We are not all the same, we don’t all approach things the same way. When you learn about behavioral styles, the end result is you can better lead people and realize what motivates them, as unique individuals.

Research shows that 85% of team struggles are due to interpersonal issues. It’s because we don’t approach things the same way, we don’t process information the same way. We know that we are not all the same and we have different preferred approaches to work.

We see that the best team has the most diversity of styles. So lets break down the different styles to see what the strengths and weaknesses are for each, here are the styles:

- **D** – Dominant
- **I** – Influencing
- **S** – Steadiness
- **C** – Conscientious

**Dominant (D) Style Characteristics**

The dominant style or (D Style) their goal is to get results, they tend to be fast paced. You can see a lot of progress around them. They get frustrated if there are a lot of obstacles in their way. They tend to go over, around and through to accomplish their goal.

Their de-motivator is loss of control or lack of control. For example, bureaucracy to get things done, micromanaging, anything that is an obstacle in their path that slows them down.

It is good to have “D’s” on a team because they will challenge the status quo. They are good at bringing progress and moving things along.

**Working with the “D” Style**

When working with a D Style they want you to be like them, no matter what your style is. The best analogy I can give is going to another country – speak their language. We will not be effective if we don’t speak their language (never lose your native tongue or style), but you adapt to their style and needs. It is one of the best ways to honor and respect them.

To be like the D style – don’t waste time, ask their input, they are good problem solvers. Let them have some control and insight. Don’t micromanage or set up obstacles.
Guide to Interpersonal Communication Skills at Work

Goals
- Wants to get results
- Likes “do it and do it now” approaches
- Wants to be in charge
- Likes new opportunities and challenges
- Wants opportunity for advancement
- Likes initiating change and taking risks

Fears/Avoids
- Being taken advantage of
- Losing control over the environment
- Boredom
- Being tied to routine
- Appearing weak or soft

To Be More Effective
- Develop more patience with other people
- Learn to negotiate with others
- Develop greater awareness of other people’s needs
- Verbalize reasons for conclusions.

Overuses
- Creating challenges
- Moving people and situations around in his/her favor
- Change for the sake of doing something new

Influencing (I) Style Characteristics

The influencing style or (I Style) their goal is to have a positive interaction with people. They are very people oriented. The energy they create tends to make them persuasive. They are your best talker.

Their de-motivator is to be rejected or to not be liked, if people are negative. So if you know that there is an I style on your team they may be looking for that affirmation.

It is good to have “I’s” on a team because they bring positive enthusiasm and energy to a team. They use levity and humor to get their point across.

Working with the “I” Style

When working with the “I” style use humor, levity and enthusiasm. Mirror their enthusiasm and optimism. Let them know you like them and value the relationship, even if you disagree.
Guide to Interpersonal Communication Skills at Work

Goals
- Wants to be involved with people
- Wants to have fun while getting things done
- Likes to help people talk things out
- Wants freedom from following through on details
- Making a favorable impression

Fears/Avoids
- Being blamed for things going wrong
- Having people be upset with him/her
- Not being liked
- Public humiliation

To be More Effective
- Become more objective in making decisions
- Develop more organized, systematic approaches to tasks
- Improve follow-through by paying attention to key details
- Learn to be direct and firm when confronting others
- Gain more control over use of time

Overuses
- Emotional expressions or outbursts — others may feel attacked
- Verbalizing thoughts and feelings
- Humor, playfulness
- Meetings, discussions

Steadiness (S) Style Characteristics

The steadiness style or (S Style) their goal is to have harmony. They are also people oriented like the I style, but they are more slower paced. If the I style is your best talker, the S style is your best listener. They truly want to be thoughtful and helpful.

Their de-motivator is chaos, direct conflict and confusion.

The S style is the glue of the team, they are good at keeping the harmony amongst the group.

Working with the “S” Style

When working with the “S” style be consistent and reliable, they are people oriented. Sincere praise and compliments. They are motivated on how to be helpful and want to depend on you as well. They are demotivated by conflict.
Guide to Interpersonal Communication Skills at Work

Goals
• Likes to be involved with people
• Wants everyone to do their share
• Likes things to run smoothly
• Wants stability and security
• Wants conflict-free environment
• Enjoys being a good listener
• Calming excited people

Fears/Avoids
• Situations where nobody knows what is happening
• Confusion and instability
• Lack of clarity on expectations
• Situations requiring aggressive confrontations

To be More Effective
• Learn to handle change better
• Become more assertive
• Increase his/her comfort with handling conflict
• Vary routines occasionally
• Become more receptive to short-cut methods
• Speak up when concerned or upset

Overuses
• Modesty
• Accommodation to others
• Predictability

Conscientious (C) Style Characteristics

The conscientious style or (C Style) their goal is accurate work. They focus on accuracy and quality, very analytical, focus on the details others would miss. They are more moderate paced. The standards they set for themselves are even higher than the organization has for them.

Their de-motivator is criticism, more specifically of their work. So broad sweeping, unfounded generalizations criticizing their work, making errors, or others not paying attention to the details, not giving them the information they need to do a quality job. Also, giving them enough time to analyze things.

A challenge they have is that they are critical thinkers and in general can be more critical of an idea. They pick up the finer details others miss. They are the detail people that keep the non-detailed people out of trouble….they can help avoid lawsuits for example.
Guide to Interpersonal Communication Skills at Work

Working with the “C” Style

When working with the “C” style have details prepared, reserve emotion, and focus on the facts. Don’t rush them if not necessary, but let them know the deadline.

Goals

- Wants specific criteria for performance
- Likes accuracy
- Likes setting and meeting high standards
- Wants opportunities to analyze and assess
- Likes logical, systematic approaches to work

Fears/Avoids

- Unjustified personal criticism
- Criticism of what he/she has done
- Changes and surprises that may affect his/her performance
- Spontaneous displays of feelings
- Situations that require talking about his/her personal life

To be More Effective

- Develop more comfort with emotionally charged situations
- Determine potential payoff before investing time analyzing a task
- Learn to value informal interactions with others
- Adjust his/her standards to the needs of the environment
- Practice confronting directly rather than making indirect comments

Overuses

- Analysis
- Criticism of performance — both of self and others
- Defensiveness when questioned about his/her performance
- Logical approaches to people and situations
## Guide to Interpersonal Communication Skills at Work

### Relating to DiSC® Dimensions of Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominance</th>
<th>Influence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>High “D’s” want others to be direct, straightforward, and open to their need for results.</em></td>
<td><em>High “I’s” want others to be friendly and to recognize their contributions.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make communication brief and to the point</td>
<td>• Approach them informally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respect their need for autonomy</td>
<td>• Be relaxed and sociable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be clear about rules and expectations</td>
<td>• Let them verbalize thoughts and feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Let them initiate</td>
<td>• Keep the conversation light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show your competence</td>
<td>• Provide written details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stick to the topic</td>
<td>• Give public recognition for individual accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show independence</td>
<td>• Use humor</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Eliminate time-wasters</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conscientiousness</th>
<th>Steadiness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>High “C’s” want others to minimize socializing, give details, and value accuracy.</em></td>
<td><em>High “S’s” want others to be relaxed, agreeable, cooperative, and appreciative.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give clear expectations and deadlines</td>
<td>• Be logical and systematic in your approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show dependability</td>
<td>• Provide a consistent and secure environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate loyalty</td>
<td>• Let them know how things will be done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be tactful and emotionally reserved</td>
<td>• Use sincere appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allow precedent to be a guide</td>
<td>• Show their importance to the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be precise and focused</td>
<td>• Let them adapt slowly to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Value high standards</td>
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</table>
Identifying the styles of other people doesn’t have to be hard. You can basically ask yourself these two questions:

1. Think of Accepting/Warm as basically People Oriented and
2. Questioning/Skeptical as basically Task Oriented.

You can quickly identify the style of a team member by asking two simple questions. Is he/she more fast-paced and task focused or is he/she more deliberate/slower-paced and people oriented.

You’ll remember that:

**D Style:** Fast-paced and Questioning. Key goal is to get results. Interested in the bottom line.

**I Style:** Fast-paced, Accepting and Warm. Key goal is to have positive interactions with people.

**S Style:** More reflective but also Accepting and Warm. Key goal is to have things run smoothly in a harmonious way.

**C Style:** Reflective and also Questioning. Key goal is that their work is accurate.

**DiSC Humor – Behavior in Action**

Here are some examples of the DiSC styles to help you understand them better.

**Getting on a busy elevator:**

- The D walks up, gets on the elevator, pushes the button that closes the door.
- The I lets others in, says, “Always room for one more,” and “Come in, you’re going to be late; we’ll wait for you!”
- The S will wait in line, moving from one line to another, appearing unable to make a decision.
- The C will get on the elevator. If it’s crowded, the C will count the number of people and, if the number is over the limit, will make someone get off.

**Shopping for groceries:**

- The D is the impulse shopper. No list.
- The I tells you where everything is in the store, whether you ask or not.
- The S is prepared, has a list and gets it done efficiently.
- The C wouldn’t think of going shopping without coupons and a calculator.
On the golf course:

- Watch out for the D driving the golf cart. They frequently play through groups of golfers.
- The I spends more time in the club house talking than on the course.
- The S golf’s the same day, the same time, the same place, using the same clubs.
- The C keeps score and plays strictly by the rules. They clean their clubs a lot, too.

Hanging wallpaper:

- The D says, “Come over Saturday and help me wall paper. And bring the paste.” Then starts in the middle of the living room. The patterns don’t match. The D says, “So what. That’s what drapes and pictures are for.”
- The I has the wallpaper in the closet with the paste. It’s on a list of things to do. They never get around to it.
- The S has to find a pattern that everyone likes before they even begin to think about handing it.
- The C starts in a closet or in the garage to be sure the pattern is going to match. Then gets it exactly right before starting on the living room.
About the Author

Susan Cullen is President of NexaLearning and is a renowned expert on leadership and management development. She has been a trusted partner for over 20 years to organizations who are seeking to develop the skills their managers and supervisors need. She is a co-author of the book “101 Great Ways to Advance Your Career”, numerous eLearning courses for Management Development, and the author of the Corporate Training Tips blog. Susan is best known for her ability to understand the needs of her clients and the skill to create learning solutions that get result.

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