



Communications style assessment

PURPOSE: Analyse your communication style to understand your strengths and shortcomings in terms of how you interact with others.

SOURCE: Psychologists David Merrill and Roger Reid first articulated this model of in their 1984 publication *Personal Styles and Effective Performance*.

Their theory is that there are 4 main 'social styles' we adopt when interacting with others influenced by two key factors:

Assertiveness – or the degree of forcefulness or directiveness.

Responsiveness – the degree to which a person's behaviours are seen by others as emotionally controlled. More responsive people react to their own emotions or to the emotions of others. Less responsive people are more guarded in their emotional expression.

No one style works better than any other. The ability to get along with people whose styles differ from one's own (flexibility), has been shown to distinguish the successful manager from the unsuccessful. It is also important to be aware of one's own strengths, preferences and weaknesses.

HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE:

1. Complete the questionnaire. There are no right answers to these questions, so base your response on how you are today, not how you think you should be or would like to be in the future.
2. Use the scoring grid to identify your dominant style.
3. Read the notes below that explain the characteristics of each 'type'.

Self-evaluation questionnaire

1. When talking to a customer or co-worker ...
 - a) I maintain eye contact the whole time.
 - b) I alternate between looking at the person and looking down.
 - c) I look around the room a good deal of the time.
 - d) I try to maintain eye contact but look away from time to time.
2. If I have an important decision to make...
 - a) I think it through completely before deciding.
 - b) I go with my gut instincts.
 - c) I consider the impact it will have on other people before deciding.
 - d) I run it by someone whose opinion I respect before deciding.
3. My office or work area mostly has ...
 - a) Family photos and sentimental items displayed.
 - b) Inspirational posters, awards, and art displayed.
 - c) Graphs and charts displayed.
 - d) Calendars and project outlines displayed.
4. If I am having a conflict with a co-worker or customer ...
 - a) I try to help the situation along by focusing on the positive.
 - b) I stay calm and try to understand the cause of the conflict.
 - c) I try to avoid discussing the issue causing the conflict.
 - d) I confront it right away so that it can get resolved as soon as possible.
5. When I talk on the phone at work ...
 - a) I keep the conversation focused on the purpose of the call.
 - b) I spend a few minutes chatting before getting down to business.
 - c) I am in no hurry to get off the phone and don't mind chatting about personal things, the weather, etc
 - d) I keep the conversation as brief as possible.
6. If a co-worker is upset ...
 - a) I ask if I can do anything to help.
 - b) I leave him alone because I don't want to intrude on his privacy.
 - c) I try to cheer him up and help him to see the bright side.
 - d) I feel uncomfortable and hope he gets over it soon.
7. When I attend meetings at work ...
 - a) I sit back and think about what is being said before offering my opinion.
 - b) I put all my cards on the table so my opinion is well known.
 - c) I express my opinion enthusiastically, but listen to other's ideas as well.
 - d) I try to support the ideas of the other people in the meeting.
8. When I make a presentation in front of a group...
 - a) I am entertaining and often humorous.
 - b) I am clear and concise.
 - c) I speak relatively quietly.
 - d) I am direct, specific, and sometimes loud.
9. When a customer is explaining a problem to me...
 - a) I try to understand and empathize with how she is feeling.
 - b) I look for the specific facts pertaining to the situation.
 - c) I listen carefully for the main issue so that I can find a solution.
 - d) I use my body language and tone of voice to show her that I understand.
10. When I attend training programs or presentations...
 - a) I get bored if the person moves too slowly.
 - b) I try to be supportive of the speaker, knowing how hard the job is.
 - c) I want it to be entertaining as well as informative.
 - d) I look for the logic behind what the speaker is saying.

11. When I want to get my point across to customers or co-workers...

- a) I listen to their point of view first and then express my ideas gently.
- b) I strongly state my opinion so that they know where I stand.
- c) I try to persuade them without being too forceful.
- d) I explain the thinking and logic behind what I am saying.

12. When I am late for a meeting or appointment...

- a) I don't panic but call ahead to say that I will be a few minutes late.
- b) I feel bad about keeping the other person waiting.
- c) I get very upset and rush to get there as soon as possible.
- d) I apologize profusely once I arrive.

13. I set goals and objectives at work that...

- a) I think I can realistically attain.
- b) I feel are challenging and would be exciting to achieve.
- c) I need to achieve as part of a bigger objective.
- d) Will make me feel good when I achieve them.

14. When explaining a problem to a co-worker whom I need help from...

- a) I explain the problem in as much detail as possible.
- b) I sometimes exaggerate to make my point.
- c) I try to explain how the problem makes me feel.
- d) I explain how I would like the problem to be solved.

15. If customers or co-workers are late for a meeting with me in my office...

- a) I keep myself busy by making phone calls or working until they arrive.
- b) I assume they were delayed a bit and don't get upset.
- c) I call to make sure that I have the correct information (date, time, and so on).

- d) I get upset that the person is wasting my time.

16. When I am behind on a project and feel pressure to get it done...

- a) I make a list of everything I need to do, in what order, by when.
- b) I block out everything else and focus 100 percent on the work I need to do.
- c) I become anxious and have a hard time focusing on my work.
- d) I set a date to get the project done by and go for it.

17. When I feel verbally attacked by a customer or a co-worker...

- a) I tell her to stop it.
- b) I feel hurt but usually don't say anything about it to her.
- c) I ignore her anger and try to focus on the facts of the situation.
- d) I let her know in strong terms that I don't like her behaviour.

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18. When I see a co-worker or customer whom I like and haven't seen recently...

- a) I give him a friendly hug.
- b) I greet him but don't shake his hand.
- c) I give him a firm but quick handshake.
- d) I give him an enthusiastic handshake that lasts a few moments.

Scoring form

Once you have completed the questionnaire, score each answer using the key below:

Total your scores for each category:

Driver

Expressive

Amiable

Analytical

1 a Driver b Amiable c Analytical d Expressive	7 a Analytical b Driver c Expressive d Amiable	13 a Analytical b Expressive c Driver d Amiable
2 a Analytical b Driver c Amiable d Expressive	8 a Expressive b Analytical c Amiable d Driver	14 a Analytical b Expressive c Amiable d Driver
3 a Amiable b Expressive c Analytical d Driver	9 a Amiable b Analytical c Driver d Expressive	15 a Expressive b Amiable c Analytical d Driver
4 a Expressive b Amiable c Analytical d Driver	10 a Driver b Amiable c Expressive d Analytical	16 a Analytical b Driver c Amiable d Expressive
5 a Driver b Expressive c Amiable d Analytical	11 a Amiable b Driver c Expressive d Analytical	17 a Driver b Amiable c Analytical d Expressive
6 a Amiable b Analytical c Expressive d Driver	12 a Analytical b Amiable c Driver d Expressive	18 a Amiable b Analytical c Driver d Expressive

Analytical - Polite but reserved, logical, fact- and task-oriented. This person's focus is on precision and perfection. Other strengths include persistence, diligence, caution, and a systematic approach. Weaknesses involve being withdrawn, boring, quiet, reclusive. Perfectionism can be a fault, and they may seem indecisive because of a need to possess all the data. This person is definitely not a risk-taker. The Analytical needs to be right.

Tips for working with Analytical people:

- Be systematic, thorough, deliberate, and precise
- Focus on the task – don't get too personal
- Be prepared to answer many "how" questions
- Provide analysis and facts
- Don't rush unnecessarily - allow time for evaluation

Driver - A high achiever – a mover and shaker who is definitely not averse to risk. The individual is extroverted, strong-willed, direct, practical, organized, forceful, and decisive. Look for someone who tells it the way it is and is very persuasive. But watch out or you'll be worn down and bowled over. A driver is task-rather than relationship-oriented and wants immediate results. The Driver can be stubborn, domineering, impatient, insensitive, and short-tempered, with little time for formalities or niceties. They can also be demanding, opinionated, controlling, and uncompromising –or even overbearing, cold, and harsh.

Tips for working with Drivers:

- Focus on the results
- Be business-like and factual
- Provide concise, precise, and organized information
- Discuss and answer "what" questions
- Provide options

Amiable - Devoted, consistent, dependable, and loyal, the Amiable is a hardworker and will persevere long after others have given up. He or she is a team player, cooperative and easy to get along with, trustful, sensitive and a good listener. They enjoy company, perform best in a stable environment, and often have a stabilizing effect on others. Weaknesses include indecision and an inability to take risks. Amiables are often too focused on others, conforming, quiet, and passive. They often won't speak up for themselves, are too compliant and nice, and often painstakingly slow to make decisions.

Tips for working with Amiable people:

- Be relaxed and agreeable
- Create a plan with written guidelines
- Be prepared to answer "why" questions
- Be predictable
- Use the word "we"

Expressive - A verbally adept personality, is engaging, accommodating, supportive of others, persuasive, socially adept, and relationship- rather than task-oriented. They love to be one of the gang, and is always ready for something new and exciting. Additional strengths include enthusiasm, diplomatic skills, and the ability to inspire others. Weaknesses involve impatience, a tendency to generalize, verbal assaults, and sometimes irrational behaviour. Expressives can also be egotistical, manipulative, undisciplined, reactive, unorganized, and abrasive. Their main need is to be appreciated and accepted.

Tips for working with Expressives:

- Focus on developing a relationship
- Show how your ideas will improve their image
- Relate to the need to share views and stories
- Ask and answer "who" questions
- Minimize their involvement with details or conflicts

