



# Hemisphere Consulting

PEOPLE STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS

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## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

### Robin Robbins

Conflict is part of everyday life- something that we face everyday. It is as common as laughter, anger, love, hope, work, play and is probably no less important than any of these. In simple terms conflict is the condition in which people's concerns- the things they care about – appear to be incompatible.

Surveys show that managers spend about a quarter of their time handling conflicts. They have to negotiate over resources, handle disagreements over policies, deal with complaints, enforce rules and manage the inevitable frictions.

It is important for us to realize that we have choices before us as to how we manage or resolve disagreements or conflicts. If you are into denial, then you can ignore the conflict and go on with life, if not, you will want to do something about it. There are a few things you can do to help resolve the problem and restore relationships. Sometimes it will take a lot of time and other times you could be resolving it in a matter of minutes. However, it takes someone doing some initiating.

If managed constructively, conflict can bring about much-needed change. However, if managed ineffectively or destructively conflict can also breed resentment, alienation and break down of trust and respect. Conflict resolution is the [process](#) of resolving disputes or differences in understanding by providing for each side's needs, and adequately addressing their interests so that they are satisfied with the outcome.

Personal awareness of our individual “conflict management modes,” including habits, attitudes, and beliefs enable us to manage, and resolve conflict constructively. Conflict resolution aims to end conflicts before they start or to resolve differences as soon as possible.

Resolution methods can include having a discussion or meeting, [conciliation](#), [mediation](#), [arbitration](#) or [litigation](#).

It may also be possible to avoid conflict without actually resolving the underlying dispute, by getting the parties to recognize that they disagree but that no further action needs to be taken at that time. In this case the parties might [agree to disagree](#).

There has been a considerable amount of research in the area of conflict management and an instrument that enables people discover the ways they handle conflict – their conflict mode and the impact on performance is The Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI).

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) is the world's best-selling instrument for understanding how different conflict-handling styles affect personal and group dynamics and for learning how to select the most appropriate style for a given situation.

Let us briefly understand some of the sources of conflict in a team scenario before we go on to understand our style for conflict resolution.

### **Most members of a team have to understand two fundamentals:**

- Having different opinions is one of the basic fundamentals of teamwork
- Team members have strong feelings and emotions

Teams cannot achieve their full potential if all that is allowed is only logic or information. It is possible to take steps to minimize disagreements or conflict and to resolve disagreements that may be brewing.

### **It is important to understand and identify the kind of Team Conflict that exists or is brewing.**

- Internal conflict
  - An individual or team member is experiencing a personal conflict that may or may not be related to the team, but which is interfering with the person's ability to perform.
- Individual conflict with another team member –
- Individual conflict with the entire team
  - One team member could be experiencing conflict with the entire team
- Conflict between several team members
  - The entire team is experiencing conflict with several other team members
- Conflict between teams
  - Some or most of the team members or the entire team is in conflict with another team

### **Some possible causes of conflict may be due to:**

- Defiant behavior
- Authority figures
- Beliefs, values or goals
- Managing Change
- Organizational climate
- Leadership styles
- Age
- Departmental pressures and stress
- Increased accountability
- Discrimination
- Conflicting rules or policies
- Personal problems
- Different life or career stages
- Ineffective or misunderstood Communication between individuals or teams

### **In resolving conflict it would be appropriate to go about the following:**

- Analyzing the conflict to understand the causes
- Setting mutual goals
- Brainstorming options
- Selecting and implementing the best options
- Reflecting and learning
- Review results later on a regular basis

**A few tips to resolve conflict would include:**

- **Understand your Conflict Resolution Style**
- It is important to acknowledge that differences exist
- Create a supportive climate
- Focus on issues – attack the problem not the individual
- Use two-way communication
- Judge timing
- Keep in mind the emotional impact the message will have on the receiver
- Be respectful
- Keep the dignity of people intact
- Control your Anger – otherwise it could lead to **Danger**

**Try to understand and determine your “Conflict Resolution Mode”**

According to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), the five Conflict Management Modes are:

- **Avoiding**
- **Competing**
- **Accommodating**
- **Compromising**
- **Collaborating**

The TKI helps you to understand your preferred "mode" of Conflict Resolution and explains these modes in detail. This enables you to safely open a discussion about conflict, to reveal patterns and look at instances when one conflict behavior is productive and when choosing another style would be more effective.

It is important for you to understand when to use each mode, as well as specific techniques on how to carry out each mode effectively, and how to reduce that mode's negative side effects.

These five styles are all successful strategies in Conflict Resolution.

The key is to be skilled in each of these styles and to know when to apply each strategy according to the situation and context of the conflict.

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