



## The Conflict Management Strategies Matrix

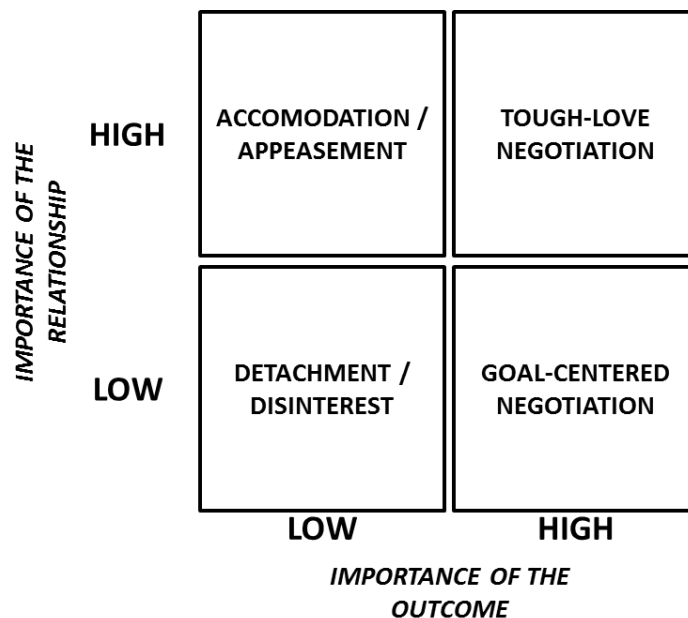
Four key strategies to use when managing conflict, and when to use them

by [Andrew Cooke](#), [Blue Sky GPS](#)

When assessing what strategy to use in managing the conflict there are two key criteria:

- the importance of the *outcome* and
- the importance of the *relationship*.

Their relative importance will vary with each situation.



The four quadrants in the above matrix are:

- **Detachment/Disinterest.** You don't care about the outcome or the relationship.
- **Accommodation/Appeasement.** Keeping the relationship going is far more important to you than achieving your personal goal. In this kind of conflict, you may accommodate the other person's interests. Accommodation approaches can be habit forming. Being flexible about your personal goals is important, but putting yourself second to all others can be an ineffectual stance.



- **Tough-Love Negotiation.** You place equally high value on your goal and the relationship. These conflicts are often difficult as you look to create a 'win-win' situation.
- **Goal-Centered Negotiation.** You don't care whether the other person likes you, whether the relationship continues or how badly the other person feels; you just want to win. You are prepared to forgo the relationship

In managing conflict you need to be aware of, and develop the necessary cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills that will allow you think, calm down, slow down and engage with the conflict constructively.

When faced with conflict, people respond in a variety of ways. They think about what is happening. They experience emotional reactions that are influenced by the ways they view and how they interpret the conflict. Finally, they also take action to address the concerns that the conflict raises.

Three other factors that will influence your style of handling conflict: power, emotionality and time.

- **Power.** The extent to which a person has power will vary with the context of the situation, and the relative of power of the others involved in conflict. These interactions will affect how the conflict is handled. People derive their power, both formally and informally, through five main sources:
  - *Reward power:* using compensation to drive people to accomplish more than expected.
  - *Coercive power:* convincing people to do things against their will.
  - *Legitimate power:* using their role or position within an organization to garner respect.
  - *Expert power:* exercising influence because they are viewed as knowledgeable in an area.
  - *Referent power:* compelling people to act in a certain way because they are attracted to you or want to be like you.



- **Emotionality.** Certain strategies are typically accompanied by more expressed emotion, and certain emotions can influence which strategies we use. For example, tough-love is hard requiring the ability to express, tolerate and manage emotions.
- **Time.** Here we find ourselves having to cope with what is important and what is urgent. Often people fall victim to a sense of urgency and compromise on what is important. For example, you may lack the time you need to involve everyone and gain their commitment in managing a conflict. Time, especially the lack of it, can change the dynamics of the conflict.

Being aware of these different strategies is important in two ways – firstly, it helps you determine what kind of strategies you want to adopt in managing the conflict; secondly, it provides you a tool by which to assess what strategies the other party may adopt.

Try these three steps in developing insights in situations where you currently experience conflict:

**Step 1:** For yourself: where are you now and where do you want to be? Mark it out on the matrix.

**Step 2:** For the other party(s): where are they now and where do you them to be? Mark it out on the matrix.

**Step 3:** What do you need to do to move each other to a suitable location on the matrix that will create a “win-win” situation? Identify the key strategies and actions.

What have you found out and what will you do?

### **About Andrew Cooke and Blue Sky GPS (Growth & Profit Solutions)**

#### **Andrew Cooke**

*An experienced executive coach, business facilitator, and management consultant Andrew has more than 25 years' national and international experience, working across a range of industries and businesses. He is passionate in helping people, teams and companies to unlock their individual and collective potential, enabling them to achieve their personal and business goals and, in turn, to help them unlock the potential of others.*



*Andrew has extensive experience in dealing with both blue-chip and start-up companies, and has had extensive international experience in the UK, the Middle East and Ireland across a range of industries.*

*He has post-graduate business qualifications with a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from the London Business School. He is an accredited associate coach for Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching in coaching executives and leaders.*

**Blue Sky GPS (Growth & Profit Solutions)**

Andrew runs [Blue Sky GPS \(Growth & Profit Solutions\)](#), working with individuals, teams, groups and corporate so they can unlock their potential, that of others, and create a life and a job they love and choose to lead.

Through customized development programmes using experiential learning, backed by group workshops, individual one-to-one coaching and on-going support the individual and group development needs are addressed, the skills and capabilities are unlocked and the people can grow and achieve both personal and business outcomes on a sustainable basis. His blog, Growth and Profit, can be found at <http://growthandprofit.me>.

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