



Internal Conflict Resolution

Self-Assessment &
Learning Guide

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Internal Conflict Resolution

When the elder John D. Rockefeller led Standard Oil Company, he said, “The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee, and I will pay more for that ability than for any other under the sun.”

The ability to interact with people – and especially to resolve conflict – might be even more important today. The stakes are often high, may involve far-reaching networks and occur in fast-paced work environments. Significant conflict needs to be addressed head-on to avoid negative consequences, but doing so is a challenge for most people.

Mishandled or ignored conflict can lead to strained work relationships, diminished teamwork, lower productivity and disengagement. In contrast, well-handled conflict offers more benefits than we might expect: diverse points of view and differences of opinion are valuable to high-quality decision-making. When we embrace conflict and deal with it quickly, efficiently, and fairly it can lead to stronger work relationships, increased collaboration, innovation, creativity and productivity.

The value of developing this skill can't be overstated.

This learning guide will help you analyze your current approach to handling conflicts and identify areas you may want to work on. Then, it provides guidance on:

- Understanding your typical reaction to conflict and its implications.
- Identifying five common types of conflict.
- Developing basic conflict resolution strategies for each.

Conflict Reaction Profile

Record your reaction to the following statements. Read each item carefully and place a number from the answer scale next to each statement.

Answer Scale: 1 – Rarely • 2 – Sometimes • 3 – Most of the time

1. ____ I can be swayed to someone else's point of view.
2. ____ I shut down people who I disagree with.
3. ____ I address the issue at hand diplomatically and do not attack the individual.
4. ____ I think that others try to "bully" me.
5. ____ I express my thoughts and beliefs tactfully when they differ from those just expressed.
6. ____ Rather than offer my opinion when I disagree with someone, I keep it to myself.
7. ____ I listen to other people's points of view with an open mind.
8. ____ I let my emotions get the best of me.
9. ____ I raise my voice to make my point.
10. ____ I tend to belittle other people when making my point.
11. ____ I look for ways to negotiate and compromise with others.
12. ____ I have been told I am too pushy.
13. ____ I make sure I have my opinion heard in any controversy.
14. ____ I think conflict in meetings is necessary.
15. ____ I am the most vocal in meetings when trying to get my point across.

Conflict Reaction Profile Score

Scoring:

Add the total score from questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15

Subtract the sum of the score from questions 3, 5, 7, 11

Total:

What does your score mean?:

1—4: “Passive”

Your passive behavior may allow people to disregard your perspective, meaning your team’s decision-making isn’t always benefiting from your contribution. You – and your team – will gain from you learning to stand up for your ideas and opinions in a diplomatic and tactful way.

5—10: “Assertive”

You are appropriately assertive when dealing with people. Continue to be open to listening to different points of view, express your ideas and opinions – and look for ways to help others on your team do the same.

11+ “Aggressive”

Your style of handling conflict may cause some people to avoid interacting with you, which means you could miss out on valuable input. You will benefit from learning to listen more effectively and expressing your opinions in a way that others are more likely to accept.

The 5 Types of Conflict and Strategies for Reducing Them

Process Conflicts:

Process conflicts are those that arise from disagreement about how a task should be accomplished.

- Ask yourself, “How much control do I have over this process conflict?”
 - Identify the root cause of the problem and analyze the improvement opportunity.
 - Talk first to the owner of the process.
 - Describe the current problem and gain agreement.
 - Suggest a workable solution and action plan.
 - Follow through on the plan and give recognition to the owner of the process.
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Role Conflicts:

Each employee has one or more roles to perform in an organization. Role conflicts occur when people’s understanding of the performance criteria for a role differ.

- Ask yourself, “Exactly how do I perceive my role in relation to others involved in this issue?”
 - Take responsibility for clarifying your role with others involved.
 - Be prepared to change your perception of your role.
 - Show your willingness to be flexible in achieving your organization’s goals.
 - Stay positive. View any role change in terms of the opportunities it presents.
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Interpersonal Conflicts:

Interpersonal conflicts involve incompatibilities between people working together and may include differing needs, values, goals, preferred approaches or work styles.

- Ask yourself, “How much do my personal biases and prejudices affect this relationship?”
- Write down three behaviors that you could change in order to reduce the conflict in this relationship. Commit to following through on these changes for at least three months.
- Ask the other person involved how you could defuse the existing conflict. Encourage feedback that might seem brutally honest.
- Put yourself in their position. How do you think they view your commitment to reducing conflict in your relationship? Why?
- Make a list of five strengths that you see in the other person. Then list five ways that improving this relationship would benefit you.

Direction Conflicts:

Direction conflicts occur in situations such as when differences of opinion exist on work priorities or when it's unclear who has the final decision-making authority.

- Ask yourself, "Am I clear on the direction or vision?"
 - Clarify the discrepancy so that it can be easily described in neutral words and then take action.
 - Ask permission to address the discrepancy with the other person in a friendly, nonconfrontational way and gain agreement.
 - Use "I" and "we" messages rather than "you" messages.
 - If there is a difference in values, always go with the higher value.
 - Make authentic commitments.
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External Pressures Conflicts:

External pressures conflicts stem from what's happening in the environment outside of the organization, they may include such things as changing government regulations or a weaker job market.

- Ask yourself, "How much control do I have over this factor?"
- Choose to fight battles that are worth the price.
- Put your energy into things you "can do" rather than complain about what you "can't do."
- Do something good for others.
- Maintain perspective and a sense of purpose.
- Talk to someone you trust.

Increase innovation and productivity by equipping the leaders on your with the tools to understand, manage and resolve conflict in our Leadership Training for Managers program.

To learn more about Dale Carnegie's training programs on conflict resolution and other important leadership skills, please go to:

Conflict Resolution Plan

Use this template to help you create your own action plan.

1. Specific Conflict (Which type is it?):

2. People Involved:

3. Plan of Action:

4. Results Expected:

5. Accountability Partner: _____