

# Team, Know Thyself

## Enhancing Productivity by Recognizing Strengths

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**W**ouldn't it be great if everyone could get along in every environment and every situation and still produce the most efficient results? As an HR professional, you recognize the importance of having strong, cohesive teams. When you have a system in place for identifying and understanding behaviors, communication styles and roles within teams, you create a more engaged workforce.

When it comes to building an effective team, the first thing you need to know is who the players are and what they have to offer so you can make assignments based on skills. For example, you do not put the fastest guy on the

football team on the offensive line to block 350-pound linemen. You give him the ball 30 times and let him run toward the end zone. So, is building a successful team in your organization any different?

### Using the DISC Model

We recognize five basic phases of team development:

1. Know your own communication "style"
2. Test or evaluate every team member to determine individual communication styles
3. Meet as a team to discuss the different styles and evaluate the accuracy of the data
4. Decide who would work best in a particular position or role based on each individual's communication style and skill set
5. Teach the key concept to other managers with whom you will be working.

As teams come together, it is helpful for participants to recognize that obstacles are inevitable but that there are strategies in place to overcome them. Over the last 30 years, the concept of "DISC" has been used to help people understand themselves and others. DISC stands for four behavioral characteristics:

- **D**ominance – How individuals relate to problems
- **I**nfluence – How individuals relate to people
- **S**teadiness – How individuals relate to pace
- **C**onscientious – How individuals relate to procedures.

This theory of behavior styles is based on a publication titled "Emotions of Normal People," written by Dr. William Marston in 1928. His concepts have evolved over the years and been adapted into what is now a four-quadrant model of behavior styles and preferences that help people talk about behaviors in a non-judgmental framework. The table on page 48 gives an overview of all four DiSC® dimensions (adapted from Inscape Publishing, Inc.).





**(D) DOMINANCE**

Emphasis is on shaping the environment by overcoming opposition to accomplish results.

**DESCRIPTION**

This person's tendencies include:

- Getting immediate results
- Causing action
- Accepting challenges
- Making quick decisions
- Questioning the status quo
- Taking authority
- Managing trouble
- Solving problems.

This person desires an environment that includes:

- Power and authority
- Prestige and challenge
- Opportunities for individual accomplishments
- Wide scope of operations
- Direct answers
- Opportunities for advancement
- Freedom from controls and supervision
- Many new and varied activities.

**ACTION PLAN**

This person needs others who:

- Weigh pros and cons
- Calculate risks
- Use caution
- Structure a predictable environment
- Research facts
- Deliberate before deciding
- Recognize the needs of others.

To be more effective, this person needs to:

- Receive difficult assignments
- Understand that they need people
- Base techniques on practical experience
- Receive an occasional shock
- Identify with a group
- Verbalize reasons for conclusions
- Be aware of existing sanctions
- Pace self and to relax more.

**(I) INFLUENCE**

Emphasis is on shaping the environment by influencing or persuading others.

**DESCRIPTION**

This person's tendencies include:

- Contacting people
- Making a favorable impression
- Being articulate
- Creating a motivational environment
- Generating enthusiasm
- Entertaining people
- Viewing people and situations with optimism
- Participating in a group.

This person desires an environment that includes:

- Popularity, social recognition
- Public recognition of ability
- Freedom of expression
- Group activities outside of the job
- Democratic relationships
- Freedom from control and detail
- Opportunities to verbalize proposals
- Coaching and counseling
- Favorable working conditions.

**ACTION PLAN**

This person needs others who:

- Concentrate on the task
- Seek facts
- Speak directly
- Respect sincerity
- Develop systematic approaches
- Prefer to deal with things instead of people
- Take a logical approach
- Demonstrate individual follow-through.

To be more effective, this person needs to:

- Control time, if D or S is low
- Make objective decisions
- Use hands-on management
- Be more realistic appraising others
- Make priorities and deadlines
- Be more firm with others, if D is low.

**(C) CONSCIENTIOUSNESS**

Emphasis is on working conscientiously within existing circumstances to ensure quality and accuracy.

**DESCRIPTION**

This person's tendencies include:

- Adhering to key directives and standards
- Concentrating on key details
- Thinking analytically, weighing pros and cons
- Being diplomatic with people using subtle or indirect approaches to conflict
- Checking for accuracy
- Analyzing performance critically
- Using a systematic approach to situations or activities.

This person desires an environment that includes:

- Clearly defined performance expectations
- Values on quality and accuracy
- Reserved, business-like atmosphere
- Opportunities to demonstrate expertise
- Control over those factors that affect their performance
- Opportunities to ask "why" questions
- Recognition for specific skills and accomplishments.

**ACTION PLAN**

This person needs others who:

- Delegate important tasks
- Make quick decisions
- Use policies only as guidelines
- Compromise with the opposition
- State unpopular positions
- Initiate and facilitate discussions
- Encourage teamwork.

To be more effective, this person needs to:

- Plan carefully
- Know exact job descriptions and performance objectives to schedule performance appraisals
- Receive specific feedback on performance
- Respect people's personal worth as much as their accomplishments
- Develop tolerance for conflict.

**(S) STEADINESS**

Emphasis is on cooperating with others within existing circumstances to carry out the task.

**DESCRIPTION**

This person's tendencies include:

- Performing in a consistent, predictable manner
- Demonstrating pertinence
- Developing specialized skills
- Helping others
- Showing loyalty
- Being a good listener
- Handling excited people
- Creating stable, harmonious work environments.

This person desires an environment that includes:

- Maintenance of the status quo unless given reasons for change
- Predictable routines
- Credit for work accomplished
- Minimal work infringement on home life
- Sincere appreciation
- Identification with a group
- Standard operating procedures
- Minimal conflict.

**ACTION PLAN**

This person needs others who:

- React quickly to unexpected change
- Stretch toward the challenges of accepted tasks
- Become involved in more than one thing
- Are self-promoting
- Apply pressure on others
- Work comfortably in an unpredictable environment
- Help prioritize work
- Are flexible in work procedures.

To be more effective, this person needs to:

- Be conditioned prior to change
- Validate self-worth
- Know how personal effort contributes to the group effort
- Have colleagues of similar competence and sincerity
- Know task guidelines
- Have creativity encouraged.



**It only makes sense that if you know how to communicate effectively with others, you will be more successful in the workplace and in your relationships.**

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When teams learn and apply the concepts of DISC, individuals become aware of their own behavioral strengths as they relate to others; identify the potential contribution their strengths bring to relationships and teams; recognize that the behavioral strengths of others may be different from their own; and learn what they can do to communicate more effectively with people whose strengths are different from their own.

Behaviors are observable, so team members can identify behavior styles by listening to the types of words people use, the way they speak (e.g., pace, inflection and volume) and their body language. For example, if a team member uses words that convey action and results, speaks with conviction and displays a firm disposition, this individual most likely has a high "D" communication style.

Every behavior and communication style has both strengths and limitations. When people of various strengths work together, they can reduce "groupthink" and improve productivity. While each person is really a mixture of styles, individuals tend to favor one or two dimensions.

**Recognizing Individual Roles**

As groups work together toward common goals, individuals naturally play certain roles within the team. It is important for individuals to recognize that others may react differently when faced with the same obstacle or situation. By identifying team members' roles, managers can capitalize on each person's strengths to produce the best outcome.

Team roles can be divided into five basic types:

- *Creators* are imaginative and think abstractly—they generally see the "big picture" and generate a variety of new ideas. Managers can promote these strengths by allowing creators freedom to explore, providing an environment that is open to new ideas and giving full consideration to ideas.
- *Advancers* focus on interaction with people, are generally expressive and will move an idea or plan forward. Managers can support advancers by generating enthusiasm and understanding within the entire group when it comes to putting the plan or project in motion.
- *Refiners* are very analytical, think logically, test for accuracy and forecast

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barriers in a plan. Managers can take refiners' strengths into consideration by making sure there is adequate time to make quality decisions and uncover flaws.

- *Executors* generally maintain order and organization within the group—they are motivated by the completion of a project and assure quality of the final product. Managers can help executors be successful by ensuring that objectives are clear and direct.
- *Flexers* are a combination of most or all of the roles and can often adapt to fit the team's needs.

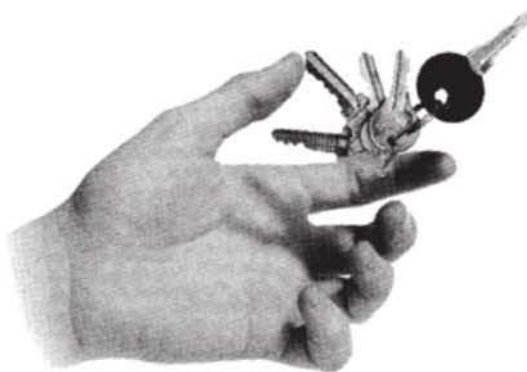
#### Understanding Behaviors

Research conducted by Harvard, the Carnegie Foundation and the Stanford Research Center has shown that 85 percent of a person's success is directly related to people skills, rather than technical knowledge or intelligence. Knowing that fact, it only makes sense that if you know how to communicate effectively with others, you will be more successful in the workplace and in your relationships.

The more you learn about yourself and how you communicate, the better you will be able to identify others' behavioral styles as well. When your objective is understanding how individuals behave at work and learning how to open the lines of communication between team members, there are many tools available. Whether the goal is forming a new team or trying to improve the productivity of a struggling department, understanding the meaning of each person's behavior and how to maximize their strengths can make all the difference in the world. ■

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