



Module 3: Communication (Part 2)

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION ONLINE PROGRAMME
DAWN WILLIAMS

MODULE 3 – COMMUNICATION	2
MODULE 3: Outcomes	2
Business Writing.....	2
Characteristics of effective correspondence	3
5 steps of writing	5
Writing tips	6
Planning and writing guidelines	8
INTERPERSONAL STYLES	13
Characteristic behaviours	13
The four behavioural styles	15
Summary.....	21
Identifying the Styles	21
Relationship with stress	26
Pace and priority	26
Tension among the styles.....	28
Backup behaviours.....	29
If you are a dominant style	31
If you are an influencing style	32
If you are a steady style	32
If you are a conscientious style	32
Making teams work	33
Spotty track record	33
How the four styles act in groups – communicating	34
Providing service with style.....	36
Quick guide to dealing with different styles	39

MODULE 3 – COMMUNICATION

In Module 2 we discussed the communication process and how to effectively use advanced communication skills to build rapport and improve relationships. Not only do we need to communicate verbally and non-verbally, we need to become competent and careful writers to ensure our message is received in the manner it was intended.

Increasing your compatibility with other people will benefit you in your career, your day-to-day dealings with people, and in your personal relationships. We need to observe others and identify their styles so that we can communicate them in a way that can build better relationships and understanding.

MODULE 3: OUTCOMES

On completing Module 3: Communication you will be able to:

- Identify the 5 steps of writing
- Produce correspondence that is clear, concise, and accurate
- Identify the different interpersonal styles and how they need to be treated
- Recognise your interpersonal style, your strengths, and weaknesses
- Handle difficult customers by identifying their style

BUSINESS WRITING

As an Administrative Professional your job demands that you compose correspondence. When you begin working for an organisation, you may compose draft copies or correspondence. As you learn your position and needs of the company, you may send out correspondence under your own signature or write final copies for your employer to sign. Being a competent and careful writer is important to your success.

The Administrative Professional produces four basic types of written messages:

Email – throughout the world billions of emails are sent each day not only in the workplace but also at homes, schools, and universities. Initially emails were an informal way of sending messages between friends and a quick and convenient way to send messages to others in the workplace. As time has moved on, email has become a vital communication tool in the workplace and when composing an email, the same care should be taken as if writing a formal business document. Many business transactions take place over email today.

Memorandums – although email has pretty much taken over memorandums in most workplaces, there is sometimes still a need for a memorandum. A memorandum can be used when the correspondence is relatively lengthy (longer than one-half of an A4 page) or when a signed document is needed. It can also be used for short reports.

Letters – letters are a more formal way of communication than emails and memorandums. They are still the preferred method of communication when writing to current and prospective clients and customers. Letters provide formal documentation that you and your client may want for future reference.

Reports – reports may be formal (table of contents, body, appendices, and references) or informal (two to three pages) in nature.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE CORRESPONDENCE

COMPLETE

Correspondence is complete when it gives the reader all the information, he or she needs to accomplish the results the writer intended. To help achieve completeness, ask the “w” questions:

- Why is the correspondence being written?
- What is the goal of the correspondence? What do I hope to accomplish?
- What information is needed before writing the correspondence?
- Who needs to receive the correspondence?
- What information needs to be included in the correspondence?

CLEAR

After reading a message, the reader should be able to determine (without a doubt) the purpose of the correspondence. Clear messages reflect clear thinking. Each sentence should have one thought and each paragraph one purpose. Business correspondence is not the place to impress a person with your vocabulary – your aim is to get your purpose across in a simple, concise manner. If a short, easily understood word is available, use it. Your words should express rather than impress!

ACCURATE

Accuracy can be twofold:

1. The information that you provide in writing must be able to be substantiated with facts. If you have been asked for information, and you need to get research, ensure that what you put in the writing is fact and if you need to you can substantiate the information.
2. The correct use of grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary for the language you are using.

PROMPT

Prompt answers to messages say to readers that the writer cares about them. Conversely, late messages tell the reader that the writer is indifferent to the needs of the readers or that the writer is grossly inefficient.

The basic promptness rule is:

- Reply to the email on the same day as receipt
- Reply to memorandum within one day
- Reply to letters within three to five days
- Respond to reports within the timeline established by the cover letter or memorandum

CONCISE

Conciseness in writing means expressing the necessary information in as few words as possible. Say what you need to say without cluttering your communication with irrelevant information or needless words.

Checklist for conciseness:

- Are my sentences short?
- Are my paragraphs short?
- Have I used simple, easy to understand words?
- Have I used bullets or numbered lists whenever possible?
- Have I avoided unnecessary repetition?
- Have I eliminated excessive information?
- Have I avoided clichés? (Phrases that have become overused e.g. what goes around comes around)

COURTEOUSNESS

Use good human relations skills as you write. Treat the reader with respect. Demonstrate that you care about the reader as you write. When talking with people face-to-face, courtesy and consideration are necessary to develop and maintain goodwill. The same or perhaps even greater concern must be evident in written correspondence since only the written word conveys the message – a smile or friendly gesture cannot be observed.

Courtesy also means being considerate. If a person is asking you something, respond. If you are unable to give a positive response, explain why. Explanations let other people know you are sincere.

POSITIVE

People hear the word ‘yes’ easier than the word ‘no’. You will not always be able to say yes to someone or something. If you use a positive tone when saying no, the reader will respond in a more favourable manner. You set a positive tone by the words you choose and by the way you use them. Some words and phrases possess positive qualities, whereas others possess negative qualities.

5 STEPS OF WRITING

DETERMINE THE GOAL OR PURPOSE

Many times, people start the writing process before they understand clearly what their purpose of goal is. Ask you begin writing, to ask yourself these questions:

- What is my purpose in writing?
- What do I hope to accomplish?
- Analyse the reader/audience

An important consideration in the writing process is determining the reader(s). The strongest communications focus on the readers and their needs. It is important to note the experience and age of the reader regarding the topic you are writing and how much information you need to provide.

GATHER THE APPROPRIATE INFORMATION

Information for your correspondence can be gathered in various ways including researching the topic. There are two ways you can go about getting the information:

- **Primary research** – this is research you have done yourself. It could be an interview, a survey etc.
- **Secondary research** – is research that has been done by someone else that you can use. It is important to note that should you use research done by others; they must be acknowledged for their work. If not, you could be accused of plagiarism which is a serious offence.

ORGANISE THE CONTENT

The first part of your document should convey the purpose of the correspondence. The second supports, informs, and/or convinces the reader and the last part states the desired results, the action or summary of findings.

DRAFT THE CORRESPONDENCE

Your goal when drafting correspondence is to write everything down that you want to say in rough draft form. Do not spend too much time agonizing over each word – rather get all your ideas down.

At this stage, your writing is really putting your words down on paper. Write as if you were speaking to the reader face to face. Use the same words. It is amazing that when we put things on paper, we try and add words that we would never use if we were passing the information on verbally. When you write as you speak, your writing has a friendly tone and is easy to understand.

EDIT

Once you have completed the document, it must be checked to ensure that it is grammatically correct, the language is clear, the sentence structure appropriate and the readability level matches the audience. During the editing process, you must be precise and address the writing mechanics i.e. the rules of the written language – capitalisation, punctuation and spelling!

WRITING TIPS

ENSURE EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

Unity – a paragraph has unity when its sentences clarify or support the main idea. The sentence that contains the main idea of a paragraph is the topic sentence. The topic sentence helps the writer stay focused on the main idea of the paragraph.

Coherence – a paragraph has coherence when its sentences relate to each other in content, grammatical construction, and choice of words.

Parallelism – parallel structure also helps you achieve coherence. When grammatically equivalent forms are used, parallelism exists. Consider the following example of nonparallel and parallel constructions:

- **Nonparallel** – the position is prestigious, challenging and the money is not bad
- **Parallel** – the position offers prestige, challenge, and money

USE APPROPRIATE SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Sentences should be simple but varied. Use a combination of sentence structures to keep your reader's attention. There is no formula for determining sentence length, but shorter sentences keep the reader's attention. Generally, short sentences are also easier to understand. A reader loses attention when a sentence is more than 20 words in length. You do not necessarily have to count all the words in your sentences or try to limit them, simply be aware that the readability is increased when sentences are short.

ELIMINATE PASSIVE VOICE

Passive voice is present when the subject of the sentence receives the action or is acted upon. It has three characteristics:

- A form of the verb to be (is, am, are, was, were, be, been, being)
- A past participle (a verb ending in ed or en)
- A prepositional phrase beginning with by

Examples:

“The document was written by Sophie. The results of the meeting will be sent to you by Monday”

In contrast, the active voice is present when the subject performs the action. Read the same sentences above rewritten in active voice.

“Sophie wrote the document. You will receive the results of the meeting on Monday”

The active voice is clearer and stronger than the passive voice. Sometimes the writer can use the passive voice to obscure who is responsible for an action. In the sentence below, the reader does not know who made the decision:

“The decision was made to downsize the organisation by 20 percent.”

The writer intended to be ambiguous about the decision. Although the writer can use passive voice intentionally, if it is overused, it can result in wordy, dull writing. Use passive voice when necessary but do not overuse it.

DETERMINE READABILITY LEVEL

Readability is defined as the degree of difficulty of the message. These items contribute to greater reading difficulty:

- Long sentences
- Words with several syllables
- Technical terms

Readability formulas, such as the Gunning Fog Index and the Flesch-Kincaid Index provide readability indices. The higher the readability index, the less readable the message. There are many online websites that will give you readability calculators to check the readability index of your work (<http://simbon.madpage.com/Fog/>).

You can check your readability by using the built-in function from Word. If you go to the Options section under Proofing, under the section “When correcting spelling and grammar in Word”, select the “Show readability statistics”. The statistics will appear every time you run a spell and grammar check.

PLANNING AND WRITING GUIDELINES

EMAIL

The basic characteristics of effective correspondence presented earlier are applicable to email as well:

- Completeness
- Clarity
- Accurateness
- Promptness
- Conciseness
- Courteousness
- Positivism

Several guidelines as well as the guidelines for etiquette and ethics apply to email specifically.

- Be appropriately formal when writing email. The rule of thumb is to be almost as formal as you are in standard memorandums.
- Avoid using emoticons (faces produced by the internet counterculture in answer to email being devoid of body language). For example:

<G> – I am grinning as I write this sentence

<LOL> – I am laughing out loud

- Use the subject line provided on your email form. This line should be concise yet give enough information, so the receiver knows the purpose of the message immediately
- Think through the purpose of your email before you begin writing
- Organise the message. Email should not be longer than one screen. If you are writing a memo longer than one screen, send a traditional hard copy memorandum
- Edit and proofread carefully! Check your spelling. Do not send an email that contains inaccuracies or incorrect grammar. Most email programs allow for checking spelling and grammar. Set the preferences so that spelling and grammar are checked
- Use complete sentences
- Capitalise and punctuate properly
- Do not run sentences together
- Insert a blank line after each paragraph
- Include your name and title (if appropriate) when replying to an email. Often you can add a signature in your preferences, which will automatically include this information at the end of every email you send
- Assume that any message you send is permanent

- Do not double space your entire message. It takes up too much space and makes the message more difficult to read
- Be wary of humour or sarcasm. Electronic communication is devoid of body language, so the slightest hint of sarcasm could be badly misinterpreted
- Avoiding using all uppercase or all lowercase letters

EMAIL: NETIQUETTE

- Do not use different types of fonts, colours, clip art and other graphics in email. Such an approach merely clutters your message and takes longer to send and receive
- Do not key the message in all uppercase letters. You may emphasise a word or phrase in all capital letters, but use the Caps Lock button sparingly
- Avoid sending messages when you are angry. Give yourself time to cool down and think about the situation before you send or reply to an email in anger. Take a walk around the office, drink a cup of tea to soothe your nerves or wait 24 hours to respond. In some cases, you may want to make a telephone call or have a personal conversation with the person. You have a more difficult time being angry when you see the person face-to-face or when you hear the person's voice
- Answer emails promptly. The general rule is to read and respond to email once or twice a day (depending on volume)
- Do not send large attachments unless you know the person can receive them

ETHICS

Ethical behaviour is important. Ethics regarding email means that you do not misuse the organisations email system.

Do not send personal email from your office computer (check what your company's email policy is)

- When people send you inappropriate email, let them know politely that you cannot receive it
- Do not use email to berate or reprimand any employee. Do not use email to terminate someone's employment
- Do not use email to send information that might involve legal action
- Remember that even if you delete email, it might not actually be deleted. Some organisations make backup tapes of all electronic files. Think carefully before putting something on email
- Do not respond to unsolicited email
- Do not forward junk mail or chain letters to a mailing list. (This practice is known as spamming and some organisations have email policies that result in a loss of computer privileges for individuals who engage in spamming)
- Do not forward an email unless you know the message is true. For example, you may think you are being helpful by forwarding a message about a computer virus. Check first to see if it is a hoax before forwarding on

MEMORANDUMS

The characteristics of effective correspondence holds true for memorandums. Memorandums must be complete, clear, concise, accurate, prompt, and positive. In style, they are slightly more formal than email, but less formal than letters. A memorandum form contains the following headings:

- To
- From
- Date
- Subject

The word memorandum or an organisational name or logo may be included. A copy notation indicated by the letter 'c' may follow the body of the memorandum.

Guidelines

N.B. Each organisation has their own guidelines for writing memorandums. Make sure you check the guidelines at your organisation as they may differ to the general guidelines. E.g. some organisations do not allow you to use first names, you need to use Ms or Mr.

- Use the first name (or initials) and the last name of the individual to whom you are sending the memo
- Use the job title of the individual if company policy dictates doing so. Many organisations do not use titles in memos
- Do not use Ms or Mr (dependent on company policy)
- If you are sending a memorandum to more than one individual, list the names in alphabetical order or by hierarchical order within the company
- List 'c' recipients alphabetically or hierarchically
- If you are addressing a memo to ten or more people, use a generic classification, such as Strategic Planning Team

If the memorandum is more than one page, key the additional pages on plain paper. Include an appropriate header on additional pages

LETTERS: DETERMINE THE BASIC PURPOSE

Before you begin to write a letter, you must determine the basic purpose for writing. Letters can fall into six types:

- Requesting information or seeking routing action
- Providing information
- Acknowledging information
- Conveying negative information

- Demanding action
- Persuading

The first three types of letters (requesting information, providing information, and acknowledging information) are letters in which the reader's reaction to the message will be favourable or neutral. The next two types of letters (conveying negative information and demanding action) are letters in which the reader's reaction may be unfavourable. Use the direct approach in the first three types of letters and the indirect approach in the others.

As you write, you want to keep the reader uppermost in your mind and attempt to put yourself in the place of the reader. The approach, called the 'you approach', demands empathy (identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives) on the part of the writer. You must place yourself in the reader's shoes and try to understand the situation from the reader's perspective. If you are trying to sell a product or service, you must look at the benefits it will offer to the reader. If you are trying to persuade someone to speak at a conference, you must highlight the contributions the proposed speaker can make – his or her unique gifts and skills. When carrying out the 'you approach', adhere to two words of caution: Be sincere. Your goal is not to flatter the reader, but to see the situation from the reader's point of view. The 'you approach' is important when writing all types of letters.

TYPES OF LETTERS

DIRECT APPROACH (POSITIVE LETTER)

Direct correspondence begins with the reason for the correspondence. If you are making a request or an inquiry, state it. Continue with whatever explanation is necessary so the reader will understand the message. Close the letter with a courteous thank you for action taken or with a request for action by a specific time.

INDIRECT APPROACH (NEGATIVE LETTER)

When writing indirect correspondence:

- Begin with an opening statement that is pleasant but neutral
- Review the circumstances and give the negative information
- Close the correspondence on a pleasant and positive note

PERSUASIVE APPROACH

Use the persuasive approach when you want to convince someone to do something or you want to change an indifferent or negative reader's reaction. Your goal is to turn a negative or indifferent attitude into a positive one. When writing a persuasive letter:

- Get the reader's attention quickly, open with the 'you approach'

- Continue by creating interest and desire
- Close by asking for the desired action

The approach is also known as the AIDA approach – Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. An example would be a charity asking for assistance. See summary on next page for styles of letters.

EDIT PROOF AND FORMAT

Once you have written a letter, you are responsible for editing and proofreading the document. The grammar and spelling software on your computer can help you do the job. However, the software will not catch all the errors and certain errors noted by the software may not necessarily be errors! You must have a good command of grammar and proofread carefully. You might even ask someone else to proofread the document.

Some proofreading tips:

- Proofread your document on the screen before you print it. Scroll to the beginning of the document and use the top of the screen as a guide for your eyes in reading each line
- Proofread a document in three steps
 - General appearance and format
 - Spelling and keyboard errors
 - Punctuation, word usage and content
- Read from right to left for spelling and keyboard errors
- Use a spell checker
- If possible, do not proofread a document right after keying it. Let the document sit while you perform another task
- Pay attention to dates. Do not assume they are correct. For example, check to determine that Thursday, 15 November is a Thursday. Check the spelling of the months and the correctness of the year
- Use the thesaurus if you are not certain a word is appropriate
- Watch closely for omissions of –ed, -ing or –s at the end of words
- If punctuation causes you problems, check a grammatical source after you have completed all other proofreading
- Be consistent in the use of commas
- Be consistent in the use of capital letters
- Check numerals

Be consistent in format.

INTERPERSONAL STYLES

When you increase your compatibility with other people it will benefit you in your career, your day-to-day dealings with people, and in your closest personal relationships.

Our characteristic styles or patterns of relating to others determine the way with which we build relationships. Most of our behavioral patterns are established early in life through the influence of peers, education, parents, authority figures, and our environment. Throughout our lives, a variety of behavioral patterns are reinforced and become habits. While our habits make us predictable, everyone has different habits. That is what keeps relationships interesting and challenging!

The DISC Platinum Rule developed by Dr Tony Alessandro uses simple tools that can easily be applied to improve both business and interpersonal relationships. Below are some guidelines for understanding and adjusting to the differences in people, through observation of their behaviors. The tools that are discussed will allow you to see yourself and your world through someone else's eyes and ears, and that can go a long way toward building compatibility!

CHARACTERISTIC BEHAVIOURS

To practice The DISC Platinum Rule effectively, you need to be able to “read” people. Reading people involves observing their behavior, being aware of their tone of voice, and actively listening to their words. It requires that you “tune” into them, find their wavelength and communicate with them on their channel, rather than expecting and waiting for them to communicate on yours.

Human beings are often predictable. They develop habitual ways of dealing with other people in their environments. The Platinum Rule recognises that people are different and that others may not wish to be treated the same way you do. Patterns that work for you may not work for them. It allows for individual differences and preferences and serves as a useful guide for many relationship situations.

The behavioral styles you will learn in the following sections are based on personality theories that classify behavior patterns.

OPEN VS GUARDED

Openness shows the degree of self-disclosure: a person's readiness and willingness to outwardly show thoughts and feelings and accept openness from others.

GUARDED BEHAVIORS

- Keeps feelings private: shares only on a “need-to-know” basis
- Makes most decisions based on evidence (objective)
- Focuses conversation on issues and tasks; stays on subject
- More formal and proper

- Goes with the agenda
- Fact- and task-oriented
- Takes time to get to know in business or unfamiliar social situations
- Disciplined about how their time is used by others
- Prefers to work independently
- Avoids/minimizes physical contact
- Tells, or enjoys listening to, goal-related stories and anecdotes
- Limited range of facial expressions during speaking and listening
- Shows less enthusiasm than the average person
- Formal handshake
- Less likely to give nonverbal feedback, if given at all
- Responsive to realities/actual experiences/facts

OPEN BEHAVIORS

- Self-disclosing
- Shows and shares feelings freely
- Makes most decisions based on feelings (subjective)
- Conversation includes digressions, strays from subject
- More relaxed and warm
- Goes with the flow
- Opinion- and feeling-oriented
- Easy to get to know in business or unfamiliar social situations
- Flexible about how their time is used by others
- Prefers to work with others
- Initiates/accepts physical contact
- Shares, or enjoys listening to, personal feelings, especially if positive
- Animated facial expressions during speaking and listening
- Shows more enthusiasm than the average person
- Friendly handshake
- More likely to give nonverbal feedback
- Responsive to dreams/visions/concepts

DIRECT VS INDIRECT

Directness is the way a person deals with information and situations. It is also the amount of control and forcefulness a person attempts to exercise over situations or other people's thoughts and emotions.

INDIRECT BEHAVIORS

- Approaches risk, decision, or change slowly/cautiously
- Infrequent contributor to group conversations
- Infrequent use of gestures and voice intonation to emphasize points
- Often makes qualified statements: “According to my sources,” or “I think”
- Emphasizes points through explanations of the content of the message
- Questions tend to be for clarification/support/information
- Reserves expression of opinions
- More patient and cooperative
- Diplomatic
- When not in agreement (if it is no big deal), most likely to go along
- Understated; reserved
- Initial eye contact is intermittent
- At social gathering, more likely to wait for others to introduce themselves
- Gentle handshake
- Tends to follow established rules and policies

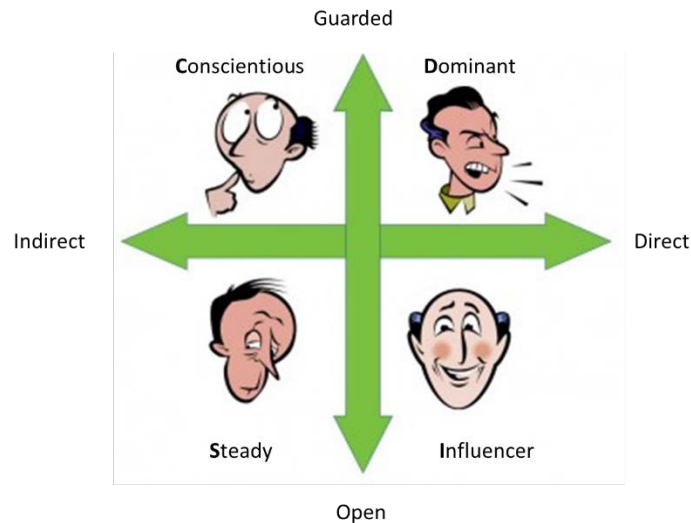
DIRECT BEHAVIORS

- Approaches risk, decisions, or change quickly/spontaneously
- Frequent contributor to group conversations
- Frequently uses gestures and voice intonation to emphasize points
- Often makes emphatic statements: “This is so!” or “I’m positive!”
- Emphasizes points through confident vocal intonation and assertive body language
- Questions tend to be rhetorical, to emphasize points, or to challenge information
- Expresses opinions readily
- Less patient; competitive
- Confronting
- More likely to maintain his or her position when not in agreement (argue)
- Intense; assertive
- Initial eye contact is sustained
- More likely to introduce self to others at social gathering
- Firm handshake
- Tends to bend/break established rules and policies

THE FOUR BEHAVIOURAL STYLES

As we have seen, each of the quadrants created by combining the openness and directness axes represents a unique combination of open or guarded and indirect or direct behaviors. Each combination has its own needs and preferences in terms of how an individual relates to people and situations.

The quadrants are used to represent four distinct, identifiable, predictable behavioral patterns or Styles. We will refer to these Styles as the Dominant Style (D's), the Influencing Style (I's), the Steady Style (S's) and the Conscientious Style (C's).



The name given to each style reflects a generalized character type, rather than a complete or accurate description of any individual.

You have probably identified with some of the characteristics of all four behavioral patterns. That is natural! People possess traits from all four Styles to varying degrees. Yet most people display a dominant pattern. It is like a theme in a musical composition. It does not describe all the parts, but it is a recurring and predictable element. Like variations on a theme, people also possess traits which vary from their dominant patterns. The most hard-driving, self-reliant Dominant Style will also have, if ever so subtly expressed, parts of the needing to be part of the Steady Style.

There is no “best” behavioral style. Each style has its own unique needs and wants, strengths and weaknesses. Much of a Style’s effectiveness in a situation depends on its “owner’s” ability to apply his strengths flexibly and compensate for his weaknesses in that situation.

Although behavioral style is only a partial description of personality, it is useful in describing how a person is perceived in social and business situations.

As you better understand why people behave the way they do, and come to understand your own patterns better, your communication will become more open and effective in ways that maintain comfort (reduce tension) and heighten productivity. With an awareness of the four basic Styles, you can learn to apply the spirit of the Golden Rule to create better chemistry more of the time and in more of your relationships.

THE DOMINANT STYLE

Dominant Styles are guarded and direct. They exhibit firmness in their relationships with others, are oriented toward productivity and goals, and are concerned with bottom line results.

Dominant Styles accept challenges, take authority, and go headfirst into solving problems. They tend to exhibit great administrative and operational skills and work quickly and impressively by themselves. They tend to come on cool, independent, and competitive with others, especially in a business environment. Dominant Styles try to shape their environment to overcome obstacles en route to their accomplishments. They demand maximum freedom to manage themselves and others and use their leadership skills to become winners.

Closely allied to their positive traits are the negative ones of stubbornness, impatience, and toughness. Dominant Styles tend to take control of other people and can have a low tolerance for the feelings, attitudes, and inadequacies of co-workers and subordinates. They like to move at a fast pace and are impatient with delays. It is not unusual for a Dominant Style to call you and, without saying hello, launch right into the conversation, *“You’ve got to be kidding; the report from Head Office will kill us... by the way, this is Matthew.”* When other people cannot keep up with their speed, they view them as incompetent.

The Dominant Style’s motto might be: *“I want it done right and I want it done now”* or *“I want it done yesterday!”* They get things done and make things happen. They are like jugglers who like to do many things at the same time. They start juggling three things at once and when they feel comfortable with those three things, they pick up a fourth. They keep adding more until the pressure builds to the point where they let everything drop, then immediately start the whole process over again. The Dominant Style’s theme seems to be, *“Notice my accomplishments.”* Their high-achievement motivation gives Dominant Styles a tendency toward workaholism.

The primary strengths of the Dominant Styles are their ability to get things done, their leadership, and their decision-making ability. Their weaknesses tend to be inflexibility, impatience, poor listening habits, and failure to take time to *“smell the flowers.”* In fact, they are so competitive that when they do finally go out to *“smell the flowers,”* they return and say to others, *“I smelled twelve today. How many did you smell?”*

A Dominant Style’s ideal occupation might be a hard-driving newspaper reporter, stockbroker, independent consultant, corporate CEO, drill sergeant, or monarch. In a business environment, they like others to be decisive, efficient, receptive, and intelligent. In a social environment, they want others to be quick, assertive, and witty.

A Dominant Style’s desk will be busy with paperwork, projects, and material separated into piles. Their offices are decorated to suggest power. Dominant Styles are formal and keep their distance physically and psychologically.

A Dominant Style's office is arranged so that seating is formal. Face-to-face with a big power desk separating him from his visitors. They do not appreciate people talking three inches from their noses, so becoming your friend is not a prerequisite to doing business with you.

To achieve more balance, Dominant Styles need to practice active listening, pace themselves to project a more relaxed image, and develop patience, humility, and sensitivity. They need to show a concern for others, use more caution, verbalise the reasons for their conclusions, and participate more as team players.

THE INFLUENCING STYLE

Influencing Styles have high directness and openness, exhibiting characteristics such as animation, intuitiveness, and liveliness. But they can also be viewed as manipulative, impetuous, and excitable when displaying behavior inappropriate to the situation.

Influencing Styles keep a fast pace. Their actions and decisions are spontaneous. They are seldom concerned about facts and details and try to avoid them as much as possible. Their motto is "Don't confuse me with the facts." This disregard for details sometimes prompts them to exaggerate and generalize data. It also gives them a built-in excuse when they are wrong: "I didn't have all the facts!" They are more comfortable with "best guesstimates" than with exact data.

The Influencing Style's primary strengths are their enthusiasm, persuasiveness, and delightful sociability. Their primary weaknesses are getting involved in too many things, impatience, and their short attention spans, which cause them to become bored easily.

Influencing Styles are "idea people." They can get others caught up in their dreams because of their good persuasive skills. They influence others and shape their environment by bringing others into an alliance to accomplish results. They seek approval and recognition for their accomplishments and achievements. They have that dynamic ability to think quickly on their feet.

Influencing Styles are true entertainers. They love an audience and thrive on involvement with people. They tend to work quickly and enthusiastically with others. If they had a motto that would aptly describe their behavior, it might be: "Don't we have fun!"

Influencing Styles are stimulating, talkative, and gregarious. They tend to operate on intuition and like to take risks. Their greatest irritations are boring tasks, being alone, and not having access to a telephone.

Many Influencing Styles are in occupations such as sales, entertainment, public relations, professional hosts, trial attorneys, social directors on cruise ships, the hotel business, and other glamorous, high-profile careers. In the business environment, they like other people to be risk-takers and to act quickly. In a social environment they like others to be uninhibited, spontaneous, and entertaining.

Influencing Styles design and use their space in a disorganized and cluttered manner; they know if something is missing. Their walls may contain awards, stimulating posters or notes, and motivational, personal slogans. The seating arrangement indicates warmth, openness, and a willingness to make contact. Since Influencing Styles are touchers, and do not mind a slap on the back or a warm handshake, they often move to an alternative seating arrangement when talking with visitors. There is little danger of alienating Influencing Styles by standing too close or playing with something on their desks.

To achieve more balance and behavioral flexibility, Influencing Styles need to: control their time and emotions; develop a more objective mind-set; spend more time checking, verifying, specifying and organizing; develop more of a task-focus; and take a more logical approach to projects and issues.

THE STEADY STYLE

Steady Styles are open and indirect, relatively unassertive, warm, and reliable. Steady Styles are sometimes seen by others as compliant, soft-hearted, and accepting of situations.

Steady Styles seek security. They act and make decisions slowly. This pace stems from their desire to avoid risky or unknown situations. Before they act or decide, they must know how other people feel about their decision.

Steady Styles tend to be the most people-oriented of all the four Styles. Having close, friendly, personal, first-name relationships with others is one of their most important objectives. They dislike interpersonal conflict so much that they sometimes say what they think other people want to hear. They have natural counseling skills and are extremely supportive. Their theme is, “Notice how well-liked I am.”

Steady Styles tend to be good, active listeners and generally develop relationships with people who are also good listeners. As a result, Steady Styles have strong networks of people who are willing to be mutually supportive. You often feel good just being with a Steady Style.

Steady Styles focus on getting acquainted and building trust. They are irritated by pushy, aggressive behavior. They ask the question, “How will it affect my personal circumstances and the camaraderie of the group?” They are cooperative, steady workers and excellent team players.

The primary strengths of Steady Styles are relating to, caring for, and loving others. Their primary weaknesses are that they are somewhat unassertive, overly sensitive, and easily bullied.

Ideal occupations for the Steady Style cluster around the helping professions such as counseling, teaching, social work, the clergy, psychology, nursing, parenting, and human resource development.

In the business environment, Steady Styles like others to be courteous, friendly, and accepting of their share of the responsibility. In a social environment, they like others to be genuine and friendly.

Steady Style's desks contain family pictures and other personal items. Their office walls have personal slogans, family or group photos, serene pictures, or mementos. Steady Styles are high-touch in a high-tech world. They give their offices a friendly, warm ambience and arrange seating in a side-by-side, cooperative way.

To achieve more balance and to develop behavioral flexibility, Steady Styles need to say "no" occasionally, attend to the completion of tasks without over-sensitivity to the feelings of others, be willing to reach beyond their comfort zone to set goals that require some stretch and risk, and delegate to others.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS STYLE

Conscientious Styles are both indirect and guarded. They are concerned with analytical processes and are persistent, systematic problem-solvers. They can also be aloof, picky, and critical. Conscientious Styles are very security-conscious and have a high need to be right, leading them to an over reliance on data collection. In their quest for data, they tend to ask many questions about specifics. Their actions and decisions tend to be slow and extremely cautious, but they rarely miss a deadline. Although they are great problem-solvers, Conscientious Styles could be better decision-makers.

Conscientious Styles tend to be perfectionistic, serious, and orderly. They focus on the details and the process of work and become irritated by surprises and "glitches." Their theme is, "Notice my efficiency," and their emphasis is on compliance and working within existing guidelines to promote quality in products or service.

Conscientious Styles like organization and structure and dislike too much involvement with other people. They work slowly and precisely by themselves, are time-disciplined, and prefer an intellectual work environment. Conscientious Styles tend to be critical of their own performance. They tend to be skeptical and like to see things in writing.

The Conscientious Style's primary strengths are their accuracy, dependability, independence, follow-through, and organization. Their primary weaknesses are their procrastination and conservative natures, which promote their tendency to be picky and over-cautious. Occupations that they tend to gravitate toward are accounting, engineering, computer programming, the hard sciences (chemistry, physics, math), systems analysis and architecture.

The greatest irritation for Conscientious Styles is disorganized, illogical people. In business environments, they want others to be credible, professional, and courteous. In social environments, they like others to be pleasant and sincere.

Environmental clues include highly organized desks with clear tops. Their office walls contain their favorite types of artwork: charts, graphs, exhibits, or pictures pertaining to the job. Conscientious Styles are non-contact people who prefer the formality of distance. This preference is reflected in the

functional but uninviting arrangement of their desks and chairs. They are not fond of “huggers” and “touchers” and prefer a cool handshake or a brief phone call.

To improve their balance and behavioral flexibility, Conscientious Styles need to: openly show concern and appreciation of others; try shortcuts and time-savers occasionally, adjust more readily to change and disorganization, improve timely decision-making and initiation of new projects, compromise with the opposition, state unpopular decisions, and use policies more as guidelines than hard and fast laws.

SUMMARY

	Dominant	Influencers	Steadiness	Conscientious
Psychological need	Direct/dominate others	To interact with others	To serve	To comply with own high standards
Team strengths	Driving change	Optimistic and people oriented	Team player, patient	Accuracy and intuitiveness
Seeks	Personal challenges	Social recognition	Harmony	Perfectionism
Fears	Loss of control	Social rejection	Loss of stability	Criticism of their own work
Overextensions	Impatience	Dis-organisation	Possessiveness	Overly critical of themselves and others

IDENTIFYING THE STYLES

You now have a basic understanding of the four types of behavioral Styles. You may begin to suspect at this point that relationships depend, in part, on our appropriate interaction with each style. The next question is how to identify someone’s behavioral style.

“Excuse me, Mr. Naidoo, I need to analyze your style. Do you have a moment to discuss your openness and directness with me?” That just will not do. Guesswork is not advisable, and rarely necessary because there are so many clues available if you know how to look for them. To identify someone’s style, you must *observe what that person does*.

This simple procedure should help you quickly and accurately identify a person's behavioral style:

1. Note the person's **ENVIRONMENT**
2. **ANALYZE THE BEHAVIORS** with respect to openness and directness to arrive at the likely **BEHAVIORAL STYLE**
3. **CONFIRM** your observations.

STEP 1: NOTE THE ENVIRONMENT

Note the environment in which your subject works, lives, or otherwise spends time. That may give you several immediate clues. How (if you should have the opportunity to see it) is the person's office decorated and arranged? What is on the desk, walls, and bookshelves? What is the seating arrangement between you and this person?

The "Environmental Clues" chart (below) summarizes several indicators that relate to the office environment. For instance, if you entered a client's office and noticed family pictures on the desk and walls, nature posters with personal relationship motifs, a round desk, and a separate seating area with four comfortable chairs, what would be your first impression of that client's behavioral style? If your client then stood to greet you personally and sat with you in the easy chairs to discuss the purpose of your visit, would that confirm or change your initial impression? By comparing these clues against those presented in the "Environmental Clues" chart, you can get a good initial indication that (in this case) you are indeed dealing with a Steady Style.

Try another: This time you enter the office and notice on the walls: diploma, an achievement plaque, and a poster that says, "Why not?" On the desk: several jumbled stacks of papers in piles, a chaotic appearance. For seating: two overstuffed chairs and a small table close to the open side of the desk where two people can join in a discussion.

You also notice a bookcase with books and stacks of folders intermixed and a plant on the file cabinet. Check the information in the "Environmental Clues" chart. From the environment, what kind of style does the person in that office appear to be? (The disorganization, wall decorations of achievements, stimulating personal comments that go beyond specific projects, and the comfortable and accessible seating mark this as the office of an Influencing Style. Get the idea?)

These environmental indicators are only one kind of clue to behavioral style and **NOT** the only clue. The person may have had little control over the environment you see or may have changed the environment to meet other needs (e.g., an intense workload and a special visitor). Of course, many times your first contact with someone, and your first opportunity to get a feeling for their behavioral style, will not be a face-to-face encounter. It may be over the telephone, or through a letter or an e-mail.


The Thinker - Conscientious	The Director - Dominant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk may appear structured and organized with clear top • Walls may contain charts, graphs, exhibits or photos pertaining to the job • Decorated functionally for working • Seating arrangement suggests formality and non contact • Desk between you and the individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk may appear busy , lots of work and material separated into piles • Walls may contain achievement awards or large planning sheet / calendar • Decorated to suggest power and control • Seating arrangement is closed , formal, non contact – positioned for power • Desk may be large to show success and to separate them from the individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk may contain family photos and personal items • Walls may contain personal slogans, family or group pictures, serene art, or mementos • Decorated in relaxed, airy, friendly, soothing manner • Seating arrangement is open and informal • No desk between you and the individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk may look disorganized and cluttered, but they know if something’s missing • Walls may contain awards, motivational slogans, stimulating posters, or “pat-on-the-back” notes • Decorated in open, airy, friendly manner • Seating arrangement indicates warmth, openness, contacts, and activity • Likes contact: may move to alternate seating arrangement when talking to you
The Relator – Steady	The Expressive - Influencer

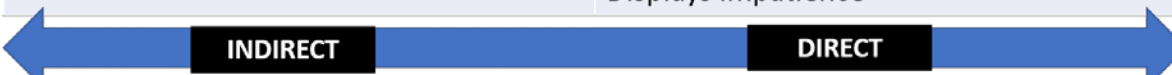
STEP 2: OBSERVE BEHAVIOURS

The second step, the crucial step, in identifying a person’s behavioral style is to observe it in action. Steps One and Three enhance and corroborate Step Two’s observations. To observe someone’s behavioral style, you need to be aware of and observe a range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors. This may require you to stimulate more behaviors by asking questions (probing) and by “actively” listening.

The figure below shows a classified range of verbal, visual, and vocal characteristics, and their observable behaviors. These behaviors refer to actions you can see, not judgments you may be tempted to make about them. For example, if you were to see a person hopping up and down, is he doing so because he: is hop-stomping mad, just stepped on a nail, has a foot that is asleep, or is extremely happy and excited? You cannot tell by looking. All you can say is he is jumping up and down. Remember – observable behaviors!

USING VERBAL, VOCAL AND VISUAL INDICATORS

VERBAL, VOCAL, VISUAL INDICATORS - OPENNESS			
 <p>GUARDED</p> <p>OPEN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact- and task-oriented • Limited sharing of personal feelings • More formal speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little inflection • Few pitch variations • Less variety in vocal qualities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer facial expressions • Controlled/ limited hand and body movement • Non-contact-oriented
	<p>Verbal (Words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tells stories/ anecdotes • Shares personal feelings • Informal speech • Expresses opinions readily 	<p>Vocal (Tone of Voice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of inflection • More pitch variation • More variety in vocal quality 	<p>Visual (Body Language)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animated facial expressions • Much hand/ body movement • Contact-oriented • Dramatic actions

VERBAL, VOCAL, VISUAL INDICATORS - DIRECTNESS	
VERBAL	
Asks (“Would you like to sit down?”) Listens Reserves opinions Low quantity of verbal communication	Tells (“Have a seat” or “Sit down”) Talks Expresses opinions readily Lots of verbal communication
VOCAL	
Steady, even delivery Less forceful - Lower volume Slower speech patterns	More voice variety More forceful - Higher volume Faster speech patterns
VISUAL	
Gentle handshake Intermittent eye contact Limited gestures to emphasize points Exhibits patience	Firm handshake Steady eye contact Gestures to emphasize points (e.g., pointing) Displays impatience
 <p>INDIRECT DIRECT</p>	

STEP 3: CONFIRMATION

After identifying the other person's style based on environment and behavior, you should use behavioral confirmation to corroborate your choice. Behavioral confirmation simply means looking for additional behaviors that are characteristic of the style you believe (based on your preliminary observations) a person represents. You have observed someone and made a preliminary classification; now check this against the characteristics of the various Styles as you receive further information.

If you have determined that the individual is a Dominant Style, look for specific characteristics that you expect from a Dominant Style—competitiveness, impatience, efficiency, decisiveness, fact-orientation, goal concerns, and so on. If you find that the person exhibits these types of characteristics, you have verified your choice. You can now feel comfortable interacting with him/her as a Dominant Style. Use the same behavioral confirmation process with the other three Styles. **Always test and validate your initial style choice.** The price for being wrong is much greater (if nothing else an embarrassment) than the time involved in confirming an initial assessment.

EXAMPLE 1

X is a businessman who exudes warmth even over the phone. He likes restaurant meetings and usually arrives early. When I met him for the first time, he immediately stood up and smiled. He called me by my first name, extended his hand to shake mine, and wrapped his left arm about my shoulders. He asked if I liked rum, then ordered a drink he was certain I would like and related the story of his first encounter with the drink in New Orleans. The lunch lasted two and a half hours. Fifteen minutes of this time was spent on business, twenty minutes on new jokes, and the remaining time spent on X's accomplishments and interests. During the lunch, he made friends with the manager and three waitresses, including the one who bumped into him as he was gesturing broadly.

- How would you rate his openness?
- How would you rate his directness?

EXAMPLE 2

When I called a vice president of training, she answered her own phone in a notably quiet voice. Upon hearing who recommended that I call, she spent a good minute talking about her friendship with the person. When I asked for an appointment, she said that her schedule was flexible. At our meeting, she greeted me by my first name in a warm voice. We sat in a comfortable seating area away from the desk. She brought in two coffees and we talked about the training program. She was most concerned about the training's potential effect on the communications between management and employees. Though I felt that she had really listened, we had not made a great deal of progress in terms of identifying training needs. Nonetheless, we had developed a strong personal trust and parted our first meeting as friends.

- How would you rate her openness?
- How would you rate her directness?

RELATIONSHIP WITH STRESS

You have been introduced to a generalised method of classifying many behavioral characteristics into four basic behavioral Styles. Besides differences in openness and directness, the Styles tend to differ in preferences for PACE (a person's natural rate-of-speed) and PRIORITY (what a person sees as most important toward accomplishing a goal).

Each style has demonstrated their internal motivators through a combination of priority and pace. Open types place a priority on relationships, whereas Guarded people place the priority on tasks. Direct types demonstrate a desire for a faster pace through impatience, whereby Indirect people come across as more cooperative and patient. You can almost visualize a dashboard of a car with only two gauges: Speed and temperature! Direct people go fast; Indirect prefer a slower, steady speed. Open people are warm and Guarded are more relaxed.

An open behavioral style tends to correspond with a relationship priority. Guarded Styles with task-orientation. Indirect behaviors tend to be slower-paced than the direct-style types, which tend to be faster-paced.

An awareness of behavioral-style preferences becomes especially important when people of different Styles meet. When that occurs, and if each person behaves according to the preferences of his or her own style, tension often results.

PACE AND PRIORITY

The “Tension Among the Styles” graphic on the next page relates pace and priority characteristics to behavioral Styles. Notice that the Steady Style and Conscientious Style both tend to prefer a slower pace; the Influencing Style and the Dominant Styles prefer a faster pace. These style combinations will get along well as far as pace is concerned but watch out for their priorities!

Take the Dominant Style–Influencing Style relationship. Both the Dominant Styles and the Influencing Styles are relatively fast-paced behavioral types. Yet the Influencing Styles place more emphasis on personal relationships than on tasks, while the Dominant Styles tend to pursue tasks with less concern for relationships or feelings. Some degree of tension is likely to result during their interaction due to their differences in priority.

Where priorities are concerned, the Influencing Styles do better with the Steady Styles. These two will still be getting to know each other while the Conscientious Styles and the Dominant Styles are headlong into the task. Without some awareness and accommodation for their differences in pace, tension may build as well in the Steady Style–Influencing Style interaction when these two finally do

get around to the tasks at hand—the Influencing Styles usually want it yesterday whereas the Steady Styles want to take the slow and steady approach.

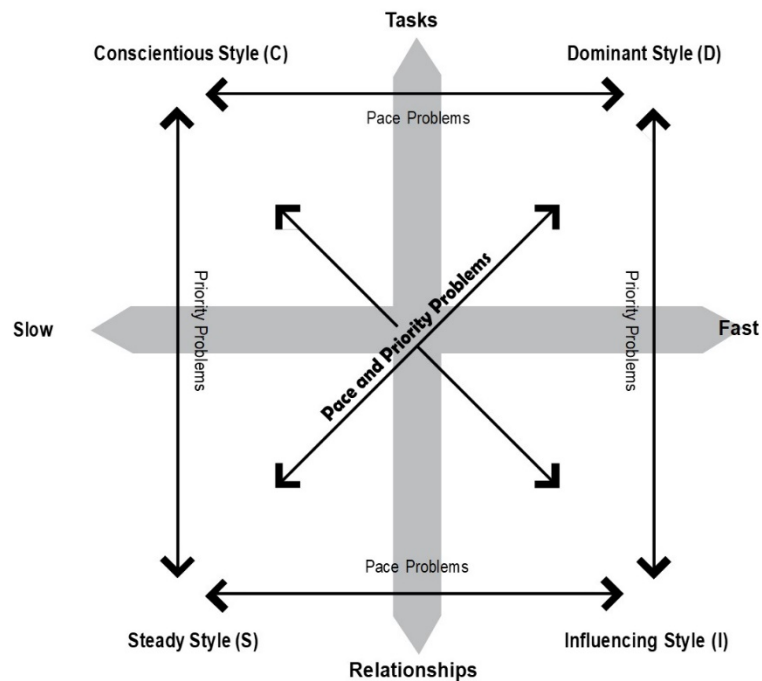
Consider the task-oriented team of Dominant Styles and Conscientious Styles, another example of pace-based tension. The fast-paced Dominant Styles like to make quick decisions. The slower-paced Conscientious Styles get uptight when having to make decisions without an opportunity to fully analyze all the alternatives.

When dissimilar pairings occur, as they often do in many business and social encounters, one or the other of the individuals must adjust in style to avoid increasing tension in the other person. This does not mean you must sacrifice your personality or become something you are not. Ideally, both people would demonstrate some adaptability and move part of the way. Depending on the circumstances, however, only one of the individuals may recognize the potential problem or be sufficiently motivated to do something about it.

When interactions join Styles that differ in **both** their pace and priority preferences, things really get interesting! Here the probability of relationship tension is even greater. This occurs in Steady Style–Dominant Style relationships, as well as Conscientious Style–Influencing Style relationships.

Take the case of the Dominant Style–Steady Style interaction: The Dominant Styles should try to show some concern for people rather than appearing to treat them only as a resource toward task accomplishment. The Steady Styles should try to show more concern for task completion, even if it means putting the personal relationships aside temporarily. When the Dominant Styles meet Steady Styles (a diagonal relationship), both individuals should attempt adjustments in both pace and priority. The same applies to the Influencing Style–Conscientious Style relationship. The key to managing tension is to know when to expect pace and priority problems and have a strategy to prevent or deal with these differences in preference.

TENSION AMONG THE STYLES



EXAMPLE: THE COMMITTEE

Imagine what would happen if you put together a committee consisting of a Dominant Style, an Influencing Style, a Steady Style, and a Conscientious Style, and they all practiced The Golden Rule. I can see it all now: As they enter the conference room for the first meeting and the door closes, the Dominant Style says, *“All right, everybody, let us get this act together! Here’s my plan.”*

No sooner does the Dominant Style get the words out than the Influencing Style chimes in: *“Who died and left you boss? We have got tons of time. Did you see what that manager was doing outside the room? It reminds me of a good joke I heard recently...”* The Conscientious Style, who is patiently awaiting a turn in the conversation, says, *“As I see it, there are three specific tasks we must accomplish to reach our ultimate objective. First ...”* The ever-patient Steady Style is likely the last one to speak, with, *“Please, let us not argue. Let us try to get along and work as a team.”*

Some people might think that the committee would be much better off if all four members were of the same behavioral style. But, the best committee that anyone could choose would be a combination of all four Styles, as described above. Each style has strengths that complement the weaknesses of the others.

They could make an excellent team - they should focus on each other’s strengths rather than criticize each other’s weaknesses or differences. These differences in style bring new perspectives to

problem-solving, creativity, and team-building that cannot be accomplished with a homogeneous group of Styles or a heterogeneous group of Styles that is critical of each other's style.

EXAMPLE: BREAKDOWN BEHAVIOUR – A STORY

What happens to others when do not adjust your behavior to meet the style needs, including the communication needs—of the other person? Two sides of the same story emphasize this very issue.

A salesman I knew complained of the narrow-mindedness and difficulty of a prospect he was trying to see. I did not tell him I had already heard the prospect's side, but I could guess the problem.

The salesperson is an Influencing Style, complete with warm, open handshakes, first names and questions about his client's personal interests. The prospect is clearly a Conscientious Style. I have already observed his quiet, somewhat remote, stone-faced, and fact-oriented behaviors. You can almost imagine the encounter these two had. As the salesman was involved in building a friendly relationship and dealing in general opinions and feelings, the prospect wanted to get down to business and was pressing for details. A communications nightmare!

As a result of the disastrous initial contact, the salesman thought the prospect was picky, aloof, and uninterested in him or his product. The prospect thought the salesman was uncertain of his points and intrusive in concerns that had no bearing on the business. The tension between the two was obvious, and both the prospect and the salesman had justifiable reasons for their lack of ease. Note that none of these reasons had anything to do with the product involved. Such an increase in tension generally results in distrust, low credibility and, eventually, an unproductive business or social relationship

BACKUP BEHAVIOURS

Within everyone there is a point where tension increases until it results in stress. People in stress seek to reduce it any way possible, frequently by verbally or psychologically dumping it on the person "responsible" for the tension. Most dumping behaviors are unproductive and can be destructive to the relationship at hand.

When tension increases, each behavioral style tends to manifest symptoms and respond to tension in ways (sometimes immature ways) that characterize that behavioral style. Each style has its own unproductive but characteristic manner of "dumping" stress on another.

The Steady Style who resorts to back-up behavior generally **gives in** or "**submits.**" The purpose is to avoid conflict at all cost. Although the Steady Style's back-up behavior on the surface may appear to be a "go-along" attitude, it is not. Resentment builds due to the high-tension level, and the subsequent interactions are likely to be filled with distrust and tension.

As a rule, an Influencing Style (like the salesperson in our example) resorts to back-up behavior by **verbally attacking the person who causes the stress**. And if you have an Influencing Style on the attack, what tends to be your reaction? Most people react with increased tension of their own which, at some point, can push them into stress too. At this point, the relationship has all but ended.

The Conscientious Styles back-up behavior takes the form of **withdrawal** from the other person or the situation. Being less assertive in nature, a Conscientious Style would rather flee from the unpleasant relationship than deal with it outright. Thus, the Conscientious Style typically seeks more information and wants to think it over as a means of avoiding the other person and the stressful situation.

Under stress, the Dominant Styles tends to become **overbearing, pushy, uncompromising, and dictatorial**. It is an outgrowth of the Dominant Style. When the Dominant Styles is in back-up behavior, he or she tries to control anyone or anything that gets in his or her way.

THE GOOD NEWS

Our understanding of behavioral Styles and communications lets us recognize back-up behavior for what it is. Rather than **reacting** to that behavior in ways that might make matters worse, we can **respond** to the behaviors with appropriate strategies that will reduce relationship tension before it has a chance to become significant stress.

If you are dealing with a style that moves fast, you move fast. If an individual is more comfortable taking time to get to know people, allow more time for the appointment and avoid looking at your watch. Move at **their** pace and priority, not yours. When you understand someone's behavioral style needs, you can help create a climate of good chemistry and mutual trust. As the trust develops and strengthens, the other person—a co-worker, a client, or a friend—will begin to tell you what he or she really needs from the relationship. There will be no contests or testing one another. The relationship will become more productive. As you develop better personal interaction, you will also feel more confident.

For our purposes, **tension management** involves meeting the behavioral needs of the people in a relationship – specifically those needs dictated by their behavioral Styles. In short, you must treat them the way they want to be treated.

BEHAVIOUR UNDER STRESS

When tension is high, each style tends to manifest symptoms of behavioral stress, often called “back-up” behavior. Often immature, this behavior results from a need to reduce tension immediately. In dealing with people under stress, you can reduce tension by providing what they most need.

STYLE	BEHAVIOUR	MAY APPEAR	NEEDS
DOMINANT	<p>Will dictate</p> <p><i>Typical response in a stressful situation – “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen”.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restless • Critical • Blunt • Intrusive • Uncooperative • Irritable • Aggressive • Pushy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of situation and self • Tangible evidence of progress • Fast pace for moving towards goals • Accomplishments
INFLUENCING	<p>Will disregard</p> <p><i>Typical response in a stressful situation – “Hey, let us move on to something more positive!”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulative • Overeager • Impulsive • Inconsistent • Superficial • Unrealistic • Wasteful of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get credit • Action and interaction • Quick pace for stimulation and excitement • Prestige
STEADY	<p>Will submit</p> <p><i>Typical response in a stressful situation – “Okay, if that is the way you must have it, we will try it.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wishy-washy • Submissive • Passive • Dependent • Hesitant • Defensive • Indecisive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassurances that they are liked • Personal assurance • Slow pace for comfort and security • Relationships
CONSCIENTIOUS	<p>Will withdraw</p> <p><i>Typical response in a stressful situation – “I can’t help you further. Do what you want.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-reliant on data and documentation • Resistant to change • Slow to act • Slow to begin work • Unable to meet deadlines • Unimaginative • Withdrawn • Resentful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantees that they are right • Understanding of principles and details • Slow pace for “processing” information • Accuracy

IF YOU ARE A DOMINANT STYLE ...

Ratchet down a notch or two! Keep in mind that others have feelings and that your hard-charging, know-it-all style can make your colleagues feel inadequate and often resentful.

Accept that mistakes will occur and try to temper justice with mercy. You might even joke about errors you make, rather than trying to always project a super-human image.

Dominant Styles can encourage growth in others in at least two ways. First, by praising them when they do something well. And second, by giving them some authority and then staying out of their way so they can use it. Whatever you lose in control, you are likely to gain in commitment and improved staff competency.

Try not to be quite so bossy! Ask others' opinions and maybe—though this is radical for a Dominant Style—even plan some collaborative actions

IF YOU ARE AN INFLUENCING STYLE ...

People depend on you not just for ideas, but for coordination too. So, anything you can do to become more organized—making lists, keeping your calendar current, prioritizing goals—will pay big dividends for you and them.

Nothing is so dispiriting as to see the Influencer drop the ball on important matters. So, remember: If you fail to follow-up, procrastinate on tough decisions, or make pledges you do not keep, your colleagues will lose faith. Even though you do not do those things purposely, they will see you as letting them down. Your charm and warmth cannot fully compensate for unreliability.

Come to grips with the fact that conflicts are going to occur. Try to deal with them up front, not sweep them under the rug. In addition, organize your time better and keep your socializing in balance with your tasks.

IF YOU ARE A STEADY STYLE ...

You are probably well-liked by your colleagues.

Learn to stretch a little, take on more, or different, duties and try to accomplish them more quickly. You may want to be more assertive as well as more open about your thoughts and feelings. Experiment with a little risk, a little change.

Being sensitive to your colleague's feelings is one of your greatest strengths. But you must seek a middle ground between that and being knocked off balance by the first negative comment or action that comes your way.

IF YOU ARE A CONSCIENTIOUS STYLE ...

Your high standards are a double-edged sword. Your colleagues are inspired by your quest for excellence, but often they feel frustrated because they can never quite seem to please you.

One of the best things you can do is lessen and soften your criticism, spoken or unspoken. You can seem so stern sometimes!

Ease up on your need to control. Walk around and spend more time with your colleagues, chatting up people at the water cooler or in the lunchroom.

Wake up to the fact that you can have high standards without requiring perfection in each instance. That will take a load off your shoulders.

Whatever your style, being adaptable can help you to build bridges to your employees and make them feel valued. By learning to best respond to their interests and concerns, their strengths, and weaknesses, you can get the most from your people as well as leave them more satisfied.

MAKING TEAMS WORK

At work, how much time do you spend in meetings with at least two other people? If you are like many of us, you have got planning meetings, staff meetings, project meetings, budget meetings... the list seems nearly endless. No wonder one office joker described meetings as “the practical alternative to work.”

Organizations love such groups—call them teams, committees, task forces, boards, panels, whatever. And why shouldn't they? When they work, they can improve coordination, help employees feel more involved, and maybe even spur innovation.

But when they flop—or more commonly, just deteriorate into mediocrity—they can drain an organization of its vitality and leave a legacy of frustration. Posturing, power struggles, and misunderstandings are so rife that you have probably wondered more than once if more would get done if your group never met again.

SPOTTY TRACK RECORD

One of the reasons for the spotty track record of work groups is that we are generally naïve about them. Too often, we assume a group can automatically be a team.

But, in truth, making those choices is not as simple as it sounds. And whom you choose will likely affect the outcome. The key is to analyze the objective before you recruit a group and then create a team that best matches the desired results.

One of the single biggest reasons that teams misfire is that personality differences are ignored. That can be the fault of the group's creator, the team members themselves, or both. In either event, that is where The DISC Platinum Rule comes in. As we have learned, all people are not created equal—at least, not so far as their behavior patterns are concerned.

Knowing and considering those differences is what can help make the best possible use of the strengths of each team member. Dominant Styles can do some things a whole lot better than an Influencing Style. A Conscientious Style might easily handle something that would drive a Steady Style nuts.

If you are armed with The DISC Platinum Rule, you will be more likely to:

- Assign projects to those able to do them well,
- Sustain a cooperative climate in which each person can gain genuine respect, and
- Customize work groups to get the best results in the most efficient, satisfying manner

HOW THE FOUR STYLES ACT IN GROUPS – COMMUNICATING

Each behavioral style communicates in ways so different that it is no wonder misunderstandings occur. Dominant Styles, for example, tend to communicate with short, task-oriented comments, particularly at the start of a meeting when they like to assume control and set the meeting in motion. More than the other Styles, they are concerned about having a clear agenda and setting the tone. They like to keep the discussion on track and on time.

Influencing Styles, by contrast, communicate more frequently and more evenly throughout a meeting. Their comments are more likely to include jokes and cover a range of topics so wide that the Influencing Styles may appear to be hopping all over the place.

Steady Styles seem generally interested in discussions throughout the whole meeting. They may ask many questions, trying to understand others' points of view or what follow-through will be expected. They naturally act as synthesizers, go-betweens, or translators, by saying things like, "Now, if I understand what Jane and Tom meant, it's that the next step is to..."

On the other hand, Conscientious Styles usually just quietly observe until they grasp an issue fully and have figured out in some detail what they want to say and if they will feel comfortable saying it. They often begin by asking a few well-chosen questions. Then, if the climate seems receptive, they will build up to a longer statement on what they believe is the answer.

USING INFLUENCE

The different Styles also try to sway, or influence, the group in different ways. This can become critical because every group at an early stage wrestles with the issue of who is going to wield power.

Dominant Styles like to influence others by structuring agendas, tasks, and assignments and, if relevant, by using their formal position as leverage.

Influencing Styles are more inclined to use flattery or compliments to win over the group and get its members to feel good as a team. They will often use humor to defuse tension or conflict. They try to avoid a hard line that will lose them acceptance or recognition by the group.

Steady Styles, whether they are anointed leaders or not, often take on the role of keeping the process moving along. They will elaborate on what others say and encourage everyone to speak. They seek to exert influence indirectly by keeping things mellow and moving.

Information and logic are the tools of the Conscientious Styles. They like to furnish information that, directly or indirectly, suggests their expertise and experience. They are the most likely to focus on the “rightness,” or logic, of a solution, rather than spend a lot of time debating who is personally helped or hindered by it.

INVOLVING OTHERS

Working in a group, by definition, means involving others. But the four Styles vary in why and how enthusiastically they embrace others.

Generally, groups put together by Dominant Styles will be smaller and have shorter meetings than those set up by people with other Styles. Often, the Dominant Style will want the group to make some key decisions on key issues, and then delegate the rest of the work to individuals or subcommittees.

Influencing Styles are more inclined to favor a group for the group’s sake. They like others to be involved in the give-and-take. Not everyone who is put on a committee by an Influencing Style will have a logical role there but, in the Influencing Style’s mind, that person is further seasoning for the soup, if not necessarily a main ingredient.

Steady Styles also are innately attracted to groups. However, instead of using meetings for presentation of reports, they prefer to work toward consensus as they collect information from many sources.

Conscientious Styles, too, involve others in groups to get information from a wide variety of sources. However, the Conscientious Styles are just less comfortable operating in groups. So, they prefer to have much of the group work done behind the scenes by sub-groups or individuals. The Conscientious Style especially likes to be the only one who knows how all the parts of the group’s task puzzle fit together.

DECISION MAKING

The four Styles differ in their approach to group work because they tend to make decisions differently.

In a meeting run by a Dominant Style, decisions are more likely to be made unilaterally by the Dominant Style, or he or she will call for a vote. Dominant Styles like voting because it is clean, quick, and decisive. It keeps debating to a minimum. Also, it is harder to argue that a vote is unfair. And closure is clearly attained. Next topic!

A problem with voting—though Dominant Styles rarely see it as a problem—is that there are winners and losers. Influencing Styles, being more people-oriented, try to work out compromises

that reduce resentment and maybe even fudge over differences. Influencing Styles want to downplay group divisions. They are not big on voting.

Steady Styles also prefer decisions by consensus. They would like to see most of the group be on the bus. So, actions tend to be worked and reworked until almost all agree.

Conscientious Styles crave “rational” decisions. Optimally, the decision will not be made as much as it will be dictated by the facts and logic of the situation, including the key players required to make it work. Conscientious Styles like to list pros and cons of issues—sometimes even weighing the options numerically—to reach the “correct” decision. The process, they believe, will make obvious the best course of action.

Love them or hate them, work groups are here to stay. But while they can be high-performance vehicles, they can also be high-maintenance, especially in the early stages. Only a team that fully understands and savors its members’ Styles is likely to be genuinely productive.

If the teams are assigned tasks that fit their Styles—and if members practice The DISC Platinum Rule—the advantages of stylistic diversity can quickly outweigh the group’s liabilities. The result, despite the differences, can be a wonderful synergy.

PROVIDING SERVICE WITH STYLE

Everywhere you turn today, you hear about the importance of customer satisfaction. You might think that service is getting better with each passing moment. Surveys, though, suggest otherwise. One customer in four is thinking about leaving the average business at any given time because of dissatisfaction.

What is wrong? Too many companies and employees view customer support as something that happens once and is then over. True service does not just focus on a one-time event, but on building a sustained, positive relationship.

Organisations and people with a positive attitude toward service know that each contact is an opportunity that may never come again. Such encounters typically produce either a Moment of Magic: Positive experiences that make customers glad they do business there, or a Moment of Misery: negative experiences that irritate, frustrate, or annoy.

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

The key to creating a “Moment of Magic” is exceeding a customer’s expectations. But what works for one person may not work for another. So, we are going to look at that process and how we can use knowledge of the behavioral Styles to create Moments of Magic.

DEALING WITH DOMINANT STYLES

Dominant Styles may appear uncooperative, trying to dictate terms and conditions. But ask yourself: what do they need? You can help defuse them by providing:

- Results, or at least tangible signs of progress.
- A fast pace.
- Evidence that they have control of the situation.
- A belief that time is being saved.

The last thing you should do is assert your authority and argue with the Dominant Style. They are not going to be listening, and they will probably out-assert you. “Nobody ever won an argument with a customer” is an axiom of service. And that is doubly true with Dominant Styles.

DEALING WITH INFLUENCING STYLES

Influencing Styles with a complaint may seem overeager and impulsive. They may also come across as manipulative. Under stress, Influencing Style’s primary response may be to disregard the facts and anything you say. But you can address their needs by giving them:

- Personal attention.
- Affirmation of their position.
- Lots of verbal give-and-take.
- Assurance that effort is being saved.

You would be better off to give Influencing Styles a quick-paced, spirited explanation that shows you are not just brushing them off.

DEALING WITH STEADY STYLES

Steady Styles may appear submissive, hesitant, wishy-washy, or even apologetic. You may need to draw them out. They just wish this whole problem would go away. Steady Styles will be made most comfortable if you:

- Make them feel they are personally “okay”.
- Promise that the crisis will soon ebb.
- Guarantee the process will be relaxed and pleasant.
- Show you are committed to working with them to iron out the problem and save the relationship.

Remember, Steady Styles get just as upset as Dominant Styles; they just express it in a much more low-key way. And they will quietly go elsewhere if their needs are not met.

DEALING WITH CONSCIENTIOUS STYLES

Conscientious Styles tend to recite the chronology of events and the litany of errors they have had to endure. They will provide copious data and documentation. Here is how you can lessen tension with a complaining Conscientious Style:

- Suggest that they are right.
- Explain the process and details.
- Show appreciation for their accuracy.
- Help them “save face”.

You may see them as “compulsives” who are more hung up on the process and on showing they are right than getting the problem resolved. But if you want to retain their loyalty, you will deal with them precisely and systematically, emphasizing your firm’s interest in seeing justice done.

Be customer-oriented! When you are policy-oriented, you give off an attitude of not caring about what your customers want. When you focus on the customer and his or her needs, you will be utilizing Customer Driven Service.

QUICK GUIDE TO DEALING WITH DIFFERENT STYLES

	D	I	S	C
Needs to know	What it does/by when/what is the cost?	How it enhances their state and vulnerability	How it will affect their personal circumstances	How they can justify it logically/how it works
Do it	Rapidly	Dynamically	Friendly	Precisely
Save them	Time	Effort	Conflict	Embarrassment
To facilitate decision making provide	Options with supporting analysis	Testimonials and incentives	Personal services and assurance	Data and documentation
Likes you to be	To the point	Stimulating	Pleasant	Precise
Support their	Goals	Ideas	Feelings	Procedure
Create this environment	Business-like	Enthusiastic	Personal	Serious
Maintain this pace	Fast/decisive	Fast/spontaneous	Slow/relaxed	Slow/systematic
Focus on this priority	The task/the results	The relationship/interaction	The relationship/communication	The task/ the process
At play be	Competitive and aggressive	Spontaneous and playful	Casual and co-operative	Structures/ play by the rules
Use time to	Act efficiently	Enjoy the interaction	Develop the relationship	Ensure accuracy
Write this way	Short and to the point	Conversational and playful	Warm and pleasant	Business-like and precise