



Module 10.3.b Avoider Team

Conflict management styles do not solve conflict. Once you develop an understanding that differences of opinion are context specific, you can identify whether the persons involved are managing the conflict effectively. People have fifteen options when managing a conflict. When faced with a difference of opinion with others you choose from five management styles to settle the conflict. Your decision is usually predicated upon what style you are most comfortable with and have used many times in the past rather than the most effective style. Choosing the appropriate style is the major factor in whether the conflict is settled appropriately or not. People are usually unaware that they are choosing a style that they are either under using, over using or appropriately using. If in the survey the person's score is lower than 50% then the person under used the style, over 50% over used the style, and if the score is 50% used the style appropriately.

Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative – you do not immediately pursue your own concerns or those of the other person. You do not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

You may want to review why you over use Avoidance

Avoiding occurs when you try not to engage in a conflict issue with the other person. It is a lose-lose mode in which you decide to pursue neither your own nor the other's concerns.

Contributions: You are sensitive to the time demands and stress of conflict issues. Your caution can help your team steer clear of conflict issues that might take up more time than is merited. You may also promote prudence when the team encounters dangerous issues – for example, highly sensitive topics or political issues with hidden agendas. You may also help postpone matters when conditions are not yet right to address them.

Characteristics: You tend to see conflicts as intrusions or disruptions. Believing interruptions can divert energy from work and cause unnecessary stress. You have faith in using time wisely, addressing only important issues and only when conditions are right. You often regard team members as potential time sinks, so you like to keep meetings short and often defer them until their attention is freed from other tasks. You exercise prudence and caution because you value your time and being prepared. You try to avoid getting involved in 'messy' or dangerous issues, if possible.

When Especially Helpful:

1. When issues are relatively unimportant and not worth the team's time.
2. When conflict issues are potential disruptive or damaging to team goodwill, such as when there are personality issues or strong emotional issues.
3. When postponing would make a team discussion more productive - allowing time to prepare, allowing tempers to cool, etc.

Behaviors to Guard Against:

Missing Meetings: not attending team meetings you consider unimportant.

Avoiding Team Members: avoiding individuals you have issues with, not returning e-mails, calls, etc.

Withholding Information: not volunteering information on issues under discussion, avoiding vague and non-committal answers when asked.

Procrastinating: not addressing difficult issues, hoping they will disappear or resolve themselves, being inattentive to schedules and deadlines.

Foot-dragging: delaying implementation when a decision is made – “Are we really really sure?”

Reactions to Different Styles: As an avoider, you may appreciate the value of other styles when they clearly fit the situation and benefit the team. Likewise, people with different styles are likely to respect your contributions when they are clearly appropriate. However, both you and they may be sensitive to, even resent, some aspects of each other's styles.

In Teams:

Conflict Styles in Action

Behavior and Different Types of Issues in Teams:

Agenda: Missing meetings or not bringing up topics. “There is no point opening up that can of worms.”

Truth: Not sharing facts or opinions. “I'll stay out of this one.”

Goals: Not pursuing either person's goal “Let's just get this over with and get back to work.”

Action: Trying to postpone a decision. “Let's table the discussion until a better time.”

Foundations of the Conflict Styles: As an Avoider your perception of conflict and you team members' perceptions are relevant. When settling a conflict you will use your guiding principles and values and your team members will be doing the same. These perceptions, guiding principles and values could be an integral part of the conflict and each team member's perception could be different.

Perceptions of Conflict: A disruption that diverts energy from work and can cause unnecessary stress. Perception of Team Members: potential time sinks when conflicts arise.

Guiding Principles: Belief in pragmatism – being reasonable about what is possible in a situation.

Values: Moderation, pragmatism, reciprocity, and exchange.

Appropriate Use of Avoiding:

For Team Effectiveness: Managing time costs. You are sensitive to the time expense and stress of conflict issues. Your caution can help your team steer clear of conflict issues that might take up more time than they merit or pose significant dangers for the team.

Common Examples:

Avoiding people you find troublesome

Not engaging in issues that are unimportant, complex or dangerous

Postponing discussion until later

Benefits:

Reducing stress

Saving time

Steering clear of danger

Setting up more favorable conditions

Costs:

Declining working relationships: Work may not get accomplished if people avoid each other; hostile stereotypes are allowed to develop and fester

Resentment: Others whose concerns are being neglected may resent your avoiding; see it as evasive

Delays: Unaddressed issues cause delays, may keep recurring-taking up more time and causing more frustration than if faced earlier

Degraded communication and decision-making: People may walk on eggshells rather than speaking candidly and learning from each other

Deciding when to Avoid:

Try not to avoid people, avoid emotional conflicts:

Avoid issues of blame
Control your anger
Don't discuss personalities

Avoid issues when little can be gained: Issues that are not important are symptoms of other issues, that others can handle, are too sensitive, or you can't win.

Know when to postpone an issue: Finding time, gathering information, refocusing, taking a break, and changing the setting.

Behavioral Skills for Avoiding:

Deciding what is important:

Be clear about your goals for a meeting
Set joint goals if possible
Try to stick to those goals
Be on the lookout for new information

Avoiding without being invasive:

Give your reason
When postponing, set a time
Use inviting language

Breaking up the anger cycle:

Use your psychological boundaries
Give the other person the benefit of the doubt
Discharge your anger safely
Watch your connotations
Use humor to diffuse tension

Avoiding Uses:

1. When an issue is trivial, of only passing importance, or when other more important issues are pressing.
2. When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns – e.g., when you have low power or you are frustrated by something that would be very difficult to change (national policies, someone's personality structure, etc.).
3. When the potential damage of confronting a conflict outweighs the benefits of its resolution.
4. To let people cool down – to reduce tensions to a productive level and to regain perspective and composure.
5. When gathering more information outweighs the advantages of an immediate decision.
6. When others can resolve the conflict more effectively.
7. When the issue seems tangential or symptomatic of another more basic issue.

If you scored High in Avoiding:

1. Your coordination suffers because people have trouble getting your inputs on issues.
2. It often appears that people are "walking on eggshells." (Sometimes a dysfunctional amount of energy can be devoted to caution and the avoiding of issues, indicating that issues need to be faced and resolved.)
3. When decisions on important issues are made by default.

If you scored Low in Avoiding:

1. Do you find yourself hurting people's feelings or stirring up hostilities? (You may need to exercise more discretion in confronting issues or more tact in framing issues in nonthreatening ways. Tact is partially the art of avoiding potentially disruptive aspects of an issue.)
2. Do you often feel harried or overwhelmed by a number of issues? (You may need to devote more time to setting priorities – deciding which issues are relatively unimportant and perhaps delegating them to others.)

How Avoiders Interact amongst other Styles on a Team:

Competitors

How you may see others	How others may seem you
Others may appear rash – rushing into an issue before they understand the cost and risks	You may seem to reticent or timid – too cautious to take a risk by standing up and being counted
Others may seem to be troublemakers – stirring things up and disrupting the team’s activities	You may appear to ignore important issues – leaving that burden to others
Others may appear to be squeaky wheels – using up too much of the team’s time on their personal agendas	You may try to avoid others when they try to force you to deal with an issue

Collaborators

How you may see others	How others may seem you
Others may seem prone to long, time consuming discussions of the issues	You may seem uninterested in getting to the bottom of team problems
Others may appear intrusive – prying into your own matters and interrupting your work	You may seem as keeping information to yourself – withholding useful data
Others may appear to eager to open up dangerous or complex issues	You may seem too pessimistic to seek solutions – allowing problems to continue and grow

Compromisers

How you may see others	How others may seem you
Others may seem to push you to make or accept an offer before you are ready	You may seem to be delaying a settlement – holding the team back
Others penchant for exchanging concessions may seem like a tiresome game to you	You may seem unwilling to engage in the necessary give and take
Others bargaining may seem to expend more energy than a compromise settlement is worth	You may appear to be losing out – leaving your issues unsettled and getting nothing

Accommodators

How you may see others	How others may seem you
Others may appear to be too concerned with pleasing people at the expense of their own efforts	You may seem to invest too little time in building working relationships – squandering your social capital
Others may seem to sympathetic – encouraging others to vent their complaints and gripes	You may seem to ignore resentments – allowing them to fester and become destructive
Others may seem unable to protect themselves and their time enough	You may seem unresponsive to team members' concerns and detached from the team

Dealing Constructively with Other Styles

With Competitors:

1. Recognize that there are times when it is important to take a firm stand – listen to competitors' positions to see if they are justifiable
2. Learn to give competitors the feedback they need to tell whether their position is supported by their team members
3. When you feel the time isn't right to take a firm stand on an issue, explain why

With Collaborators:

1. Recognize that many important conflict issues can be, and need to be, resolved – allow collaborators time to raise and dig into issues
2. Learn to give collaborators the information they need to problem solve – without being resentful
3. When you think a problem solving discussion has taken too much time or is going nowhere, point that out, suggest a reasonable time limit for a discussion

With Compromisers:

1. Recognize that compromise solutions are often good enough on nonvital matters, and better than nothing – listen to compromisers' suggestions about practical settlements
2. Learn to give and take without having to be perfectly prepared, especially if the stakes aren't high – you can often save time by getting a quick, reasonable settlement and moving on
3. When you feel that bargaining and compromise are not worth the time, explain why – e.g. when other matters are more pressing or the issue is too risky or unimportant

With Accommodators:

1. Recognize that social capital is important – pay attention to accommodators' rationales for attending to others' feelings and doing favors
2. Learn to allow others to get feelings off their chest when it's important to them, without impatience or resentment
3. When you judge that too much time is being spent on venting or socializing, explain why it is time to move on – don't just withdraw without an explanation

References

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