

Family Business & Dealing with Conflict



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Conflict is a normal part of any business, particularly a family business. If unresolved conflict can be very destructive emotionally and financially.

A key to business and family success is to understand that conflict is a normal part of business and life. To reach full potential and deal with the emotional aspects a structured approach to conflict situations is required.

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict model (TKI) was developed to provide a framework for a person to assess their personal behaviour in conflict situations. A conflict situation is where the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible and difficult to resolve. In these situations the person's behavior is described along two basic dimensions:

1. assertiveness - the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns, and
2. cooperativeness - the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

These two dimensions of behavior can be used to define five methods of dealing with conflict as described in the diagram and further below.

Avoiding

Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative. When avoiding, an individual does not immediately pursue his or her own concerns or those of the other person. He or she does 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.

Competing

Competing is assertive and uncooperative, a power-oriented mode. When competing, an individual pursues his or her own concerns at the other person's expense, using whatever power seems appropriate to win his or her position. Competing might mean standing up for your rights, defending a position you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.

Accommodating

Accommodating is unassertive and cooperative—the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is

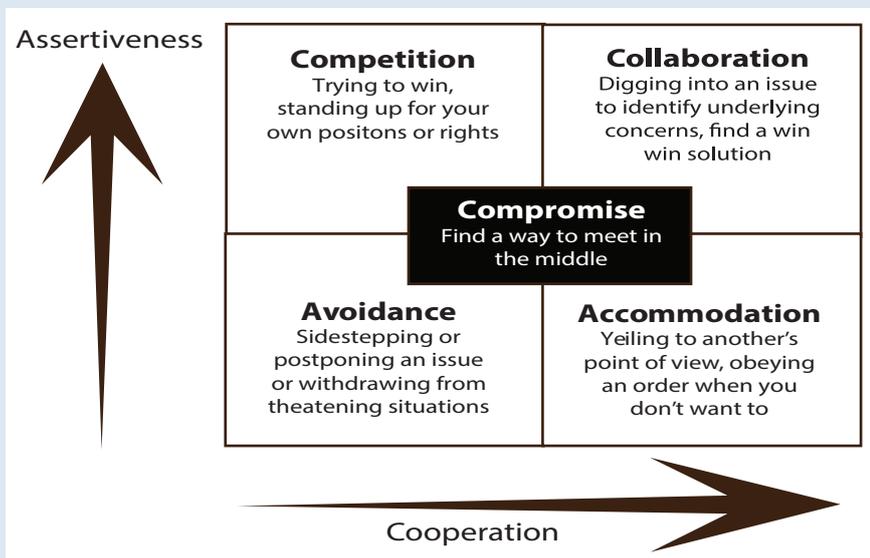
an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.

Compromising

Compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. When compromising, the objective is to find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. Compromising falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating, giving up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding but doesn't explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

Collaborating

Collaborating is both assertive and cooperative. When collaborating, an individual attempts to work with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both. It involves digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative that meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, resolving some condition that would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.



How are the Five Handling Conflict Modes Used?

We are all capable of using each of the five conflict handling modes depending on the situation. There is generally no single, rigid style of dealing with conflict however an individual may use some modes better than others.

Use productive conflict solving strategies such as:

1. Openness – state your feelings and thoughts openly
 - React openly
 - Own your thought and feelings
 - Address the issues. Don't attack the person
2. Empathy – put yourself in the other person's shoes
3. Supportiveness – describe the behaviours with which you have difficulty
 - State your position tentatively – demonstrate flexibility and willingness to change
4. Positiveness – capitalise on agreements
 - Express positive feelings about the other person
 - Be positive about the prospect of conflict resolution
5. Equality – treat the other person as an equal
 - Give each other equal time
 - Express respect for the inevitable differences

As always, prevention is better than cure. This means having a structure and process in place to enable open communication.

Also refer to our flyer titled Farm Planning: Family and Business Dealing with the Issues.

We offer a free no obligation meeting to review your situation. Call us today on 1300 204 781 and take advantage of this valuable

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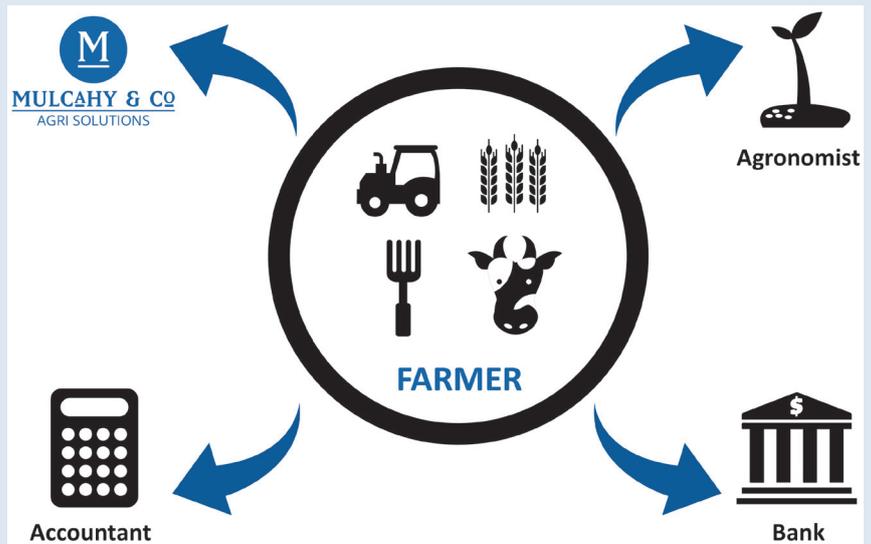
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