

## Psychometrics Canada **News Release**

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### **Warring Egos, Toxic Individuals, Feeble Leadership**

#### **A study of conflict in the Canadian workplace**

Psychometrics Canada, a leading assessment publisher and consultant for the development and selection of people in business, government and education, today announced the results of its Canadian study on workplace conflict. The report identifies the causes and effects of workplace conflict in Canada. In many cases conflict has severely crippling effects on productivity, staff engagement and working relationships. However, the report also found that when properly managed, conflict actually benefits organizations, leading to major innovations and better solutions to problems.

The study, which polled over 350 Human Resource (HR) professionals across Canada identifies the causes and effects of workplace conflict. According to the report almost all HR professionals (99%) deal with conflict. The most common causes of conflict are warring egos and personality clashes (86%), poor leadership (73%), lack of honesty (67%), stress (64%) and clashing values (59%). These conflicts frequently result in negative outcomes. Three out of four (76%) have seen conflict result in personal insults and attacks, and 43% have witnessed someone being fired. Eighty-one percent of those surveyed have seen conflict lead to someone leaving the organization, and 77% have seen it result in sickness or absence.

“These figures should be a strong alert to industry leaders that poorly managed conflict could be causing significant problems in their organizations” said Mark Fitzsimmons, Managing Director, Psychometrics Canada. “We expect conflict to grow in the current economy as one of the biggest causes of conflict rises – Stress.”

The study also uncovered a serious gap between the importance of conflict management skills and the effectiveness of current leaders. Nine out of ten rate the ability to handle conflict as either a very important or critical leadership skill. However, 18% of those surveyed indicated that current management and leadership is not at all effective at dealing with conflict, and 63% said that they are only somewhat effective.

## **Conflict Can Have Benefits if Managed Well**

The study also shows that properly managed conflict benefits organizations. HR professionals have seen conflict lead to better solutions to problems and challenges (57%), major innovations (21%), increased motivation (31%), a better understanding of others (77%), and higher work team performance (40%).

Recommendations for managers to deal more effectively with conflict included: manage toxic individuals more firmly (75%), provide more clarity about their expectations (77%), and model appropriate behavior (84%). These recommendations seem to be self-evident, suggesting that when it comes to dealing with conflict, some managers are avoiding an important part of their job.

“This research clearly shows the positive and negative effects that conflict has in business”, said Shawn Bakker, Psychologist and Researcher at Psychometrics Canada. “If organizations are to turn conflict into improved professional relationships and better organizational performance, they must invest the time to train and coach their employees to deal with different point of views, personalities and work styles”.

To read the complete report, visit [www.psychometrics.com](http://www.psychometrics.com)

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## Fact Sheet

- From November through December 2008 Psychometrics Canada surveyed 357 HR professionals currently working in Canadian organizations.
- More than six out of 10 (66%) respondents say that everyone has a role to play in conflict management. Most others believe that senior leaders (15%) and managers (11%) are responsible for ensuring that conflict is dealt with appropriately. What is most interesting is that HR professionals certainly do **not** see managing conflict as their ultimate responsibility. Only one percent believes that they are the final arbiters of workplace conflict.
- A recent study of 5,000 full-time employees in Europe and the Americas found that only 12% of them had received formal training in conflict management. (Employee sample from “Fight, flight or face it” a report authored by business psychology firm OPP).
- HR Professionals from four different work sectors: business, government, education and not-for-profit indicate that the ways managers can effectively resolve conflict are universal, and not dependent on their work environment. All respondents, regardless of their place of employment, rated the following two behaviors as their top recommendations for what managers could do to address conflict more effectively:
  1. Identify and address underlying tensions before things go wrong.
  2. Be a model of the right behaviors.
- The three work sectors where frequent conflict is most common are government (42.7%), education (41.8%), and not-for-profit (41.3%). There is a big drop in dealing with conflict in the business (36.7%) and consulting (27.6%) sectors.
- Conflict Quote: "I argue very well. Ask any of my remaining friends. I can win an argument on any topic, against any opponent. People know this, and steer clear of me at parties. Often, as a sign of their great respect, they don't even invite me." Dave Barry, American author and columnist.
- Psychometrics Canada is the publisher of the Work Personality Index and Career Values Scale and is the only authorized Canadian distributor of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®, Strong Interest Inventory®, Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, FIRO-B®, CPI 260™, and CPI™ 434. These assessments are available in both French and English.