

UNDERSTANDING OTHERS COMMUNICATION STYLES

People communicate in a variety of ways, but for the purpose of understanding why people behave as they do, these communication approaches can be categorized into four basic styles.

BE ACCURATE ANALYTICAL	BE EFFICIENT DRIVER
BE AGREEABLE AMIABLE	BE STIMULATING EXPRESSIVE

These styles can be used to characterise the observable behaviour of most individuals. Although most people have a favourite style of behaviour, no one is ever rigidly held in one style to the exclusion of all others. We all combine the action of several or even all these styles, but most of us tend to use a basic style of communicating that becomes a characteristic way of coping with the various interactions encountered during the day. Each style possesses characteristic strengths; but if a style is overused or used inappropriately, its strengths can become weaknesses. Avoid limiting yourself or others with these styles; use this framework as a tool – a basic framework – for understanding behaviour and maximizing communication effectiveness.

Driver

People who are drivers know what they want and give the impression of **“let’s get it done now – and get it done my way”**. Drivers seem to concentrate primarily on the task at hand, rather than on the people who do the work. As a result, they may seem to be uncommunicative, detached, independent and competitive. Drivers initiate clear-cut actions. Their reason for actions, however, may not be clear to others because they seldom share personal motives or feelings. Building close personal relationships with drivers is difficult; they are too busy “getting things done”. Drivers appear to work with others only because it is necessary to do so to achieve their objectives, not because they enjoy working with people. On the other hand, they can at times be very pleasant and even charming – but on their terms.

Action oriented drivers like to make their own decisions; they seek power and they are quick to say what they think. When obstacles block their paths, they do whatever it takes to work through them. Adjectives used to describe drivers include serious, persistent, and industrious; but people

Expressive

People who are expressive appear communicative, approachable, warm and competitive. They want others as friends, but they like them best as followers and supporters. They place value on power and politics; they are motivated to gain personal recognition and to rally support for their own causes. Even though relationships and people are important to them, their interests in relationship sometimes appears shallow.



Expressive people change a course of action easily; they move rapidly from one concern to another. They often fail to bother themselves with specifics of who, why, what and how. They sometimes are undisciplined in their use of time.

Imaginative and creative, expressive people may not do things the way other people expect them to. They sometimes make mistakes because their decisions are frequently based on opinions and intuition and very little on cool logic and facts. These people are characterised as enthusiastic, egotistical, friendly and ambitious, but are also considered undisciplined, manipulative and excitable.

Amiable

At the opposite extreme from drivers are amiable individuals. They set a high priority on co-operative behaviour, close relationships, and friendships. They lend freshness and warmth to any situation. They interpret the world on a personal basis; they tend to become involved in the feelings of others and in relationships between people. They look for the why in the action of others.

Power over others does not motivate the relationship oriented; being accepted by others, however, is important to them. Amiable individuals like to get things done through people; they use understanding and mutual respect rather than authority, force or threats to gain co-operation.

Relationship oriented, amiable people sometimes appear undisciplined in their use of time and seem to move slowly. They take time to share feelings with other people. Socialising sometimes makes it difficult for them to get other work done. They feel more comfortable with the known, and they avoid activities involving risks. They consider personal opinions in their decision making. Relationship oriented people are often characterised as dependable, respectful, and supportive; but they are also perceived as conforming, inefficient, compliant and over agreeable.

Analytical

Analytical people live life according to facts, principles and logic. They show minimum concern for relationships and maximum effort to organise and to get things done. Those who use this style are often regarded as cold, detached and indifferent. Because they are analytical, they are cautious about showing personal warmth, and they sometimes seem more concerned with getting things done rather than with personal involvement or regard for feelings.

Thinking orientated analytical people have a “show-me” attitude. Suspicious of power or leverage they like to see a predictable pattern in the way authority is used. If power is systematic and logical, they go a long way with it; in fact, they tend to incorporate such predictable patterns into their own way of behaving.

You can depend on analytical people to avoid flashiness; they move slowly and in a disciplined, deliberate way. They look at information in a calm, common sense manner, focusing on the past to gain purpose, meaning and direction for the future. Analytical people avoid risks, they make decisions based on hard facts. They require solid evidence to support the validity of decisions they make. They gather all the information before they make a decision. But once they make up their minds, they almost never change. An analytical person is motivated by a deep desire to be “right”.



Awareness of these styles

Before you communicate with various people, consider their basic styles of behaviour as you plan your message. Become aware of the usual response you can expect from a particular person. Do not build expectations that every response, every action, or every reaction of a particular person will come from the basic style. Remember that communication is situational and can depend on the circumstances of the moment, earlier experiences of the day, physical well-being – even the weather. Watch for possible signs that will tell you what style someone else is using:

- Word choice
- Speed of speaking
- Tone of voice
- Body movements
- Area of interest shown by questions and comments

All of these factors will give you clues to the behavioural style at work. Accept the fact that no style is “better” than the others. And avoid attempts to force someone else to respond as you would. To achieve any goal, we need to utilise the strengths from all four styles. Your communication style has no indication on your level of success, productivity or efficiency. Your ability to use all four styles when need be will be your greatest asset.

