaged relationships and inhibits the expression of valuable differences in perspectives. On the other hand, effectively working through conflict can result in stronger working relationships and encourage creative solutions.



The Dual Concern model of conflict resolution

It was the renowned psychologist Carl Gustav Jung who, back in the 1920's, first described a person's behaviour along two basic dimensions or continuums, known as **assertiveness** and **responsiveness** to others.

Various psychologists and researchers working in the field of conflict resolution developed Jung's concept over time. In 1993, two eminent American psychologists, Dean G Pruitt and Peter J Carnevale, first published their Dual Concern model of conflict resolution which is still recognised and used widely today for describing conflict management styles.

The Dual Concern model is a conceptual perspective that assumes individuals' preferred method of dealing with conflict is based on two underlying dimensions analogous to Jung's original theory:

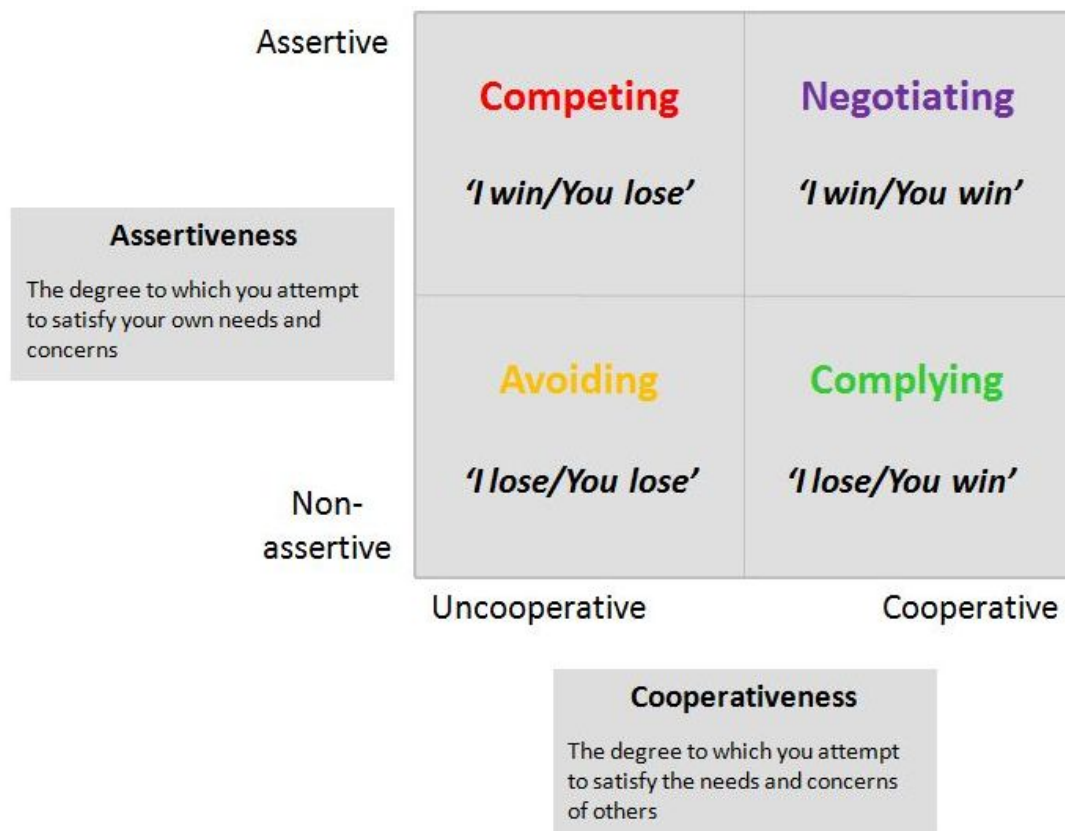
- a concern for self – **assertiveness** – the extent to which an individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns
- a concern for others – **cooperativeness** or **empathy** – the extent to which an individual attempts to satisfy the concerns of others

According to the model, individuals balance their concern for satisfying their personal needs and interests with their concern for satisfying the needs and interests of others in different ways. The intersection point between the assertiveness and cooperativeness dimensions lead individuals towards exhibiting different styles of handling and resolving conflict.

Conflict management styles

The two basic dimensions of behaviour – **assertiveness** and **cooperativeness** – can be used to define four specific methods of dealing with conflict, defined here as **competing**, **avoiding**, **negotiating**, and **complying**.

Research on conflict management styles has found that each of us tends to use one or two of the above four styles more than the others. No one style is better than the other for all occasions. Some particular styles, however, are less suited to conflict management or resolution (e.g. an **avoiding** style or a **competing** style), and a **negotiating** style is generally considered the best way to increase the likelihood that the interests of all participants will be considered and that a win/win outcome will be achieved.





The four conflict management styles are described below. The point is not to label or categorise an individual in terms of their conflict management style, but rather to give them a framework in which to assess their responses and options.

Competing

Competing is a power-oriented mode in which an individual maximises assertiveness and minimises cooperativeness or empathy. Competitive types enjoy negotiation, seek to dominate and control the interaction, and are not afraid to take unpopular decisions or to make their views known. When competing, an individual pursues his or her own concerns at the other person's expense, using whatever power seems appropriate to win his or her position. They pay less attention to the relationship underlying the dispute since they are focused on winning. In some situations, this can lead other people to agree with them (*'yes people'*) or to avoid expressing their true opinions (*'anything for a quiet life'*). Competing might mean standing up for your rights, defending a position you believe is correct, or simply trying to win. This style is appropriate when quick decisions need to be made or unpopular action taken.

Keywords: *'This looks like a win-lose situation, and I want to win.'*

Complying

Complying is the opposite of competing and is a style that maximizes empathy and minimizes assertiveness. Complying types derive satisfaction from meeting the needs of others, are perceptive and intuitive about emotional states, detect subtle verbal and nonverbal cues, and tend to have good relationship building skills. There is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode; complying types tend to deflect or back down in the face of conflict out of concern for the relationship. This can lead them to be vulnerable to competitive types in conflict situations. Complying might also take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's instruction when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view. This can raise the risk of their opinions and concerns not being heard. It is possible that some people may lose respect for overly-complying types and see them as a *'doormat'* to be walked all over. However, the complying style is useful in situations where the issue is insignificant to you but important to others, or when continued disagreement could, potentially, damage you or your team.

Keywords: *'Being agreeable may be more important than winning.'*

Avoiding

Avoiding is both low in assertiveness and low in empathy. When avoiding, an individual does not immediately pursue either his or her own concerns or those of the other person – rather he or she does not address the conflict. Avoiding types tend to dislike disagreement and may go out of their way to avoid it all together. On the other hand, avoiding types can be adept at sidestepping pointless conflict, are able to exercise tact and diplomacy in high-conflict situations, and can increase their own leverage in negotiations by waiting for others to make the first concession. At the same time, however, they may *'leave money on the table'* and miss opportunities for mutual gain that conflict can present, neglect underlying relationships, and allow problems to fester by ignoring them. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing dealing with an issue until a better time or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. The perceived lack of confrontation of issues on the part of avoiding types can lead to frustration amongst people around them. In some situations this might mean that decisions on important issues may be made by default. Nevertheless, this style can be useful when other people can solve the conflict more effectively than you, when issues are beyond your remit, or when people will benefit from a cooling-off period.

Keywords: *'I don't want to give in, but I don't want to talk about it either.'*

Negotiating

Negotiating is both assertive and cooperative – the opposite of avoiding. This style adopts a consensus or collaborative approach to conflict; you are clear about your opinions and are willing to listen to other people in order to broker agreement. Negotiating types are concerned about the underlying relationship and are sensitive to the other person's needs while simultaneously are committed to having their own needs met. They often see conflict as a creative opportunity and do not mind investing the time to dig deep and find a win-win solution. This involves exploring the issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative that meets both sets of concerns. Negotiating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insight, with the goal of resolving some condition that would otherwise have then competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem. This style promotes harmony and commitment when people have different needs. However, it can

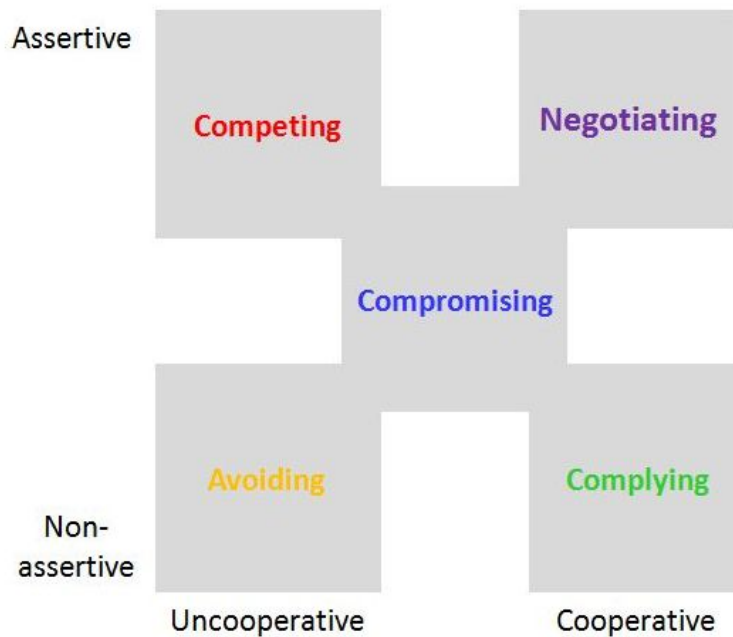


take time and effort and can be difficult to achieve when other people do not adopt a similar style.

Win-win is the ideal solution to any problem, and this approach can therefore be seen as a great goal, allowing both you and others involved to meet your needs. However, there are drawbacks. Like all teamwork, negotiation relies upon trust and communication. Moving to negotiation without this foundation will be very difficult. A second disadvantage is that negotiation takes longer. Those who rely on this approach may find that even small decisions can take a long time, although in the long term working with someone that you trust becomes quicker and more efficient.

Keywords: *'Let's find a way to satisfy both our goals.'*

Compromising - the 'middle ground'



Compromising is moderately assertive and moderately cooperative. Compromising is all about trying to find a middle ground – engaging in some give and take; forgoing some of your concerns and committing to other person's concerns. A compromise approach will often be chosen by those who wish to avoid the emotional aspects of conflict management, aiming for a quick and equitable, if not completely satisfactory, resolution.

The compromising style can be effective in situations where issues are of moderate importance; or when both parties are equally powerful and equally committed to opposing views; or when time is a concern and a deadline is looming. The main drawback of compromise is that it produces temporary solutions, and can lead to both parties being unequally happy. Also, compromising can sometimes miss opportunities by moving too fast to split the difference, hence failing to search for trades and joint gains. And it can neglect the relational aspects of the dispute. Hence, in some situations you may be better off letting the other person get everything they want. This will delight them and strengthen your relationship.

Keywords: *'Let's meet halfway on this issue.'*



Conflict Management Inventory[®] – interpreting your results

The **Conflict Management Inventory[®]** is designed to assess an individual's behaviour in situations involving conflict and disagreement measured in terms of their preference for using a **competing, avoiding, negotiating, or complying** style.

Your **Conflict Management Inventory[®]** profile is shown on the bar chart on the next page. When you look at your results, you may probably ask yourself: *'What are the correct answers?'* In the context of conflict management behaviour, there are no right or wrong answers. Each style represents a set of useful social skills. All four styles are useful, and the effectiveness of a given conflict management style depends upon the requirements of the specific conflict situation and the skill with which you use that style.

You are capable of using all four conflict management styles: you cannot be characterised as having a single, rigid style of dealing with conflict. However, it may be possible that you use one or two styles more frequently than others, and therefore tend to rely upon those styles more heavily. The conflict behaviours you use are the result of both your personal predispositions, and the requirements of the situations in which you find yourself. Also, your social skills may lead you to rely upon some conflict management behaviours more or less than others.

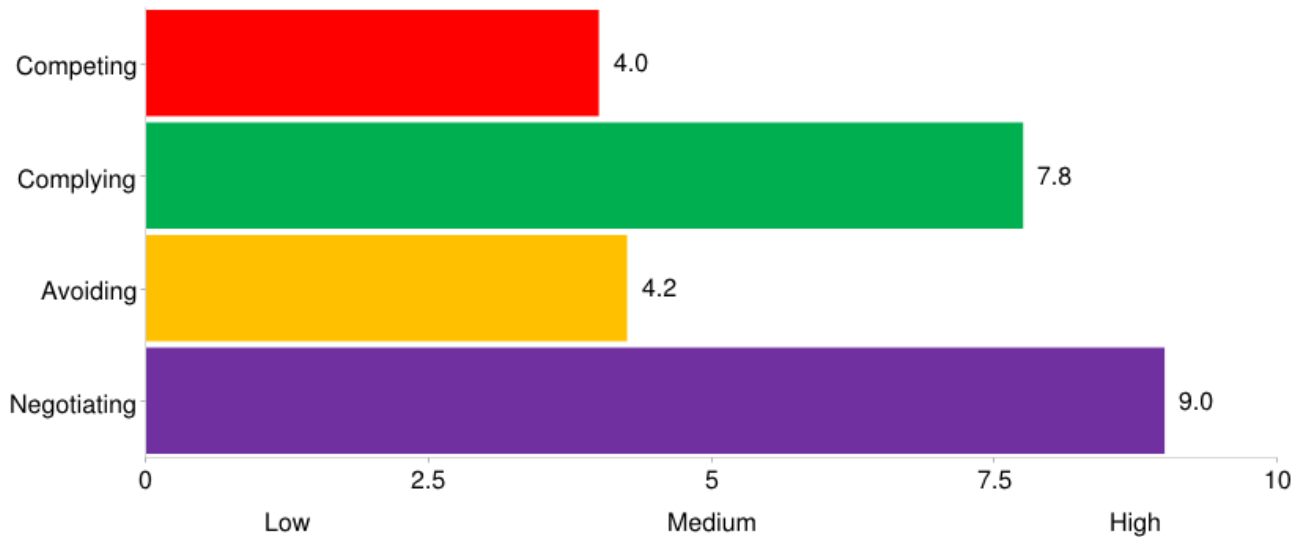
Using the same approach to conflict in every situation will not get you the best results – different circumstances warrant different approaches. It's important, therefore to consider the outcome you might want to achieve against the time needed to get you there. Does the disagreement really merit the work involved in collaboration? While a *'win-win'* approach might eventually ensure you are both happy with where you end up, some issues may be better and more quickly addressed through your offering concessions, or simply avoiding the disagreement entirely. You will almost certainly have a preferred style of handling conflict, to which you will default. The trick is to identify this, and question whether it best suits the situation you find yourself in.



Your Conflict Management Profile

Your profile of **Conflict Management Inventory[®]** scores shown below indicates the conflict-handling styles you tend to use in situations involving conflict or disagreement.

Your highest score represents your characteristic response in a conflict situation.



The number at the end of each bar of the chart represents your actual score for that particular conflict management style.

Take a few moments to review and think about your profile.

Here are some questions to facilitate your self-reflection:

1. Do you recognise your typical response to conflict as represented by your highest score? Is it consistent with your own perception of your most characteristic behaviour in a situation involving conflict or disagreement?
2. What might be the impact on others when you adopt this style?
3. In what situations do you believe it is appropriate for you to adopt this style?
4. Do you think you may have a tendency to overuse this style?
5. In what situations may other styles be more appropriate? Which ones?