

# CONFLICT DEBT

## ASSESSMENT

### THE GOOD FIGHT

**CONVENTIONAL WISDOM HOLDS** that conflict is bad for productivity and corrosive to trust and engagement. It's just not true. There is a steady stream of contentious issues every individual, team, and organization needs to resolve. Unfortunately, because most people don't like conflicts, we tend to duck, dodge, and defer them. The result is conflict debt.

Conflict debt is the sum of all the contentious issues that need to be addressed to be able to move forward but instead remain undiscussed and unresolved. It can be as simple as withholding feedback and as profound as deferring a strategic decision. Use this assessment to measure your conflict debt.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Evaluate the conflict debt within your organization, your team, and the personal conflict debt you're accumulating
2. For each topic, pick the option that best corresponds to the situation for you. Are you:
  - 0 - Continually surfacing and working through conflicts
  - 1 - Occasionally surfacing and working through conflicts
  - 2 - Sometimes avoiding issues that are creating conflict
  - 3 - Frequently avoiding issues that are creating conflict
3. Give yourself a score out of three for each topic
4. Add the topic scores to get an overall score for your organizational, team, or personal conflict debt
5. Think about the impact of the conflict debt to your business, your relationships, and your stress levels
6. BE HONEST! No one needs to see these findings but you.

# ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT DEBT



## Prioritization

- ☑ We continually prioritize and are always clear on what is MOST important across teams

**0 POINTS**

- ☑ We occasionally get aligned around cross-departmental priorities

**1 POINT**

- ☑ We sometimes refuse to prioritize when it requires difficult trade-offs

**2 POINTS**

- ☑ We frequently add more to our plates without prioritizing the use of time or resources

**3 POINTS**

Score: /3



## Innovation

- ☑ We continually bring together diverse groups to spark debate and innovation

**0 POINTS**

- ☑ We occasionally create forums for innovation, but the conversations are too safe to be useful

**1 POINT**

- ☑ We sometimes keep our ideas within siloes to protect them from criticism

**2 POINTS**

- ☑ We frequently avoid discussions that might challenge the status quo

**3 POINTS**

Score: /3



## Risk

- ☑ We continually call out assumptions and stress-test one another's ideas

**0 POINTS**

- ☑ We occasionally raise concerns, but back down quickly if someone defends their approach

**1 POINT**

- ☑ We sometimes stop after looking at the superficial issues and risks

**2 POINTS**

- ☑ We frequently point fingers and blame after the fact rather than spotting concerns proactively

**3 POINTS**

Score: /3

### 0-3 Free and Clear

Your organization is surfacing and working through the issues that could slow you down. Prepare for prime productivity.

### 4-6 Debt is Mounting

Your organization is building up issues that could get in the way of productivity. Start systematically working toward resolution.

### 7-9 Almost Bankrupt

Your organization has significant barriers to getting work done. Start resolving the issues where you have the most clout.

# TEAM CONFLICT DEBT



## Skills

- ☑ I continually hold the people on my team to high standards and address any skill gaps  
**0 POINTS**
- ☑ I occasionally give feedback about skill gaps, but don't create enough accountability for change  
**1 POINT**
- ☑ I sometimes hold some people more accountable than others because I've given up on some people  
**2 POINTS**
- ☑ I frequently overlook skill gaps on my team that are affecting our business and our customers  
**3 POINTS**

Score: /3



## Workload

- ☑ I continually discuss workload and make adjustments where required to ensure fairness  
**0 POINTS**
- ☑ I occasionally attempt to allocate work fairly, but seldom revisit if it gets off balance  
**1 POINT**
- ☑ I sometimes overlook workload issues until someone raises a specific concern  
**2 POINTS**
- ☑ I frequently ignore uneven workloads and allow some people to carry a heavier burden than others  
**3 POINTS**

Score: /3



## Behavior

- ☑ I continually encourage candid conversations about team members' behavior  
**0 POINTS**
- ☑ I occasionally attempt to call out bad behavior, but tend not to do it reactively  
**1 POINT**
- ☑ I sometimes allow team members to complain about one another to me rather than directly.  
**2 POINTS**
- ☑ I frequently tolerate disruptive behavior from members of my team  
**3 POINTS**

Score: /3

### 0-3 Free and Clear

Your team is addressing the issues that could affect your trust and performance. Kudos to all of you!

### 4-6 Debt is Mounting

Your team is allowing some issues to go unspoken or unresolved. Get these issues on the table before they erode trust.

### 7-9 Almost Bankrupt

Your team is at significant risk of getting bogged down in drama. Carve out a chunk of time to start an open dialogue.

# PERSONAL CONFLICT DEBT



## Workload

- ☑ I continually work with my manager to create a workload and work-life balance that is good for me  
**0 POINTS**
- ☑ I occasionally share my workload concerns with my manager, but I underplay the challenges  
**1 POINT**
- ☑ I sometimes raise concerns and ask for help if my work is unmanageable  
**2 POINTS**
- ☑ I frequently feel overwhelmed without raising concerns about my work demands  
**3 POINTS**

Score: /3



## Development

- ☑ I continually advocate for my own development and am happy with how my manager invests in me  
**0 POINTS**
- ☑ I occasionally ask for my manager's support when development opportunities arise  
**1 POINT**
- ☑ I sometimes hide my concerns about the lack of investment in my development  
**2 POINTS**
- ☑ I frequently feel stifled by my lack of growth, but I haven't told my manager  
**3 POINTS**

Score: /3



## Treatment

- ☑ I continually provide feedback to people who treat me in a way I don't like  
**0 POINTS**
- ☑ I occasionally raise concerns about the way my colleagues interact with me  
**1 POINT**
- ☑ I sometimes put up with people interacting with me in ways that I don't like  
**2 POINTS**
- ☑ I frequently feel disheartened by the way I am treated at work, but I stay silent  
**3 POINTS**

Score: /3

### 0-3 Free and Clear

You are advocating for yourself and creating the work environment you need to thrive. Congratulations!

### 4-6 Debt is Mounting

You are letting issues pile up and probably feeling the drag on your productivity and morale. Pick one issue you will address.

### 7-9 Almost Bankrupt

You are ignoring your own needs and tolerating a stressful environment at work. Consider whether you're in the right spot.

# QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

## Organizational Conflict Debt

1. What kinds of difficult issues is our organization good at addressing?  
Where do we work through opposing perspectives effectively?
2. What kinds of issues tend to get stuck in our organization?  
Where do we fail to make the difficult calls?
3. What is the impact on the organization of avoiding these issues?

## Team Conflict Debt

4. How well does your team incorporate diversity of thought and differing points of view? What are some examples of situations where you've effectively worked through a conflict to create a positive resolution?
5. What types of issues remain a challenge for your team to address?  
Where do you tend to avoid the difficult discussions?
6. What are some examples of issues that trigger unhealthy conflict on your team?  
When do things get heated or personal?
7. What are some examples of issues that trigger unhealthy conflict on your team?  
When do things get heated or personal?

## Personal Conflict Debt

8. What types of issues do you allow to build up without addressing them openly?
9. Where could you use the most help in using conflict productively?
10. What's one situation you would like to learn how to work through today?

