

Conflict Management Styles Key

The Competing Shark

- Sharks use a 'forcing' or competing conflict management style
- They are highly goal orientated – relationships are a lower priority for them
- Sharks can sometimes use aggressive behaviour to resolve conflicts
- Sharks can be autocratic, authoritative and unco-operative, and sometimes even threatening and intimidating
- Sharks have a need to win therefore others need to lose, creating win-lose situations

Advantage: If a shark's decision is correct, a better, quicker decision without compromise can result.

Disadvantage: Their autocratic behaviour can breed hostility and resentment towards the person using this strategy.

Appropriate times to use the shark style:

- When conflict involves personal differences that are difficult to change
- When fostering intimate or supportive relationships is not a concern
- When others are likely to take advantage
- When conflict resolution is urgent or when a decision is vital
- When unpopular decisions need to be implemented

The Avoiding Turtle

- Turtles adopt an avoiding or withdrawing conflict management style
- Turtles would rather hide and ignore conflict than resolve it. This leads to a lack of both co-operation and assertiveness
- Turtles tend to give up personal goals and display passive behaviour creating lose/lose situations

Advantage: May help to maintain relationships that could be hurt by addressing the conflict directly

Disadvantage: Conflict remains unresolved and overuse of this style leads to others taking advantage

Appropriate times to use the turtle style:

- When stakes are not high or the issue is trivial
- When confrontation will hurt a working relationship
- When there is little if any chance of satisfying your wants
- When potential disruption outweighs the benefits of conflict resolution
- When an immediate decision is not required
- When others can more effectively resolve the conflict
- Where time constraints demand a delay

The Compromising Fox

- Foxes use a compromising conflict management style; the concern is for both goals and relationships
- Foxes are willing to sacrifice some of their goals while persuading others to give up parts of theirs.
- Compromise is assertive and the result can be win/lose win/win or lose/lose

Advantage: relationships are maintained and conflicts are avoided

Disadvantage: compromise may create less than ideal outcomes

Appropriate times to use the Fox Style:

- When important/complex issues leave no clear solutions
- When all in conflict have equal power and strong interests in different solutions
- When there are time restraints

The Collaborating Owl

- Owls use a collaborative or problem solving conflict management style, valuing both their goals and relationships
- Owls seek solutions agreeable to all (win/win)

Advantage: both sides get what they need and negative feelings are minimised

Disadvantage: it can take a great deal of time and effort

Appropriate times to use the Owl Style:

- When maintaining relationships is important
- When time is not a concern
- When peer conflict is involved
- When trying to gain commitment through consensus building

The Harmonising Teddy Bear

- Teddy bears use smoothing conflict styles with the emphasis on human relationships
- Teddy bears ignore their own goals and resolve conflict by giving into others; unassertive and cooperative creating a lose/win (bear is loser) situation

Advantage: Accommodating behaviour maintains relationships

Disadvantage: Giving in can compound injustices and bear is often taken advantage of

Appropriate times to use a teddy bear style:

- When maintaining the relationship outweighs other considerations
- When suggestions/changes are not important to the accommodator
- When minimizing losses in situation where they are outmatched
- When time is limited or when harmony and stability are crucial

Source: *Mastering Human Relations, 3rd Ed. By A Falikowski*