

STRAIGHT TALK® LESSON 5: IDENTIFYING A PERSON'S PREVAILING STYLES

There's no fail-safe way to pinpoint a person's secondary style short of having him or her take a survey. That said, you can still figure out which two styles a person uses most often -- information that is almost as useful as knowing his or her exact position on the Matrix. This is called identifying a person's "prevailing styles."

Let's assume you're trying to understand your boss. You're pretty sure she's either an Expresser or a Harmonizer. She exhibits many of the traits of an Expresser: she's an animated speaker, she loves to brainstorm ideas, she has a capacity for meeting new people that frankly amazes you. But she also has a lot of the qualities of the Harmonizer: she's good at making small talk, at putting people at ease, at making people feel part of the team.

Moreover, she isn't one who painstakingly pursues a particular task to the finish line - a key trait of the Thinker - nor does she take on big challenges and risks like the Director. So you're pretty confident of your diagnosis: Expresser or Harmonizer.

If you stop and think about it, you're already 90 percent finished. She must either be an Expresser/Harmonizer, which makes her a Socializer, or a Harmonizer/Expresser, which makes her a Nurturer. Review these two styles and you may figure out right away which description is the better match. Even if you don't, you'll have enough information to make some very informed decisions about how to improve your communications with your boss.

As your understanding of communication styles grows, you'll learn how to detect which two styles prevail in any individual. If circumstances allow it, you can, of course, ask the other person to take the Communication Styles Profile.

By the way, even after you confirm your assessment by asking the person to take the Communication Styles Profile, don't assume that his or her style is permanent. People's styles change. One colleague's style changed three times in three years (from Initiator to Charmer to Provider). Of course, he changed jobs three times, too.

EXERCISE 5: IDENTIFY YOUR COLLEAGUES' PREVAILING STYLES

This exercise will help you become more skilled at quickly identifying people's prevailing styles and placing them on the Matrix. Remember, however, that taking the survey is the only way to guarantee an accurate portrait.

Step 1: List four people whose communication styles are important to you in your work—your colleagues, boss, key customers, or others with whom you work closely. Based on what you've learned so far, think about the two styles you think each person uses most frequently. Write them down in the chart below. If you think a person relies on a single style, then write it down in both squares—for instance, Expresser, Expresser. Use the example as a guide.

	Example	1	2	3	4
Name	Will Jones				
Most-used style #1	Expresser				
Most-used style #2	Thinker				

Step 2: Using the chart below, find in columns A and B the two styles you listed in Step 1. It doesn't matter in which columns the styles appear. To the right, find the two specific communication styles that result from the combination.

Column A	Column B	Specific style(s)
Director	Director	Dictator
Director	Expresser	Initiator, Charmer
Director	Thinker	Explorer, Investigator
Director	Harmonizer	Persuader, Counselor
Expresser	Expresser	Entertainer
Expresser	Thinker	Diplomat, Organizer
Expresser	Harmonizer	Socializer, Nurturer
Thinker	Thinker	Analyzer
Thinker	Harmonizer	Supporter, Provider
Harmonizer	Harmonizer	Pleaser

Step 3: For each person you listed in Step 1, write down the specific communication styles from Step 2 in the table below. Follow the example.

	Example	1	2	3	4
Name	Will Jones				
Specific communication style #1	Diplomat				
Specific communication style #2	Organizer				

Step 4: For each person you listed, go back to the Matrix and reread the descriptions of the specific styles you wrote down under his or her name. Decide which description is a better fit. Once you decide, put that individual’s initials in the appropriate squares on the Matrix below. If you can’t decide, put his or her initials in both squares. Put your own initials in the appropriate square, too.

Step 5: Now think about what you could do to improve your communications with each person you listed. Write down your thoughts in the space below:

1. To improve communications with Person 1, I should:

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2. To improve communications with Person 2, I should:

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3. To improve communications with Person 3, I should:

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4. To improve communications with Person 4, I should:

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