

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

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## Five Logical Ways To Manage Conflict



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Leader's Guide

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## Important Notice

It is not possible to guarantee that workplace conflicts will be prevented or eliminated. These training materials are designed to supplement your overall training program. Their use in no way implies, nor does it constitute, any legal, safety / security, or psychological advice. Businesses and organizations should and are encouraged to contact legal, safety, and medical / psychological professionals for help with issues or individual concerns regarding workplace conflict.

*"Let's fight the problem . . . not each other."*

*Kim Calderone*

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## THE LEADER'S GUIDE

The Leader's Guide attached to *Conflict Resolution Strategies* provides the information about this video program as well as suggestions for using it.

The Leader's Guide explains the purpose of this video and the values on which it is based. It presents the structure of the show and instructions for the leader.

Included are:

- suggested exercises
- five pages of questions with the answers for the leader, corresponding to the five conflict strategies
- five worksheets for the participants, each containing the same sets of questions, without the answers; these pages are perforated, easy to remove and intended to be photocopied for any number of participants.

Additional Leader's Guides are available upon request.

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

## 1. THE PURPOSE

**con-flict** n. (ken flikt') v., -flict•ed, -flict•ing  
1. A state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas, or interests; a clash.  
2. To be contrary, or at variance, or in opposition with an other.

In today's fast paced business environment, it is hard to imagine a day without conflict.

Some common forms of day-to-day conflicts in the work place:

- conflicts of interest
- personality conflicts
- differences of opinion
- contest of wills
- challenges to authority
- resistance to change
- inappropriate behavior
- petty arguments
- insults
- bickering
- distrust
- competitions
- combative styles
- cycles of hard-feelings

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Add these to the inherent problems arising from production processes, mechanical break-downs and other unfortunate situations and the day-to-day conflicts we all face can become overwhelming.

## 2. THE VALUES

*Conflict Resolution Strategies* encourages you to take a deep breath, step back and pick the best strategy for any given conflict by analyzing the two factors that matter most in solving it: the **outcome** and the **relationship**.

NOTE: The term *outcome*, in this course, refers to the business outcome.

No matter what the problem is, it needs to be solved. It should not become a source of discontent, hard feelings, broken friendships and / or broken business relationships. It is important to recognize that any problem that involves people who oppose your position is a conflict. Any conflict can be dealt with in a logical way.

*Conflict Resolution Strategies* identifies five strategies that, if correctly applied, can lead to a satisfactory resolution. This study of the five major conflict resolution strategies is based on the relative values of **outcome vs. relationship**.

The outcome is certainly important, but what about the relationships themselves? Is it worth it to deteriorate or sacrifice a long established relationship for the sake of the outcome? Is this conflict just a passing cloud, a serious breakdown, or a turning point?

Everything comes down to answering the following two important questions:

- **What value do you place on the outcome of this conflict?**
- **What value do you place on your relationship with your opponent?**

Once you've answered these questions, you choose the appropriate strategy, based on a logical win / lose formula:

- **ACCOMMODATE** (I lose, you win)
- **AVOID** (I lose, you lose)
- **COMPROMISE** (we both lose, we both win)
- **COMPETE** (I win, you lose)
- **COLLABORATE** (I win, you win)

A logical choice can put you in control of the situation and provides the means to resolve the conflict.

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# THE VIDEO PROGRAM

## 1. STRUCTURE

The *Conflict Resolution Strategies* video is structured in two parts.

The first part opens with some familiar conflicts found in a typical morning's rush, which then bring us, along with our heroine, Kim Calderone, into the highly-charged atmosphere of her work place.

Most participants will identify with these conflicts, even if they have never thought of them as actual conflicts.

Here we find the first learning point - determining if a problem is, or is not, a conflict.

We then follow Kim through her work day by depicting five different conflictual situations, which she solves using the five conflict resolution strategies.

Five action-packed vignettes, 2-3 minutes long each, are used to clearly illustrate each strategy, the behavior to use and the rationale of this training module.

Each vignette ends with supportive commentary and graphics. These are easy places to stop for emphasizing the learning points of the conflict resolution strategy presented.

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*"We often dive into conflicts as they arise with a make-it-up-as-we-go approach, based more on hope and good intentions than logic and strategy."*

The second part, the summary video-slide show, reiterates the learning points of each strategy with three minutes of graphics. This is another perfect place to stop, discuss and take notes.

We suggest that the leader view the entire video before the training session to determine where he / she believes it is best to interrupt the show for notes and discussion, based on his / her own criteria and issues specific to the individual work place.

## 2. EXERCISES

We suggest the leader use the following sequence for the training session assisted by the *Conflict Resolution Strategies* video:

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### A. View the video in its entirety

The leader can show the video in its entirety or can stop the tape during the key scenes or summary to emphasize the learning points.

### B. Discuss cases with the participants

During discussions, the leader should emphasize that all the scenarios are typical day-to-day conflicts that one faces on the job. Ask participants to share examples from their own experience.

Discuss conflict situations that participants successfully or unsuccessfully resolved. Which of the five categories would fit that particular conflict?

Have they faced a conflict situation that does not fit into any of the categories described?

After watching the show, would they treat that situation differently? Did the video throw a different light on the nature of that conflict?

The appropriateness of their responses in a series of actual or hypothetical workplace circumstances should be carefully considered. Discuss extreme cases.

Steps to use when analyzing a circumstance:

1. Determine value of the outcome and value of the relationship with the opponent.
2. Choose the appropriate strategy based on win / lose formula.
3. Apply strategy.

In any circumstance, flexibility is a must; resolutions and approaches will vary depending on each organization. One of the objectives of this training is to stimulate group discussion in a setting where these differences can be raised and understanding broadened.

Participants should be given time to analyze each situation presented by the group, then demonstrate an understanding of how to determine the most appropriate response for that business, organization, or individual.

The following five pages are meant to help the leader describe the nature of the conflict presented in each vignette, test the participants' understanding and stimulate discussion.

NOTE: The following questions and answers are for the leader only. A detachable, re-printable worksheet with the "questions only" can be found at the end of this guide. Duplicate as needed.

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### C. Summarize

The summary section of the video is meant to be used like a slide show. Each of the five conflict strategies are presented in order of their appearance. Each begins with a banner headline where it is convenient to stop the tape, if necessary. This is also a good time for participants to take notes.

### D. Hand out copies of the Participant's Worksheets, located at the end of the Leader's Guide

Have the participants answer the questionnaire to test understanding and reinforce learning.

NOTE: The Participant's Worksheets can be used directly after viewing the tape as a means to stimulate discussion.

# LEADER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

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**ACCOMMODATE (I lose, you win)****VIGNETTE #1****Q: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF KIM'S FIRST CONFLICT?**

Kim Calderone's first conflict on this typical work-day begins when one of her suppliers, Bob, calls and asks her for a favor. The conflict here lies in Kim's having to choose between her temporarily availing Bob her company's resources and Bob's need to solve his storage problem.

**Q: HOW DO WE DETERMINE THE VALUES AT STAKE IN ANY CONFLICT?**

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We ask these three questions:

1. What value do I put on the outcome of this conflict?
2. What value do I put on the relationship with the other person?
3. How do I balance these two issues?



With these questions in mind, let's look at Kim's choices.

**Q: WHAT DOES THE OUTCOME MEAN TO KIM?**

Bob's problem is the lack of storage. Kim has no storage problem. In fact, she has excess storage. She can *accommodate* Bob's request with no negative consequences. Therefore, the outcome is of little or no value to her.

**Q: WHAT DOES HER RELATIONSHIP WITH BOB MEAN TO KIM?**

Bob is a key supplier, so her relationship to Bob is important. It is reasonable for Kim to help an important supplier, since there are no negative economic consequences for Kim. *Accommodate* is appropriate in this example.

**Q: WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO ACCOMMODATE?**

*Accommodate* works best when the value of your relationship with the other party is more important than the outcome of the conflict situation. This resolution has no effect on Kim, so she placed a low value on it. But the value of her accommodation to Bob was very high, and that was more important to Kim than storage.

**Q: WHAT CAN DEVALUE AN ACCOMMODATION?**

Kim must not be too quick to *accommodate*, and she was careful not to devalue it by saying, "It doesn't matter to me" or "Whatever you say." She wants Bob to know that she chose to solve his problem - by being cooperative, not weak.

**Q: WHAT DID KIM GAIN BY ACCOMMODATING?**

Bob now "owes her one." So she can expect him to return the favor sometime in the future. This kind of quid pro quo is common amongst people who depend upon each other and may be an essential component of their ongoing relationship.

**AVOID (I Lose, You Lose)****VIGNETTE #2****Q: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF KIM'S SECOND CONFLICT?**

Kim's second conflict occurs in the conference room when her boss asks, "Kim, where do we stand on the Hargrave and Stonewall settlement?" Although we do not know the particulars of the "settlement", we discover that Kim is not fully prepared, and her opponent became angry and hung up on Kim. The conflict here is between Kim and a hostile opponent whom she is not prepared to deal with in the process of a settlement.

**Q: WHAT VALUE DOES KIM PLACE ON THE OUTCOME OF THIS "SETTLEMENT"?**

It is important enough that she is willing to lose this round, if it means her opponent will also lose this round. Her position is so strong that she can control who will lose - which is both of them, and that's fine with her. Winning the settlement is her goal. *Avoiding* her opponent at this moment moves her closer to that goal than engaging now. The outcome is very important.

**Q: WHAT VALUE DOES KIM PUT ON THE RELATIONSHIP?**

Relationship is of very little importance, at this time. That may change, and Kim will stop avoiding when that time comes.

**Q: WHY DO THEY DECIDE TO AVOID?**

Kim's boss suggests, and Kim agrees, that the *avoid* strategy will press her opponent to come to a reasonable settlement because the "deadline" works against them, and nothing good will come from arguing. If nothing else, it will give Kim's opponents time to "cool off" and her time to prepare. *Avoidance* is a temporary measure, and requires a good sense of timing.

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**Q: HOW DOES KIM GAIN THE ADVANTAGE BY AVOIDING?**

With each passing day, as the deadline draws near, her opponent's aggressive position becomes less sustainable. By *avoiding* this conflict she insures that her opponent will weaken, and she *avoids* ugly confrontations.

**Q: WHAT ACTION DID KIM TAKE TO INSURE SOME DEGREE OF AVOIDANCE?**

Kim scheduled a meeting as far in the future as Hargrave and Stonewall would agree. This not only increased the deadline pressure, but it gave her some needed time to prepare.

**Q: WHAT DID KIM GAIN?**

Kim increased the pressure on her opponent to negotiate while reducing the negative effects of his anger. Kim came out ahead, which may seem like a contradiction in an "everyone loses" proposition. Kim has actually strengthened her position at the expense of her opponent by consciously doing nothing. *Avoid* is good strategy for Kim. Some conflicts resolve themselves, while angry opponents cool down. You must *avoid* any conflicts with opponents you feel are dangerous or too powerful to negotiate with on a level playing field. *Avoid* conflicts you cannot win; learn to know when you are in a "no win" situation.

**Q: WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME OF THIS CONFLICT?**

Kim chose to give up this round, limit her opponent to a draw, and position herself to win the "settlement."

**COMPROMISE** (We Both win, We Both Lose)**VIGNETTE #3****Q: WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF CONFLICT WHERE KIM CHOSE TO COMPROMISE?**

Kim's third conflict came when a critical component, the 43L valves, ran out at a job site. When she calls her supplier, Morris, he tells her he cannot deliver any 43Ls because he is bogged down in filling her order for tube steel parts.

**Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS THE OUTCOME OF THIS CRISIS FOR KIM?**

The outcome is very important.

**Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS HER RELATIONSHIP WITH MORRIS?**

The relationship is very important.

**Q: WHY DID KIM CHOOSE TO COMPROMISE?**

There can be no resolution of this problem without Morris's help. To balance a situation where opposing needs are in conflict both parties have to give a little - the guiding principle of *compromise*.

**Q: WHAT DID THEY TRADE TO MAKE THE COMPROMISE WORK?**

Kim gives up her deadline on the tube steel parts; Morris gives up his production configuration and delivery schedule.

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**Q: WHAT DID THEY BOTH GAIN?**

Kim got her crews back to work; Morris got his crew on a schedule without overtime expenses. Although they have both given up something, they both will gain something else that's of commensurate value to them. Everyone wins by giving something up.

**Q: HOW MUCH TIME WAS INVESTED IN THE RESOLUTION?**

By *compromising*, they quickly found a position that worked for both of them. Flexibility, reasonableness and a clear statement of the problem from both sides lead to a speedy resolution. Exaggerated claims and other ploys to gain an advantage might have challenged the other party to do the same. This often leads to distrust, and the process quickly transforms into a competition.

**COMPETE ( I Win, You Lose)****VIGNETTE #4****Q: WHY IS COMPETE THE APPROPRIATE STRATEGY HERE?**

Kim's next conflict is a simple one. She has to choose between two bids on comparable dump-trucks. This is a typical situation where there can be only one winner. Kim will choose the best deal and that sales person will take-all. The losing bid will get nothing. Winner take all is the hallmark of the *compete* situation.

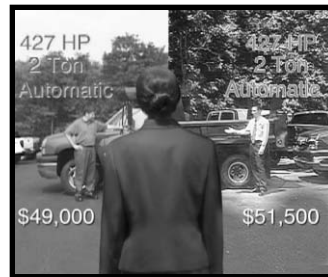
**Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS GETTING THE BEST DEAL? (THE OUTCOME)**

The outcome is very important.

**Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS HER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SALESPERSON?**

The relationship is of little or no importance.

Kim's only concern here is the outcome, getting the best truck at the best price. She accepts the best bid based on merit alone, without consideration of the sales rep.

**Q: WHEN IS COMPETE APPROPRIATE?**

*Competing* is appropriate when only one party can reach the desired outcome. Use the *compete* strategy when the outcome is extremely important, and relationship is of little or no importance.

**Q: WHAT PROBLEMS DOES THE COMPETE STRATEGY PRESENT?**

Overuse and inappropriate use can lead to a "win at all costs" attitude that will alienate co-workers, suppliers and clients.

*Competition* consumes lots of time and energy, so "pick you battles carefully"; they may not pay off over time.

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**COLLABORATE (I win, You win)****VIGNETTE #5****Q: WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF KIM'S CONFLICT WITH SUPERINTENDENT GARZA THAT LEAD TO A COLLABORATION?**

Kim and Garza clash over changes that will improve production, but put a heavy burden on Garza. Kim must persuade Garza to accept these changes, while Garza believes he is defending his plant and its workers. But before Kim has a chance to present her case, Garza blows his top.

**Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS THE OUTCOME TO KIM?**

The outcome is very important.

**Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS KIM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GARZA?**

The relationship is very important.

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**Q: WHY DID KIM CHOOSE COLLABORATE?**

When both the outcome and relationship are very important, *collaborate* will produce the best, and, often, mutually beneficial results.

**Q: HOW DID KIM DEAL WITH GARZA'S ANGER AND REGAIN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION?**

She demanded respect, refused to be intimidated and set the ground rules, or, she threatened to withdraw. (*Avoid*)

Kim employs, briefly, several strategies that support her *collaboration*. When Garza becomes confrontational, which Kim is unprepared for, she plays the *avoid* card by gathering up her papers and heading for the door. Garza quickly apologizes. As the *collaboration* proceeds, Kim seeks *accommodations* and offers *compromises*, knowing when to give and take.

**Q: WHY COLLABORATE?**

The collaborative process holds the highest potential to produce great results. *Collaboration* is the best way to resolve problems with people you work with daily as they tend to be those with whom you'll have important relationships and common or ongoing problems. Conflicts resolved through *collaboration* usually produce mutual benefits and a lot of good will.

**Q: IS THERE AN EMOTIONAL COMPONENT TO COLLABORATION?**

*Collaborations* fueled with trust, openness and respect lead to the most creative ways to solve problems. Both parties must feel that any idea they present can and will get a fair hearing. *Collaboration* is most satisfying because both parties feel they have reached a good outcome and their relationship is unaffected or even improved.

**Q: WHAT KIND OF INVESTMENT IN TIME AND ENERGY DOES COLLABORATION REQUIRE?**

*Collaboration* takes the greatest investment of time and energy. It should not be considered when a quick resolution is necessary, because the *collaborative* process takes time.

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**Q: ARE THERE ANY DANGERS IN COLLABORATION?**

*Collaboration* makes for the best results but that doesn't make it the best choice in all situations. Constant use of *collaboration* may give co-workers the impression that you need or want their input for every decision, which will hamper your ability to act in emergencies. *Collaborations* are the perfect way to disguise useless personal activity as productivity, wasting time chatting off the point. *Collaborate* when both the relationship and outcome are important.

# **PARTICIPANT'S WORKSHEETS**

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**VIGNETTE #1****ACCOMMODATE (I lose, you win)**PREVIEW  
ONLY**Q: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF KIM'S FIRST CONFLICT?**

Kim Calderone's first conflict on this typical work-day begins when one of her suppliers, Bob, calls and asks her for a favor. The conflict here lies in Kim's having to choose between her temporarily availing Bob her company's resources and Bob's need to solve his storage problem.

To determine which strategy is most appropriate ask these three questions:

- 1. WHAT VALUE DO I PUT ON THE OUTCOME OF THIS CONFLICT?**
- 2. WHAT VALUE DO I PUT ON THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OTHER PERSON?**
- 3. HOW DO I BALANCE THESE TWO ISSUES?**

With this in mind, let's ask some questions about Kim's choice to *accommodate*.

**Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS THE OUTCOME TO KIM?****Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS HER RELATIONSHIP WITH BOB?****Q: WHY DID KIM CHOOSE TO ACCOMMODATE?****Q: WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO ACCOMMODATE?****Q: WHAT CAN DEVALUE AN ACCOMMODATION?****Q: WHAT DID KIM GAIN BY ACCOMMODATING?**

**YOUR NOTES:**

**VIGNETTE #2****AVOID (I Lose, You Lose)**PREVIEW  
ONLY**Q: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF KIM'S SECOND CONFLICT?**

Kim's second conflict occurs in the conference room when her boss asks, "Kim, where do we stand on the Hargrave and Stonewall settlement?" Although we do not know the particulars of the "settlement", we discover that Kim is not fully prepared, and her opponent became angry and hung up on Kim. The conflict here is between Kim and a hostile opponent whom she is not prepared to deal with in the process of a settlement.

**Q: WHAT VALUE DOES KIM PLACE ON THE OUTCOME OF THIS "SETTLEMENT"?****Q: WHAT VALUE DOES KIM PUT ON THE RELATIONSHIP?****Q: WHY DO THEY DECIDE TO AVOID?****Q: HOW DOES KIM TAKE ADVANTAGE BY AVOIDING?****Q: WHAT ACTION DID KIM TAKE TO INSURE SOME DEGREE OF AVOIDANCE?****Q: WHAT DID KIM GAIN?****Q: WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME OF THIS CONFLICT?**

Kim chose to give up this round, limit her opponent to a draw, and position herself to win the "settlement".

**YOUR NOTES:**

**VIGNETTE #3****COMPROMISE** (We Both win, We Both Lose)**Q: WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF CONFLICT WHERE KIM CHOSE TO COMPROMISE?**

Kim's third conflict came when a critical component, the 43L valves, ran out at a job site. When she calls her supplier, Morris, he tells her he cannot deliver any 43Ls because he is bogged down in filling her order for tube steel parts.

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**Q: WHAT DID THEY TRADE TO MAKE THE COMPROMISE WORK?****Q: HOW MUCH TIME WAS INVESTED IN THE RESOLUTION?**

Exaggerated claims and other ploys to gain an advantage might have challenged the other party to do the same. This often leads to distrust and the process quickly transforms into a competition.

**YOUR NOTES:**

**VIGNETTE #4****COMPETE ( I Win, You Lose)****Q: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF KIM'S FOURTH CONFLICT?**

Kim's next conflict is a simple one. She has to choose between two bids on comparable dump-trucks. This is a typical situation where there can be only one winner. Kim will choose the best deal and that sales person will take-all. The losing bid will get nothing. Winner take all is the hallmark of the *compete* situation.

**Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS GETTING THE BEST DEAL? (THE OUTCOME)****Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS HER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SALESPERSON?****Q: WHEN IS COMPETE APPROPRIATE?**

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**Q: WHAT PROBLEMS DOES THE COMPETE STRATEGY PRESENT?**

Kim's only concern here is the outcome, getting the best truck at the best price. She accepts the best bid based on merit alone, without consideration of the sales rep.

Competition consumes lots of time and energy, so "pick you battles carefully"; they may not pay off over time.

**YOUR NOTES:**

**VIGNETTE #5****COLLABORATE (I win, You win)****Q: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF KIM'S LAST CONFLICT?**

Kim and Garza clash over changes that will improve production, but put a heavy burden on Garza. Kim must persuade Garza to accept these changes, while Garza believes he is defending his plant and its workers. But before Kim has a chance to present her case, Garza blows his top.

**Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS THE OUTCOME FOR KIM?****Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS KIM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GARZA?****Q: HOW DID KIM REGAIN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION?****Q: WHY COLLABORATE?**

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**Q: IS THERE AN EMOTIONAL COMPONENT TO COLLABORATION?****Q: WHAT KIND OF INVESTMENT IN TIME AND ENERGY DOES COLLABORATION REQUIRE?****Q: ARE THERE ANY DANGERS IN COLLABORATION?**

**YOUR NOTES:**