

Get Your Communication Styles In-Sync

By Deanne DeMarco

Julia has been a manager for more than five years. She is known as a capable manager who is able to accomplish difficult projects. The only problem for Julia is her inability to effectively manage all the members on her team. Turnover rate in her department is high and she is named as the primary reason why employees leave the company. Other managers have complained that working with Julia creates tension and conflict.

Unfortunately the challenge that Julia faces is one that many managers deal with. Much of a company's success is contingent on the ability of its managers to effectively communicate with other employees. People will leave a company if the working environment is strained. Great companies have strong management teams that are able to manage, motivate and communicate effectively with subordinates and peers.

The ability to adapt one's communication style to others maximizes our effectiveness in all aspects of life. Without these skills, personal and professional relationships may become conflict-prone because each person communicates differently.

Although there are many different personalities, communication style can be narrowed down to four major behavioral approaches, which were identified two thousand years ago by Hippocrates. Dr. William Marston, a Harvard-trained psychologist, outlined the four communication styles that are widely accepted for today's behaviorist thinking. Here are the four different styles, as well as tips on how managers can utilize the strengths and weaknesses of each style to increase cooperation and productivity.

The Dominance Style (D)

The "D" communication style is direct, opinionated, wants the bottom line, seeks immediate results, and enjoys challenges. Communicators who use this style like to win, will take risks, and work hard to get desired results. "D" communicators prefer a fast pace, new activities, change, variety, and uses a direct approach to solve problems. They are confident leaders and believe in pragmatic principles: if it doesn't work get rid of it.

To be effective with these people, show them the simplest and quickest way to be productive. Be firm, direct, and clearly define the limits of their authority. They like public recognition for creating results that make a difference in the world.

Strengths	Weakness
Born Leader	Bossy
Excels in emergencies	Intolerant
Goal Oriented	Over Demanding
Motivational	Workaholic
Logical Thinker	Impatient
Confident	Rude/ Tactless

In managing a “D” employee, it is important to clearly define the limits of his or her authority. When faced with conflict, “D” communicators will confront the opposition and defend their position. Often they will win a disagreement by using intimidation tactics. However, when they feel the conflict is a no-win situation, they will mentally leave the conversation and sometimes physically exit.

The Influence Style (I)

“I” communicators like to interact with people; they are fast-paced, animated, enthusiastic, and like to express their thoughts and feelings. These outgoing people desire results; however, they are very sociable in their interactions. They are excellent communicators and are viewed as friendly, creative and persuasive.

To be effective, avoid overwhelming details and request specific feedback to check on their understanding of how-to complete a project. Use public praise and provide opportunities for them to interact with others.

Strengths	Weakness
Magnetic Personality	Exaggerates
Storyteller	Compulsive talker
Entertaining	Undisciplined
Friendly	Immature
Creative & Colorful	Interrupts
Enthusiastic	Disorganized

With an “I” communicator, use fast-paced enthusiastic descriptions. In conflict they are very persuasive and vocal. They will talk at length on a variety of topics - quickly moving from one topic to the next.

The Steadiness Style (S)

The “S” communicator is very accepting of others. They like cooperation and harmony and are good at calming others. “S” communicators also like security, being part of a team, and stability. These people are not risk-takers and dislike change - especially abrupt change. “S” communicators are patient, loyal and wonderful listeners. They prefer to work with others and like to take time in establishing group cohesiveness. They have a predictable manner and are known as peacemakers.

With this communicator, use a step-by-step plan for development. Provide one-on-one hands-on instruction and regular informal feedback on improvements. Use warm and sincere statements complimenting his or her efforts.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Cooperative	Indecisive
Patient	Procrastinating
Well Balanced	Passive
Team Oriented	Sarcastic
Steady & easygoing	Too accommodating
Mediator & good listener	Fearful & worried

When managing an “S” communicator, be patient and sincere. These are loyal employees who respond positively to group achievements. In times of conflict they will seek win-win solutions. During intense disagreements they can become stubborn and uncommunicative.

The Conscientious Style (C)

The “C” communicator is cautious, detailed and demands quality. They like to work under known conditions, and prefer to follow written standards and procedures. These people are neat and orderly; they value accuracy, and are tactful and diplomatic. They have a perfectionist nature and an analytical view of the world, thereby analyzing situations and problems utilizing high standards for themselves and others.

To be effective with this communicator provide precise, factual statements and specific performance expectations. Use accurate, detailed statements, and check for understanding and acceptance of information.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Artistic & Musical	Perfectionist
Schedule Oriented	Moody
Keeps emotions in check	Suspicious
Long Range Goals	Inflexible
Serious and Analytical	Pessimistic
Likes Charts and Graphs	Slow to Action

When managing a “C” communicator, be specific and detailed. Before a meeting, prepare information to be discussed prior to the conversation. This style asks many questions so allow extra time for your meeting. In time of conflict they will stand behind the facts rather than opinions.

For a Strong Team Mix Them Up

A work group that has all four styles can be an effective team. Each style brings different strengths to the team. However, it is important for the manager to set a positive tone by demonstrating mutual respect, trust, and acceptance. It will be a challenge to minimize the interpersonal conflicts that will naturally arise within the group but if the manager can create the right environment, minimize conflicts and allow the group to motivate themselves, this team can achieve outstanding results.

* The research of William Marston was used as the foundation of this article as well as the terms Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness from his “DiSC” research. My clients have experienced tremendous success with the DiSC assessments and training.

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Is a respected expert on organizations and the changing workforce. She works with organizations in training their managers to be more effective in motivating and retaining their younger workers. An author of four books, Including the “*Managers Pocket Resource: Coaching*” and “*Secrets of Success.*” Deanne’s generational programs help managers inspire more productivity, passion, and enthusiasm in today’s changing workforce. Read more about Deanne on her [speaker](#) and [expert](#) pages or call 866-91-COACH