Student Module 1: Team Dynamics

Team topics included in this Module:

- Effective Meetings
- Team Skills
    - Interpersonal Communication (Feedback)
    - Brainstorming
    - Conflict Resolution
    - Time Management

1. Leading an Effective Meeting

It is important for leaders to be able to facilitate effective meetings. Most people can remember what things they do not like about meetings but often have a difficult time avoiding these mistakes when they are the one leading the meeting. People spend so much time in meetings that turning meeting time into sustained results is a priority for successful organizations. Actions that make meetings successful require management before, during, and after the meeting. If you neglect any one of these meeting management opportunities, your meetings will not bear the fruit you desire from the time you invest in meeting. Take these twelve meeting management actions to guide meeting attendees to achieve expected, positive, and constructive outcomes.

Before the Meeting to Ensure Effective Meetings. Actions before the meeting establish the groundwork for accomplishing meeting results. You can do all of the needed follow-up, but without an effective meeting plan to start, your results will disappoint you.

Plan the Meeting. Effective meetings that produce results, begin with meeting planning. First, identify whether other employees are needed to help you plan the meeting. Then, decide what you hope to accomplish by holding the meeting. Establish doable goals for your meeting. The goals you set will establish the framework for an effective meeting plan. As Stephen Covey says in the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "Begin with the end in mind." Your meeting purpose will determine the meeting focus, the meeting agenda, and the meeting participants.

Make Sure You Need a Meeting. Once you've developed your meeting plan, ensure that a meeting is the appropriate vehicle for accomplishing the set goals. To schedule and hold a meeting is expensive when you account for the time of the people attending. So, make efforts to determine that a meeting is the best opportunity to solve the problem, improve the process, or make an ongoing plan. You may find that you can accomplish the meeting goals with an email discussion or by distributing and requesting information through the company newsletter. Make sure the meeting is needed and not just convenient for you – you'll get better results from attendees.

Ensure Appropriate Participation at the Meeting. If a meeting is the appropriate means to accomplish your goals, check with the participants who must attend for the meeting to succeed. The needed attendees must be available to attend the meeting. Postpone the meeting rather than holding a meeting without critical staff members. If a delegate attends in the place of a crucial decision maker, make sure the designated staff member has the authority to make decisions – or postpone the meeting.

Distribute and Review Pre-work Prior to the Meeting. How many meetings have you attended that started out with the meeting facilitator passing out a ream of handouts or projecting a Microsoft PowerPoint slide for discussion? Frustrating? You bet. The meeting becomes a group read-in, hardly productive for goal accomplishment. You can make meetings most productive and ensure results by providing necessary pre-work in advance of the actual meeting. Providing pre-work, charts, graphs, and reading material 48 hours before a meeting affects meeting success. The more preparation time you allot, the better prepared people will be for your meeting. Documentation that will help you achieve the meeting goals can include reports; data and charts such as competitive information, sales month-to-date, and production plans; Microsoft PowerPoint slides that illustrate key discussion points; and minutes, notes and follow-up from earlier or related meetings and projects. Pre-work distributed in a timely manner, with the serious expectation that attendees will read the pre-work before the meeting, helps ensure meeting success.

During the Meeting to Ensure Effective Meetings. Effective use of meeting time builds enthusiasm for the topic. It generates commitment and a feeling of accomplishment from the participants. People feel part of something bigger than their day-to-day challenges. Therefore, a well-facilitated, active meeting, that sets the stage for follow-up, will produce meeting results.

Effective Meeting Facilitation. The meeting leader sets a positive, productive tone for interaction among the meeting participants. Effective meeting facilitation starts with a review of the goals, or anticipated outcomes, and the agenda. The facilitator helps group members stay focused and productive. Meeting design and the agenda set the framework for the meeting. An effective facilitator, who keeps participants on track, ensures the accomplishment of expected, desired results from the meeting.

Use the Pre-work in the Meeting. Use or reference the pre-work and other information supplied prior to the meeting during the meeting. You reinforce the need for participants to spend the time needed upfront to review material that is integral to accomplishing the desired results. You participants will prepare prior to attending your meetings and your results will bear testimony to solid preparation and leadership.

Involve Each Participant in Actions. Every work group has various personalities that show up for meetings. You have quiet coworkers and people who try to dominate every platform. Whether facilitating or attending the meeting, you need to involve each attendee in the accomplishment of the meeting goals. This ensures that each participant is invested in the topic of the meeting and in the follow-up. You'll accomplish more results with the whole team pulling than with one dominant staff person trying to push everyone else up the hill.

Create an Effective Meeting Follow-up Plan. During the meeting, make a follow-up plan with action items. Effective plans include:

* the specific action item,
* the name of the person who committed to "owning" the accomplishment of the action item,
* the due date of the action item,
* an agreement about what constitutes completion of the action item.

Discuss real life scenarios and barriers to success that team members may experience as they try to accomplish the items that will produce the required results. Set a time for your next meeting, if needed, while participants are in attendance.

After the Meeting to Ensure Effective Meetings. Actions and planning before and during the meeting play a big role in helping you achieve expected, positive, and constructive outcomes. Your actions following the meeting are just as crucial. Follow-up at the next scheduled meeting is never enough of an investment to ensure results.

Publish Meeting Minutes. Begin by publishing your minutes and action plan within 24 hours. People will most effectively contribute to results if they get started on action items right away. They still have a fresh memory of the meeting, the discussion and the rationale for the chosen direction. They remain enthusiastic and ready to get started. A delay in the distribution of minutes will hurt your results since most people wait for the minutes to arrive before they begin to tackle their commitments.

Effective Meeting Follow-up. Respecting and observing deadlines and follow-up will help you achieve results from your meetings. The deadline was established during the meeting. Following the meeting, each person with an action item should also make a plan for their personal accomplishment of their commitment. Whether they write the steps in their planner, delegate the tasks to another staff person, or just complete the task, the individual is responsible for follow-up. So is the meeting planner. You can improve meeting results by following up with each person who has an action item mid-way between meetings. Your goal is to check progress and ensure that tasks are underway. Remember that what you ask about gets accomplished.

Accountability for Follow-up during the Next Meeting. Have you ever sat in a follow-up meeting that consisted of each participant telling the group why they were unable to accomplish their commitment? I have, and the result is deplorable. Establishing the norm or custom of accountability for results begins early in your meeting cycle. Follow-up by the facilitator mid-way between meetings helps, but the group must make failure to keep commitments unacceptable. Report on progress and outcomes at the next meeting and expect that all will have been accomplished. Alternatively, check progress at the next meeting and if there is a real roadblock to progress, determine how to proceed.

Debrief the Meeting Process for Continuous Improvement. The practice of debriefing each meeting is a powerful tool for continuous improvement. Participants take turns discussing what was effective or ineffective about the current meeting process. They also discuss the progress they feel the group is making on the topic of the meeting. Taking continuous improvement to another level, successful teams debrief their entire project as well as the process to determine how effectively they managed to create results. Future meetings reflect the evaluation. Meetings evolve as an even more effective tool for creating organization results.

Conclusion. Results are achievable and predictable from well-planned and implemented meetings. Follow these twelve recommendations to ensure that meeting attendees achieve expected, positive, and constructive outcomes from the time invested in meetings.

Developing an Agenda

One of the most important parts of planning and leading effective meetings is to develop an agenda. The agenda lays the groundwork for how the meeting will flow and provides a blueprint of what will be covered.

The Agenda
- communicates important information such as:
     1. topics for discussion
     2. presenter or discussion leader for each topic
     3. time allotment for each topic
- provides an outline for the meeting (how long to spend on which topics)
- can be used as a checklist to ensure that all information is covered
- lets participants know what will be discussed if it's distributed before the meeting. This gives them an opportunity to come to the meeting prepared for the upcoming discussions or decisions.
- provides a focus for the meeting (the objective of the meeting must be clearly stated in the agenda)

How to Create an Effective Agenda
You're responsible for planning your project meeting this month. Arrggh!! What to do? Now you understand how important an agenda is to the effectiveness of the meeting, but don't know how to create one. Breathe easy! All you have to do is follow the steps outlined below.

- Send an e-mail stating there will be a meeting, the goal of the meeting as well as the administrative details such as when and where it will be. Ask those invited to accept or decline the meeting. Make it clear that once they have accepted the meeting, they are expected to attend.
- Ask participants requesting an agenda item to contact you no less than two days before the meeting with their request and the amount of time they will need to present it.
- Once all of the agenda requests have been submitted to you, summarize them in a table format with the headings Agenda Item, Presenter and Time. It's your responsibility to ensure that each agenda item is directly related to the goals of this particular meeting. If an inappropriate request is made, suggest that person send an e-mail or memo instead or recommend that this agenda item be discussed in another meeting. Also, you must be realistic in the amount of time you allocate to each presenter. Don't cram an unrealistic number of agenda items into an hour meeting. When people accept an hour meeting, they expect to be finished in an hour. When meetings go over time, people generally tend to get uneasy. It's better to schedule 50 minutes of discussion into an hour time slot. This way you have 10 minutes to spare and if you get done a little early, people will be pleased.
- Send the agenda to all the meeting participants the day before the meeting with a reminder of the meeting goals, location, time and duration. At this time, ask the presenters if they are happy with the order in which they will be speaking and the amount of time they have been allocated.
- Of course, the most important part of creating an effective agenda is to follow it during the meeting!

Team Skills

Feedback - How to Give It and Receive It

Feedback helps you understand how you are doing in a leadership position and lets those you lead know how they are doing. While learning how to give feedback is a valuable skill, it is also important to learn how to receive feedback. Feedback also enables leaders to determine how they can change to make a process or situation better.

Feedback: Negative, Positive or Just Right? (© Copyright Gail Zack Anderson)

Some of us are really good at giving positive feedback. Others are really good at giving negative feedback. Not many seem skilled in providing both, what I call balanced feedback. Occasionally a client will tell me, "just tell it like it is. Be brutally honest." Or, "you are just being nice." This makes me wonder if my feedback is too polite, or too subtle, even though I try to give it honestly and in a balanced fashion. Why? Let's take a look at what can happen when you give feedback, either too positive or too negative.

Too little positive feedback. While working recently with a manager, I noticed that he tended to give mostly negative feedback, and very little positive. This manager stated that he had been taught that giving negative feedback would be more motivational. He also thought positive feedback seemed "too soft" and unnecessary. As he added: "Why should we praise people for just doing their jobs?"When most or all feedback is negative, people know what you don't like, but they often have to guess at what you do like or want from them. They may feel overwhelmed and discouraged by the criticism, and they may take it personally. They don't ready minds, and so are often confused about what you really want. They may lose confidence, since everything they do seems wrong. In addition, if the only time they hear from you is when you have a complaint, they may soon begin to feel defensive, or try to avoid interactions with you.

That said, negative feedback has its place. To be effective it needs to be specific and non-judgmental. Compare these two comments on a written report:

1. "I can't believe you turned in such shoddy work. Don't you know any better?"
2. "One of your conclusions was faulty and you had 3 typos on the report."

The first comment is shaming and demotivating. I feel bad, but I don't know what I should do differently. The second comment seems deliberately unemotional, so it takes the shame out of it. It also gives me specific information about what I can do to improve.

Too much positive feedback. If you are a big believer in positive feedback, or if you don't want to hurt people's feelings, you may be relying too much on positive feedback and fail to deliver the bad news. We have all heard about employees who received glowing performance reviews right up to the day they were let go for "performance issues." Obviously, there were problems that should have been addressed. If all you give is positive feedback, people can have an unrealistically high view of their worth and performance levels. Because they receive unbalanced feedback, they can have confidence above and beyond their actual performance levels.

Positive reinforcement certainly has its place, and to be effective it also needs to be specific and clear. Consider these two examples:

1. "Good job. Keep it up."
2. "Your report was clear, your conclusions were on target, and the writing was crisp and accurate."

The first comment may make me feel good, but I am not really sure what was right about my work. It might make me feel bad because you didn't even take time to notice what I did. In other words, the easy compliment seems canned and can come across as insincere. The second comment is all positive, but it tells me what you valued, and clearly shows you read my report.

Balanced feedback.

Balanced feedback provides feedback on what is being done well as well as what could be improved. The positive feedback builds confidence and reinforces the "good" behavior you want to see more of. It clarifies expectations. It feels good. The negative feedback is given factually and preferably with suggestions for improvement. Consider this example of balanced feedback: "Your report was clear, your conclusions were on target, and the writing was crisp and accurate. There were several typos, and for that I suggest more careful proofing. And one of your conclusions wasn't clear to me. Let's talk it over this afternoon and compare notes. Overall, great job!"

If you lead, coach or develop people, I suggest aiming for balanced feedback that builds confidence, shows the direction you want the performance to take, and highlights areas for improvement in a clear, non-punishing way. At the same time, note that people react differently. Some crave the honest feedback, and some crave the "feel good" aspects of positive feedback. Some remember and take to heart any criticism, and some live for it. So adjust accordingly, but always strive to be honest, sincere and matter-of-fact. By being honest and straightforward, and by offering balanced feedback, the people you influence can build skills and confidence at the same time.

How to Share Useful – and Respectful – Feedback (© Copyright Carter McNamara)

Feedback to employees is information regarding their performance and also is information they can act on. Feedback must be shared in a manner that is understandable to them and is perceived by them as being provided in a highly respectful manner. Sharing feedback involves skills in effective listening, verbal and non-verbal communications, and working in multi-cultural environments. Consider the following guidelines, as well.

1. Be clear about what you want to say before you say it. You might have already sensed what feedback you want to convey. However, you should be clear to yourself about what you want to convey and how you want to convey it.

2. Share your feedback in a concise and specific manner, then you can embellish. People often lose specificity when they speak because they say far too much, rather than not enough. Or, they speak about general themes and patterns. When giving feedback, first share what you saw or heard, what you want instead, and how the person can achieve it. Then you can add more descriptive information if necessary.

3. Avoid generalizations. Avoid use of the words "all," "never" and "always." Those words can seem extreme, lack credibility and place arbitrary limits on behavior. Be more precise about quantity or proportion, if you address terms of quantities, at all.

4. Be descriptive rather than evaluative. Report what you are seeing, hearing or feeling. Attempt to avoid evaluative words, such as "good" or "bad." It may be helpful to quickly share your particular feeling, if appropriate, but do not dwell on it or become emotional.

5. Own the feedback. The information should be about your own perception of information, not about the other's perceptions, assumptions and motives. Use 'I' statements as much as possible to indicate that your impressions are your own.

6. Be careful about giving advice. When giving feedback, it is often best to do one thing at a time – share your feedback, get the person's response to your feedback, and then, when he/she is more ready to consider additional information, share your advice with him/her.

Additional Perspectives on Giving and Receiving Feedback (see http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed   for links)

[Basic Guidelines for Giving Feedback](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[How To Give Good Feedback](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[A Contrast of the Technical and Social Science Views of Feedback](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[Leadership Knowledge Base: Information to Improve Your Leadership Skills.](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[Kare Anderson : Handling Criticism With Honesty and Grace](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[Team Member Feedback: A Priceless Communication Tool](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[Respect for People Doesn't Mean Avoiding Any Hint of Criticism](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[How to Deliver Bad News to Employees](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[Feedback and Leadership](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[Secrets of Positive Feedback](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[How to Give Your Boss Feedback](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[Giving a High Performer Productive Feedback](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[10 Reasons Your Employees Hate You (Or At Least Reject You)](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[Criticism: How to Handle Negative Feedback From Your Boss](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)
[Feedback: Employee Want To Know How They're Doing](http://managementhelp.org/communicationsskills/feedback.htm#feed)

Giving Negative Feedback:

1. **Get your emotions under control**. You don't want to critique someone else's actions when you are angry or upset. You are likely to say something you don't really mean or to react poorly to something that is said to you.

2. **Find a private place**. No one wants to receive negative feedback in front of others. Sometimes it is unavoidable, but that should be a last resort. Take a meeting in your office, call the person into a vacant conference room, step into the lunch room if it is vacant.

3. **Focus on their actions, not on the person**. You create an immediate barrier when you criticize the person. Focus instead on what you want to change. Focus on their performance.

4. **Be specific**. It does no good to tell someone 'you have a bad attitude'. You need to identify specific actions the person took or specific things they said if you want them to understand.

5. **Be timely**. Negative feedback should be given as soon as possible after the event. If you see an employee being rude to a customer, don't wait until their annual performance review to tell them. How many other customers will they have angered in the meantime? Call them into your office right away.

6. **Be calm**. Don't yell and scream. The other person will become defensive and won't hear what you are trying to tell them.

7. **Reaffirm your faith in the person**. This reinforces step three, but here you tell them that you still have faith in them as a person and in their abilities; it's just their performance you want them to change. Say something like "you're a good customer service rep, so I'm sure you see the need to be more patient with customers".

8. **Stop talking**. After you have told the person what specific, recent actions were inappropriate, and why, stop talking. Give the other person a chance to respond to or refute your statements. **Listen** to what they have to say.

9. **Define positive steps**. Agree on what future performance is appropriate for the employee. If there are specific things the employee needs to start doing or needs to stop doing, be sure they are clearly identified. If there is something you need to do, perhaps additional training for the employee, agree on that as well.

10. **Get over it**. After you have given the negative feedback and agreed on a resolution, move on with the job. Don't harbor ill will toward the employee because they made a mistake. Don't hover over them out of fear that they may make another mistake. Monitor their performance as you do all employees, but don't obsess.

Brainstorming

Teams often use brainstorming as a tool to exercise creativity and foster participation.

Different Approaches to Brainstorming:
http://www.innovationtools.com/resources/brainstorming.asp

How to Brainstorm: http://www.innovationtools.com/resources/brainstorming.asp

Conflict Management and Resolution

Conflict management can be a healthy way to open up lines of communication, initiate problem solving and discuss change. Knowing how to best manage conflict can have many benefits for a group and leader. In many cases, conflict in the workplace just seems to be a fact of life. We've all seen situations where different people with different goals and needs have come into conflict. And we've all seen the often-intense personal animosity that can result. 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. In many cases, effective conflict resolution can make the difference between positive and negative outcomes.

The good news is that by resolving conflict successfully, you can solve many of the problems that it has brought to the surface, as well as getting benefits that you might not at first expect:

- **Increased understanding:** The discussion needed to resolve conflict expands people's awareness of the situation, giving them an insight into how they can achieve their own goals without undermining those of other people.
- **Increased group cohesion:** When conflict is resolved effectively, team members can develop stronger mutual respect, and a renewed faith in their ability to work together.
- **Improved self-knowledge:** Conflict pushes individuals to examine their goals in close detail , helping them understand the things that are most important to them, sharpening their focus, and enhancing their effectiveness.

However, if conflict is not handled effectively, the results can be damaging. Conflicting goals can quickly turn into personal dislike. Teamwork breaks down. Talent is wasted as people disengage from their work. And it's easy to end up in a vicious downward spiral of negativity and recrimination. If you're to keep your team or organization working effectively, you need to stop this downward spiral as soon as you can. To do this, it helps to understand two of the theories that lie behind effective conflict resolution:

Understanding the Theory: Conflict Styles

In the 1970s Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identified five main styles of dealing with conflict that vary in their degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness. They argued that people typically have a preferred conflict resolution style. However they also noted that different styles were most useful in different situations. They developed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) which helps you to identify which style you tend towards when conflict arises.

Thomas and Kilmann's styles are:

Competitive: People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand, and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise, or persuasive ability. This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be make fast; when the decision is unpopular; or when defending against

someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly. However it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less urgent situations.

Collaborative: People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when a you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution; when there have been previous conflicts in the group; or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.

Compromising: People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. Everyone is expected to give up something, and the compromiser him- or herself also expects to relinquish something. Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground, when equal strength opponents are at a standstill and when there is a deadline looming.

Accommodating: This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning, or when you want to be in a position to collect on this "favor" you gave. However people may not return favors, and overall this approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes.

Avoiding: People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely. This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions, and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings. It can be appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem. However in many situations this is a weak and ineffective approach to take.

Once you understand the different styles, you can use them to think about the most appropriate approach (or mixture of approaches) for the situation you're in. You can also think about your own instinctive approach, and learn how you need to change this if necessary. Ideally you can adopt an approach that meets the situation, resolves the problem, respects people's legitimate interests, and mends damaged working relationships.

Understanding The Theory: The "Interest-Based Relational Approach"

The second theory is commonly referred to as the "Interest-Based Relational (IBR) Approach". This type of conflict resolution respects individual differences while helping people avoid becoming too entrenched in a fixed position.

In resolving conflict using this approach, you follow these rules:

- **Make sure that good relationships are the first priority:** As far as possible, make sure that you treat the other calmly and that you try to build mutual respect. Do your best to be courteous to one-another and remain constructive under pressure.
- **Keep people and problems separate:** Recognize that in many cases the other person is not just "being difficult" – real and valid differences can lie behind conflictive positions. By separating the problem from the person, real issues can be debated without damaging working relationships.
- **Pay attention to the interests that are being presented:** By listening carefully you'll most-likely understand why the person is adopting his or her position.
- **Listen first; talk second:** To solve a problem effectively you have to understand where the other person is coming from before defending your own position.
- **Set out the "Facts":** Agree and establish the objective, observable elements that will have an impact on the decision.
- **Explore options together:** Be open to the idea that a third position may exist, and that you can get to this idea jointly.

By following these rules, you can often keep contentious discussions positive and constructive. This helps to prevent the antagonism and dislike which so-often causes conflict to spin out of control.

Using the Tool: A Conflict Resolution Process

Based on these approaches, a starting point for dealing with conflict is to identify the overriding conflict style employed by yourself, your team or your organization. Over time, people's conflict management styles tend to mesh, and a "right" way to solve conflict emerges. It's good to recognize when this style can be used effectively, however make sure that people understand that different styles may suit different situations. Look at the circumstances, and think about the style that may be appropriate. Then use the process below to resolve the conflict:

Step One: Set the Scene

If appropriate to the situation, agree the rules of the IBR Approach (or at least consider using the approach yourself.) Make sure that people understand that the conflict may be a mutual problem, which may be best resolved through discussion and negotiation rather than through raw aggression. If you are involved in the conflict, emphasize the fact that you are presenting your perception of the problem. Use active listening skills to ensure you hear and understand other's positions and perceptions.

- Restate.

- Paraphrase.
- Summarize.

And make sure that when you talk, you're using an adult, [assertive](#) approach rather than a submissive or aggressive style.

Step Two: Gather Information

Here you are trying to get to the underlying interests, needs, and concerns. Ask for the other person's viewpoint and confirm that you respect his or her opinion and need his or her cooperation to solve the problem. Try to understand his or her motivations and goals, and see how your actions may be affecting these. Also, try to understand the conflict in objective terms: Is it affecting work performance? damaging the delivery to the client? disrupting team work? hampering decision-making? or so on. Be sure to focus on work issues and leave personalities out of the discussion.

- Listen with empathy and see the conflict from the other person's point of view.
- Identify issues clearly and concisely.
- Use "I" statements.
- Remain flexible.
- Clarify feelings.

Step Three: Agree the Problem

This sounds like an obvious step, but often different underlying needs, interests and goals can cause people to perceive problems very differently. You'll need to agree the problems that you are trying to solve before you'll find a mutually acceptable solution. Sometimes different people will see different but interlocking problems – if you can't reach a common perception of the problem, then at the very least, you need to understand what the other person sees as the problem.

Step Four: Brainstorm Possible Solutions

If everyone is going to feel satisfied with the resolution, it will help if everyone has had fair input in generating solutions. Brainstorm possible solutions, and be open to all ideas, including ones you never considered before.

Step Five: Negotiate a Solution

By this stage, the conflict may be resolved: Both sides may better understand the position of the other, and a mutually satisfactory solution may be clear to all. However you may also have

uncovered real differences between your positions. This is where a technique like [win-win negotiation](#) can be useful to find a solution that, at least to some extent, satisfies everyone.

There are three guiding principles here: Be Calm, Be Patient, Have Respect.

Key Points

Conflict in the workplace can be incredibly destructive to good teamwork. Managed in the wrong way, real and legitimate differences between people can quickly spiral out of control, resulting in situations where co-operation breaks down and the team's mission is threatened. This is particularly the case where the wrong approaches to conflict resolution are used. To calm these situations down, it helps to take a positive approach to conflict resolution, where discussion is courteous and non-confrontational, and the focus is on issues rather than on individuals. If this is done, then, as long as people listen carefully and explore facts, issues and possible solutions properly, conflict can often be resolved effectively.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

The Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is a model for handling conflict:
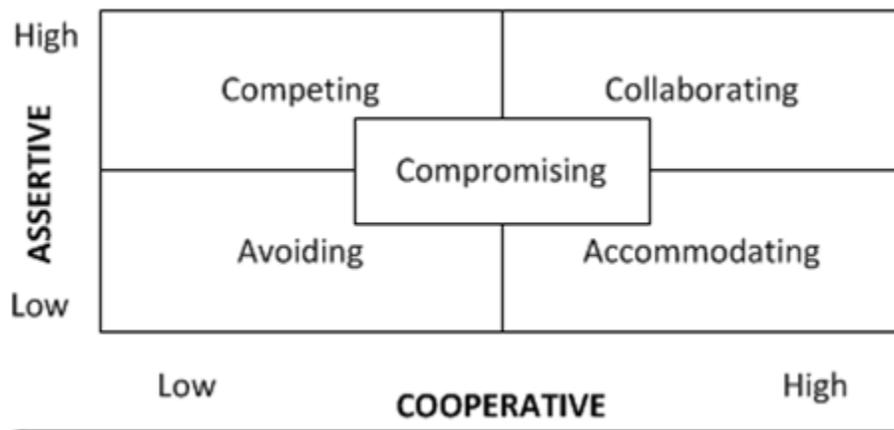
The model organizes five conflict management styles based on two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness.

Five Conflict Management Styles

Here are the five conflict management styles according to Thomas, K.W., and R.H. Kilmann:

1. **Accommodating** – This is when you cooperate to a high-degree, and it may be at your own expense, and actually work against your own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes. This approach is effective when the other party is the expert or has a better solution. It can also be effective for preserving future relations with the other party.

2. **Avoiding** - This is when you simply avoid the issue. You aren't helping the other party reach their goals, and you aren't assertively pursuing your own. This works when the issue is trivial or when you have no chance of winning. It can also be effective when the issue would be very costly. It's also very effective when the atmosphere is emotionally charged and you need to create some space. Sometimes issues will resolve themselves, but "hope is not a strategy", and, in general, avoiding is not a good long term strategy.

3. **Collaborating** – This is where you partner or pair up with the other party to achieve both of your goals. This is how you break free of the "win-lose" paradigm and seek the "win-win." This can be effective for complex scenarios where you need to find a novel solution. This can also mean re-framing the challenge to create a bigger space and room for everybody's ideas. The downside is that it requires a high-degree of trust and reaching a consensus can require a lot of time and effort to get everybody on board and to synthesize all the ideas.

4. **Competing** – This is the "win-lose" approach. You act in a very assertive way to achieve your goals, without seeking to cooperate with the other party, and it may be at the expense of the other party. This approach may be appropriate for emergencies when time is of the essence, or when you need quick, decisive action, and people are aware of and support the approach.

5. **Compromising** – This is the "lose-lose" scenario where neither party really achieves what they want. This requires a moderate level of assertiveness and cooperation. It may be appropriate for scenarios where you need a temporary solution, or where both sides have equally important goals. The trap is to fall into compromising as an easy way out, when collaborating would produce a better solution.

By knowing your own default patterns you improve your self-awareness. Once you are aware of your own patterns, you can pay attention to whether they are working for you and you can **explore alternatives**. By using a scenario-based approach, you can choose more effective conflict management styles and test their effectiveness for you and your situations.

Conflict Management Style Quiz

Take the following test regarding your conflict management style. Think of how you behave in conflict situations in which your wishes differ from those of one or more persons. Rate yourself based on this scale:

1=very unlikely 2=unlikely 3=likely 4=very likely

__1. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.

__2. I try to win my position.

__3. I give up some points in exchange for others.

__4. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.

__5. I try to find a position that is intermediate between the other person's and mine.

__6. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.

__7. I try to show the logic and benefits of my positions.

__8. I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.

__9. I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.

__10. I attempt to work through our differences immediately.

__11. I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.

__12. I try to soothe the other person's feelings and preserve our relationships.

__13. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.

__14. I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.

__15. I try not to hurt others' feelings.

Scoring

Avoiding (add scores for 4,11,14) _____

Accommodating (add scores for 6,12,15) _____

Competing (add scores for items 1,2, 7) _____

Compromising (add scores for 3,5,9) _____

Collaborating (add scores for items 8, 10, 13) _____

Time Management and Follow Through

Introduction

- There's no such thing as time management! So why should you read the rest of this handout? Because there is such a thing as self management and that's the key to making time your ally rather than your enemy.
- There are only 24 hours in your day, just the same as everybody else's. So how do you end up frustrated, angry, behind in your work, and dead on your feet? Maybe because you don't know how to use those 24 hours to your advantage.

Step #1

- If using your time wisely is a problem for you, you probably don't have a very good idea of where it all goes. It just seems to go! A good place to start, then, is to keep track of how you use your time. Get a Weekly schedule (available in the Learning Skills corner of the Counseling and Testing Center's Career Library) and faithfully keep track of how you use your waking hours for one week. The results will probably surprise you.

Step #2

- The next step is to pick up several more of these Weekly Schedules and do some planning. You'll discover, among other things, that if you get seven hours sleep a night, you have 119 hours per week to do everything you need to do. That, of course, includes going to class, eating, athletic events, social activities, personal hygiene, time-in-transit, studying, student organizations, telephone and TV time, etc. Be sure to schedule time for all these in your 119 hours. Then try sticking to your schedule for a week. This should give you a good idea of where your real priorities are!

Procrastination

- If you have trouble, chances are there's a culprit lurking somewhere, dodging your every move. Chances are this culprit's name is Procrastination. Procrastination masquerades in a million disguises. Among the more common of these are:
    - "One more day won't make any difference; I'll just put that off until tomorrow."
    - "It won't matter if I'm a few minutes late; no one else will be on time."
    - "I can't start on this paper until I know just how I want the first paragraph to read."
    - "I work best under pressure."
    - "I'll watch just 15 more minutes of TV."
    - Fill in the blank:"_____."

Interruptions

- Learn to say NO once your priorities are set. Turning down an invitation doesn't mean you'll never be asked to do something again. Weigh the consequences. Making a decision based on what you know is best for you at the time, leads to greater respect from your friends, not to a reputation as a party-pooper.
- Stay away from the telephone when you're trying to get work done. If it's really important, they'll call back.

Schedule / Plan Ahead

- Use a monthly calendar to help you allocate your study time on the Weekly Schedule. At the beginning of each quarter, spend an hour with your calendar to enter all important dates. As you receive course syllabi, enter the dates for quizzes, papers, etc., on your calendar. Then estimate the time needed to prepare for each of these. If your history

paper is due the eighth week of the quarter and it usually takes you four weeks to do a paper, start work on the paper the second week of the quarter, allowing yourself an extra week for typing and an extra week for disaster. If you stick to this schedule, you'll amaze yourself by having the paper finished in the seventh week. The rule-of-thumb is "Plan ahead by working backwards."

- By counting backwards like this, you'll be surprised how well you're using your time and how much better your grade will be when you're not under pressure. And, by being really honest with yourself and taking account of all your priorities, you'll be able to go to the football game and not feel guilty.
- At the start of each week, transfer important items from your calendar to your Weekly Schedule. This helps you to avoid things that might otherwise sneak up on you.
- Be sure to schedule time for your fitness routine and for study breaks. Your brain works best when it has sufficient oxygen. Your concentration is enhanced when you go hard at a task until you feel yourself fading. Then Break! A good rule-of-thumb is to work for 45 minutes and then break for 15. But watch yourself! More than 15 minutes is more than a break!

Conclusion

- Suggestions such as these don't lead to enslavement by a calendar. It may sound awful, especially if you're a skilled time mismanager. But it actually leads to a greater sense of freedom and accomplishment because you're in control. That's all self-management is-- managing your life more effectively. By following these suggestions, you'll be happier, more satisfied, and more productive. Try it--you'll like it!
- One last thing: WEAR A WATCH!