

STRAIGHT TALK® LEADERSHIP STYLES

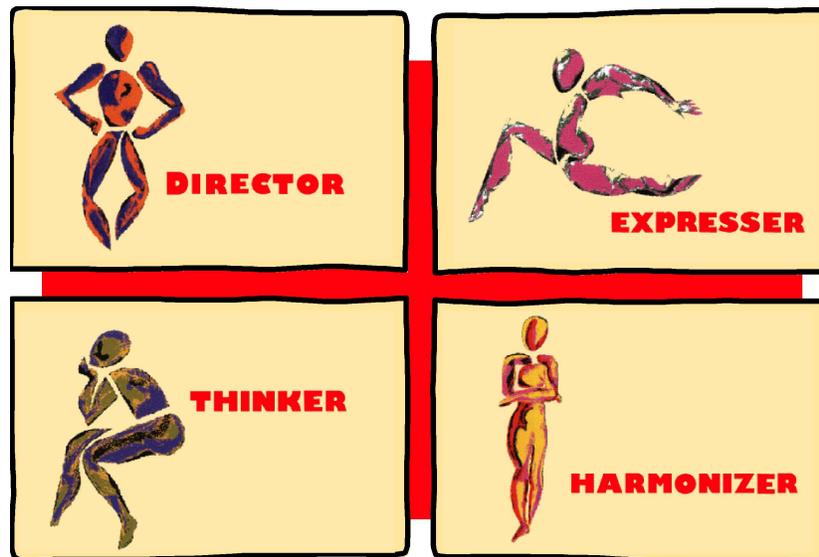
Introduction

Skillful leadership requires many things. Among them is awareness of your communication style and how it affects your leadership style. Knowing your style, and adjusting it to fit the needs of the situation, is one of the keys to being an effective leader.

This tool describes four different leadership styles, based on the Straight Talk® system of communication styles. It shows you how to identify your own style, and then provides a chart showing the strengths and weaknesses of each style. It also includes descriptions of how each style tends to manage people and manage conflicts.

The Starting Point

Straight Talk® system defines four basic communication styles: Director, Expresser, Thinker, and Harmonizer.¹ Everyone has a “natural” leadership style that corresponds to his or her communication style.

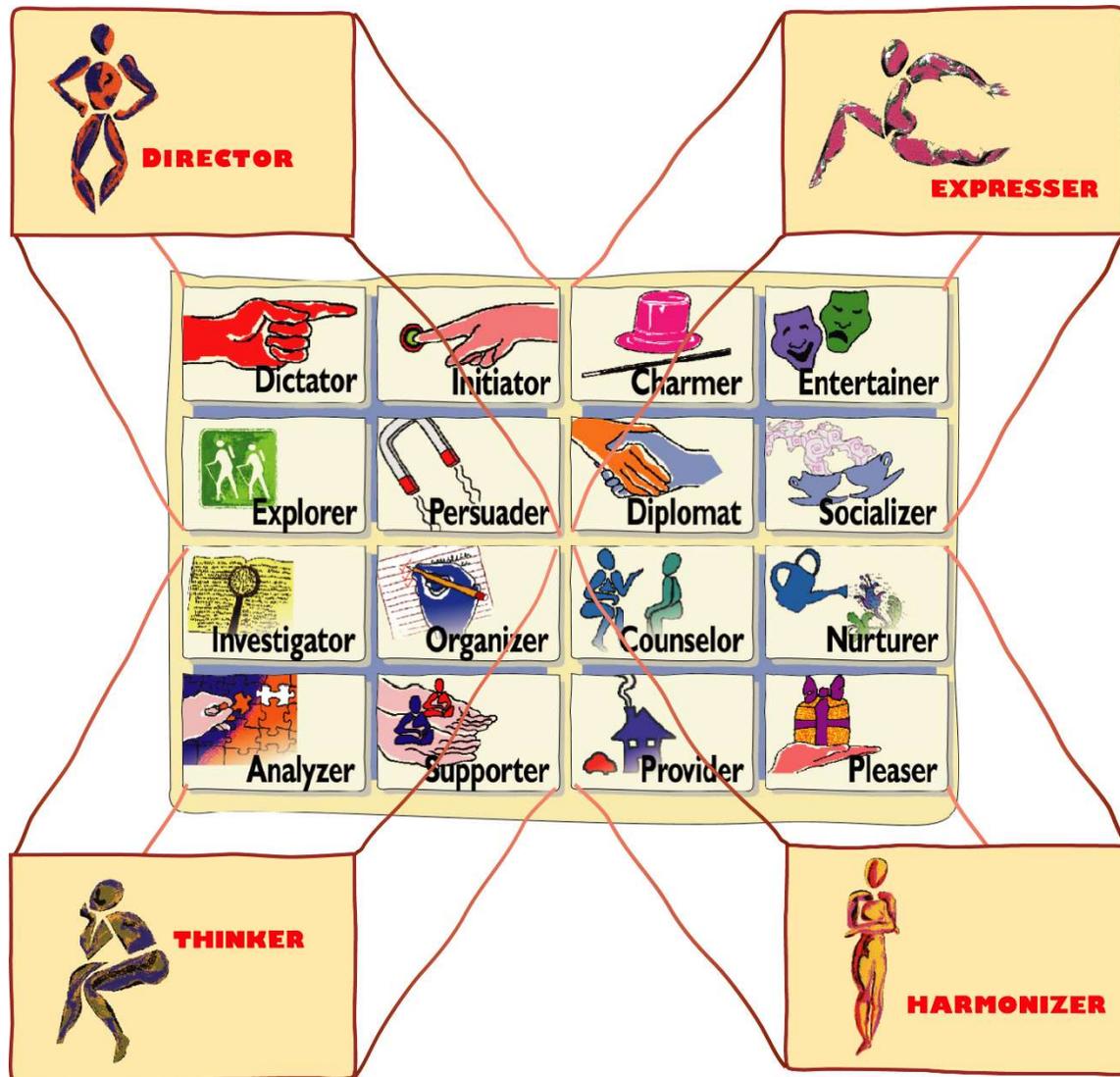


To determine your communication style, take the Straight Talk® survey and discover whether you are a Director, Expresser, Thinker, or Harmonizer.

¹ The Straight Talk system was developed in 1998 and is used worldwide. To learn more – and to take the survey – go to www.gostraighttalk.com. It takes approximately five minutes to complete the survey and learn your style. The entire process is free.

Interpreting Your Results

When you take the Straight Talk® survey, you discover your style and where you “fit” on the matrix below. Each of the four quadrants reflects one of the four primary communication styles. For example, if you are a Persuader, Dictator, Explorer, or Initiator, your primary style is Director. If you are a Charmer, Entertainer, Diplomat, or Socializer, then your primary style is Expresser, as shown below.



Traits of Each Style

Once you've figured out your communication style, refer to the chart below for the corresponding leadership traits:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Director	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goal oriented ▪ Emphasis on bottom line ▪ Makes quick decisions ▪ Willing to take risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pursues big, risky challenges ▪ Makes abrupt decisions ▪ Lack of esprit de corps ▪ Lack of communication
Expresser	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Idea oriented ▪ Emphasis on people ▪ Entertaining, fun ▪ Willing to take risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lots of ideas, goals ▪ Lack of clear priorities ▪ Difficulty with follow through ▪ Hard to gain commitment
Thinker	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fact and process oriented ▪ Emphasis on precision ▪ Stress academic credentials ▪ Lots of quality control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linear thinking ▪ Unwilling to take risks ▪ Tends to miss deadlines ▪ May not focus on the big picture
Harmonizer	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship oriented ▪ Emphasis on team ▪ Fun, warm, friendly ▪ Loyal to the cause 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoids conflict, change ▪ Makes decisions slowly ▪ Not clear about purpose, goals ▪ Tendency toward bureaucracy

Assumptions of Each Style

Each Straight Talk® style tends to make assumptions about other people because of the way that style processes and interprets information.

Directors assume:

- People don't see the big picture.
- People don't get enough done.
- People aren't decisive.
- People take too much time.
- People shouldn't waste time talking about their feelings.

Expressers assume:

- People aren't creative enough.
- People need to be more daring.
- People need to lighten up and have a good time.
- People should say what's really on their minds.

Thinkers assume:

- People don't focus enough on details.
- People don't care about getting things done right.
- People don't understand what's involved.
- People don't understand how we do things here.

Harmonizers assume:

- People aren't sensitive enough to other people's feelings.
- People don't give us enough time to get things done.
- People don't value small talk.
- People argue too much.

Approach to Management and Conflict

Directors' Approach to Management

As someone whose primary style is Director, you're at your best when boiling a complex situation into a few key goals. You have that big picture vision that enables you to see what others cannot – what needs to be done, by when, and by whom. But you don't like to spend a lot of time with details, so your planning efforts may fall short when it comes to actual implementation.



Directors tend to want to control things. So delegating can be a challenge! Once they delegate a task, Directors tend to assume that other people will do the job quickly and efficiently. But that's not necessarily the case. Directors need to practice checking in, making sure people have the resources they need, answering questions, weighing priorities, and monitoring progress.

Directors excel at setting big, bold goals. They can be inspiring and charismatic. But they can also be perceived as insensitive. Directors need to warm up their style in order to manage people successfully. Take the time to ask questions, make casual chitchat, and invite other people's input.

As a Director, you'll be tempted to step in and take control if a project goes off course. Try to avoid taking dramatic action that causes everyone to feel confused and resentful. By planning carefully and communicating in a sensitive manner, you can prevent management mayhem from ensuing.

As a Director, your approach to time management is to try to do everything now. You view time as a rare commodity, always in short supply. You tend to impose short deadlines, not allowing enough room for unexpected changes. You also tend to view deadlines as hard and fixed rules. So when a project misses its deadline, ask questions before you do or say something you'll regret later.

The key for you is to carve out enough time to involve everyone in the planning. By involving others, you'll gain invaluable buy-in. You'll also set more realistic schedules for yourself and others.

The Director's Approach to Conflict

With other Directors:

It's natural for you to butt heads with other Directors, since you're both forceful personalities, focused on your own agendas and tasks at hand. You need to take the time to state your case, cite supporting evidence, and then ask good questions, keeping an open mind until all the evidence is in.

Directors tend to jump to conclusions, and you may find to your surprise that you completely misunderstood one another! It's important for Directors to set aside enough time to listen, ask questions, and clarify your assumptions.

In talking with another Director, remember to lay all your cards on the table. Directors prefer straightforward, direct communication. They would prefer to decide now, rather than engage in long, protracted negotiations.

With Expressers:

In a stressful situation, Directors need to let Expressers vent their feelings. Avoid your first thought, which is to cut the conversation short. Let the Expresser talk it through. Then help the Expresser organize his or her thoughts. Use your skill at seeing the big picture to round out the Expresser's view of the situation. Help him or her review the long-term consequences. Remember, the Expresser wants to open up to you, so be patient.

Directors should remember not to assume the Expresser has determined his or her priorities. The Expresser may appear to know what's most important, when in fact he's still trying to assess the situation. Again, by clarifying the situation for the Expresser, you can become an ally.

With Thinkers:

A major source of conflict for these two is time management. The Director wants things done right away, and the Thinker wants things done right. Typically, the Director will say: "We need this by Friday." When the Thinker protests, the Director will listen with only half an ear. The Thinker will be reluctant to press further because of the Director's obvious lack of patience.

Once a conflict arises, Directors need to be careful in handling it. Both of you can be stubborn – you don't want to cross the line to an unacceptable level of conflict. Set aside time when the two of you can dissect what went wrong and reach clear agreements on the steps you're going to take. Failure to invest time in understanding what went wrong will leave the Thinker with the clear impression you don't really care about the process – or the outcome – and cannot be trusted in the future.

With Harmonizers:

Directors need to check their desire to be blunt and direct when dealing with Harmonizers in stressful situations. When working with a Harmonizer, start the conversation with some small talk and banter. Take the time to build your relationship. If you have bad news, underscore your sensitivity to the situation. Empathize. Make sure you choose a moment when the Harmonizer has plenty of privacy in which to react and plenty of time to discuss his or her thoughts about what ought to be done.

The Expresser's Approach to Management

As someone whose primary style is Expresser, you excel at brain storming. You love to imagine possible scenarios and come up with bold, creative solutions. You can dazzle people with your ability to think on your feet. But if none of your ideas catch fire, you may become frustrated and turn to something else instead.



Expressers aren't natural project managers. They would prefer to wing it rather than take the time to plan carefully what resources are required or who's best for the job. To be more effective, the Expresser needs to commit to a specific set of outcomes and deadlines. By writing a detailed draft of a project, the Expresser can learn to translate his or her ideas and develop a final set of specs. Putting the project into words also compels a certain level of logical analysis – an invaluable exercise for an Expresser.

When projects go awry, the Expressers' natural enthusiasm and optimism may blind them to the damage done. They may need to seek the counsel of others to grasp the full impact of a situation. By focusing on the full ramifications, the Expresser can set the stage for finding a successful resolution.

The Expresser's Approach to Conflict

With other Expressers:

Expressers want to express themselves. So, conflicts can typically be avoided by listening and understanding and giving people equal talk time. In a meeting of Expressers, for example, the group leader should emphasize the need to balance listening with advocating. Make it a ground rule. By doing so, you set the stage for a productive meeting.

Another source of conflict surrounds commitments. Expressers tend to make vague commitments and consider deadlines "flexible." People are likely to be frustrated by the Expresser's lack of follow through. A good rule is for Expressers to force themselves to make written agreements whenever possible. And remember to go "the last mile" to finish a project completely.

When communicating, two Expressers will tend to think out loud, to brainstorm, and to think out of the box. This can be very productive; but it can also lead to a disorganized conversation. Expressers may need an outside party to help steer the conversation. Again, when agreements are reached, it is very important to write them down.

When delivering bad news to an Expresser, do what comes naturally. Say: "I'm terribly sorry to upset you. But..." Then proceed to lay out the story with as much evidence as possible. But don't forget to ask questions and listen!

With Directors:

If you're an Expresser, you have three challenges in dealing with a Director. First, you like to think aloud, which is likely to confuse the Director. You need to train yourself to say: "I'm thinking out loud right now, but here's a thought." Then listen carefully – and respond after you've had a chance to understand what others think.

Second, Directors want tough-minded analysis and action. Show them the numbers. Prepare two or three alternatives. Negotiate from a position of knowing what's most important to you. This is hard for Expressers. But force yourself to make choices.

Finally, Expressers tend to focus on people, the Director on tasks and projects. To resolve a conflict with a Director, get on the same wavelength. Don't say: "I'm teed off that our sales staff doesn't seem to be using our new software." Say: "Our sales team's failure to adopt our sales management software is having a serious impact on our sales revenues this month." Then offer two or three solutions.

With Thinkers:

For Expressers, a source of conflict with Thinkers is being imprecise. Expressers often portray things in broad, general terms: "We need to penetrate the market for organic foods." Or: "We need to set aside money for the children's education." The Thinker prefers much more detail and precision. They'll ask many questions. "What do we know about the market? How is it defined?" Typically, the Expresser will grow frustrated by all these questions.

When a conflict occurs, Expressers need to ask questions and find out what went wrong. Again, it's going to require an investment of energy and time to listen. But in order to maintain trust with a Thinker, the Expresser must show respect for the Thinker's way of doing things. Only then can you reach an agreement on what to do next.

When delivering bad news, the Expresser should take time to organize his thoughts. Give the Thinker ample warning that you need to discuss something important. Find out when it will fit into his schedule. Then make sure you're prepared to offer lots of details and give yourself enough time to answer questions.

With Harmonizers:

Expressers enjoy free-flowing conversations filled with imaginative ideas and have a high tolerance for ambiguity. The Harmonizer likes order, structure, and predictability. Put these two together and you have a recipe for conflict.

For example, the Expresser may think he's being clear when he says: "We need to totally rethink the way we're handling this client. Put the team together and give me your best thoughts tomorrow." But the Expresser has failed to define the issues or the goals. As a result, the Harmonizer is baffled about how to approach the problem.

When a conflict occurs, the Expresser needs to handle the situation gingerly. You need to recognize the need for detailed context setting and clarity of expectations. You should point out to the Harmonizer exactly where the misunderstanding occurred. You should

state your resolve to help repair the situation. And then the two of you should decide what steps to take.

In presenting bad news to a Harmonizer, demonstrate your concern for everyone involved. If you have a solution, show how it benefits other people.

The Thinker's Approach to Management

As someone whose primary style is Thinker, you excel at planning. You enjoy knowing that you've covered every contingency. But planning alone cannot guarantee success. You may overlook the kind of bold, creative thinking that allows you to identify the best alternatives. Rather than starting a project by looking at the logistics and timetable, a better approach is to talk about the broader goal first, then the context, then invite creative brain-storming, and only afterwards give rein to your natural planning abilities.



Thinkers like to process things logically. They're typically capable of setting up a project management plan that spells out the tasks and timelines, the roles and responsibilities. You're also good at monitoring progress, giving praise to people who've completed their tasks.

To become more effective managers, Thinkers may need to be more open-minded and warmer toward others. If you ask people for feedback, don't forget to first affirm the value of their input. Give people the chance to express opposing points of view. Above all, keep an open mind and use your logical gift to sift through and select the best ideas.

As a Thinker, you're aware of time. But you view deadlines as a necessary evil. You're much more concerned about the quality of the work than about the time it takes. Thinkers need to be aware that once they've set a deadline, for themselves or anyone else, it costs the organization every day that it is delayed.

As a Thinker, you can be overly reliant on old, proven ways of doing things. You may display reluctance to try out a new technology or embrace a new way of doing things. This conservative approach could limit your growth as a manager. Counter it by promising to teach your staff new techniques and technologies. Keeping that promise will force you to learn them first.

The Thinker's Approach to Conflict

With other Thinkers:

As a Thinker, you are careful, precise and focused. You can also be inflexible. So your conflicts with another Thinker typically arise over the correct approach to accomplishing a task or solving a problem.

The proper approach to resolving a conflict between Thinkers is to analyze the assumptions that underlie each person's approach. Lay out on a sheet of paper each person's rationale. Make sure you capture all of their arguments. Then break down the assumptions reflected in each rationale. Once you've written down each assumption,

ask each other: What do we need to know that we don't know in order to resolve this conflict? By partaking in a collaborative process to resolve the problem logically, Thinkers can overcome almost any conflict.

With Directors:

If you're a Thinker, you share with Directors the quality of following your head, not your heart. Conflicts can arise because you take too much time to get something done, whereas the Director is more impatient. When you find yourself at odds with a Director, curb your tendency to dissect things. Instead, get right to the point, state what you think ought to be done, and negotiate an agreement. It's a good idea to follow up in writing. The Director will appreciate your "take charge" approach.

Don't try to gild bad news for the Director. He wants it straight and factual, right away. Your matter-of-fact style will help the Director think you've got everything under control.

With Expressers:

Thinkers are organized, precise and logical. Expressers are free-wheeling, adventurous, and imprecise. Since they view things from opposite poles, conflicts are not uncommon. As a Thinker, you can handle conflict with Expressers by listening attentively, giving logical feedback, and helping the Expresser weigh the options. Thinkers can help the Expresser by logically analyzing different options, playing the role of sage counselor, reviewing the best alternatives and pointing out the pros and cons.

With Harmonizers:

Thinkers get into conflicts with Harmonizers over process. For example, a Thinker may view a Harmonizer as lacking the necessary precision and attention to detail. Direct criticism will cause the Harmonizer to become defensive and withdrawn. Instead, the Thinker should demonstrate his concern for the Harmonizer, stressing the importance of their relationship. Having laid a foundation of trust, the Thinker can then focus on the problem. Rather than state the criticism directly, pose it as a question: "Have you figured out what went wrong with the batch process yesterday?"

The same technique applies when the Thinker is the bearer of bad news to the Harmonizer. Make sure you demonstrate your sensitivity to how each individual will be affected while delivering the message.

The Harmonizer's Approach to Management

As someone whose primary style is Harmonizer, your approach to planning is to do what's best for the people around you. This team approach gives you a natural gift for management. People know you'll go to bat for them, so they'll go to bat for you.



Your drive to please makes you a highly popular manager. But as a manager, one of your responsibilities is to set priorities. The quality of pleasing others may cause inconsistent or contradictory priorities to get incorporated into your plans. Sometimes, these contradictions don't emerge until much later. When they do come to light, you may

be genuinely shocked and either look for help – or give up in frustration. All because you allowed yourself to get caught between needing to plan and wanting to please.

One strategy for the Harmonizer is to identify a sage counsel to ask for help in setting priorities. This person should have the hard-nosed, bottom-line approach you lack. By seeking good counsel, you'll learn to set priorities on others and yourself.

Another quality of a good manager is the ability to impart constructive criticism. As a Harmonizer, you may find it difficult to provide constructive feedback. However, once you learn that constructive feedback is a necessary role of a manager, and that it can help people do a better job, you can become very adept at managing people.

Harmonizers need to practice time management. Set daily deadlines. If you can couple your natural skills with people with good project management skills, you can be a very successful manager.

The Harmonizer's Approach to Conflict

With other Harmonizers:

As a Harmonizer, you're not likely to want to deal with a serious conflict – even with another Harmonizer. By nature, you'll want to smooth over any problem. Your desire to avoid confrontation can work against you, however. Harmonizers need to discuss conflicts openly and candidly. You can start by stressing how much you want the conflict to be resolved. Be sure to disclose your personal reactions to what happened. Ultimately, follow your desire to resolve the conflict by inviting other people to help you assess the options in a logical, objective fashion. Don't let your loyalties to other people cloud your judgment about what's best for all concerned.

When delivering bad news to another Harmonizer, reaffirm the value of the relationship and then gently let them know what's going on. Stress your desire to help them be successful. By citing evidence of how other people feel, it will help the Harmonizer grasp the situation.

With Directors:

For Harmonizers, handling a conflict with a Director can be very stressful. Remember to prepare what you're going to say, keep it short, and be assertive. Don't gloss over the facts or try to hide anything. State the bad news in headline fashion. Cite factual evidence and lay out the major ramifications. Above all, don't dwell on extraneous details. The Director cares less about whose fault it is and more about whether the problem can be fixed.

When dealing with a Director, it's tempting for you to shelve bad news or pretend it's going to get better. Don't succumb. Remember to look the Director straight in the eye and state your point of view clearly and succinctly. Don't let yourself be ambushed by a Director's abrupt questions. Make sure you've got adequate information to support your case. The Director needs to know, and he or she will react positively so long as he's assured you have the interests of the organization at heart.

With Expressers:

The Harmonizer typically puts the group's needs above his own, whereas the Expresser is often more focused on his or her own ideas. When Harmonizers experience conflicts with Expressers, it's typically over questions of whose interests are paramount.

When a conflict does occur, the Harmonizer should urge the Expresser to see things from the group's perspective. If the Expresser interrupts, the Harmonizer needs to say: "Please let me finish my point, then I'll be happy to hear what you have to say." By keeping a steady hand, the Harmonizer can help defuse a volatile situation.

If a Harmonizer is a bearer of bad news to an Expresser, take pains to underscore how much you value the Expresser's personal contributions. The Expresser will usually respond positively.

With Thinkers:

Harmonizers typically get along well with Thinkers. When a conflict does occur, it may be repressed, because neither Harmonizers nor Thinkers like open confrontation. Signs of repressed conflict might be avoidance, silence, or even forced amiability.

One successful technique is to issue a regular invitation to the Thinker to clear the air. After some initial chitchat, say to him: "I sure hope everything is going smoothly between us. Is everything okay from your perspective? I really want you to be honest with me." Having laid the groundwork, it should be easy to get any issues on the table.

As a bearer of bad news, the Harmonizer should inform the Thinker in careful detail about what happened. Keep the conversation focused on what actually happened, rather than conjecturing about how people are reacting. Thinkers like to be told things in logical order, so start at the beginning and leave nothing out.

Team Styles

Here are four team styles – again based on Straight Talk® – and the assumptions that accompany each style:

Director Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Action is better than inaction. ▪ We should act more quickly. ▪ We should reward bold decisions.
Expresser Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Every idea is worth considering. ▪ People should be willing to try anything once. ▪ We should reward creativity.
Thinker Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis can solve any problem. ▪ There’s a right way to do things – and a wrong way. ▪ We should reward people who do things the right way.
Harmonizer Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good relationships are essential to our success. ▪ People shouldn’t argue, but seek to understand. ▪ We should reward people who work well together.

As a leader of a team, you should try to help move the team toward a balanced style of communicating. For example, if a team is paralyzed by indecision, then injecting more people with the Expresser or Director style will get them moving. If a group is acting too quickly, then a Thinker or Harmonizer style should be added to the mix.

Exercise:

In the box below, make note of the potential strengths and shortcomings of your team, based on your understanding of its members’ styles. Then note 1-3 strategies to mitigate the weaknesses.

Potential strengths of the team	Potential weaknesses of the team
1-3 strategies to mitigate the potential weaknesses of the team	

Exercises

Here are two more exercises to help you build awareness of how your communication style affects your leadership style.

Exercise 1:

Reflect on a recent decision you've made that worked out well. Then reflect on your preferred communication style. What about your style contributed to the effectiveness of that decision?

Decision you made	How my leadership style affected the decision	The positive outcomes

Exercise 2:

Reflect on a decision you made that didn't work out very well. Then reflect on your style. What were the negative outcomes? What could you have done differently?

Decision you made	How my leadership style affected the decision	The negative outcomes
Things you could have done differently		

DIRECTORS

Dictator

Primary style: Director
Secondary style: Director



As a Dictator, you thrive on being in control. You bristle when someone else is in charge. When you communicate with others, you typically focus on what you want to accomplish. Personal issues and emotional situations are awkward. You'd rather talk about a new business idea than your relationships.

At work, you seem to have amazing energy to get things done, but you also seem insensitive and manipulative. You're valued for your leadership skills and "take charge" attitude, but you tend to make decisions more quickly than others would like. The Dictator has a hard time with interpersonal communication. You typically talk in abrupt sentences and don't volunteer much information. Your short attention span makes it hard for people to open up. You enjoy dealing with other "bottom-liners," but you'd prefer to be taking on a new challenge – not talking about it.

To be a more competent communicator, the Dictator needs to be more patient and self-disclosing. Set aside time simply to practice making casual conversation with other people. Start by disclosing how you feel about a particular situation or current event. Talk about your feelings and reactions. If it involves juicy controversy, state your opinion but emphasize that your mind is open. Invite other points of view – "I'm curious, what do you think?" Give others plenty of time to talk. Above all, ask questions and listen. But don't conduct an interrogation!

Dictators need to make people feel that they're really interested in their point of view. Try using empathic listening; say, "I understand you" or "You make a good point." Paraphrase and play back what people say. Learn to control your snap judgments, and you're more likely to find your troops behind you as you yell, "Charge!"

Initiator

Primary style: Director
Secondary style: Expresser



As an Initiator, you're happiest leading a group of people into new territory – whether it's a new business or a new way of doing things. You don't like when someone else is in charge. You pride yourself on how much you can accomplish compared to others. Your energy and ingenuity inspire admiration, but your assertiveness can undermine the respect you desire. You tend to speak your mind quickly, before listening to what other people have to say. In your best moments, you're charismatic and enthusiastic – in your worst moments, arrogant and inconsistent.

At work, you can display great vision about the needs of an organization. You may undertake too much at times, yet you somehow manage to get the job done. You are often regarded as having impossible standards and making snap judgments about things and people. This can make people around you feel uneasy and anxious.

The Initiator has the potential to be a good communicator. You like people and prefer a direct, honest approach. But you tend to jump to conclusions without checking the facts. To be a more successful communicator, the Initiator needs to soften his or her style, ask more questions and be less assertive.

Because the Initiator is perceived as aggressive, your style can be intimidating. You need to make it clear that you want to increase the level of understanding for everyone involved; you're not trying to gain the upper hand. Restrain yourself from drawing conclusions too quickly. It might help to control your body language and to reduce the amount of direct eye contact. By paraphrasing what others say, you will show more respect for them. They'll respond more positively once they see you're willing to listen to their point of view.

Explorer

Primary style: Director
Secondary style: Thinker



As an Explorer, you enjoy complex challenges, whether it's developing a business or climbing a mountain. People view you as logical and independent. They also think of you as unemotional. In relationships, you tend to be a perfectionist. You're not always easy to get along with.

At work, the Explorer is known for doing things on his own and conceiving new theories or solutions. You enjoy taking the long-term perspective and meeting large challenges. At the same time, the Explorer can become lost in the theoretical, neglecting other people's concerns.

To communicate better, the Explorer needs to suppress his natural instinct to look at everything logically. Instead, practice disclosing your personal feelings and reactions to a situation. Don't say, "Conditions look favorable for making this transaction." Say, "I would really like to close this deal."

You're careful in gathering facts before presenting a solution. But you need to spend more time creating buy-in. Let other people talk about their approach to the problem. Expressing frustration at how much time it takes to reach a solution won't help. Practice listening for the assumptions in other people's statements, and then gently help them see things more objectively. By focusing your attention on how other people see a situation, you'll find they respect and respond to your insights far more readily.

Persuader

Primary style: Director
Secondary style: Harmonizer



As a Persuader, you possess a pragmatic, people-oriented approach that enables you to get other people to do the things you want. For the most part, you can be warm and friendly. But when your back is up against the wall, you can be cold and dictatorial.

At work, the Persuader likes to run and organize activities. You make a good leader because you tend to consider everyone's point of view – not just your own or a select

few. Your pragmatic approach enables you to communicate effectively and honestly. While balanced in your approach to people and requirements of a situation, you can be imprecise in spelling out exactly what you want. This can limit your potential as a leader.

Most of the time, the Persuader is an effective communicator. To improve, work on the following two things: First, precision. You tend to leave out crucial details, leaving your audience uncertain about what to do next. Organize your thoughts in advance and make sure everyone has the same information.

Second, while you recognize the need to listen and gather input, you tend to make assumptions about what needs to be done before gathering sufficient data. This can undermine the process and cause people to respond half-heartedly to your agenda. The Persuader will benefit by making clear that your mind is open to suggestions and alternative strategies. Only after enough input is gathered should you apply your persuasive powers. Given your ability to listen, this will make you a very effective communicator.

EXPRESSERS

Charmer

Primary style: Expresser
Secondary style: Director



As a Charmer, you're happiest when you're expressing yourself or doing something creative. You're not happy with humdrum day-to-day activities. Spontaneity and brainstorming are areas where the Charmer excels. At work, the Charmer is well suited to providing a creative spark to an organization and its people. At the same time, you may not be patient enough, or sufficiently well organized, to provide the necessary structure and stability.

Because Charmers tend to be assertive and demanding, they can appear insensitive to others. But in fact the Charmer has a well-tuned sense of how other people feel. You especially like people you've just met, revealing to them your inner feelings and secrets. This can vex the people closest to you, who wonder why they don't get such special treatment.

As a Charmer, you tend to leap to conclusions and think out loud instead of carefully analyzing a situation. When you are solving a problem, you tend to talk it through with other people and make a decision based on your intuition. When it comes to influencing other people, you tend to rely on the force of your personality. This can make you popular and well liked, but it can also make you appear inconsistent or superficial.

The Charmer has the potential to be a competent communicator, especially if he or she can learn to pay more attention to details and process. When important situations arise, you should give yourself plenty of time for preparation and focus your attention on the details of planning. Decide on two or three objectives. You should rehearse and allow other people to critique your presentation. In meetings, you should ask more questions

and paraphrase people's responses. And you should tell people when you're thinking aloud. It helps them to distinguish your finished thoughts from "works in progress."

Entertainer

Primary style: Expresser
Secondary style: Expresser



As an Entertainer, you're happiest when the spotlight is on you – least happy when someone else is getting all the attention. In business, you're good at public speaking and sales presentations, maybe even one of the performing arts. This sensitivity and desire to be well liked make it difficult for you to deal with awkward situations and tough decisions.

At work, you're at your best in a creative environment that requires on-the-spot improvisation and imagination. Brainstorming meetings are where the Entertainer shines, not analyzing financial reports or preparing a work plan.

To communicate better, the Entertainer needs to round out his or her skills by learning how to listen more carefully, to ask more detailed questions, and to think more analytically. Practice the art of asking questions, gathering data and analyzing what additional information is needed before drawing a conclusion. When you have the spotlight, try to focus on the situation rather than on other people or yourself. Thinking aloud can get you into trouble, so rehearse what you're going to say – especially in sensitive situations. This can help prevent you from developing a sudden case of "foot-in-mouth disease."

Diplomat

Primary style: Expresser
Secondary style: Thinker



As a Diplomat, you're a bit of a contradiction – fun-loving and jovial, yet aloof and analytical. You revel in pleasurable things, people and places; you love talking about them, which makes you a magnet for other people. Yet you can be very analytical and sober-minded. Taken together, this makes the Diplomat something of an enigma. People can interpret that you are masking your calculating nature with your social skills.

At work, the Diplomat is perceived as personable, versatile and analytical. You are drawn to situations and organizations where your people management skills can be used. You are competent at leading people through complex projects. At times the Diplomat's focus and determination can be overwhelming to others, especially those less articulate. The Diplomat may need to learn to temper his or her drive for perfection with sensitivity to other people's feelings.

The Diplomat is a naturally skilled communicator. Your ability to ask detailed questions nicely complements your expressive side. To communicate more effectively, allow other people to contribute equally to the discussion. You may need to remind people that your mind is open. You're genuinely looking for ideas and input. Be sure to state clearly exactly what you want – otherwise people may be uncertain.

Socializer**Primary style: Expresser****Secondary style: Harmonizer**

As a Socializer, you're happiest working with other people; you're least happy when working alone. You enjoy meeting new clients, working on project teams, and engaging in brainstorming sessions. To your friends, you're loyal to the end. But when you feel unappreciated, you can become withdrawn. In relationships, the Socializer is a true friend, sensitive to others' needs. The only downside is that the Socializer may not examine a situation logically, and therefore may make decisions without considering all the information or implications.

At work, the Socializer is a born team member, always looking to inject a creative idea and motivate people. When inspired, he or she can work endlessly. The Socializer may need to work on addressing conflict more directly. You can use your skill in drawing out other people to make sure all viewpoints are heard. Remember that conflict is natural in any organization.

To communicate better, the Socializer needs to be more logical and analytical in his or her communications. Work on asking logical questions and pursuing a rational line of inquiry, especially in disagreeable situations. By avoiding painful feelings and situations, the Socializer is only half a communicator – the easy half. Try to analyze a difficult situation in terms of missing information. What assumptions are you making? What assumptions are others making? What is missing?

In a difficult situation, it will help if you rehearse what you're going to say. The more practice you get at addressing the issues that don't feel right, the more effective a communicator you will be.

THINKERS**Investigator****Primary style: Thinker****Secondary style: Director**

As an Investigator, you like to be viewed as an encyclopedia of information, a walking expert. You're happiest when someone asks you a question or taps you to perform a complex task. You don't focus on people's feelings. You prefer to observe life and analyze things with an air of detachment. Your logical, focused personality is at its best during times of crisis when you're known for calmly assessing the situation and keeping your cool.

At work, the Investigator is perceived as organized, calculating, and competent. You may make an excellent engineer because you enjoy figuring out how things work and using your knowledge to improve them. You enjoy being called upon to provide solutions on the spot; as a result, you make a good trouble-shooter.

To communicate better, the Investigator needs to curb his or her desire to dissect everything and everybody. You are by nature a good listener and communicator when the subject is a task, process, or piece of equipment. Try to use the same listening skills when it comes to people. By being more willing to reveal your feelings and hear other people's points of view, you'll find that you can solve organizational problems, too.

Because you have a naturally cool demeanor, try using facial and hand gestures more often to make your points. Above all, train yourself to find out how other people feel. If you succeed, you'll make a great communicator.

Organizer

Primary style: Thinker
Secondary style: Expresser



As an Organizer, you enjoy getting people together to do things, which makes you effective in almost any social situation. Your compassion and dedication to other people is apparent. The Organizer is comfortable talking about other people, but not particularly comfortable talking about himself or herself. Your style of communicating is to avoid trouble spots, which may make you popular but less of a leader than you could be.

At work, the Organizer is respected for his or her principled, conscientious way of doing things. Compassionate toward people, you enjoy helping them interact and work together – making you a good manager. At times, you need to go someplace where you can be focused and alone.

The Organizer has the ability to be a strong communicator. You know how to ask questions and analyze a situation. You also know how to say things in a sensitive, understanding way. Your challenge is to communicate when there's a potential conflict. You may be reluctant to take a position or raise an issue that you feel may be a magnet for controversy or criticism. You need to be willing to step in and find out what people think and get their opinions. By asking for their input, you can build ownership in the decision. By beating around the bush, you'll only leave everyone feeling frustrated.

Analyzer

Primary style: Thinker
Secondary style: Thinker



The Analyzer is painstaking and thorough with detail, valued for following a logical process and getting tasks done the correct way. You are happiest using your logical abilities to solve problems, and least happy when obligated to engage in social activities. To others, the Analyzer can be viewed as something of a social misfit. You tend to avoid showing your feelings or asserting your own desires. This makes you an enigma to those around you, who don't know how to get close or offer help to you when needed.

At work, the Analyzer can be counted on to respond positively to accomplishing a specific task – so long as it falls into your area of expertise and can be tackled using a tried and true approach. The Analyzer is adept at collecting information, but not at seeing the bigger picture. In your communications, you may appear to be prematurely

focused on details when the goal remains unclear. At times your style may appear too conservative and inflexible.

To become a more effective communicator, the Analyzer needs to be willing to open up to other input and ideas. Your biggest barrier to being an effective communicator is holding back too much. Try expressing your point of view and asking other people whether they see it the same way – or whether there’s another equally valid interpretation. Force yourself to solicit a full spectrum of opinion. As you open up and people feel more comfortable around you, you’ll discover you’re a more successful communicator.

Supporter

Primary style: Thinker
Secondary style: Harmonizer



The Supporter’s patience with people and innate kind-heartedness make you an ideal person to turn to for help. You can be analytical when the situation requires it, but you are always looking out for other people. Cautious and conservative by nature, the Supporter prefers that someone else take the risks. In your communications, you display a high level of loyalty and caring for other people. But be on guard that your low-risk approach doesn’t land you in hot water; you may stick with something or someone for far too long.

At work, the Supporter is patient and kind, preferring to blend a cautious approach with a desire for harmony among your colleagues. Valued for knowing the rules and traditions, you pay close attention to the consequences of a given decision on the people involved. You make a good peacemaker or negotiator. You’re not likely to be known for innovative thinking, which may limit you to certain types of jobs.

The Supporter is a natural communicator, especially when discussing an issue or concern outside himself or herself. You can be reluctant to assert your feelings and ideas. When you wish to communicate something about yourself, try the same patient approach that you take with others. You should preface your remarks by saying you want to speak plainly, then say exactly what you feel. You shouldn’t worry about appearing too blunt or honest. You run little risk of being viewed as insensitive. Once you have expressed your views, you’ll find it breaks the ice for others to speak honestly about the same issue.

HARMONIZERS

Counselor

Primary style: Harmonizer
Secondary style: Director



The Counselor’s strong suit is to find out what other people need, then help them get it. You’re better than most at mediating disputes. You may even play matchmaker. The Counselor is something of a dual personality: happy to go along for the sake of the group, yet at the same time focused and driven. You operate from a

deep sense of loyalty to your friends and loved ones. In relationships, you are perceived as caring and competent. You tend to take criticism personally.

At work, the Counselor is likely to be someone people turn to for help. As a communicator, you are gifted in being able to articulate people's concerns and needs. Your ability to empathize with other people's points of view makes you a trusted and respected figure. Because you operate from a deep sense of loyalty to the cause, you can be effective at mediating disputes since you're rarely seen as acting from self-interest.

You have a tendency to avoid your own personal conflicts. To communicate more effectively, make sure you take the time to figure out your priorities and goals. Your tendency not to reveal yourself may make it difficult for other people to understand what you need or to help you in times of trouble. This can lead to a dilemma – people want to help you, but they don't know how.

As a starting point, the Counselor should practice stating his or her thoughts and feelings, couching them in terms like: "I know you would be honest with me, so let me be honest with you." Guard against being overly optimistic in your communications. Be honest and clear about potential problems; don't mask them.

Nurturer

Primary style: Harmonizer
Secondary style: Expresser



As a Nurturer, you're easy-going, accepting and friendly. You're as good a listener as you are a talker, so people turn to you when they're down. The Nurturer looks to create cooperation. In relationships, you're viewed as loyal, warm and enthusiastic. You like any kind of group activity involving colleagues and friends – attending a meeting or planning a project. At times, you may let your loyalty to other people get in the way of achieving your goals.

At work, the Nurturer is open-minded and a congenial communicator. You are included on many teams because your enthusiasm and cooperation make you effective at bridging different people and cultures. You're perceived as someone who knows the latest gossip; people turn to you for information. You tend to be happiest in jobs that allow you to use your considerable people skills. Your weakness: You may be prone to not finishing what you start. You may also avoid conflicts – letting a bad situation grow even worse because you're unwilling to confront it head-on.

The Nurturer can be an effective communicator, especially as a go-between when people need to understand each other's true feelings. To communicate more effectively, spend more time analyzing the financial and pragmatic ramifications of a particular course of action. Practice following a logical process to its conclusion, and make sure that all information is considered before a decision is reached.

When faced with a tough decision, force yourself to take some action, even if no action at all seems like the easier course. In your communication, stress both cons and pros, not just the pros. People will still like you – even if they don't like some of the information you bring to the table.

Provider**Primary style: Harmonizer****Secondary style: Thinker**

As a Provider, you're in your element doing things for others. You enjoy figuring out solutions to other people's problems. The Provider is a traditionalist; you like doing things that involve a well-thought out plan and process. At work, you're loyal and steadfast – maybe even when it's not in your best interest. You prefer someone else to take the lead. You're very aware of other people's behavior and can show a judgmental streak – especially of people who like to challenge the status quo.

At work, the Provider tends to succeed by a combination of people skills and problem-solving skills. You're very good at figuring out what motivates other people. This can make you effective in managing people, analyzing a problem, or monitoring quality. Not showy or flashy in temperament or style, you're valued for your steady contribution to the team. You tend to be uncomfortable in front of a crowd. You are someone who prefers to avoid conflict if possible – you'll keep your thoughts to yourself rather than rock the boat.

To communicate more effectively, the Provider needs to be more willing to assert his or her own opinions and feelings. When you're being assertive, you may think you've gone overboard. Not to worry! You can be even more assertive. Use the phrase: "I need to make sure you understand my point of view." An excellent listener, you could easily become a very effective communicator if you would demand for yourself some of that listening time you're so willing to give others.

Pleaser**Primary style: Harmonizer****Secondary style: Harmonizer**

The Pleaser is quiet and shy. Your loyalty, patience and concern for others are your greatest strengths. You live for the comfort of relationships with other people. You are likely to do anything to avoid a scene or an argument, which is why you wouldn't dream of forcing your opinions on others – unless you know they're shared. The Pleaser's happiest moments are spent in quiet conversation. In relationships, you are modest, cautious and conventional. You prefer to let someone else take the lead, as long as they are mindful of you and don't cause any embarrassment!

At work, the Pleaser likes to spend free time building relationships with others. With regard to accomplishing tasks, you most likely have a set way of doing things and may not easily be swayed to another, perhaps more suitable, method – making you seem stubborn and rigid. You can hold strong opinions, but because you don't like conflict, you withhold your opinions from others. This can limit your progress in the long run.

Communication is a dance in which partners need to alternate taking the lead. To communicate more effectively, the Pleaser needs to learn to lead. Ask a friend to give you fifteen minutes of serious, undivided listening time. Rehearse what you're going to say, then state exactly how you feel about the situation. Ask them to paraphrase what

you said – Do you understand what I mean? Through this process, you may come to realize that you can rely on your friends as much as they rely upon you.