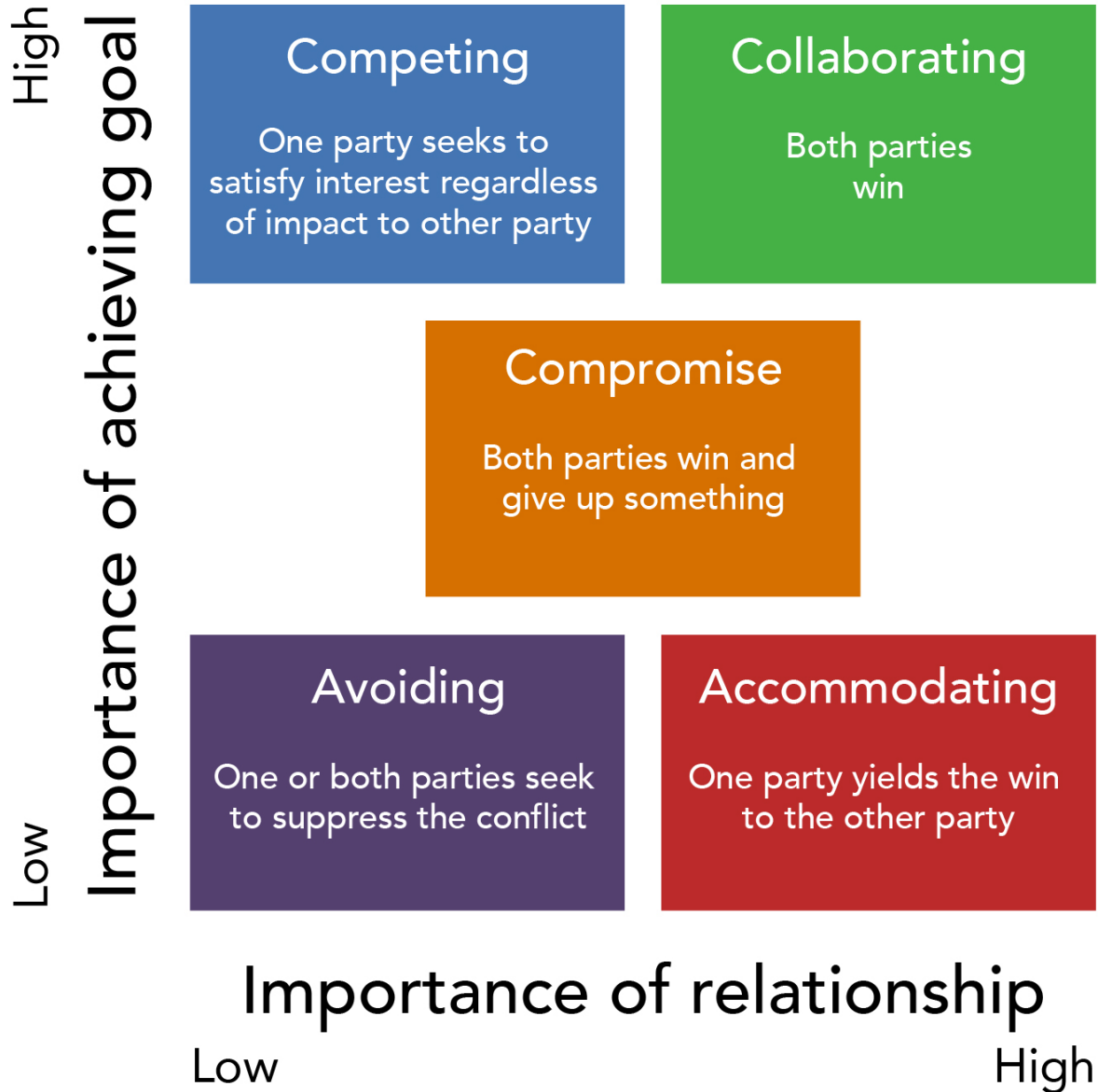




Conflict Styles





Competing Style

Pro: Decisive, assertive, addresses personal needs

Con: Can damage relationships, shut others down

The goal of the competing style is to win. In this mode the individual aims to pursue one's agenda at another's expense. Ex. standing up for one's needs, defending a cherished position and/or simply trying to win.

Competition operates as a zero-sum game, in which one side wins and other loses. The competitive strategy works best in a limited number of conflicts, such as emergency situations. In general, leaders benefit from holding the competitive strategy in reserve for crisis situations and decisions that generate ill-will, such as pay cuts or layoffs.

Accommodating Style

Pro: Can preserve harmonious relationships, can admit there is a better way

Con: Can lead to resentment by not getting your needs met, can diminish your influence

The goal of the accommodating style is to yield. Typically, a person using this conflict style neglects his or her needs to satisfy the concerns of the other person. There is an element of self-sacrifice, and this stance is concerned with preserving the relationship versus attaining goals. This style is also known as an appeasement or smoothing style and is the opposite of competing.

The accommodating strategy essentially entails giving the opposing side what it wants. The use of accommodation often occurs when one of the parties wishes to keep the peace or perceives the issue as minor. For example, a business that requires formal dress may institute a "casual Friday" policy as a low stakes means of keeping the peace with the rank and file.

Avoiding Style

Pro: Doesn't sweat the small stuff, delays may be useful

Con: Avoidance builds up and then blows, important issues don't get dealt with, it can take more energy to avoid then deal at times

The avoiding style is both unassertive and uncooperative. The goal of this stance is to delay. In this mode an individual does not immediately pursue his or her concerns or those of another. This style can provide a needed respite from the situation or it can inflame things if the issue keeps being pushed aside. This mode is also known as flight.



The avoidance strategy seeks to put off conflict indefinitely. By delaying or ignoring the conflict, the avoider hopes the problem resolves itself without a confrontation. In some circumstances, avoiding can serve as a profitable conflict management strategy, such as after the dismissal of a popular but unproductive employee. The hiring of a more productive replacement for the position soothes much of the conflict.

Collaborative Style

Pro: Finds the best solution for everyone, which leads to high commitment, higher creativity in problem solving, team building

Con: Takes time and energy; if applied to all conflicts it can be draining and unnecessary

The collaborating style is both assertive and cooperative. The goal of this stance is to find a win-win situation. Typically, this style is concerned with finding creative solutions to issues that satisfy both individual's concerns. Learning, listening, and attending to both the organizational and personal issues are addressed with this conflict style. It takes time and effort. This mode is also known as a problem solving or integrative style and it is the opposite of avoiding.

Collaboration works by integrating ideas set out by multiple people. The object is to find a creative solution acceptable to everyone. Collaboration, though useful, calls for a significant time commitment not appropriate to all conflicts. For example, a business owner should work collaboratively with the manager to establish policies, but collaborative decision-making regarding office supplies wastes time better spent on other activities.

Collaboration allows every member to have a voice and have their views taken into account. This method also integrates active listening, feedback, and critical thinking, which creates a wholesome, all-inclusive environment for each member to build a true commitment that teams need to grow and thrive.

Compromising Style

Pro: Fixes things quickly, satisfies needs of both parties, finds temporary settlements to complex issues, has backup up strategy when competition or collaboration fails

Con: Can play games, bypass longer-term solutions, compromises found may be dissatisfying and may need to be revisited

The compromising style lands one right in the middle of being assertive and cooperative. The goal of this stance is to find a quick middle ground. Parties find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution by having each person give up something and split the difference. This mode is also known as sharing.



The compromising strategy typically calls for both sides of a conflict to give up elements of their position to establish an acceptable, if not agreeable, solution. This strategy prevails most often in conflicts where the parties hold approximately equivalent power. Business owners frequently employ compromise during contract negotiations with other businesses when each party stands to lose something valuable, such as a customer or necessary service.

Compromise is a difficult technique for some team members to accept, until they realize that compromise is exactly what it means: to settle or agree to disagree.

This type of negotiation implements ideas from both sides, but each person gives up something to form a solution.

Which Conflict Style Should you Use?

Use the Competing Style If...

- An emergency is looming and there's no room for debate
- The issue is trivial or you're sure you are right
- Weaker parties need to be protected from stronger ones
- Principles are at stake and must not be compromised

Do Not Use the Competing Style If...

- Support and cooperation of others is needed
- It's used routinely, because others will start to take offense
- The self-respect of other parties will be diminished

Use the Accommodating Style If...

- Keeping others happy is the most important goal
- You really don't care about the issue
- Your knowledge is limited
- You have no real power

Do Not Use the Accommodating Style If...

- You're sure you're correct
- If others are unethical or wrong in their proposal



Use the Avoiding Style If...

- The issue and the relationship are both unimportant
- The conflict is too high and parties need to cool off

Do Not Use the Avoiding Style If...

- A long-term solution is needed
- You are responsible for resolving the conflict
- Negative feelings are likely to linger

Use the Compromising Style If...

- The goals are clearly incompatible
- The parties have equal power
- A quick solution is needed
- Working together is important, but time does not allow for true collaboration
- Finding a solution is better than a stalemate

Do Not Use the Compromising Style If...

- Finding the most creative solution is essential
- When there is an imbalance of power
- When the problem is complex
- When long-term solutions are needed

Use the Collaborating Style If...

- Reasonable hope exists to meet all concerns
- Time and energy are available to deal with the conflict
- The issue and the people are both important

Do Not Use the Collaborating Style If...

- There is no time
- There is not hope that both parties can be completely satisfied
- When others are not interested in the outcome





About the Author

Eric Williamson, author of *How to Work with Jerks*, professional development consultant, and President/CEO of Tailored Training Solutions, LLC, has a vision of success that is inherently different than most. With two decades of real-life, hands-on, in-the-trenches experience in both public and private sectors, Eric has worked with companies and institutions, both large and small, including Connecticut College, Maryland School of Nursing, Maryland Department of Labor, and the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Through his experience, Eric has learned that success is not about good grades, high IQ scores, or climbing up the corporate ladder. Eric believes that no matter how talented, gifted, or experienced, and no matter what role we serve or title we carry, our level of success is not measured based on the work we produce; it is measured based on the relationships we build. To that end, he works with organizations to build successful leaders by building stronger customer and workplace relationships.

Eric is available to present customized in-person, online, and hybrid trainings for your organization. Visit his website at [TailoredTrainingSolutions.com](https://www.TailoredTrainingSolutions.com) for scheduling details.

