



## The Conflict Management Strategies Matrix

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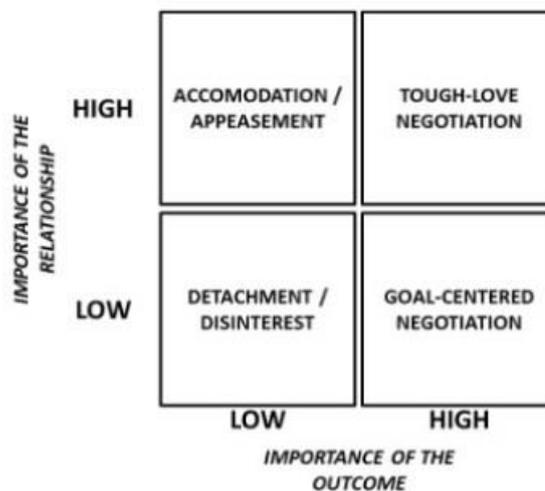
### **Four key strategies to use when managing conflict, and when to use them**

When assessing what strategy to use in managing the conflict there are two key criteria:

- the importance of the *outcome* and
- the importance of the *relationship*.

Their relative importance will vary with each situation.

**Fig 1 – Conflict Management Strategies Matrix**



The four quadrants in the above matrix are:

- **Detachment/Disinterest.** You don't care about the outcome or the relationship.
- **Accommodation/Appeasement.** Keeping the relationship going is far more important to you than achieving your personal goal. In this kind of conflict, you may accommodate the other person's interests. Accommodation approaches can be habit forming. Being flexible about your personal goals is important, but putting yourself second to all others can be an ineffectual stance.



- **Tough-Love Negotiation.** You place equally high value on your goal and the relationship. These conflicts are often difficult as you look to create a 'win-win' situation.
- **Goal-Centred Negotiation.** You don't care whether the other person likes you, whether the relationship continues or how badly the other person feels; you just want to win. You are prepared to forgo the relationship

In managing conflict, you need to be aware of and develop the necessary cognitive, emotional, and behavioural skills that will allow you think, calm down, slow down and engage with the conflict constructively.

When faced with conflict, people respond in a variety of ways. They think about what is happening. They experience emotional reactions that are influenced by the ways they view and how they interpret the conflict. Finally, they also act to address the concerns that the conflict raises.

Three other factors that will influence your style of handling conflict: power, emotionality and time.

- **Power.** The extent to which a person has power will vary with the context of the situation, and the relative of the power of the others involved in the conflict. These interactions will affect how the conflict is handled. People derive their power, both formally and informally, through five main sources:
  - **Reward power:** using compensation to drive people to accomplish more than expected.
  - **Coercive power:** convincing people to do things against their will.
  - **Legitimate power:** using their role or position within an organization to garner respect.
  - **Expert power:** exercising influence because they are viewed as knowledgeable in an area.
  - **Referent power:** compelling people to act in a certain way because they are attracted to you or want to be like you.



- **Emotionality.** Certain strategies are typically accompanied by more expressed emotion, and certain emotions can influence which strategies we use. For example, tough-love is hard requiring the ability to express, tolerate and manage emotions.
- **Time.** Here we find ourselves having to cope with what is important and what is urgent. Often people fall victim to a sense of urgency and compromise on what is important. For example, you may lack the time you need to involve everyone and gain their commitment in managing a conflict. Time, especially the lack of it, can change the dynamics of the conflict.

Being aware of these different strategies is important in two ways – firstly, it helps you determine what kind of strategies you want to adopt in managing the conflict; secondly, it provides you a tool by which to assess what strategies the other party may adopt.

Try these three steps in developing insights in situations where you currently experience conflict:

**Step 1:** For yourself: where are you now and where do you want to be? Mark it out on the matrix.

**Step 2:** For the other party(s): where are they now and where do you them to be? Mark it out on the matrix.

**Step 3:** What do you need to do to move each other to a suitable location on the matrix that will create a “win-win” situation? Identify the key strategies and actions.

What have you found out and what will you do?