

Conflict Management

**BOB J. HOLDER
GRAY MATTER PRODUCTIONS
620 ROOSEVELT DR.
EDWARDSVILLE, IL. 62025
(618) 692-0258/ Fax (618) 692-0819
E-Mail HBob372917@aol.com**

Outline

I. What Is Conflict?

- A. Definition of conflict
- B. Types, degrees of conflict
- C. Assumptions in this workshop

II. Formulating A Strategy

- A. Your Attitudes and Assumptions About Conflict
- B. What do you want?
- C. Key organizational influencers
- D. Key interpersonal influencers
- E. Planning a strategy

III. Skills

- A. Your conflict style preferences
- B. Five conflict styles and when to use them
- C. Your "Mental Mindset"

- D. Techniques to reduce defensiveness and resolve conflicts
- E. Four part formula

IV. Practice

V. Wrap-up

I. What Is Conflict?

Conflict Styles

Competing. Commonly called the win/lose style, it is appropriate when quick action is required, when unpopular courses of action must be taken, when there is competition for scarce resources.

Compromising. This style is also called lose/lose because both parties must give up part of what they want, so that all may have some of what they want.

It is appropriate when there is time pressure, when it isn't possible for all parties to get all their needs met.

Accommodating. Called the lose/win conflict style, it is appropriate when the issues are not as important to you as they may be to others, when it is more important to harmony than to win the argument.

Avoiding. This lose/lose style doesn't address the conflict, and is appropriate as a temporary measure when tempers are hot, or when you need time to decide on a course of action. It may be an appropriate permanent measure when the issues are not important.

Collaborating. This win/win conflict style allows all parties to get all of their needs met. It is preserve appropriate when the issues are not important.

A Word About Conflict.

Teams benefit from conflict when they are able to consider different viewpoints and ideas. Teams suffer, not from conflict, but from their inability to deal with it effectively.

We each have conditioned responses to conflict, which we learned in childhood. We may be aggressive and fight our "opponents", or avoid conflict by either turning away from it, or by letting the other person get what they want. Sometimes these responses are appropriate. However,

they can also intensify or suppress the conflict. Suppressed conflict usually re-appears as "another issue" at a later time.

Assumptions In This Workshop

Conflict is inevitable.

Conflict is not inherently bad or good.

Conflict can be destructive.

There is no single right way to handle conflict.

Conflict management is a skill which can be learned, practiced and improved .

II. Formulating A Strategy

Assess Your Attitude and Assumptions About Conflict

Finish these sentences, giving your first impression. Don't spend too much time thinking!

Conflict is

When someone disagrees with me about something important, I usually.....

I am most apt to "give in" to the other person when.....

I resent.....

My greatest weakness in handling conflict is.....

When I think of negotiation, I.....

My greatest strength in handling conflict is.....

I am most apt to confront people in situations such as.....

When I confront someone, I.....

I am most apt to avoid conflicts in situations such as.....

What Do You Really Want?

What is your objective in this conflict?

What do you want to happen?

What are you willing to settle for, if necessary?

What are your "non-negotiables" - what are you unwilling to have happen?

Strategy Planner

Of the 4 basic issues, what is the basic issue in this conflict?

In one sentence, what specifically is the conflict here?

Which organizational influencers are operating for or against your position?

Which individual influencers are operating for or against your position?

What conflict style are you using or would you like to use?

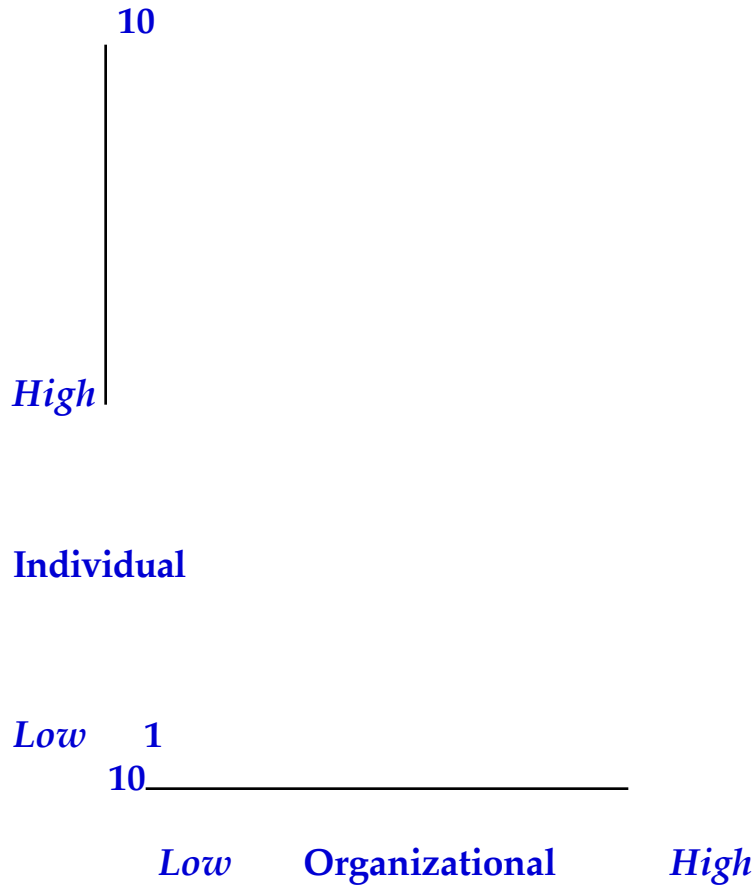
Which conflict style would be appropriate and why?

What conflict style is the other person using or do you expect them to use?

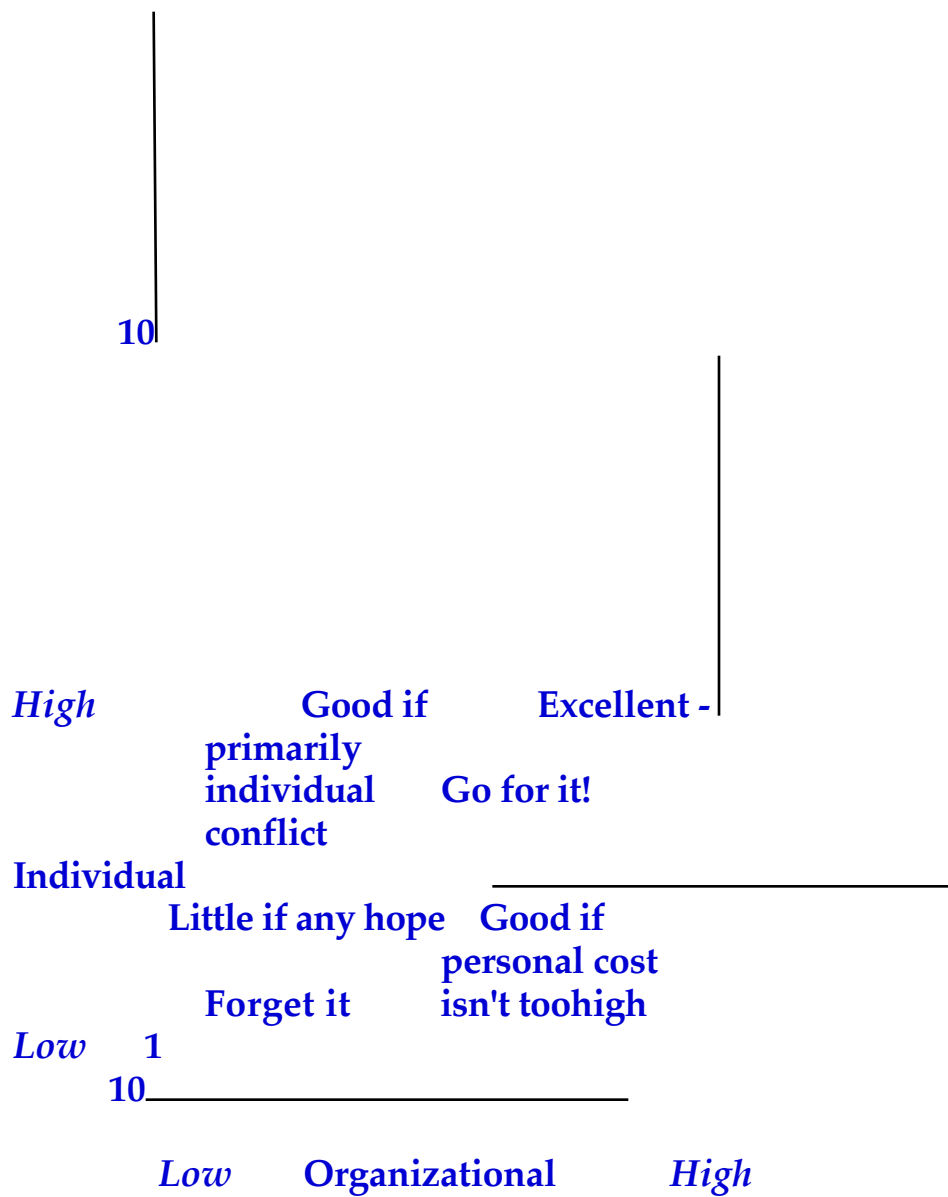
What are your objectives?

What, in your opinion, are the other person's objectives?

Now rate your rate your potential success factors - the likelihood of your getting what you want in this conflict - on the organizational scale and on the individual scale.



Draw a horizontal line from your individual plotting point, and a vertical line from your organizational plotting point, until the two intersect. Transfer your intersection point to the graph below.



III. Skills Conflict Styles

Your Conflict Styles

Competing

High

Collaborating

**Aggressive/
Self-Oriented**

Compromising

High **Avoiding** **Cooperative** **Accommodating**
Low

Competing. Commonly called the win/lose style, it is appropriate when quick action is required, when unpopular courses of action must be taken, when there is competition for scarce resources.

Accommodating. Called the lose/win conflict style, it is appropriate when the issues are not as important to you as they may be to others, when it is more important to harmony than to win the argument.

Compromising. This style is also called lose/lose because both parties must give up part of what they want, so that all may have some of what they want. It is appropriate when there is time pressure, when it isn't possible for all parties to get all their needs met.

Collaborating. This win/win conflict style allows all parties to get all of their needs met. It is preserve often time-consuming and is not appropriate when the issues are not important.

Mental Mindset

Research continues to confirm what many people knew all along - your attitude affects the outcome of many conflicts.

The Aiki method of conflict management is based on principles of the Japanese martial art Aikido. In the book *The Magic of Conflict*, Tom Crum discusses the quality of "centeredness" and "ki" energy fields.

Centered means being balanced - physically or emotionally. Great athletes, artists and professionals in all fields are mentally centered, often without trying or thinking about it. Being centered causes us to move beyond our personal feelings and struggles, and our need for outside approval becomes less important.

Being centered -

- is a psychological state

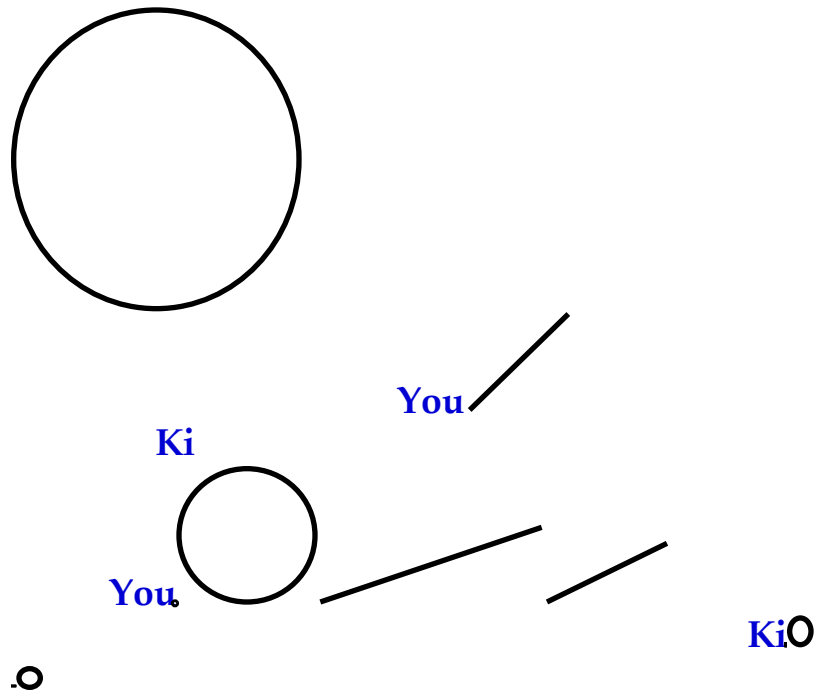
- allows you to be more authentic, sensitive and open

- produces emotional and physical stability

- has a positive effect on relationships

- is strengthened through practice

Ki is the Japanese term for the mental energy field which connects you to all things.



Typical Non-conflict

Typical Conflict

Under normal circumstances your ki is extended to others. During conflicts, however, most people "pull their ki". They connect less with other people. They communicate less and they listen less, at a time when they actually need to communicate more. This is an effort to "protect" themselves. The psychological part of this response is called "defense" or a defensive response.

Techniques for Effective Conflict Management

1. Choose the time and place carefully. Time pressure and the degree of fatigue may cause you or the other person to be more irritable, to be less receptive to the other, or to push for a resolution. When choosing a place, remember that a less formal

setting, such as a conference room or restaurant, usually helps people be more open.

2. Don't act until you have calmed down, if you are emotionally distraught or upset.

3. Pay attention to nonverbals. When you use open gestures such as "palms open, forearms out" you, and/or the other person, send a message of openness. and Defensive gestures such as hands on mouth and arms in front of the body send a message of defensiveness. "Power" gestures such as triangles made with any part of the body send a message of power and dominance, while downcast eyes and other gestures of submission send messages of giving in to the other person.

4. Agree on something. Identify the basic goals you share. Do you agree on facts but not method? Do you agree on values but not the goals?

5. Restate the issue, as you see it, and ask for feedback.

6. Use "I"language. State your case in terms of your own feelings and perceptions. Avoid "you" at the beginning of sentences.

7. Listen actively by paraphrasing what the other person says. If you encounter resistance state, in neutral language, you believe is happening. Then be quiet.

8. Examine your part in it. Be willing to consider how something you did may have contributed to the conflict.

9. Be specific. Avoid generalizations such as "you always do", or "I never get", and stick to the issue at hand.

10. Brainstorm possible solutions. List all possible options without evaluation. Once these are listed, then eliminate the unworkable ones. Choose the best solution from the remainder. You might be able to combine some of them.

11. Clarify your agreement, in writing. Even if it is an informal, handwritten note, this step will eliminate after-the-fact misunderstandings over what has been agreed to.

A Centering Exercise

Sit in a comfortable position in which your back can be held straight without straining.

Close your eyes and take some long, deep breaths through your nostrils. With each long, slow exhalation, imagine you see the tension flowing out of your body from head to toe. Do this for a few minutes until you feel relaxed and comfortable.

Let your breathing settle down naturally to its own pace.

Imagine that you have a beam of light extending from your center through the top of your head. Picture your center as being about the size of a basketball.

Let the light beam emanating from your center swing from side to side, taking your head and upper body with it as one unit. Let your swaying be easy and relaxed.

After swaying back and forth for ten to fifteen seconds to establish a natural rhythm, let the swing and your center become half as large as before. Continue swaying with the same rhythm, but decrease the swing proportionally to the size of your "new" center. Continue in this process, every few seconds decreasing the size of the swing and of your center by half.

Soon your body will cease to move physically and it may be difficult to picture the actual size of your center. Simply focus your attention on the vibration of your center diminishing in size to infinity. It is the vibratory quality of your swinging "pendulum of light" following a single, infinitely decreasing point that becomes the focus of your attention. It allows for a comfortable ride inward to the source of your being.

When extraneous thoughts come into the mind, do not fight or struggle against them. Instead, easily come back to that vibratory quality of the center becoming smaller by half...half...and half again, on to infinity. The vibratory quality may be perceived differently by each individual and may change within an individual periodically throughout the exercise. It may be perceived as a feeling, a sound or an image. Allow it to take whatever form it chooses.

Continue this process for fifteen to twenty minutes. When ending the exercise, bring your awareness back to the breath and breathe deeply into each and every area of the body. Take a few moments to do this, as it allows you to come out of the process easily and bring your awareness back into your body and the immediate surroundings.

Body Language

Openness:

Closed:

Power/Dominance:

Submission:

Suggestions for more Effective Handling of Conflict in Team Situations

1. Ventilate feelings before attempting to resolve the conflict.

2. Each person should share what they want with the team.
3. Determine the "common ground" - something everyone agrees with, such as "we all want to find a better way to do this.....we just need to decide which way would be the best".
4. Consider what might influence this decision - policies, power, importance of the issue, information, time pressure, audience, importance of harmony.
5. Listen more than you talk, and ask questions.
6. Monitor nonverbals.
7. Brainstorm possible solutions.
9. Choose the best solution from the alternatives.
10. Clarify the agreement, in writing if possible.

Brainstorming Technique

Guidelines:

There is to be no critical judgment - verbal or non-verbal.

Wildness of ideas counts - any idea is acceptable, no matter how crazy.

Build on the ideas of others.

Quantity of ideas is the goal.

Use a warm-up exercise to get started.

Wait through "quiet times."

No more than 15 minutes without a break.

Steps:

Define the problem or desired outcome - use simple language.

Generate ideas using the above guidelines.

Only after all possible ideas have been generated - eliminate unworkable ones.

Consider all possibilities - no matter how unusual, strange, or crazy.

The Four Part Formula For Resolving Conflict

1. State your feeling and thoughts. Use "I"; avoid "you" especially at the beginnings of sentences. Example: I am feeling pretty frustrated right now".
2. Empathize with the other. Let him/her know you are aware of his needs and feelings. Put yourself in his place. Example: "I understand how frustrated you are, and I know you want to get this resolved as soon as possible."
3. State the issue. Example: It appears to me that we have a difference of opinion over which method will best get the result we both want."
4. Ask for their support and jointly generated a list of possible alternatives. Don't evaluate the possibilities until several have been suggested. Then jointly consider them, being careful not to argue too strongly. The more you appear to dominate the discussion and "knock down" the other person's suggestions, the more likely they will become defensive and shut down open communication. Example: "Instead of just looking at two solutions, let's take a step back and look at lots of possible alternatives. Then we can see which one might work for both of us."