



Coaching Through Conflict

Lesson 2: Conflict Resolution Style with the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument

The Big Idea:

“Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means.”

Ronald Reagan

Conflict is a normal part of any dynamic, be it personal or professional. In fact, conflict can be a healthy aspect of any relationship if handled appropriately. Learning how to address a conflict versus avoiding it is crucial to maintaining healthy environments. Mismanaging conflict can have adverse effects on relationships and can create a hostile environment. Positively addressing conflict can create strong bonds between individuals. Conflicts arise from differences between people’s opinions, backgrounds, and philosophies. It occurs when people have different values, motivations, desires, ideas or perceptions. This is an important aspect especially in the workplace.

This lesson will examine a valuable conflict resolution model known as the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI). The TKI identifies five (5) conflict resolution styles/approaches.

◆ *Leader’s Notes* ◆
PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!

A Question to Consider:

In what ways does using a system for conflict resolution assist leaders in addressing challenges in a healthy and professional manner?



The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), identifies five different conflict styles used in conflict:

◆ Leader's Notes ◆

Competitive: A person with a competitive conflict style takes a firm stand, and knows what they want. Typically, they pursue their own goals at another person's expense. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise, or persuasive ability. A person with a competitive style “stands up for their rights.” This style is very useful when a decision needs to be made quickly, when the decision is unpopular; or when defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly.

Accommodating: This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. A person with this style is both unassertive and cooperative – which is the opposite of competing. The accommodator often gives in to others, but can also be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning, or when cashing in on a favor that has been given.

Avoiding: The avoiding style seeks to evade the conflict entirely. A person using this style is unassertive and uncooperative. 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. A person with this style will typically postpone dealing with a problem or sidestep dealing with it at all. In many situations this is a weak and ineffective approach to take. When we avoid conflict, we are neither trying to achieve results nor addressing relationships with other people. We simply do not want to deal with the conflict.

Collaborative: A collaborative conflict style attempts to meet the needs of all people involved. A person using this style can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution, when there has been a history of previous conflicts in the group, or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off. Collaborating may take the form of exploring the disagreement in an open and frank way or trying to find creative solutions to a problem.

Compromising: People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. In some situations, it may mean the parties making concessions or seeking a middle-ground solution. The aim is to find some mutually acceptable solution, which will partially satisfy the parties. 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. When people compromise, each person partially meets the other's demands. Compromising sometimes means sacrificing important needs. It is not unusual for both people to walk away unsatisfied from a compromise.



A Thought to Ponder:

A conflict is more than just a disagreement and will continue to grow if it is ignored.

A Thought: **What are some action steps that you can take as a leader to help your team gain the proper perspective of what conflict is?**

What Difference Would It Make:

6 factors leaders can consider when addressing conflicts on his/her teams:

- 1. Listen then Address the Situation*
- 2. Be Objective and Impartial*
- 3. Address the Conflict with All Parties Involved*
- 4. Address Conflict Directly and in a Timely Fashion*
- 5. Manage your Emotions and Behavior*
- 6. Pick Your Battles*

Suggested Resource:

Thomas-Kilmann Instrument

By: Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann

<http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/overview-thomas-kilmann-conflict-mode-instrument-tki>

◆ *Leader's Notes* ◆