

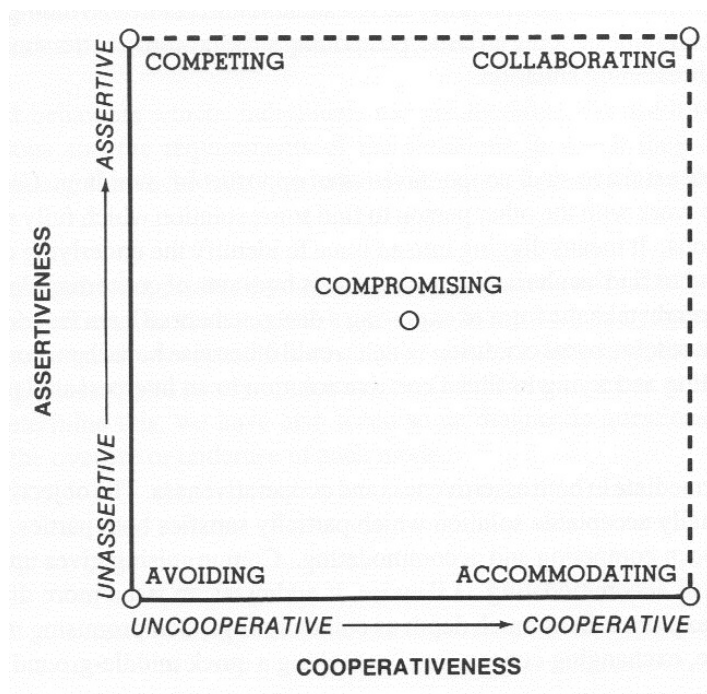
The Thomas-Kilmann conflict Mode Instrument Interpreting Your Scores

The Five Conflict handling Modes

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is designed to assess an individual's behaviour in conflict situations. "Conflict Situations" are situations in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible. In such situations we can describe a person's behaviour along two basic dimensions:

1. **Assertiveness:** The extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns.
2. **Co-operativeness:** The extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

These two basic dimensions of behaviour can be used to define five specific methods of dealing with conflicts. These five "conflict modes" are shown below:



Note: this two dimensional model of conflict handling behaviour is adapted from "Conflict and Conflict Management" by Kenneth Thomas in Volume II of The Handbook of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

	Competing (forcing)	Collaborating (problem solving)	Compromising (sharing)	Avoiding (withdrawal)	Accommodating (smoothing)
1.				A	B
2.		B	A		
3.	A				B
4.			A		B
5.		A		B	
6.	B			A	
7.			B	A	
8.	A	B			
9.	B			A	
10.	A		B		
11.		A			B
12.			B	A	
13.	B		A		
14.	B	A			
15.				B	A
16.	B				A
17.	A			B	
18.			B		A
19.		A		B	
20.		A	B		
21.		B			A
22.	B		A		
23.		A		B	
24.			B		A
25.	A				B
26.		B	A		
27.				A	B
28.	A	B			
29.			A	B	
30.		B			A

Total number of items circled in each column:

Competing Collaborating Compromising Avoiding Accommodating

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Competing is assertive and uncooperative - an individual pursues his/her own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-oriented mode, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win one's position - one's ability to argue, one's rank, and economic sanctions. Competing might mean standing up for your rights, defending a position you believe to be correct, or simply trying to win.

Accommodating is unassertive and co-operative - the opposite of competing. When accommodating an individual neglects his/her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity, of charity, obeying another person's order when preferring not to, or yielding to another's point of view.

Avoiding is unassertive and unco-operative - the individual does not immediately pursue his/her own concerns or those of the other person. He/she does not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

Collaborating is both assertive and co-operative - the opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. It means digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative which meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, concluding to resolve some condition which would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

Compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and co-operativeness. The object is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties. It falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating. Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding but doesn't explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromise might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

Interpreting Your Scores

Usually, after getting back the results of any test, people first want to know "What are the right answers?". In this case of conflict-handling behaviour, there are no universal right answers. All five modes are useful in some situations; each represents a set of useful social skills. Our conventional wisdom recognises, for example, that often "two heads are better than one" (Collaborating). But it also says "Kill your enemies with kindness (Accommodating). "Split the difference" (Compromising). "Leave well enough alone" (Avoiding). "Might makes right" (Competing). The effectiveness of a given conflict-handling mode depends upon the needs of the specific conflict situation and the skill with which the mode is used.

Each of us is capable of using all five conflict-handling modes: none of us can be characterised as having a single, rigid style of dealing with conflict. However, any given individual uses some modes better than others and therefore, tends to rely upon those modes more heavily than others, whether because of temperament or practice.

The conflict behaviours which individuals use are therefore the result of both their personal predispositions and the requirements of the situations in which they find themselves. The Thomas-Kilmann conflict Mode Instrument is designed to assess this mix of conflict-handling modes.

To help you judge how appropriate your utilisation of the five modes is for your situation, we have listed a number of uses for each mode-based upon lists generated by company directors. Your score, high or low, indicates its usefulness in your situation. However, there is the possibility that your social skills lead you to rely upon some conflict behaviours more or less than necessary. To help you determine this, we have also listed some diagnostic questions concerning warning signals for the overuse or underuse of each mode.

COMPETING

Uses:

1. When quick, decisive action is vital – e.g. emergencies
2. On important issues where unpopular course of action need implementing – e.g. cost cutting, enforcing unpopular rules, discipline.
3. On issues vital to company welfare when you know you're right.
4. To protect yourself against people who take advantage of non-competitive behaviour.

If you scored High:

1. Are you surrounded by “Yes” men? If so, perhaps it's because they have learnt it is unwise to disagree with you, or have given up trying to influence you. This closes you off from information.
2. Are your subordinates afraid to admit ignorance and uncertainties to you? In competitive climates, one must fight for influence and respect – which means acting more certain and confident than one feels. The upshot is that people are less able to ask for information and opinion – they are less able to learn.

If you scored low:

1. Do you often feel powerless in situations? It may be because you are unaware of the power you do have, unskilled in its use or uncomfortable with the idea of using it. This may hinder your effectiveness by restricting your influence.
2. Do you have trouble taking a firm stand, even when you need to? Sometimes concerns for other's feelings or anxieties about the use of power cause us to vacillate, which may mean postponing the decision and adding to the suffering and/or resentment of others.

COLLABORATING

Uses:

1. To find an integrative solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised.
2. When your objective is to learn – e.g. testing your own assumptions, understanding the views of others.
3. To merge insights from people with different perspectives on a problem.
4. To gain commitment by incorporating other's perspectives into a consensual decision.
5. To work through hard feelings which have been interfering with an interpersonal relationship.

If you scored high:

1. Do you spend time discussing issues in depth that do not seem to deserve it? Collaboration takes time and energy – perhaps the scarcest organisational resources. Trivial problems don't require optimal solutions, and not all personal differences need to be thrashed out. The overuse of collaboration and consensual decision making sometimes represents a desire to minimise the risk – by diffusing responsibility for a decision or postponing action.
2. Does your collaborative behaviour fail to elicit collaborative responses from others? The exploratory and tentative nature of some collaborative behaviour may make it easy for others to disregard collaborative overtures; or the trust and openness may be taken advantage of. You may be missing some cues which would indicate the presence of defensiveness, strong feelings, impatience, competitiveness, or conflicting interests.

If you scored low:

1. Is it hard for you to see differences as opportunities for joint gain – as opportunities to learn or solve problems? Although there are often threatening or unproductive aspects of conflict, indiscriminate pessimism can prevent you from seeing collaborative possibilities and this deprive you of the mutual gains and satisfactions which accompany successful collaboration.
2. Are subordinates uncommitted to your decisions or policies? Perhaps their own concerns are not being incorporated into those decisions or policies.

COMPROMISING

Uses:

1. When goals are moderately important, but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes.
2. When two opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals – as in labour-management bargaining.
3. To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues.
4. To arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure.
5. As a backup mode when collaboration or competition fails to be successful.

If you scored high:

1. Do you concentrate so heavily upon the practicalities and tactics of compromise that you sometimes lose sight of larger issues – principles, values, long term objectives, company welfare?
2. Does an emphasis on bargaining and trading create a cynical climate of gamesmanship? Such a climate might undermine interpersonal trust and deflect attention away from the merits of the issues discussed.

If you scored low?

1. Do you find yourself too sensitive or embarrassed to be effective in bargaining situations/?
2. Do you find it hard to make concessions? Without this safety valve, you may have trouble getting grace
3. Fully out of mutually destructive arguments, power struggles, etc.

AVOIDING

Uses:

1. When an issue is trivial, of only passing importance, or when other more important issues are pressing.
2. When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns –e.g. when you have low power or you are frustrated by something which would be very difficult to change (national policies, someone’s personality structure, etc)
3. When the potential damage of confronting a conflict outweighs the benefits of its resolution.
4. To let people cool down – to reduce tensions to a productive level and to regain perspective and composure.
5. When gathering more information outweighs the advantages of an immediate decision.
6. When others can resolve the conflict more effectively.
7. When the issue seems tangential or symptomatic off another more basic issue.

If you scored high:

1. Does your coordination suffer because people have trouble getting your inputs on issues?
2. Does it often appear that people are “walking on eggshells?” sometimes a dysfunctional amount of energy can be devoted to caution and the avoiding of issues, indicating that issues need to be faced and resolved.
3. Are decisions on important issues made by default?

If you scored low:

1. Do you find yourself hurting people’s feelings or stirring up hostilities? You may need to exercise more discretion in confronting issues or more tact in framing issues in nonthreatening ways. Tact is partially the art of avoiding potentially disruptive aspects of an issue.
2. Do you often feel harried or overwhelmed by a number of issues? You may need to devote more time to setting priorities – deciding which issues are relatively unimportant and perhaps delegating them to others.

ACCOMMODATING

Uses:

1. When you realise that you are wrong – to allow a better position to be heard, to learn from others. And to show that you are reasonable.
2. When the issue is much more important to the other person than to yourself – to satisfy the needs of others, and as a goodwill gesture to help maintain a cooperative relationship.
3. To build up social criteria for later issues which are important to you.
4. When continued competition would only damage your cause – when you are outmatched and losing.
5. When preserving harmony and avoiding disruption are especially important.
6. To aid in the managerial development of subordinates by allowing them to experiment and learn from their own mistakes.

If you scored high:

1. Do you feel that your own ideas and concerns are not getting the attention they deserve? Deferring too much to the concerns of others can deprive you of influence, respect and recognition. It also deprives the organisation of your potential contributions.
2. Is discipline lax? (Although discipline for its own sake may be of little value, there are often rules, procedure, and assignments whose implementation is crucial for you or the organisation.)

If you scored low:

1. Do you have trouble building goodwill with others? Accommodation on minor issues which are important to others are gestures of goodwill.
2. Do others often seem to regard you as unreasonable?
3. Do you have trouble admitting it when you are wrong?
4. So you recognise legitimate exceptions to rules?
5. Do you know when to give up?