Understanding conflict

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument
Dimensions of behaviour in conflict situations

- **Assertiveness** – The extent to which individuals attempt to satisfy their own concerns

- **Cooperativeness** - The extent to which individuals attempt to satisfy the other person’s concerns

Blake & Mouton 1964
Five methods of dealing with conflict

- Assertive
- Un-assertive
- Un-cooperative
- Cooperative

Images: Shark, Fox, Turtle, Bear
Using the TKI

- We all use each of the styles but usually have a preference for 2 or 3 of them
- Be aware of your own styles
- Observe the styles of others
- Context, context, context
- Practice using less preferred styles
Competing  (I win - you lose)

Characteristics

• Pursuit of own objectives regardless of others
• Use of power
• May lead to affective conflict
• May cause resentment

When to use?

• Emergencies – quick & decisive action needed
• Important and unpopular issues
• When you know that you are right (important issues)
• To defend yourself against others who are taking advantage
Collaborating (I win - you win)

Characteristics

• Working with others to find a mutually satisfactory solution
• Detailed examination of the issue to uncover concerns
• Involves cognitive conflict
• May be time consuming

When to use?

• When compromise is not acceptable to either party
• To gain commitment to a decision
• To protect or mend relationships
• To merge perspectives
Avoiding  (Neither of us wins)

Characteristics

• Neglect own concerns as well as the other person’s
• Conflict remains unresolved
• Delaying tactic

When to use?

• Hopeless situations that are beyond your control/power
• Trivial situations, especially when time is short
• To let people cool off
• When others can resolve the conflict more effectively
Accommodating  (I lose - you win)

Characteristics

• The opposite of competing
• Self sacrifice
• Selfless generosity
• Push over, doormat, etc

When to use?

• When it matters far more to the other person
• Build up social credits
• When you are outmatched and losing!
• When preserving harmony is particularly important
• To develop subordinates
Compromising (Middle ground)

Characteristics

• Intermediate to assertiveness and cooperativeness
• Middle-ground position
• Splitting the difference
• A fudge?

When to use?

• To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues
• Two opponents of equal power strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals
• When under time pressure
• A back-up mode to collaboration or competition