Recognizing & Relating to Four Behavioral Styles

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To effectively connect with others one must be able to recognize another person’s behavioral style, and then relate and respond accordingly. DISC has become one of the most widely used behavioral style assessment, profile and training tools in America. DISC is an acronym that stands for Dominant, Interactive, Steady and Compliant styles (Allesandra, T., 2010).

This article provides a practical overview of how to recognize and relate to each of these types based on their style. An online DISC assessment is available from Drinon & Associates, Inc. for determining one’s own style, or that of followers or employees. See the assessment purchase contact information at the end of this article.

UNDERSTANDING FOUR BEHAVIORAL STYLES – PRIORITY & PACE

Each of the four DISC styles --Dominant, Interactive, Steady and Compliant -- has its own unique characteristics. And, while everyone has all of these styles in their makeup, each person possesses these styles in varying degrees. Practically everyone has a distinctive primary style followed by a secondary style and so on. In addition, one’s secondary style can greatly influence or color their primary style. For example, a Dominant/Interactive blend will relate very differently than someone with a Dominant/Cautious combination; a Supportive/Cautious type will communicate in a different manner than a Supportive/Dominant style.

DISC measures four aspects of human behavior through two contrasting pairs. These pairs have to do with an individual’s Priority and Pace. The first pair of measurements, Goal/Task vs. People/Relationship orientation, has to do with one’s Priorities. The second pair, Faster Paced/ Direct vs. Slow Paced/Indirect behavior, has to do with one’s Pace. These descriptors give us four categories as follows: Faster-Paced/ Direct & Goal/Task-oriented types are called “D” or Dominant. Faster-Paced/Direct & People/Relationship-oriented individuals are “I” or Interactive. Slower-Paced/Indirect & People/Relationship-oriented types are “S” or Steady and Slower-Paced/Indirect &Goal/ Task-oriented people are “C” or Compliant.

The goal is the Dominant style’s Priority, while People are the Interactive style’s Priority. Relationships are the Priority for Steady types, while the task is the goal for the Compliant style.
Recognizing the Dominant Style

D’s are strong minded, aggressive, strong willed people who enjoy challenges, taking action and immediate results. They also:

- Thrive on power, prestige, authority and individual accomplishment.
- Fear loss of social approval.
- Focus on the bottom line.
- Ask WHAT questions.
- Are good with results
- Slogan: Just do it!

D Strengths = Administration, Leadership, Pioneering
D Weaknesses = Impatience, Insensitivity, Listening

Dominant types make up only about 10 -12% of the population.

Recognizing the Interactive Style

I’s are “people people” who prefer participating on teams, sharing ideas, entertaining and energizing others and gaining consensus. They also:

- Thrive on popularity, recognition, expression and talking.
- Fear loss of social approval.
- Focus on shaping the environment by influencing others to see things their way.
- Ask WHO questions.

Recognizing the Steady Style

S’s are helpful team players who prefer working behind the scenes in consistent and predictable ways. They don’t like rapid change or conflict. They are often good listeners. They also:

- Thrive on teamwork, structure, predictability, and calming down exited people.
- Fear loss of stability in the environment and abrupt changes.
- Focus on cooperating with others to carry out the task, being patient and loyal.
- Ask HOW questions.
- Are good with Processes
- Slogan: Don’t rock the boat!

S Strengths = Listening, Teamwork, Follow-through
S Weaknesses = Oversensitivity, Getting started quicker, Seeing Big Picture

Supportive types make up about 30 to 35% of the population.

Recognizing the Compliant Style

C’s plan ahead, constantly check for accuracy and use systematic approaches. They also:

- Thrive on details, proof, critical thinking, analysis, accuracy and perfection.
- Fear criticism of their efforts and actions.
- Focus on quality and accuracy.
- Ask WHY questions.
- Are good with Details
- Slogan: Measure twice, cut once!

C Strengths = Planning, Systematizing, Orchestrating
C Weaknesses = Perfectionist, Critical, Unresponsive (emotionally)

Cautious types make up 20 to 25 % of the population.

RELATING & RESPONDING TO FOUR STYLES: COMMUNICATING & MANAGING

When communicating with D or Dominant types it’s important to remember their priority is the goal or result. Be
direct, get to the point, focus on the bottom line and be prepared to address some questions or objections. In the workplace the D is generally efficient, busy and structured. As the boss, leading or managing the D in the workplace includes helping them:

- More realistically gauge risks.
- Exercise more caution and deliberation before making decisions.
- Follow pertinent rules, regulations and expectations.
- Recognize and solicit other’s contributions
- Tell others the reasons for their decisions
- Cultivate more attention/responsiveness to emotions

To effectively relate with I or Interactive types, keep in mind their priority is people. Remember to be fast paced and engaging, keep things fun and upbeat and provide immediate incentives for them. Is in the workplace are usually interactive, busy and personal. Leading or managing an I in the workplace includes helping them:

- Prioritize and organize
- See tasks through to completion
- View people and tasks more objectively
- Avoid overuse of giving and taking advice
- Write things down

In order to communicate with S or Supportive types remember their priority is relationships. Be candid, open, patient, assuring and supportive. Ss in the workplace are friendly, functional and personal. Leading or managing an S in the workplace involves helping them:

- Utilize shortcuts and discard unnecessary steps
- Track their growth
- Avoid doing things the same way
- Realize there is more than one approach to tasks
- Become more open to some risks and changes
- To feel sincerely appreciated
- Speak up and voice their thoughts and feelings
- Modify the tendency to do what others tell them
- Get and accept credit and praise, when appropriate

To communicate with C or Cautious types, consider that their priority is the task. Be factual, logical and emotionally reserved. List the pros and cons of any suggestions you make to help them weigh a decision. Leading or managing a C in the workplace includes helping them:

- Share their knowledge and expertise with others
- Stand up for themselves with the people they prefer to avoid
- Shoot for realistic deadlines and parameters
- View people and tasks less seriously and critically
- Balance their life with both interaction and tasks
- Keep on course with tasks, with less checking
- Maintain high expectations for high priority items vs. everything

**READING YOUR ASSESSMENT**

The DISC online assessment provides a report with a description of one’s style, along with a graph to further illustrate to what degree one possesses each style.

The DISC report includes two graphs (below). Graph I, Adapting Style, reflects one’s behavior at work on the particular day the assessment was taken. Graph II, shows one’s natural style, which is enacted on a consistent basis, day in and day out. Comparing the two graphs can show the individual how activity – on a particular day – may harmonize or conflict with their norm.

![Graphs](https://example.com/graphs.png)

A sizable difference between the two graphs may raise the question of why one acted with behaviors different from their natural style or norm on a particular day. One might also ask if those behaviors are required at work each and every day, and if
those activities make life a positive or negative challenge for the individual.

For example, if a person who scores Higher I and Lower C on their Natural Style spent the day dealing with accounting, computer or other challenges that required logic and analysis their Adaptive graph may differ from their Natural graph. The individual is likely to recognize that the particular day was not their usual and that they had to put extra effort into meeting these analytical challenges. As a result, they may observe their C style is higher and/or I style is lower on the Adaptive Style graph for that day.

On the other hand, if that same individual recognizes that they are in a position that daily requires them to deal with these same sorts of challenges they will want to ask themselves if they enjoy or are frustrated by the challenge. If working against the grain and frustrated, the individual may need to be in a different position—one that better utilizes or fits their style.

Most people show one or two styles above the midline and two or three below. Some have three above the line and one below. A few people have an evenly distributed graph along the midline. Those styles above the midline tend to come more easily for the individual. Those below the midline require more effort. We may refer these tendencies as natural vs. learned or adaptive behaviors.

Just because a style is graphed below the midline doesn’t mean one can’t adapt to activities related to that behavior. It just means that, initially, more effort is required for those types of activities. Most adults have learned, though effort and practice, how to adapt to things that at first seemed difficult.

One’s secondary style, as indicated on the Natural Style graph, infuses or affects their primary style. For example, a person with a D/I or Dominant/Interactive style will display their D characteristics with some of the warmth and engagement of the Interactive type. In contrast, a person with a D/C or Dominant/Cautious style will display dominance in a colder, more analytical manner. A person with an S/C or Supportive/Cautious style will demonstrate S characteristics in a more logical, factual manner than will one with an S/I or Supportive/Interactive style who displays their S in a warmer, engaging manner.

Based on these examples, the reader can get an idea of how one’s secondary style can infuse their primary style. If one has three styles above the midline the third style will also impact the first two. A C/D/I style leader, for example, may be an analytical C type who is driven by their D secondary style but has a quirky sense of humor emanating from the I style.

Hopefully this brief introduction to DISC will pique your interest for more knowledge and greater understanding of behavioral styles. As previously noted, DISC assessments and reports are available online. The profile you receive after taking your assessment will give you much useful information about yourself and others when it comes to connecting, communicating, and collaborating; when getting things done and dealing with change. There are also many books available to help you better understand how DISC works.

To purchase an online assessment and report of your DISC behavioral styles please contact Rich Drinon.
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