

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode

Background

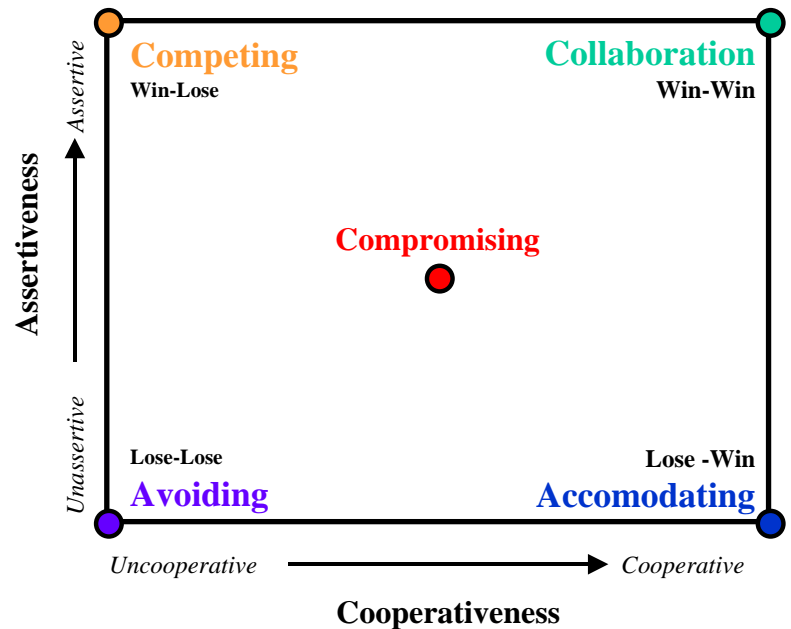
According to experts, being able to work effectively with others is one of the most sought after skills. Being able to relate to colleagues is essential for everyone, particularly those in management positions and those who would like to be.

This instrument is rooted in early work of Kenneth Thomas and Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid dating back to 1964. It asserts that all behavior in a conflict situation is comprised of two independent variables: assertiveness and cooperativeness.

The TKI examines how styles of handling conflict affect personal and group dynamics. Knowing how assertive and cooperative any person or group is during a conflict will yield both a conflict style and a road map for the conflict's solution. The model and instrument were created by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann.

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) Inventory assesses behavior on five different dimensions:

- **Competing** - the goal is to win - is assertive and uncooperative -- an individual pursues their 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 own position -- one's ability to argue, one's rank, economic sanctions. Competing might mean "standing up for your rights," defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.



- **Avoiding** - the goal is to delay - is unassertive and uncooperative -- the individual does not immediately pursue their own concerns or those of the other person. They do 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.
- **Compromising** - the goal is to find a middle ground - is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective 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. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging

concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

- Collaborating - the goal is to find a win-win situation - is both assertive and cooperative -- the opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which 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 between two persons 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.
- Accommodating - the goal is to yield - is unassertive and cooperative - the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects their 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 or charity, obeying another person's order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.

Here's how the TKI Inventory can help you improve your working relationships:

- 1) By examining the 5 conflict-handling styles and discussing how your answers compare to other group or team members who have taken this assessment.
- 2) Depending on your results, the TKI provides suggestions on how your styles may be affecting your current working relationships.

Application

The TKI is used by facilitators to help analyze a situation and apply the appropriate conflict handling mode that will lead to positive resolution. It can be used in a number of situations including the following applications:

- Conflict and change management
- Enhancing communication
- Performance Improvement
- Stress Management
- Team Building

References

1. Thomas, K. W., and Kilmann, R. H. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument 1974, Xicom
2. Thomas, K. W., and Kilmann, R. H. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument Facilitator's Guide

Order the instrument (\$9) or Facilitators Guide (\$125) from Consulting Pshycologist Press on-line at <http://www.cpp-db.com> or at 800-759-4266.

Take the Instrument On-Line at:

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/1650/qconflict.html>

or

<http://unix.cc.wmich.edu/mallakl/surveys/tkmi.htm>

or

<http://www.barnabus.com/methods/testing/managedifferences.asp>