

# Management Styles

These are the definitions of the five (5) conflict management styles.

## 1. COMPETING

### **ASSERTIVE + UNCOOPERATIVE**

This is where 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 position- one's ability to argue one's rank and economic sanctions.

Competing might mean 'standing up for your rights', defending a position that you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.

#### **What are the advantages of this strategy?**

- Associates 'winning' a conflict with competition
- When goals are fundamental, one must sometimes use power to win

#### **What are the disadvantages of this strategy?**

- Can escalate conflict
- Losers may retaliate
- Some people may use manipulation or force to win the conflict, especially if there are no rules in the contest against cheating, etc.

#### **How do these impact group function?**

The assertiveness may help move the group forward in their endeavours. They may move more quickly than otherwise. However, the functionality of the group may stall if a conflict arises or if the 'losers' don't want to follow the 'winner'.

#### **When might this strategy be sound?**

It is useful when people work harder towards achieving their goals out of fear of losing to others.

## **2. ACCOMMODATING**

### **UNASSERTIVE + COOPERATIVE**

This is where an individual pursues their 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 own position- one's ability to argue one's rank and economic sanctions.

Competing might mean 'standing up for your rights', defending a position that you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.

#### **What are the advantages of this strategy?**

- Working toward a common purpose is more important than any of the peripheral concerns; the trauma of confronting differences may damage fragile relationships
- Appease others by downplaying conflict, thus protecting the relationship

#### **What are the disadvantages of this strategy?**

- One's ideas don't get attention
- Credibility and influence can be lost
- One party may lose their power to resist further demands.

#### **How do these impact group function?**

If group members display accommodating behaviour, this may help the group reach a goal or complete a task more efficiently and peacefully. If there are few flexible people in the group, then there may not be any conflict barriers to overcome. However, group function may be hampered by everybody wanting to accommodate the other and nobody standing by a decision.

#### **When might this strategy be sound?**

It is helpful when one party does not care about the issue or if they have little power in the relationship or situation. Also, one party may let the other win on minor issues to preserve the relationship.

### **3. AVOIDANCE**

#### **UNASSERTIVE + UNCOOPERATIVE**

This is where the individual needs to pursue his concerns of the other person. They do not address the conflict. Avoiding might be diplomatically sidestepping an issue until a better time or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

#### **What are the advantages of this strategy?**

- This isn't the right time or place to address this issue
- Avoids conflict by withdrawing, sidestepping, or postponing
- The parties may believe that the issue is minor and that maintaining harmony in the relationship is more important.

#### **What are the disadvantages of this strategy?**

- Important decisions may be made by default
- Postponing may make matters worse
- Issues that are ignored may grow and lead to a significant conflict between the parties.

#### **How do these impact group function?**

Avoiding the issue or task simply delays the function of the group to complete anything. Decisions may need to be better thought out. However, a conflict may be resolved if, for instance, a council member with a vested interest in one of the local tourism companies abstains from voting on a council decision about the consent of that land being used for further commercial gain.

#### **When might this strategy be sound?**

Applicable if there is no urgent need to resolve the issue now or in the future.

## **4. COLLABORATION**

### **ASSERTIVE + COOPERATIVE**

This is 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 two individuals' underlying problems and find an alternative that meets both 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 that would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

#### **What are the advantages of this strategy?**

- Teamwork and cooperation help everyone achieve their goals while also maintaining relationships
- The process of working through differences will lead to creative solutions that will satisfy both parties' concerns
- It nurtures open communication and mutual trust.

#### **What are the disadvantages of this strategy?**

- The process takes lots of time and energy
- Some may take advantage of other people's trust and openness.
- Winning something while losing a little is OK
- Both ends are placed against the middle to serve the 'common good' while ensuring each person can maintain something of their original position
- It takes time to implement, and one party may attempt to exploit the other party's trust in the negotiation process.

#### **How do these impact group function?**

The group function is positively impacted if everybody feels they have input into a common goal. Each task takes more ownership, and the group functions better to achieve it. Good collaboration can take extra time to ensure each point of view has been canvassed and not simply dismissed without consideration. Group function may slow.

#### **When might this strategy be sound?**

It is useful when parties want or need an ongoing relationship with each other.

## **5. COMPROMISING**

### **INTERMEDIATE IN BOTH ASSERTIVENESS + COOPERATIVENESS**

The objective here is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution that 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 it 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.

#### **What are the advantages of this strategy?**

- That each party is flexible enough to seek a solution that somewhat suits everyone.
- Both parties do win something of value from resolving the conflict.

#### **What are the disadvantages of this strategy?**

- Important values and long-term objectives can be derailed in the process
- May not work if initial demands are too great
- Can spawn cynicism, especially if there's no commitment to honour the compromise solutions
- Both parties must lose something, which may cause them to feel unsatisfied with the result.

#### **How do these impact group function?**

Group function may be affected negatively if all parties compromise their ideas just to meet a deadline or reach an agreement. The decision-making may need to be more robust and result in no buy-in. Meaning the task may be completed but without pride or flair.

#### **When might this strategy be sound?**

It is useful when time is limited or it's not worth arguing to win, and also when one party can't force their solution on the other.