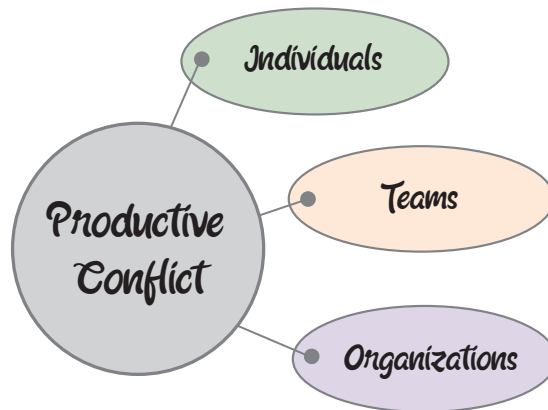


Conflict Toolkit



From destructive to productive conflict



Conflict Toolkit Overview

Conflict is inevitable. How you respond to it is a choice.

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide you with practical resources and tools to transform conflict from destructive interactions to constructive outcomes at the individual, team and organizational levels.

Individuals in Conflict

For some, the tendency in conflict may be to win. Others may strive to openly express themselves emotionally. Perhaps your tendency is to avoid conflict altogether and let it simmer under the surface. Or, maybe you'd prefer to initially withdraw and then rely on logic to make your case.

How do you respond in conflict? What factors have influenced your approach to conflict? How would you prefer to respond in conflict so that you can be more productive?

The individual section of the toolkit will provide you with opportunities to expand your awareness of what drives you in conflict so that you can better understand your impact on people, process and the business and create more productive outcomes.

Teams in Conflict

Anytime you combine a group of human beings together in a work setting, there's bound to be differences in how people prefer to engage in conflict. When teams don't effectively engage in conflict, they fail to gain commitment, the "meeting after the meeting" occurs, and decisions get revisited over and over again.

"create a conflict environment that works for everyone so that you can effectively engage in the conversations that matter most."

Conflict on teams doesn't have to be a negative experience. In fact, on too many teams, conflict avoidance or artificial harmony is just as destructive as an overly aggressive approach to conflict. In the team section of this toolkit, you'll define the dos and don'ts of conflict and create a conflict environment that works for everyone so that you can effectively engage in the conversations that matter most.

Organizations in Conflict

An organization's conflict culture almost always starts at the top with the senior leadership team. What is rewarded and criticized by senior leaders ripples across an organization and sets the conflict culture. And, there's always a direct correlation between destructive conflict and negative business outcomes. Conflict avoidance results in delayed decisions, complacency, and toleration of poor performance. Overly aggressive conflict results in a fear-based environment where people are guarded and afraid to share the truth of what's happening in the business.

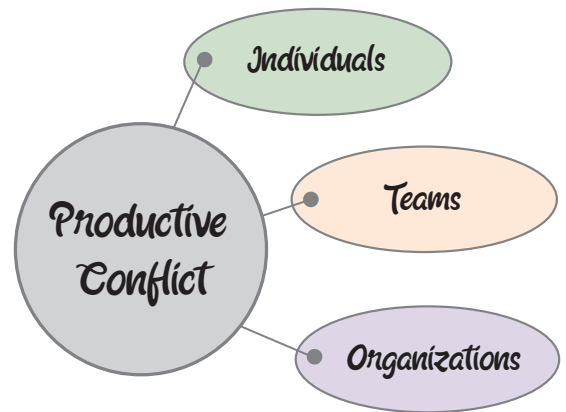
In the organization section of the toolkit, we'll explore the the conflict culture in your organization and what is rewarded and criticized when conversations get heated.

Make Your Conflict Productive

With the right mix of mind-set and skill set, you, the people on your team, and your overall organization can be more effective.

- Replace approaching conflict overly aggressively or passively with direct, honest and respectful dialogue.
- Avoid getting bogged down in analysis paralysis so you and your team can be more decisive, innovative and move faster.
- Instead of keeping people at a distance or being overly appeasing, strengthen your relationships and get more done.

That's the power of what becomes possible when individuals, teams and organizations productively approach conflict.

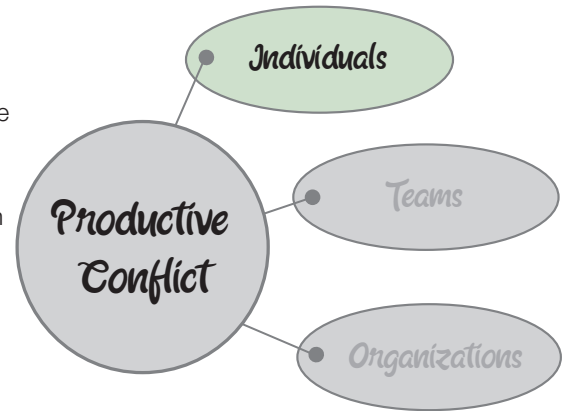


Individuals in Conflict

To be more effective in conflict and create more productive outcomes, you have to start by understanding what drives your conflict behaviors. In this section, you'll find two exercises to help you understand how your background impacts your approach to conflict and how your personality style drives your behavior in conflict.

Your Conflict Background

Each of us approaches conflict differently. Our home environment, the geographic regions in which we lived, and cultural backgrounds have all contributed to how we approach conflict. Reflect on the following questions to help you better understand the factors that have contributed to how you approach conflict.



What was the conflict environment like in your home while growing up? Did your family members actively express themselves? Was there spirited dialogue? Or were conversations swept under the rug and avoided? Describe your experience here.

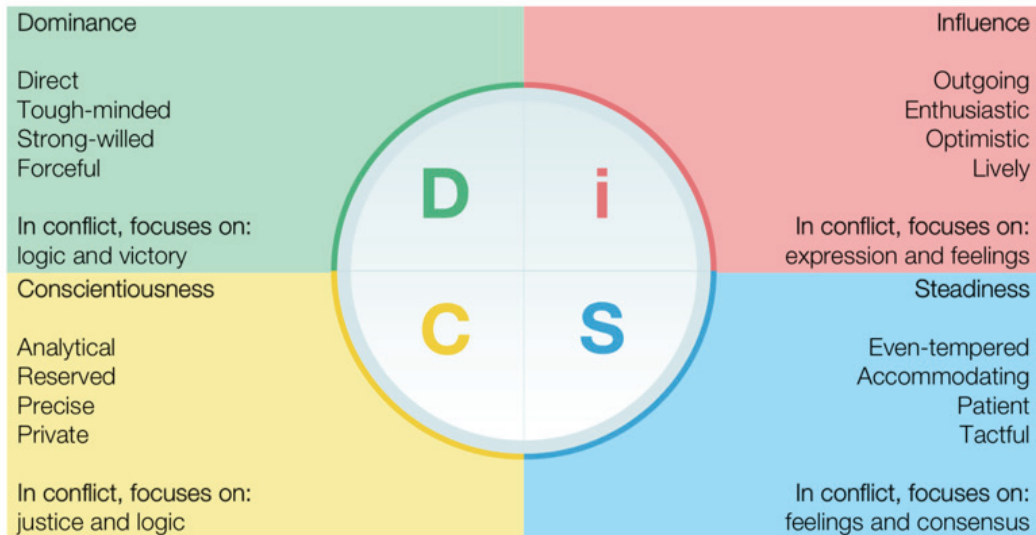
Where you grew up matters as well. The way that people engage in conflict in New York or Boston is quite different than what you might experience in Minnesota or the South (direct and blunt versus amiable and polite). Where did you grow up and how did the geographical region impact how you engage in conflict?

Your culture matters too. Some cultures tend to be more expressive and emotional. Others more guarded in their approach. What cultural background has influenced you and how has it helped shape your approach to conflict?

Individuals in Conflict: Your Personality Style

Each of us has different tendencies, motivations, stressors and preferences. Everything DiSC is a personality profile tool that we use in many of our leadership development, team acceleration, and executive coaching engagements. At a high level, DiSC describes four main styles: Dominance, influence, Steadiness and Conscientiousness. Ultimately, we are a mix of all four styles, but we tend to use or prefer to use one or two of the styles more often than others.

Instructions: Take a look at the model below and respond to the questions.



Modified from Everything DiSC Productive Conflict by Wiley

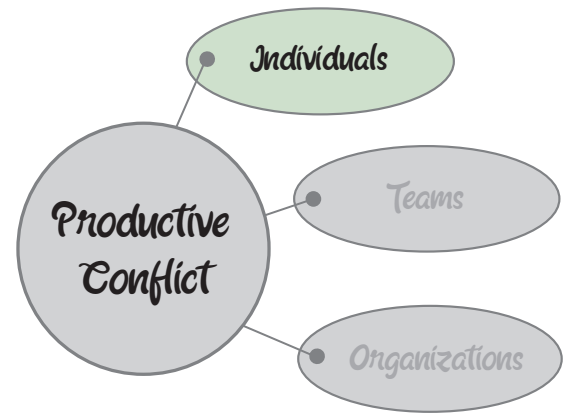
What style best describes you in the workplace?

How does your style contribute to productive conflict?

How does your style hinder or detract from productive conflict?

Summary Reflection Questions

Based on your conflict background and personality style, what do you want to stop doing, start doing, or continue doing to be more productive in conflict?

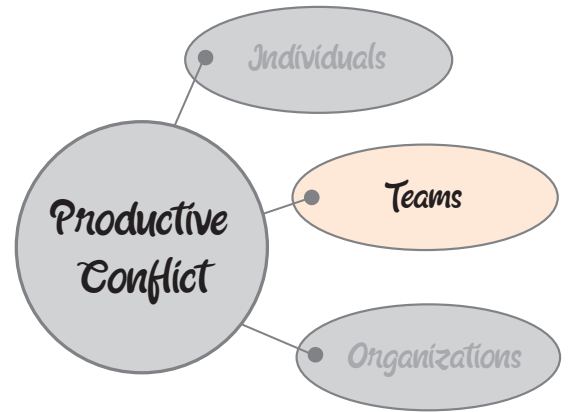


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Your Team in Conflict

Now that you've had a chance to reflect on your individual preferences and tendencies in conflict, it's time to look at your team. As you can imagine, on any given team there are countless differences in the way people may approach conflict. Some people, based on their conflict background and personality, might be very comfortable with spirited debate where passion is demonstrated. Some may even be comfortable with raised voices and cursing. Others may prefer a more toned-down approach where listening and inclusiveness are prioritized.

None of these approaches to conflict are right or wrong. They are just different. The challenge on teams is finding a collective approach that works for everyone. Below are two exercises to conduct with your team to help them find the right productive conflict path forward.



The Dos and Don'ts of Conflict

Instructions: As a team, discuss what are acceptable behaviors in conflict and those that are unacceptable. Create an exhaustive list below and then discuss.

Do	Don't

Conflict Norms

Now that you have a list of dos and don'ts of conflict, it's time to summarize that list into thematic norms that will guide the team during conflict. Norms will happen on a team regardless of whether they are intentional or not. However, when they are not intentional and written down, a team develops bad habits or time-wasting norms, many of which are unspoken and unproductive.

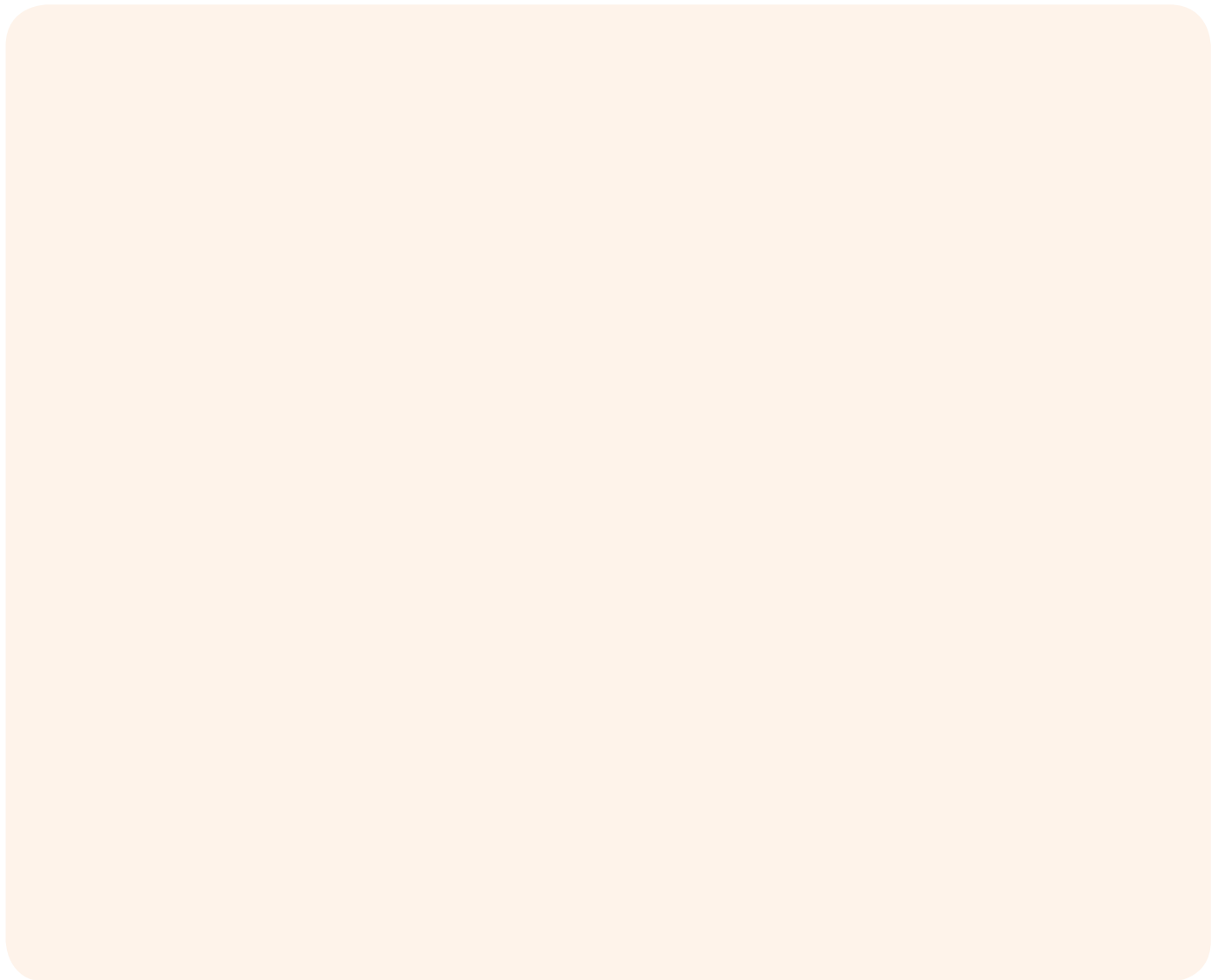
Instructions: As a team, review your list of dos and don'ts of conflict from the previous page, and identify 3-6 norms that will guide how the team engages in conflict. A few examples might be:

We will go directly to each other first when we have a conflict.

We will listen to understand, while advocating for our perspective.

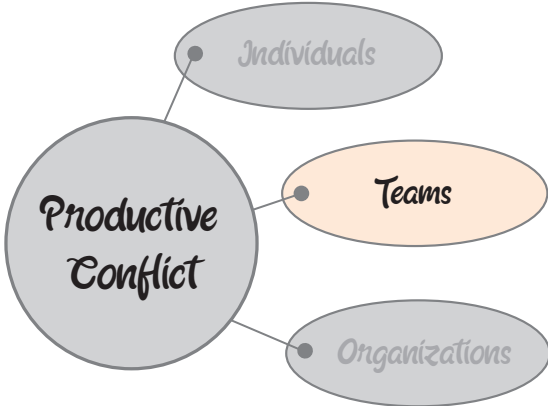
We will be direct, honest and respectful.

Create your team norms here:



Summary Reflection Questions

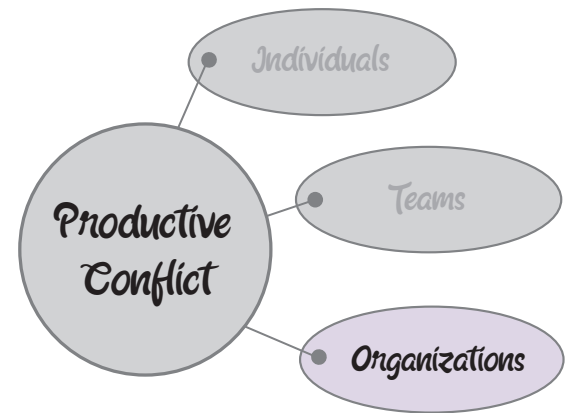
Based on your team's dos and don'ts of conflict and conflict norms, how will the team remain accountable to this way of engaging in productive conflict?



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Your Organization in Conflict

An organization's conflict culture almost always starts at the top with the senior leadership team. What is rewarded and criticized by senior leaders ripples through an organization and sets the conflict tone. Use this section of the conflict toolkit to understand your organization's current conflict culture and plan for its desired future.



Current Culture

What conflict behaviors are rewarded in your organization?

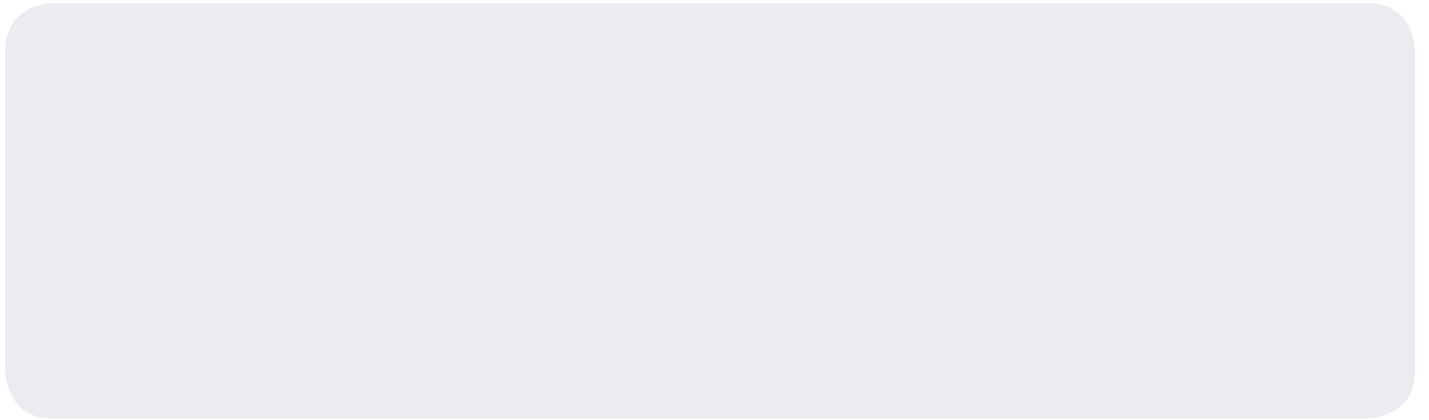
What conflict behaviors are currently criticized in your organization?

How are those behaviors in line or out of alignment with your organizational values?

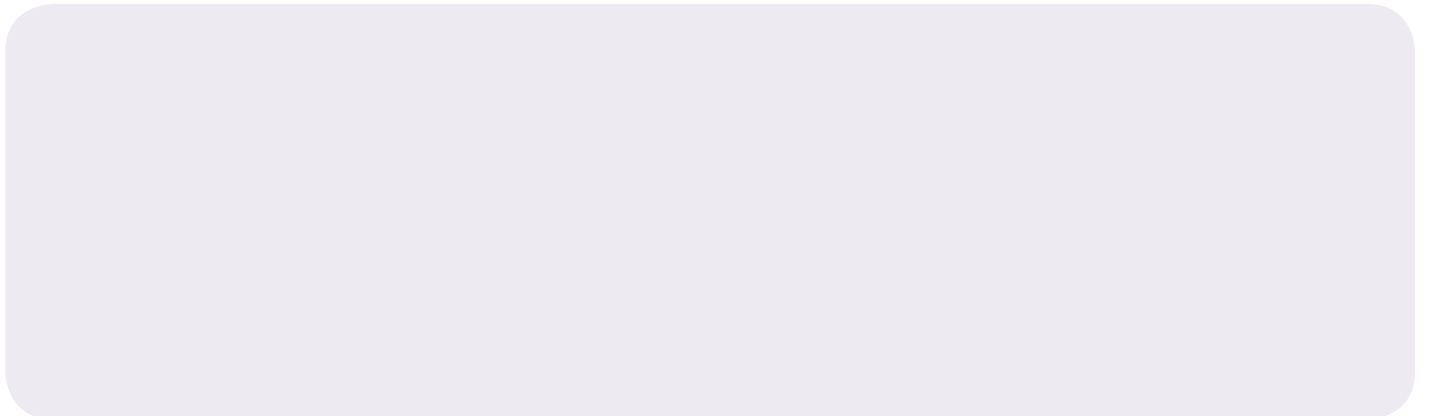
Future Culture

When an organization's conflict culture is fear based, people are guarded and less likely to share the truth of what is actually happening in the business. Such environments tend to be overly political, as people are constantly managing their messages around a senior leader's reactivity. On the other hand, an overly people-oriented culture can also result in conflict avoidance, but for different reasons. Instead of being driven by fear, people are driven by a desire to please and be accepted. As a result, the hard discussions don't take place and poor performance is tolerated. Complacency can set in and high performers eventually seek employment elsewhere.

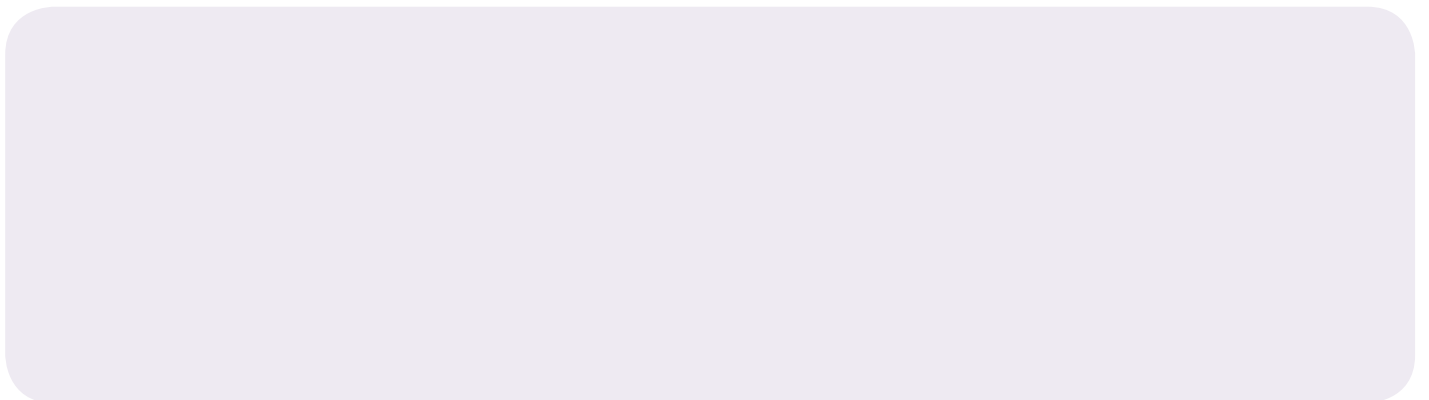
Based on your organizational values, what conflict behaviors should be rewarded in this organization in the future?



What conflict behaviors should be criticized in this organization in the future?

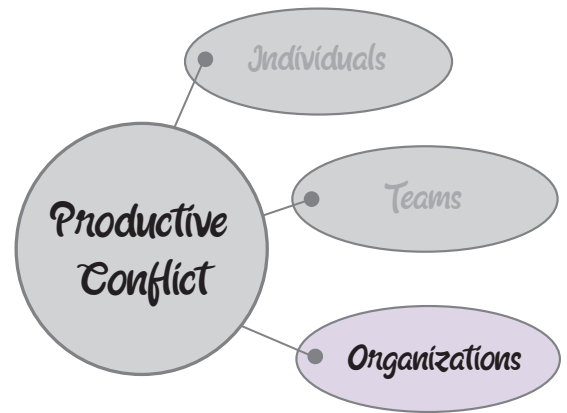


What would become possible for your organization if these new behaviors were rewarded and criticized?



Summary Reflection Questions

Based on your organization's current and future conflict culture, how can you drive new productive conflict behaviors into the fabric of the organization?



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So, Where Do You Go From Here?

If you'd like a guided approach to creating a more productive conflict environment with your individuals, teams and organization, let us know. We can accelerate the process through our Productive Conflict workshops and coaching programs for leaders and teams.

We invite you to connect with us to schedule a complimentary Insight Session. During this session, we'll explore your business challenges, current team dynamics, results you'd like to achieve, and determine if our programs are a fit for you and your organization.

The conversation will take about one hour and can be done in person or by phone. Email us (info@512solutions.com) with three dates and times that are convenient for you to meet.



People-First,

Sal Silvester

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Co-author with Marshall Goldsmith of *Stakeholder Centered Coaching: Maximize Your Impact as a Coach*

Author of *Ignite! The 4 Essential Rules for Emerging Leaders*

Author of *Unite! The 4 Mindset Shifts for Senior Leaders*