

DISCover a Tool to Foster Better Communication

by Elaine (Lainey) Lien, ReVive Careers

It is said humans are like snowflakes in that no two are exactly the same. Although humans do share communication style similarities, our distinctive communication styles often create confusion, conflict, and challenges in life and work.

On average, we spend 75% to 80% of our waking hours communicating with others in one fashion or another, for example, verbal, written, body language, or electronic communication. With so many ways of communicating, one would think we should all be experts at this communication thing. If this were true, I would be out of a job! The reality is that poor communication, or a complete lack of communication, happens to be one of the biggest complaints in the workplace.

In my article on psychological safety in the Winter 2022 issue of *ASPIRE*[®], I introduced the “BE WELL” tool and discussed how effective communication in the workplace is the key ingredient to building highly effective teams. It is essential to achieving business goals, building relationships, and fostering customer satisfaction. In this article, I share a communication enhancement tool I regularly use with my individual and business clients to foster better communication: the “DISC” assessment.

What Is DISC?

DISC is a simple, practical, and accurate universal language tool that measures human behaviors as they relate to communication. The DISC model of communication behaviors was developed by William Moulton Marston.¹ DISC assessments were designed to help people focus on understanding their own communication styles and then, equally as important, how to enhance communication with others. This

awareness of self and others is critical for improving communications across the board and reducing conflict and inefficiencies.

According to the DISC model, there are four basic communication styles: dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientiousness. Each of us is a combination of all four styles; however, we tend to use one or two of the styles most often. Each DISC style naturally and unconsciously provides us with visible clues in the form of observable behaviors and predictable patterns. These clues give us insight as to which DISC style a person is most likely to be. These behaviors and patterns are referred to as a person’s DISC language.

Intentionality is the secret sauce to achieving better outcomes with others. When one learns to consciously observe and identify the four styles, it will become easier to intentionally adapt one’s own communication style to the other person’s style, thus speaking to that person in their DISC language. With awareness and an ability to adapt, we gain an opportunity for improved communication.

Communication Styles

The following sections provide brief descriptions of the four basic DISC styles, followed by tips for communicating more effectively with each. While reading the descriptions, think about which style is most relatable to you. Think also about common interactions in the workplace. Please keep in mind, there are no good or bad, or right or wrong, DISC styles; organizations need a healthy combination of all the styles to thrive.

Dominant Style

Description: Fast paced, problem solver, task oriented, bottom-line driven,

risk taker, results oriented. D-style individuals tend to be direct, blunt, outspoken, commanding, competitive, and confident. They thrive on challenges of self, others, and the status quo. D-types are quick decision makers and big-picture thinkers, and they have a sense of urgency like no other style.

Communication tips: When working with D-style communicators, keep interactions quick and to the point. Focus on solutions, not problems. Stand your ground and be ready with bullet points and hard facts. Provide D-types with options to choose from. Recognize, praise, and reward the D-style communicator for doing a great job!

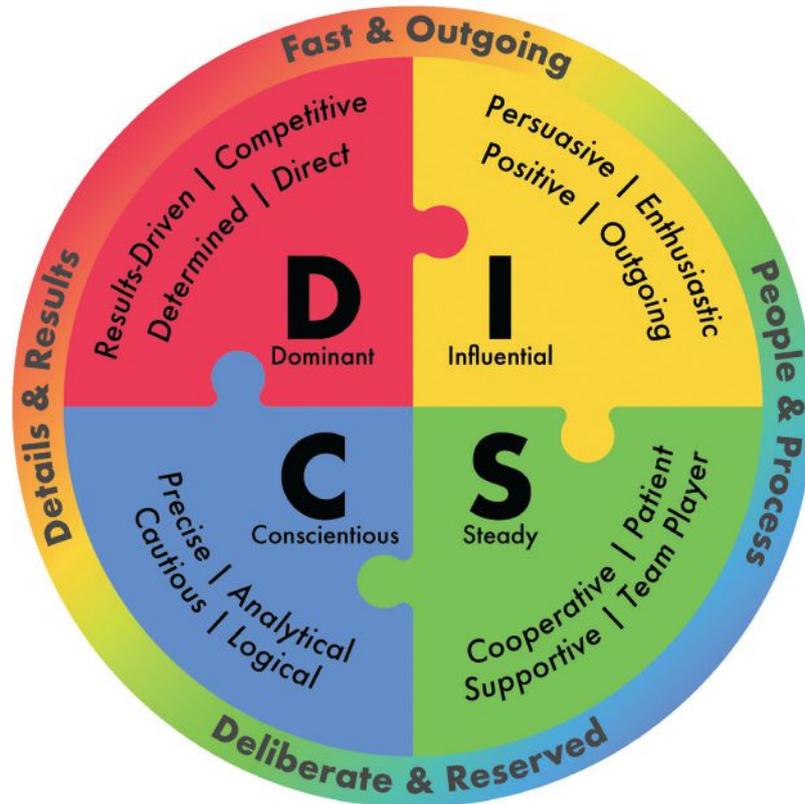
Famous D-style communicator: Simon Cowell

Influential Style

Description: Fast paced, outgoing, persuasive, people oriented, enthusiastic, creative, storyteller. I-style communicators possess an endless supply of positive energy, wit, and charm. I-types love to entertain, rally the troops, and encourage others to take action. They are optimistic, empathetic, and playful. They thrive in team environments and social settings, and they enjoy the spotlight. This style is characteristic of an out-of-the-box-thinker who is also averse to details. I-style communicators dislike confrontation; however, they are naturally gifted mediators and conflict negotiators.

Communication tips: When interacting with I-style individuals, be friendly, upbeat, and allow time for chitchat. I-types tend to have a million ongoing ideas and want to skip the boring details. They appreciate and refer back to emails recapping topics and next steps discussed in recent meetings. Be

DISC Styles



According to the DISC model there are four basic communication styles: dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientious. Awareness of an individual's communication style, including our own, gives us an opportunity to achieve more effective communication and build relationships. Source: ReVive Careers.

quick to praise I-style communicators and slow to criticize them.

Famous I-style communicator: Robin Williams

Steady Style

Description: Even tempered, moderately paced, people oriented, approachable, friendly, good listener, supportive, relationship oriented. S-style individuals are quintessential team players, who tend to be cooperative and supportive. They prefer calm and peaceful environments. S-types appreciate rules, routines, and predictability. They dislike change, confrontation, and conflict; however, they tend to champion or crusade for change when it is well directed and benefits the good of others. S-style communicators excel at planning and prefer to take a step-by-step approach to projects.

Communication tips: When working with S-style communicators, be friendly, genuine, and patient. S-style individuals will do more listening than talking, so be sure to ask for their thoughts and

clarify key agenda items. S-types prefer one-on-one interactions and step-by-step instructions.

Famous S-style communicator: Princess Diana

Conscientious Style

Description: Moderately paced, task oriented, highly analytical, organized; likes order, structure, and following the rules. C-style communicators have an insatiable need for details, data, and information. They are focused on quality and accuracy. C-style individuals tend to be private and prefer to work alone. C-types do not like change, confrontation, or conflict. They strive for precision and perfection in everything they do, including decision-making.

Communication tips: When working with C-style communicators, do your homework! Use proven data and logic, not thoughts and feelings. Ask for their insight and input. C-types appreciate and prefer emails in advance describing details and the reason for upcoming

meetings. Resist the urge for small talk or chitchat.

Famous C-style communicator: Condoleezza Rice

Conclusion

Human behavior is complex, but it is also observable and predictable. As you can see, achieving effective communication and building effective teams in the workplace may be more easily attained than one believes. Using DISC makes achieving business goals, building relationships, and fostering customer satisfaction more attainable. Start improving communication skills and building better relationships by putting this tool and these tips into practice today!

For more information about common DISC combinations, visit <https://www.revivecareers.com/resources>.

Reference

1. Marston, W. M. 1928. *Emotions of Normal People*. London, UK: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd. 