The Myers-Briggs Company

The TKI® Tool

More than **conflict management**

Practical ways to use personality insights to maximize organizational performance

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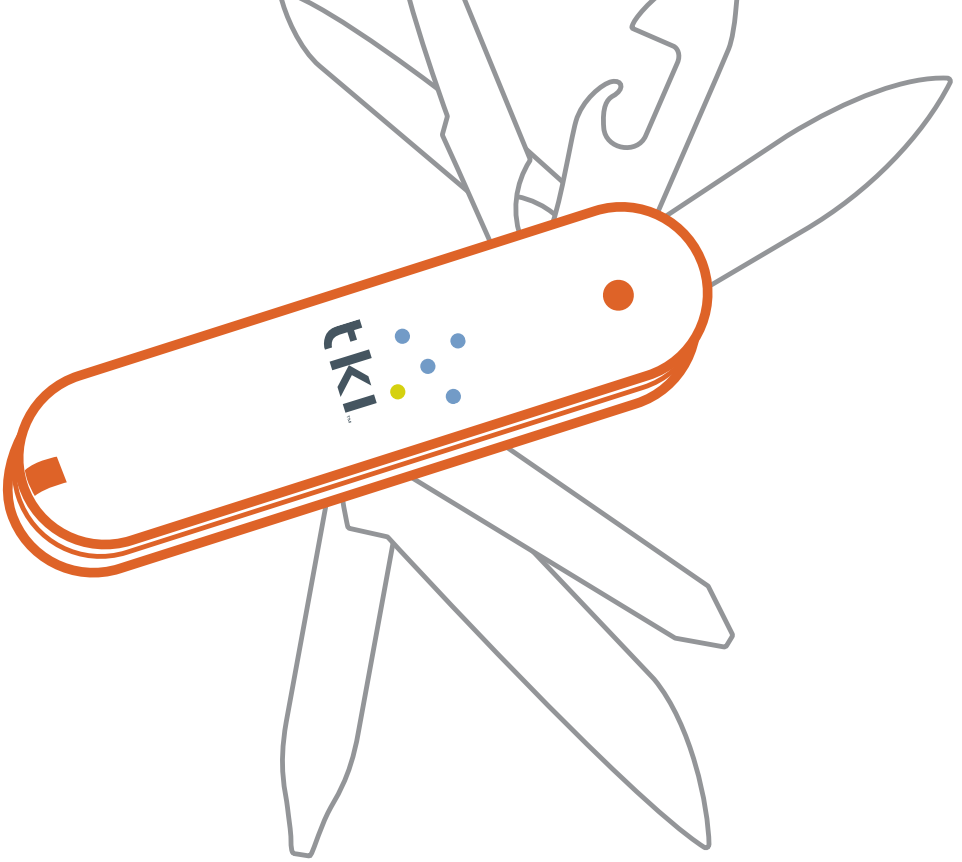

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Organizational challenges no match for the TKI® assessment

The *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* (TKI®) is the world's best-selling conflict management assessment. It's a valuable tool that helps people understand how different conflict-handling styles affect interpersonal and group dynamics—and how they can choose the appropriate style for any situation.

Watch this entertaining video illustrating four tips for conflict management.

http://bit.ly/4tipsforconflictmgmt

The TKI assessment can also be used for so much more than resolving conflict. For example, this powerful tool helps organizations address challenges such as:

- **Improving communication.**
- **Boosting influence and persuasion capabilities.**
- **Increasing engagement.**
- **Retaining employees.**
- **Reducing overall costs of increasing team efficiency.**

Up close and personal

In addition to helping organizations, the TKI framework can also serve as a personal improvement tool to help you:

- **Deal with change**

  Change and conflict are generally a package deal. Using the TKI to understand the different conflict-handling behaviors can help you improve communication, which paves the way for everyone to find solutions, achieve business goals, and decrease stress.

- **Work better in teams**

  Team dynamics are everything in business. The TKI can improve how your team functions by helping members reconcile differences and collaborate more effectively. In addition, the TKI Team Report was designed for consultants and team leaders alike to easily understand team dynamics when it comes to managing conflict.

- **Develop your leadership capabilities**

  By increasing your understanding of difference and expanding your skills in change management and conflict management, you become a better leader.

- **Improve your performance**

  In today's competitive environment, organizations need people who are dedicated to continuous improvement in themselves and others. The TKI helps you identify and eliminate barriers to effective performance and communication.

- **Increase self-awareness, manage stress**

  Learning about your preferred conflict-handling style and how you can use other styles in different situations will have a positive effect on your ability to manage stress.

TKI used in physician leadership development programs

> The *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* is used as a part of our physician leadership development programs. We've continued incorporating the TKI because it's easy to use and understand and has validity.

Learning and Development Manager,
Large Enterprise Healthcare Company

Enterprise healthcare company uses TKI to increase employees' self-awareness

> The TKI increases self-awareness for participants, who are then able to adapt their conflict-handling style more effectively depending on the situation.

Organizational Development Consultant,
Large Enterprise Healthcare Company

Trend #1: Change management—the new reality

Conflict often arises when dealing with change. Change and conflict are a package deal because in times of change, people's perspectives on how the change should be implemented or the results of the change often differ.

In addition, perception of change is different at every level. The CEO may view the change in terms of the bottom line, whereas managers see it in terms of processes and outcomes. Individual contributors may look at the exact same change and only see how it now makes their tasks more difficult, or they may be concerned about workload or job security. Add to that

the different ways people handle conflict and it's no wonder their first reaction to change is generally resistance.

"When I was doing a change management project in Barcelona the culture was very conflict averse because, in that country's history prior to 1974, if you spoke up or disagreed with those in government power, you'd be put in jail. And that was in the culture of this organization—people had learned not to speak up," **said Ralph Kilmann,** co-author of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI).

"I gave them all the TKI assessment and lo and behold, they came out very high on avoiding and accommodating. Throughout the organization. So, for two years, we had exercises and activities to work through different ways of handling conflict. We talked about what the unwritten rules were. Then we moved to what norms would help the people succeed. These people were hired for their expertise, and knowledge, and you have to share your ideas. What can we do to help everyone feel supported when they speak to better resolve complex issues?"

"Once we were done, you couldn't stop them from talking. I used to joke that it was so quiet when I first got here, now everyone is sharing their ideas and opinions."

But learning to better manage conflict means that the next time a big change comes around, you'll be better prepared. And less stressed.

Want to learn more about change management? Download Psychology of Change in the Hybrid Workplace.

The TKI assessment helps organizations address change in many areas, including:

- **Employee turnover**
- **Technology**
- **Products and marketing**
- **Customer relationships**
- **Organizational structure**
- **Integration**
- **Mission and strategy**
- **Culture**
- **Knowledge**
- **Policies and processes**

Nonprofit managers use TKI to address internal changes and challenges

> **Using the TKI, managers have been better able to address the changes within their departments and challenges their teams are facing.**

Learning and Development Consultant, Nonprofit Organization

Trend #2:
Employee engagement—no longer just a “nice to have”

Every year companies spend billions of dollars to keep their employees engaged—for good reason. When employees are engaged, challenged, and meeting their growth goals, they are more committed to the organization’s success and less likely to resign.

Retaining employees is important because a high turnover rate results in lower productivity, overworked staff, and loss of institutional knowledge. Plus, there’s the high cost of recruiting, interviewing, and training—some estimates are as high as 150% of the employee’s annual salary and up to 300% of an executive’s annual salary.

Employee engagement also has a dramatic impact on an organization's overall performance. One study examining the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance found that there's a strong correlation between employee engagement and customer loyalty, productivity and profitability, employee turnover, employee and customer safety, absenteeism, loss, and disability. (Harteret et al., 2013).

Despite these overwhelming benefits of engagement, Gallup research found that of the 100 million people in America in full-time jobs:

- **34% of employees are engaged and inspired at work.**
- **16% of employees are actively disengaged and actively spread discontent.**
- **The remaining 50% are not engaged.**

The TKI can help organizations engage employees by helping them deal with conflict. The tool is used to assess an employee's typical behavior in conflict situations and provide detailed information about how to effectively use five different conflict-handling modes, or styles. Equipped with this information, employees become less stressed, more inspired, and inevitably more engaged.

Trend #3:
Conflict is perceived negatively

> **To engage in productive conflict has ONE purpose—to produce the best possible solution in shortest period of time. Healthy conflict is a time saver.**
>
> **Patrick Lencioni,** *business author and speaker*

Why does seeing conflict positively matter? Because conflict is crucial for a team's development, performance, and health. If you define conflict simply as when two or more ideas aren't in alignment, then conflict becomes the starting point for creativity and striving for a best solution. Without conflict, teams would stagnate.

However, our recent research report **(Conflict at Work)** shows many individuals still view conflict negatively:

- **52% had a mixed response to 'Is conflict positive or negative?'**
- **31% said that conflict always or generally gave negative results.**
- **Men were more likely to see conflict positively than women. 14% of men mentioned feeling 'excited, energized, or challenged' by conflict, but only 4% of women did.**
- **People with a preference for Extraversion saw themselves as significantly better at managing conflict than people with a preference for Introversion.**

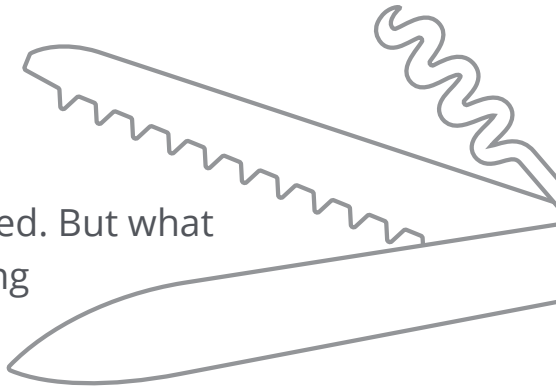
What happens when teams lack the capacity for healthy conflict?

Stuck at storming

In Bruce Tuckman's model of team development, there are four stages: **Forming, Storming, Performing and Norming.**

Stage one (Forming) describes the typical behaviors of a new group or team as they come together. People start to find their place, tend to perform individually, are probably overpolite, and are perhaps a little unsure or unclear of their roles.

Stage two (Storming) describes the challenges and stormier relations that emerge when team members move past the cautious participation of the Forming stage. Storming is when team members start to express views and opinions more readily. It's also where conflict is likely to appear first.



In Tuckman's model, Performing is conditional on Storming being resolved. But what makes teams get stuck in the Storming stage? One reason is not being able to resolve conflicts.

The quote on page 12 comes from Patrick Lencioni, author of the best-selling book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable.*

In his model, an effective team fully understands and overcomes the five dysfunctions of a team. To meet its potential and truly behave like a team, all five dysfunctions need to be overcome.

Absence of trust

The first dysfunction is absence of trust. In Lencioni's view, trust is the bedrock for all teams. Having trust means team members can be vulnerable with each other, knowing that those vulnerabilities won't be used against them.

Without trust, there is no team.

The next dysfunction—the second dysfunction of a team—is fear of conflict.

Fear of conflict

The fact that fear of conflict appears so early in this model shows how fundamental it is to team success. Fear of conflict will tend towards absence of conflict. Lencioni also describes this dysfunction as artificial harmony.

Teams with this quality will:

- Have boring meetings.
- Create environments where back-channel politics and personal attacks thrive.
- Ignore controversial topics that are critical to team success.
- Fail to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of team members.
- Waste time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management.

This has a direct impact on the third dysfunction of a team, which is lack of commitment. A team that collectively agrees but individually or privately disagrees with the team's decision simply cannot commit to it. At least, not with any authenticity.

Groupthink

Groupthink might sound like one of George Orwell's Newspeak words from his dystopian novel 1984, but it was popularized by Irving Janis, a social psychologist, in the early 1970s.

The more a team or group of people is similar, friendly, and familiar with each other, the less likely they are to challenge each other. This is the essence of groupthink, and it refers specifically to decision-making.

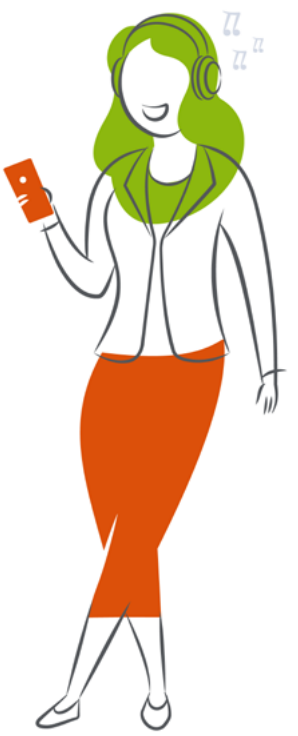
In this situation, agreement gives the impression of everyone being on the same page. And, on one level, they are—but for the wrong reason.

Agreement hasn't been reached through critical discourse or exploring different perspectives. It's been reached because preserving interpersonal harmony is the priority, not the work-related interests and objectives of the team.

Speaking up

If groupthink sounds too sinister a concept for office workers, what about simply speaking up?

Dr. Gail Fann Thomas, in **The Myers-Briggs Company podcast episode on conflict management**, says, "There's been a lot of really good research lately about people not speaking up, and there can be a lot of reasons why people don't speak up. I do a lot of coaching with helping people speak up, or coaching with senior leaders who created some kind of an atmosphere that people don't want to speak up because they're so strong and competing, or they've got such strong ideas that no one's going to bother."



And, if no-one's speaking up, we can be fairly sure there's no listening going on either. At least, not the deep, active listening that builds trust.

No conflict on the team?

Should we beware the team that looks too good to be true?

While it seems contradictory to learn conflict management skills when there is no conflict, it could also be exactly the right

reason for gaining skills. The above examples show the flipside of harmony and the potential consequences of effortless consensus on team health. They help team members see that conflict really does have value.

And if conflict has a place in a well-functioning team, conflict management skills do too.

Want to learn more about healthy conflict?

Listen to The Myers-Briggs Company Podcast episode on conflict management

Learn about the **new TKI Team Report,** designed specifically for helping teams understand their individual and collective team conflict styles

American Farm Bureau Federation **increases leadership effectiveness**

Challenge

- Increase leadership effectiveness

Results

- Increased leadership effectiveness by increasing self-awareness of team members

"The TKI is a great instrument to use in training and development with our members. It is simple and easy to understand. It integrates well when using it in conjunction with the MBTI® assessment . . . it is a great way to add an additional layer of self-awareness for team members."

John Torres, *Director, Leadership Development, American Farm Bureau Federation*

PR/marketing agency **facilitates remote employee communication**

Challenge

- Facilitate communication of remote employees working in four different geographic locations to enable faster decision making

Results

- Improved speed of team decision making by 10%–30%
- Improved quality of strategy and content
- Increased client satisfaction

> **"Deciding on a single strategy from multiple contributors inevitably leads to conflict, especially when highly creative individuals are involved. It's even more difficult when those individuals are working in four different cities and must come to consensus on a conference call. The TKI taught us how to recognize and respect our various ways of dealing with conflict, thus making it easier to reach common ground in less time."**

Mar Junge, *Principal, c3PR PR/Marketing Agency*

Global 500 construction company **decreases organizational conflict**

Challenges

- Decrease conflict within the organization
- Increase employee satisfaction
- Improve communication
- Improve influence and persuasion capabilities of employees

Results

- Improved team efficiency by 11%–20%
- Resolved team conflict
- Resolved peer-to-peer conflict
- Increased leadership effectiveness
- Resolved individual performance challenges
- Resolved team performance challenges

“We used the TKI in a first-pass training for our supervisors. This was a very strong tool that helped enable our supervisors to be better leaders.”

Professional at a Global 500 Construction Company

S&P 500 financial services company **decreases conflict**

Challenges

- Decrease conflict within the organization
- Improve communication
- Improve influence and persuasion capabilities of employees

Results

- Resolved team conflict
- Resolved peer-to-peer conflict
- Improved speed of team decision making
- Resolved team performance challenges
- Recouped its investment in the TKI in 12–24 months

"I would recommend this tool to others, and I have. It's easy to use, participants receive immediate results, and it's all coordinated electronically. I also like the feature of having a facilitator guide to use with the tool."

Professional at an S&P 500 Financial Services Company

Educational institution **improves communication**

Challenges

- Improve communication
- Improve influence and persuasion capabilities of employees

Results

- Recouped its investment in the TKI in 3-6 months
- Decreased team conflict by 21–35%
- Resolved peer-to-peer conflict
- Increased leadership effectiveness
- Improved team decision-making speed and efficiency by 21-35%
- Resolved individual performance challenges

“Using the TKI, the staff was able to transition away from destroying one another’s personal character during conflict to a greater understanding of what motivates one another’s reactions to conflict. As a result, they have deliberately modified their conflict style for greater effectiveness.”

Representative, Educational Institution Staff

Ultimate versatility

The strength of the TKI conflict management assessment lies in its rock-solid reliability and its ability to be used throughout an organization to help improve relationships and organizational performance. Think about making the TKI tool an essential element for your next:

1. Team-building exercise
2. Employee annual review
3. New supervisor training
4. Executive onboarding
5. Partner development and coaching

Telecommunications company uses TKI for team building, leadership development

“We use the TKI in either team settings or leadership development settings. It’s fun and interesting for the participants, and they learn a fairly simple model that they can remember after the training. People still use the language after the training, so I know they are retaining some valuable knowledge. It’s mostly beneficial for knowing about the different approaches to conflict. Then afterward you can help people develop skills.”

Leadership Development Professional, Large Enterprise Telecommunications Services Company

Retail company increases leadership effectiveness

“My company uses the TKI as a part of its leadership development program. Not only are participants in this program better able to detect differences in others and adapt their conflict style accordingly, but they also become aware of their preferred conflict style.”

Learning and Development Manager, Large Enterprise Retail Company

Whether you're a people manager looking to build your team's communication skills or an HR professional looking for an opportunity to help employees learn and stay engaged, the TKI tool may be a great fit for your needs. We surveyed current TKI tool customers to ask them what their primary reasons were for purchasing this conflict management tool. Here's what they told us:

TKI top purchasing drivers

Note: This was a multiple-choice question; response percentages may not add up to 100.

U.S. cellular corp. creates quicker paths to business results

> The TKI has helped our people 'lean in' to conflict to gain better understanding [of the situation], expand perspective, and create quicker paths to business results.

Maureen Talley, *Organizational Development Consultant, U.S. Cellular Corp.*

Retail company associates learn to effectively influence supervisors

> In our experience, the TKI helps associates who have an avoiding/accommodating style learn to more effectively influence supervisors, who usually have a preference for competing.

Learning Development Director, S&P 500 Retail Company

Want to learn more about the TKI tool?

Visit the TKI tool page **here** to learn more about how you can use this conflict management tool with your people or in your organizations.

Want more for your company?

Maybe you have big-picture questions about how to manage change, transform leadership, or build more cohesive teams to improve your organization's performance. Or maybe you'd appreciate bouncing ideas about retention, selection, or leadership development off someone who understands your needs.

Contact us today. The Myers-Briggs Company's Professional Services group provides easy, practical methods of using assessments and services that solve specific business problems and maximize ROI for training and development investments. Follow the links below to find your optimal solution.

Leadership & coaching
Team building
Conflict management
Career exploration
Selection
Retention

Learn more here

About The Myers-Briggs Company

In our fast-changing world, your edge lies in harnessing 100 percent of your talent—at work, at home, and everywhere in between. The Myers-Briggs Company helps organizations worldwide improve teams, develop inspirational leaders, and solve the most perplexing people challenges. We empower individuals to be the best versions of themselves by enriching their understanding of themselves and others. As a Certified B Corporation, The Myers-Briggs Company is a force for good. And we're ready to help you succeed.

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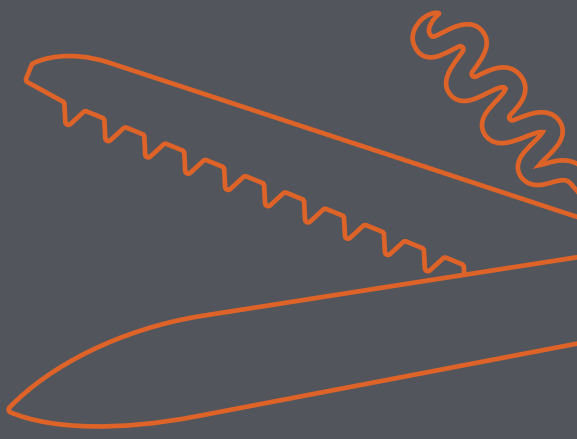

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