

# Kilmanns Organizational Conflict Instrument

*Personalized  
KOCI Report for*

*Amanda Jones*

*May 22, 2020*

**RALPH H. KILMANN**

**CO-CREATOR OF THE THOMAS-KILMANN  
CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT (TKI)**

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# KILMANN ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT INSTRUMENT

## Overview of Your Personalized KOCI Report

How well do your needs and interests fit with your organization's goals and procedures? Asked a bit differently, are you in alignment with your organization or...do you often find yourself at odds—in conflict—with what your organization expects from you?

This assessment tool reveals the “systems conflicts” that exist between you and your organization, which include both the formal and informal systems, as well as the processes and procedures that take place within those systems. And just how these individual/organizational differences are resolved not only determines your performance and satisfaction, but also determines the survival and success of your organization.

In **PART 1**, you were first asked to indicate how often you experience the negative effects from a variety of systems conflicts in your organization.

In **PART 2**, you were asked to indicate the relative frequency that you use different conflict-handling modes to address those systems conflicts.

*"I must create a system, or be enslaved by another man's."*

William Blake, poet, circa 1800

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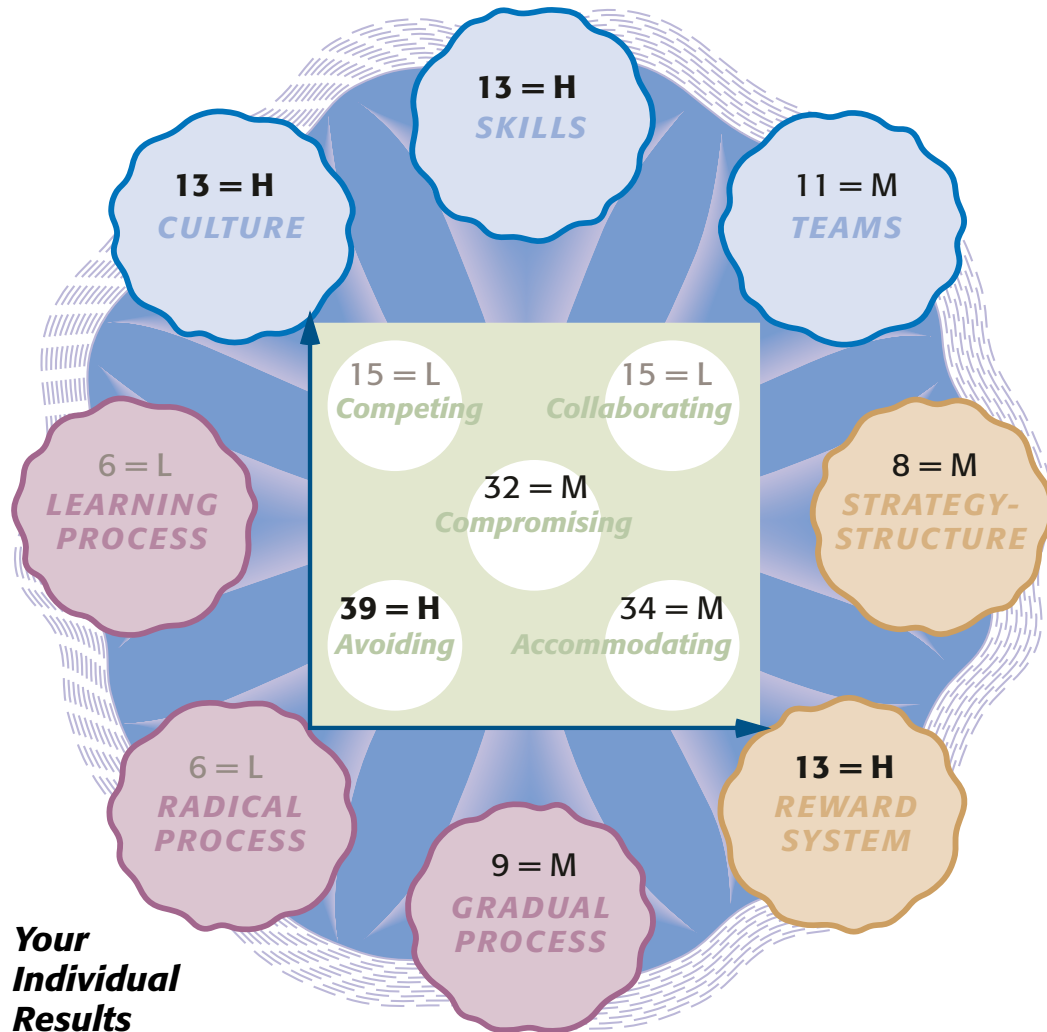
## Displaying All Your Scores on the Quantum Wheel

On the next page is the "Quantum Wheel" (also called the KOCI Graph). This elaborate diagram displays all your scores from Part 1 and Part 2 of this instrument, so you can become more aware of which conflict modes you tend to use the most (and which conflict modes you tend to use the least) while addressing the most negatively experienced systems conflicts in your work group and organization.

To help interpret your results for the *eight systems conflicts* (shown as the SPOKES on a Quantum Wheel): If any score is between **3 and 6**, an "L" is included to designate that particular score as relatively Low. If any score is between **7 and 11**, an "M" is included to designate that score as Medium. And if any score for a systems conflict is between **12 and 15**, the letter "H" is included to designate that score as relatively High. The ranges for High (H), Medium (M), and Low (L) will help you prioritize your subsequent efforts to address your most serious systems conflicts with your five conflict-handling modes.

To help interpret your results for your *five conflict modes* (shown in the HUB of a Quantum Wheel): If any score is between **9 and 18**, an "L" is included to designate that score as relatively Low. If any score is between **19 and 35**, an "M" is shown to designate that particular score as Medium. And if any score for a conflict mode is between **36 and 45**, the letter "H" is included to designate that score as relatively High. The ranges for High (H), Medium (M), and Low (L) will help you investigate which conflict modes you might be using too much or too little—while experiencing the negative aspects of one or more of those eight systems conflicts.

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## Introducing the Eight Tracks and Systems Conflicts

On the previous page, you were provided with your scores for the eight systems conflicts, including which ones are relatively High (H), Medium (M), or (L). These relative distinctions will help you prioritize all efforts to address—and resolve—the particular systems conflicts that are most frequently interfering with the quality of your work. Conveniently, those eight systems conflicts correspond to a carefully orchestrated sequence of eight tracks (change initiatives), which, if implemented successfully, can revitalize—and realign—an organization's systems and processes.

The first three tracks (culture, skills, and teams) represent the **informal systems**: the unwritten behavioral norms, members' styles and skills for managing people and problems, and the typical way of conducting team meetings. The next two tracks (strategy-structure and the reward system) address the **formal systems** in an organization: the officially documented mission and direction of the organization, the allocation of authority and other resources to achieve that mission, and what members are likely to receive for their performance and behavior. The last three tracks (gradual process, radical process, and learning process improvement) consider all the **processes** that flow within—and across—all the formal and informal systems in the organization, which includes how knowledge is created, stored, retrieved, and applied to improve the speed and quality by which the organization provides its products and services to its end customers and other key stakeholders. This series of eight tracks can thus renew and align all the systems and processes in an organization, which powerfully affect its internal and external stakeholders.

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## Introducing the TKI Conflict Model and the Five Modes

On page 3, you were also provided with your scores for the five conflict modes, including which are relatively High (H), Medium (M), or (L).

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model defines five conflict modes, based on two underlying dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness. The first dimension, **assertiveness**, is the extent to which you try to satisfy *your* needs or concerns whenever you find that your wishes differ from those of another person. The second dimension, **cooperativeness**, is the extent to which you try to satisfy the *other person's* needs or concerns in a conflict situation. The various combinations of these two dimensions then define the five conflict modes: competing (high in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness), accommodating (low in assertiveness and high in cooperativeness), compromising (moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness), avoiding (low on both dimensions), and collaborating (high on both dimensions). Usually, people prefer to rely on only one or two of these modes, while they tend not to use the other conflict modes. But all five modes are available to a person at any time, and each mode can be every effective if it matches the key attributes of the situation. In a little while, more will be presented about when—and how—to use each conflict mode for your most troublesome systems conflicts.

For the original discussion on what became known as the TKI Conflict Model, see: Thomas, K. W., "Conflict and Conflict Management," in M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1976), 889-935.

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## Interpreting Your KOCI Results

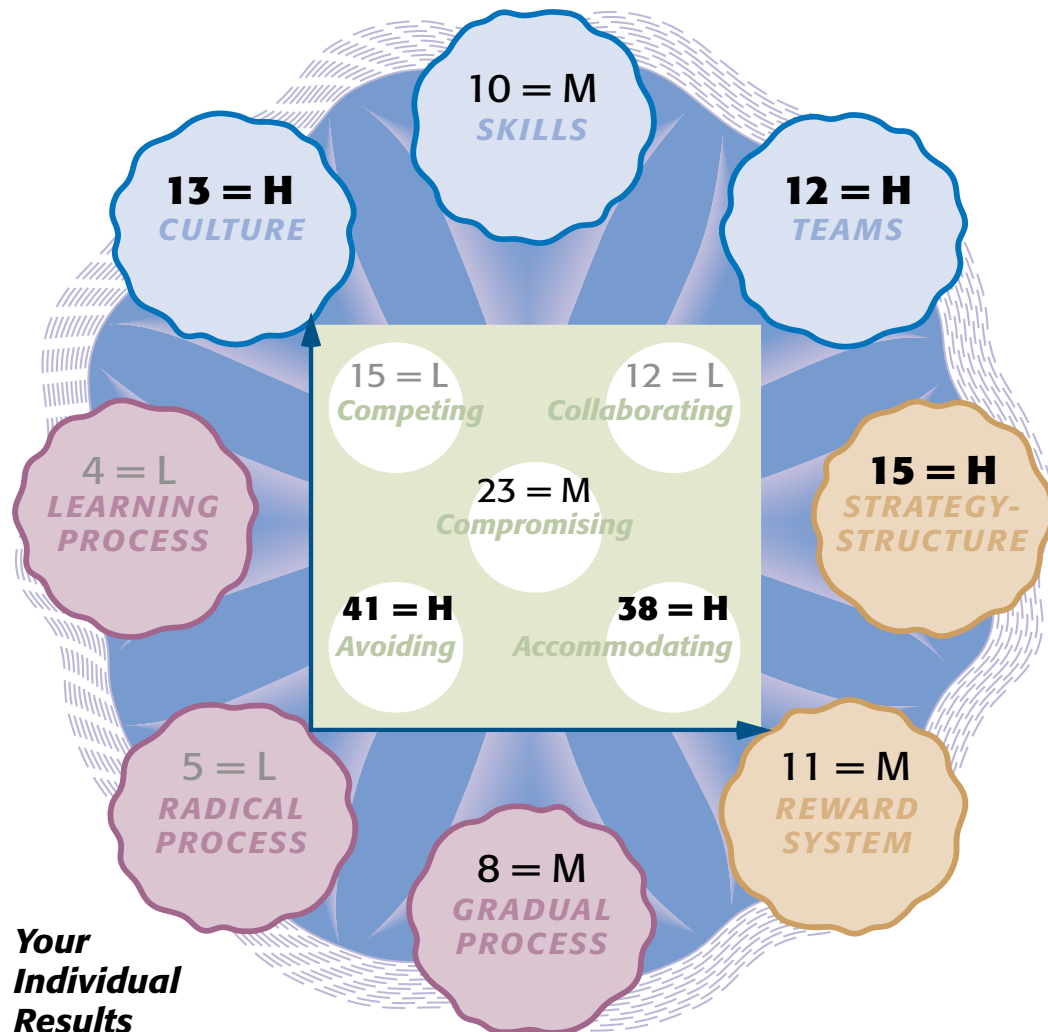
There are nine **systems conflicts** that conveniently sort into the eight tracks for quantum transformation (combing strategy and structure into one track). By implementing the integrated, orchestrated sequence of these eight tracks (culture, skills, teams, strategy-structure, reward systems, gradual process, radical process, and the learning process track), ***your most nagging systems conflicts can first be identified and then resolved by making good use of five conflict modes*** (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating). As a result of going through the eight tracks, all members will thus be able to achieve high performance and satisfaction, which will create and sustain long-term organizational success. But before more is said about quantum transformation, let's consider how to interpret your results on this instrument—so you and other members in your organization can proceed to resolve your most challenging systems conflicts.

On the following page, you can see the results for one individual: The numerical scores for the systems conflicts are placed in the outer ring of the Quantum Wheel, including which scores are H, M, and L, based on those same ranges that were used to designate your individual scores for the eight systems conflicts on the preceding page.

As you can see, there are three systems conflicts that scored in the **HIGH** range, which suggests that the member is ***frequently*** being hampered, by negative experiences with the **culture** of her organization or group, the way in which her **team's** meetings are being conducted, and the lack of clarity and alignment in **strategy-structure**. *The three high scores suggest some very serious barriers to organizational success, which, if left as is, will continue to hamper member performance and satisfaction.*



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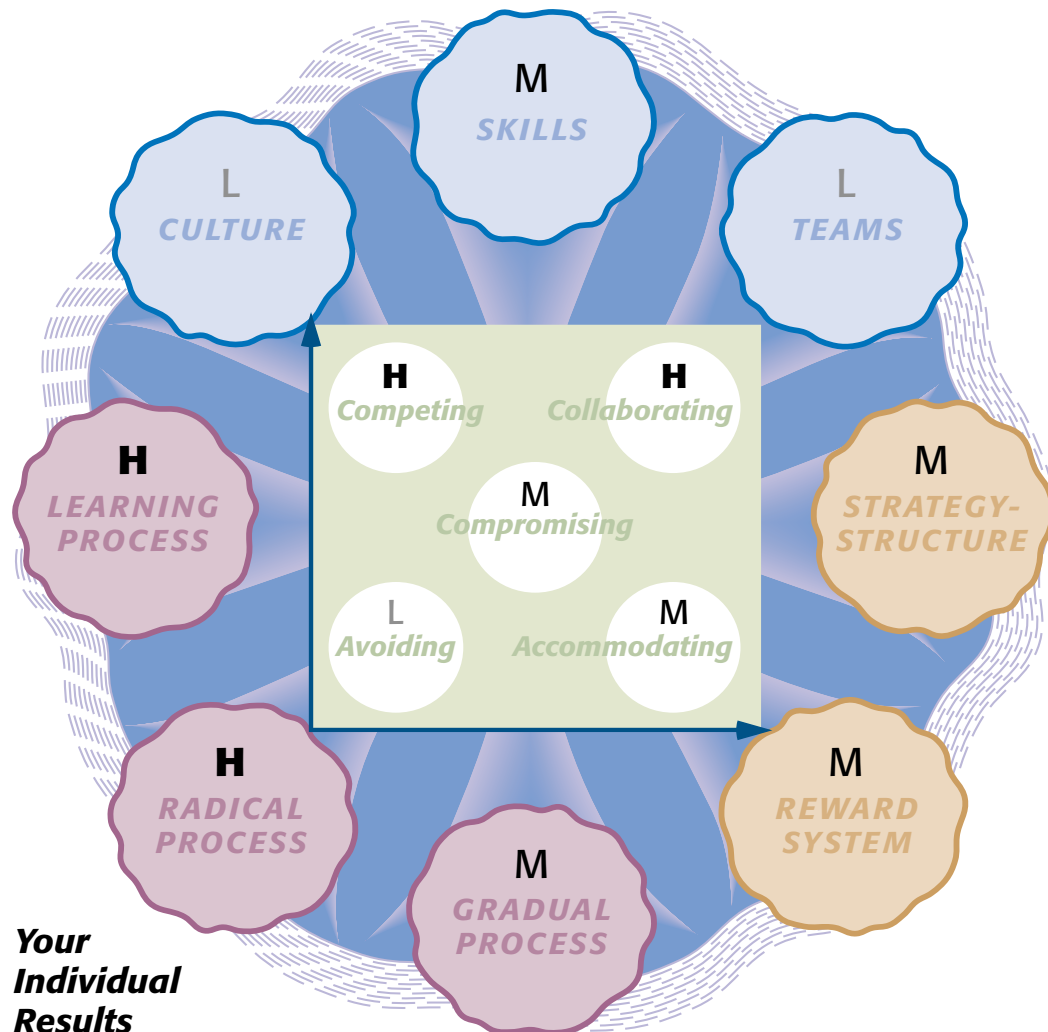
Three other conflicts (noted by the M) are *occasionally* interfering with the person's performance and satisfaction: skills, the reward system, and the processes that flow within her group. Yet two systems conflicts are LOW in their impact: radical process and learning process improvement. In all likelihood, not until those earlier conflicts are resolved will the last two process tracks become seen as key drivers of organizational success.

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On the previous diagram, you can also see the person's results on the TKI Conflict Model, which shows that the low assertive modes (avoiding and accommodating) are in the **HIGH** range. As a result, this person is almost always (daily) being negatively affected by cultural norms that pressure members: (1) to remain quiet, not to express different points of view, and not to disagree with the boss (i.e., to *avoid* such conflicts); or (2) to defer to the experience of *other* members or managers (i.e., to accommodate) when discussing important issues, such as making significant changes to the formal systems, including how the reward system works in practice, and so on. Indeed, the assertive modes (competing and collaborating) are in the **LOW** range, which confirms that this person is not bringing all her talent, wisdom, ideas, and experience into the workplace. However, once the eight tracks are underway, members will be given the chance to learn more about how and when to use the five conflict modes, and especially how to *change* the culture, skills, and teams so all five modes are always available to all members—and will be used effectively as needed.

On the following page, you'll see another graph of systems conflicts and conflict modes. This time, for convenience sake, only the H, M, and L are displayed—which makes it easy to immediately focus on the key issues: These results suggest that the integrated program of eight tracks has been proceeding—since the culture, skills, and teams are no longer frequently distracting the member (although more skill development might still be needed). Progress is also occurring for strategy-structure and the reward system, which sets the stage for resolving the conflicts in the last three process tracks of quantum transformation: After the formal systems have been revitalized, attention will then be directed to improving the speed and quality of the business and learning processes that flow within—and across—all the systems in the organization.

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On the above graph, you can also see and analyze the results for the TKI Conflict Model: The assertive modes are **HIGH** while avoiding is **LOW**, so the "pendulum" has swung from *unassertive* (from the prior graph) to highly assertive (competing and collaborating). Usually, before the results display a balanced TKI profile (mostly medium scores), members go from the extreme use of a few modes to the extreme use of the other modes!

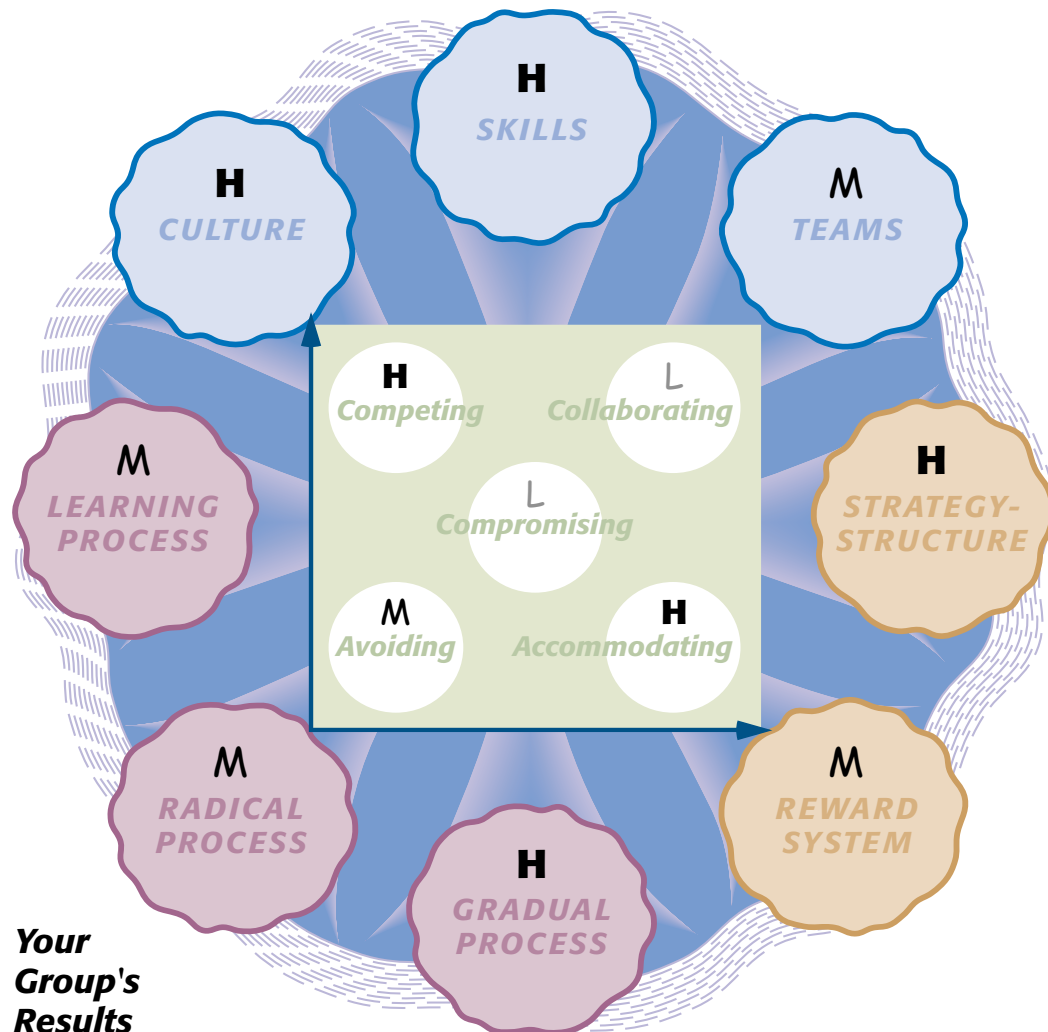
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The graph on the next page displays the key results for a twelve-member group in a large organization. Such a graph can be developed by simply calculating the average scores of group members for each of their systems conflicts as well as for their conflict modes.

As can be seen, there are four systems conflicts, marked by an **H**, which reveal what has been negatively affecting the group members **frequently**: (1) culture and skills in the informal systems, (2) strategy-structure in the formal systems, and (3) processes that mostly take place inside the group (gradual process improvement). These HIGH systems conflicts across all three categories (informal systems, formal systems, and processes) shows that this work group is facing an assortment of barriers to performance and satisfaction, which severely undermines what members can provide to their organization. Moreover, the remaining systems conflicts (teams, reward systems, radical process, and learning process improvement) are **occasionally** interfering with performance and satisfaction. Note: There are no systems conflicts that are *rarely* affecting this group. Every conflict is negatively affecting members either frequently or occasionally.

The results on the TKI Conflict Model suggest that these group members are heavily relying on competing and accommodating for resolving their systems conflicts (HIGH), which means that members either get their own needs met...or they do their best to get the needs of *other* members in their group met. Yet there is little compromising, whereby each person gets at least some of their needs met. Indeed, the collaborating mode isn't being used much at all, so members aren't taking the necessary time to derive creative solutions to their various systems conflicts—which would help them get *their* needs met, while also helping the organization achieve *its* long-term survival and success.

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## **Your Group's Results**

As seen on the TKI Conflict Model, the avoiding mode is being used more often than compromising and collaborating, but still less than competing or accommodating. During the program of eight tracks, especially during the culture, skills, and team tracks, group members will find it useful to discuss if their informal systems discourage them from exploring certain topics, even though they're being negatively affected by those conflicts.

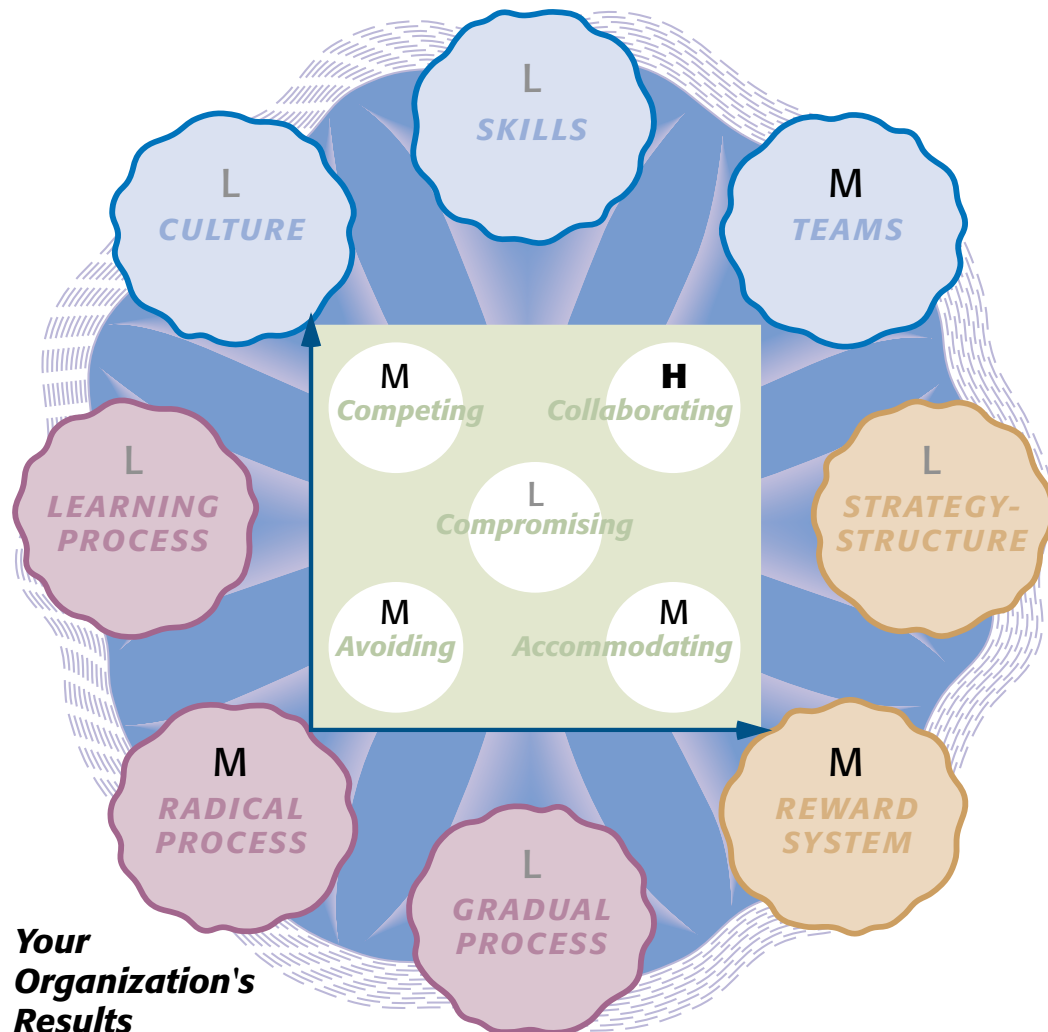
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On the following page is another graph of systems conflicts and conflict modes, which will help you learn how to interpret your scores as well as suggest what's possible when your work group or organization addresses its systems conflicts through the eight tracks of quantum transformation.

As you can see, *none of the eight systems conflicts have been negatively affecting the members of this organization frequently*. Rather, five system conflicts are **rarely** being experienced negatively, if at all, which suggests that members can spend most of their time contributing all their wisdom and experience to the strategic mission of their organization—surely, an excellent outcome. Only three systems conflicts (teams, reward systems, and radical process improvement) are being **occasionally** experienced in a negative way, which reveals the few remaining organizational systems and processes that still need to be improved or transformed.

Based on the success of the first three tracks, there are predictable changes that have occurred on the TKI Conflict Model: The collaborating mode is often used to resolve systems conflicts, which results in creative solutions that satisfy the needs of both internal and external stakeholders. Three of the other modes (competing, accommodating, avoiding) are being used moderately, while organizational members are not making much use of the compromising mode. Perhaps in the spirit of openly discussing their systems conflicts in depth (due to the program of eight tracks), members might be missing opportunities to choose a workable compromise when the issue is not crucial for success, and thus more time could be spend on resolving their other, more important aspects of various conflicts. As mentioned before, as the transformation proceeds, members tend to use some modes to the extreme, before they develop a more balanced use of all five modes, depending on the key attributes of the situation.

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## **Your Organization's Results**

After members retake the Organizational Conflict Instrument (e.g., every six months), they can determine their progress in addressing their systems conflicts, as the culture, skills, and team tracks help produce only low or medium scores—while those previous high scores disappear. Meanwhile, by retaking the instrument, members can see if their conflict modes are all being used more moderately, as the situation requires.

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## Using the Five Conflict Modes to Resolve Systems Conflicts

To fully appreciate how the five conflict modes can be used for resolving the systems conflicts that were identified by the Kilmann Organizational Conflict Instrument, let's first review the detailed definitions and use of each of the five modes:

1. **Competing** is assertive and uncooperative—an individual pursues his own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-oriented mode in which you use whatever power seems appropriate to win your own position—your ability to argue, your rank, or economic sanctions. Competing means “standing up for your rights,” defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.
2. **Accommodating** is unassertive and cooperative—the complete opposite of competing. When accommodating, the individual neglects his 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.
3. **Avoiding** is unassertive and uncooperative—the person neither pursues his own concerns nor those of the other individual. Thus he does not deal with 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.



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4. **Collaborating** is both assertive and cooperative—the complete opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with others to find some solution that fully satisfies their concerns. It means digging into an issue to pinpoint the underlying needs and wants of the two individuals.

Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights or trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

5. **Compromising** is moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. It falls intermediate between competing and accommodating.

Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding, but does not explore it in as much depth as collaborating. In some situations, compromising might mean splitting the difference between the two positions, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground solution.

Each of us is capable of using all five conflict-handling modes. But certain people use some modes more and better than others, whether because of temperament or habit. But remember this first key principle: ***About 80% of what takes place in an organization is determined by its systems and processes, while 20% is determined by member desires or preferences.*** This principle provides THE rationale for taking this instrument, so you can identify (1) your surrounding systems conflicts and (2) your relative use of the five conflict modes—which will then enable you (with various change initiatives) to resolve those conflicts and thus achieve success.

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Here's the second key principle to keep in mind (which follows directly from the first principle): ***Choose the particular conflict-handling mode that best matches the key attributes of the situation.*** Therefore, don't use any conflict mode out of habit or based only on your typical preferences. Instead, choose—and use—one or more of the five conflict modes based exclusively on how you would answer these fundamental questions:

### **The Eight Key Attributes of a Conflict Situation**

- 1. Is there overwhelming stress?**
- 2. Is the conflict simple or complex?**
- 3. How important is the topic to each person in the situation?**
- 4. Is there time to discuss the issues?**
- 5. Is there sufficient trust to openly share needs and concerns?**
- 6. Do people have good listening and communication skills?**
- 7. Does the culture and reward system actively encourage people to share their true needs and concerns?**
- 8. How important are relationships to each person in the situation?**

Depending on these eight attributes, members choose the conflict mode that has the best chance of satisfying their most important needs, plus the most important needs of their organization and its key stakeholders.

Of course, members must develop (and continually enhance) their skills for correctly reading the key attributes of any conflict situation. And then they must practice using some of their infrequently used conflict modes, while also consciously reducing the overuse of their other modes. But to reemphasize the key point: The first step for managing conflict is reading the immediate situation *before* selecting a mode of behavior, so members and the organization can get their most important needs met.

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Below are five listings for when it is best to use each of the five conflict modes, depending on the particular quality and nature of the eight key attributes of a conflict situation. Note: Each numbered item on these lists (1, 2, 3, etc.) corresponds to the same numbered attribute that appears on the previous page. Naturally, you and your group members must have the opportunity to practice reading several conflict situations and then select the best mode to use in each situation. Practice, practice, practice....

### **When to Use Competing**

1. Stress is high or moderate
2. Problem is simple: unidimensional
3. Problem is more important to you than to others
4. There is little time for discussion
5. Low or moderate levels of trust exist
6. People can communicate their views
7. The culture and reward system support members who argue their positions in a win/lose manner
8. People are not concerned with sustaining their relationships

### **When to Use Collaborating**

1. Stress is stimulating
2. Problem is complex: multidimensional
3. Problem is equally important to all
4. There is much time for discussion
5. High levels of trust exist
6. Interactions are effective
7. The culture and the reward system actively encourage exploration, cooperation, and teamwork
8. People want their relationships to improve—and last

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## **When to Use Compromising**

1. Stress is high or moderate
2. Problem is simple: unidimensional
3. Problem is moderately important to all
4. There is little time for discussion
5. Moderate or low levels of trust exist
6. Interactions are respectful
7. The culture and reward system encourage quick fixes
8. People are indifferent about their relationships

## **When to Use Avoiding**

1. Stress is overwhelming
2. Problem is simple: unidimensional
3. Problem is not important
4. There is little time for discussion
5. Low levels of trust exist
6. Interactions are ineffective
7. The culture and reward system discourage confrontation
8. People don't particularly care about their relationships

## **When to Use Accommodating**

1. Stress is moderate or high
2. Problem is simple: unidimensional
3. Problem is more important to others
4. There is little time for discussion
5. Moderate or low levels of trust exist
6. Interactions are ineffective
7. The culture and reward system encourage compliance
8. People are eager to please others to maintain their relationships

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After members have had several opportunities to read conflict situations and then practice enacting one or more conflict modes that seem to best match the key attributes of each situation, members still want to know the best approach to use whenever they're ready to address (and resolve) their most challenging systems conflicts:

### **The Best Approach to Conflict Management**

- **Know that you have all five conflict modes available to you at all times, in all situations**
- **Develop the ability to read (assess) the eight key attributes of any conflict situation**
- **Choose the conflict mode that best fits the specific situation**
- **Enact the chosen mode with care, sensitivity, and respect**
- **Switch to a different conflict mode as you experience changes in the key attributes of the situation**
- **Continue to improve your listening and communication skills—and your ability to engender trust**

It is during the second track of quantum transformation, the skills track, when members learn about people management, problem management, time management, and conflict management. All these skills are needed whenever members seek to address their systems conflicts and any other conflicts that emerge in the workplace. Moreover, even before these skills can be further enhanced for the benefit of the membership as well as the organization, the culture must actively encourage this essential learning process, which must also be assessed through the performance appraisal system. Therefore, a complete program of quantum transformation must be implemented not only to prepare members for approaching their work in new ways, but also to resolve their most challenging systems conflicts.

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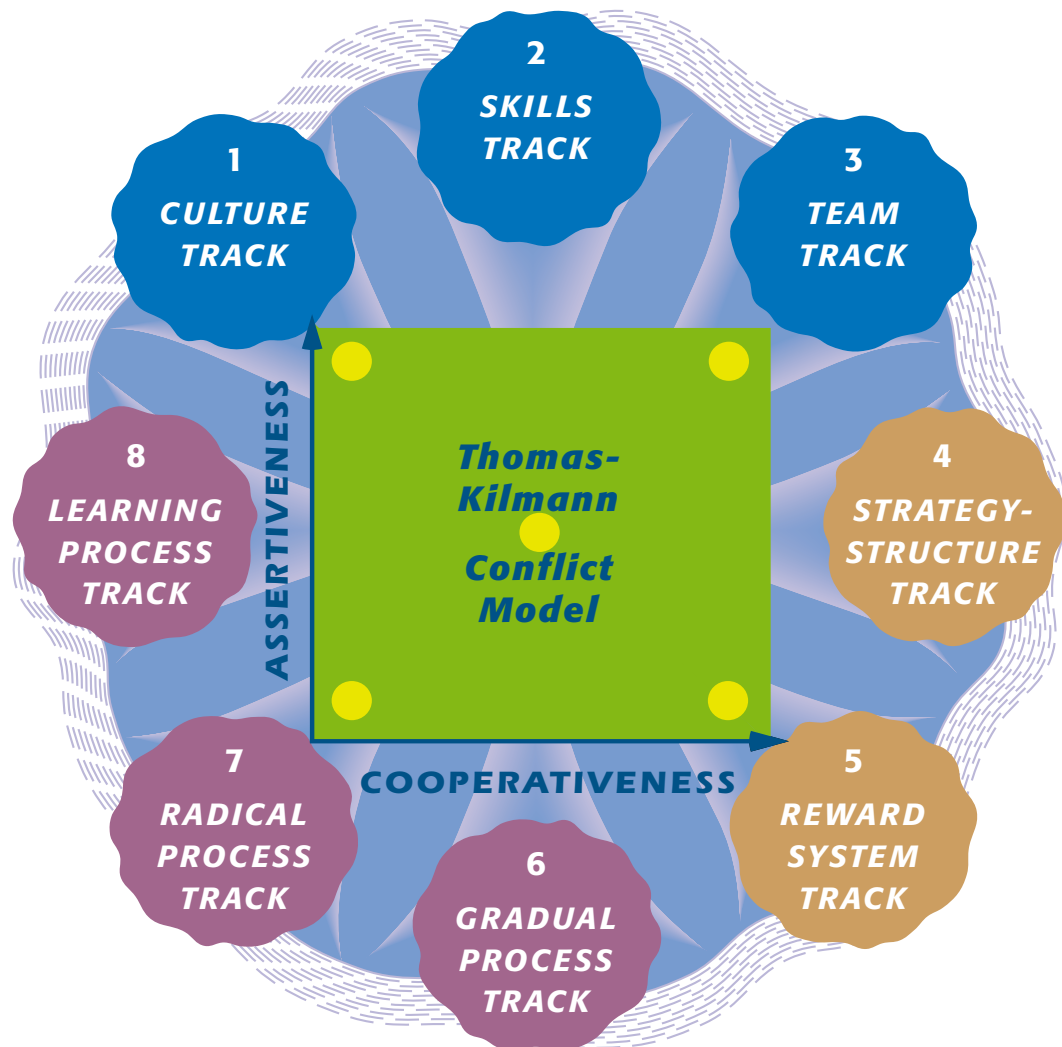
### Implementing the Eight Tracks to Resolve Systems Conflicts

Here is the third key principle to remember at all times: *In the short term, the organization's systems and processes are fixed, so the use of one or more conflict modes might be significantly constrained by the nature and quality of the key attributes of the situation—as dictated by those particular systems and processes. But in the long term, those systems and processes (which determine "the situation" for conflict resolution) can be transformed, which then changes the eight key attributes of any conflict situation to support the use of all five modes, as needed.*

This third key principle reminds us that the collaborating mode—which is essential for resolving systems conflicts in a manner that satisfies the needs and concerns of all internal and external stakeholders—can only work successfully when the key attributes of the situation support using the collaborating mode, such as stimulating (not overwhelming) stress, high levels of trust among members, sufficient time to address the topic, and so forth. (See page 17 for a list of the eight key attributes that support the collaborating mode). But if the current systems and processes do *not* support the collaborating mode (and, in fact, primarily support using the avoiding or compromising mode), then members, in the short term, won't be able to use the collaborating mode to resolve their systems conflicts—nor will members be able to collaborate successfully on any of their *other* technical, business, and management conflicts.

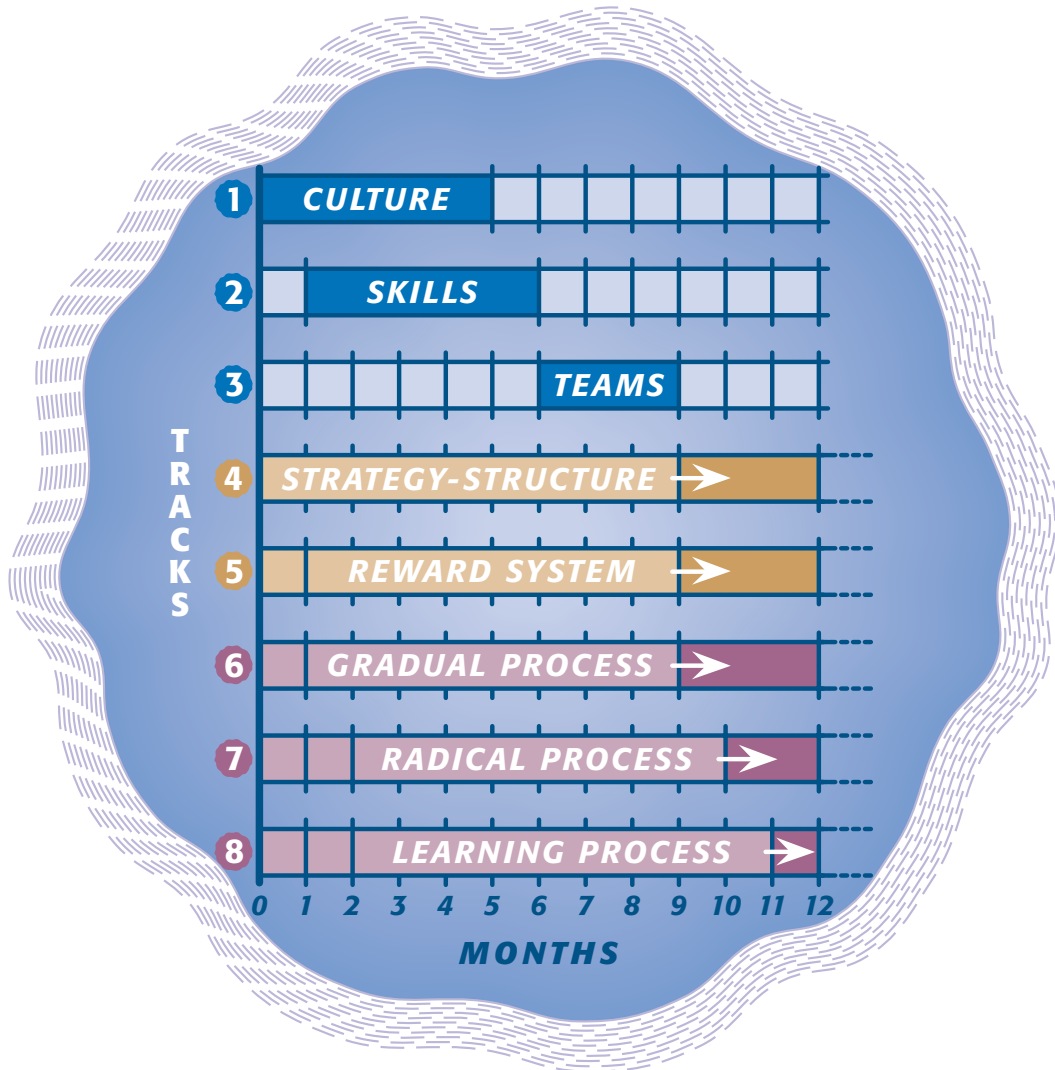
In the long run, however, the organization can transform its systems and processes to support the use of the collaborating mode (as well as all the other conflict modes) to resolve not only any lingering systems conflicts, but also to resolve any of their other complex conflicts and challenges.

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The "Quantum Wheel" shows the sequence of eight tracks, which, with the increasing use of all five conflict modes (as the systems and processes are revitalized and realigned for the future), will allow the organization to utilize all the wisdom, knowledge, talent, and experience of its members, no matter what the topic or focus of discussion happens to be.

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After the organization has made significant progress implementing the eight tracks of quantum transformation, members will be able to read the situation that surrounds any subject and then choose the conflict mode(s) that best fit with the key attributes of that particular situation. For more information about the eight tracks, visit [www.kilmanndiagnostics.com](http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com) or read Dr. Ralph H. Kilmann's 2011 book, *Quantum Organizations*.



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