Straight Talk®

Participant Workbook

director

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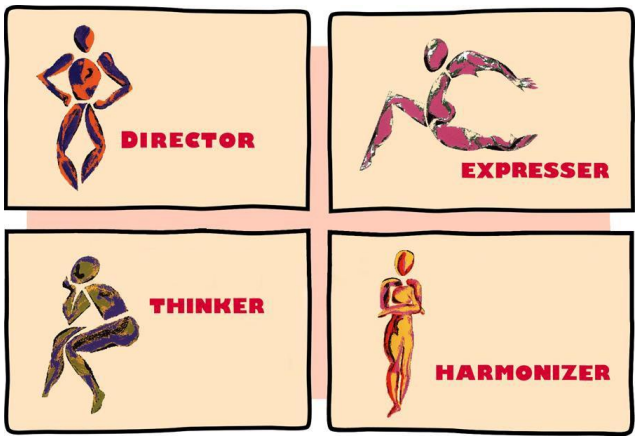
I. Welcome

This workshop is designed to help you become a more effective communicator.[1]

There are three fundamental concepts within this workshop:

- To communicate more effectively, we first need to learn about the different communication styles.
- By "tuning" our style to the style of another person, we create more effective communication with that person.
- By pushing ourselves out of our "comfort zone," we can alter our communication patterns and become more balanced and effective communicators.



Most of us think we're good communicators. Listening and talking are things we engage in all the time, so we assume we do it pretty well. But people have different communication styles, each with their own built-in assumptions. Because of these different styles, what you hear may be quite different from what I said. Our built-in assumptions get in the way.

Researchers have also shown that at least half of communication is non-verbal. Thus, we need to pay close attention to what is *not* said. We need to tune our listening, so we hear not only the words but also the tone and context of what someone is communicating.

The word "communicate" literally means, "to make common." It means you understand exactly what I mean, nuance for nuance, and vice versa. The goal of this workshop is to help you become a truly effective communicator.

1 This workshop is based on the book: "Straight Talk: Turning Communication Upside Down for Strategic Results" by Eric Douglas. The book is available at www.leadingresources.com.

II. What Is Straight Talk®?

Straight Talk® is a system of communicating that enables individuals and groups to be more understanding of each other, and more honest and direct in discussing sensitive or complex issues. It uses a set of tools that raise the quality of communication, yielding many benefits, including:

- Better understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses as a communicator;
- Better understanding of how conflict arises between people and within groups;
- Increased trust among people with different backgrounds or with different perspectives;
- Increased ability for groups to solve problems or negotiate solutions;
- Deeper understanding of the dynamics of effective teams;
- Greater understanding of how to influence other people, and how others can influence you;
- Deeper self-awareness and self-confidence.

Underline two of the benefits listed above that you think would help you be a more effective communicator.

III. Learning Goals and Objectives

The goal of this workshop is to teach you how to interact more effectively and openly with different types of people.

The learning objectives of this workshop are to:

- Raise your awareness about different communication styles;
- Help you appreciate the strengths of different styles;
- Enable you to identify different styles;
- Help you tune your own communication style to be most effective with other people.

My own learning objectives are:

_____

_____

IV. Straight Talk® Skills, Processes, and Tools

In this workshop, we will learn numerous *skills*. A skill is something you can learn and, once learned, repeat over and over again. It is visible and measurable. In this workshop we will learn the following skills:

- Distinguish intent from communication style;
- Understand your own communication style;
- Understand other people's communication styles;
- Identify other people's communication styles;
- Communicate in ways that more closely match other people's communication styles, thereby improving your communication;
- Strengthen your weakest communication style;
- Manage conflicts between styles;
- Understand and manage group styles.

A *process* is something you go through in order to gain a skill. Learning is a process. To learn these skills, we will undertake the following processes:

- Observing and identifying our interactions with others;
- Learning how to create new patterns of communication with others;
- Practicing communication styles to make us more versatile;
- Discovering the unconscious patterns that hinder us from communicating effectively;
- Learning how to bring more personal awareness and power to each interaction.

V. The Elements of Communication

All communication is comprised of three elements: style, intent, and content. They are defined in the boxes below.

Style
Our way of thinking and communicating, reflected in how we listen and respond.
Intent
The underlying purpose of our communication, reflected in our tone and body language.
Content
What is being said: information, stories, opinions, ideas.

Effective communicators know how to control all three of these elements simultaneously. They know how to adapt their style to the situation. They know how to use the appropriate intent. And they know what content to focus on, based on the situation.

Understanding Intent

Of these three elements, intent is the most basic. It is the underlying force behind every communication. A positive intent will be obvious to everyone around you. Even the most difficult communication can be successful if delivered with a positive intent. A negative intent will be equally obvious. People will hold back information if they perceive you to be controlling or defensive.

There are four types of intent:

Affirming

The intent is to provide an open sharing of ideas and objectives. There are no hidden agendas. There is mutual respect and a clearly stated purpose. Listening is balanced with speaking.

> ***Example***: “My goal here is to assure that everyone has an open and honest exchange of opinions. It is not my goal to dictate the outcome, but only to see that everyone’s voice is heard.”

Controlling

The intent is to persuade or influence others. It is a way to get others to come around to an opinion, decision, or way of thinking. Certain information may be withheld in order to control other people's reactions.

> ***Example***: "My goal is to make sure that we hone our marketing message prior to the trade show. We're going to talk today about how to get that done."

Defending

The intent is to fight for one's position, to defend one's point of view. The person may cite facts, statistics, and try to reason with the other person about his or her stand on an issue. Emotional layers, like anger or embarrassment, may color it.

> ***Example***: "It's clear to me that you aren't listening to what I am saying. As I've said before, we cannot afford to get into this venture."

Relinquishing

The intent is to give up control and to accommodate the other person. Anger or resignation usually brings it on. It manifests itself by silence or acquiescence.

> ***Example***: "I don't care what we do, let's just resolve this and move on."

Communicating Positive Intent

This workshop is about communication styles. But in order to understand communication styles, we need to understand intent. Why? Because intent is always the first thing people hear. If it is a positive intent, it sets the stage for productive communication. If it is a negative intent, it can overwhelm everything that is said and make words meaningless. You set the tone with your intent.

Someone who is angrily denouncing a colleague may appear to have a highly assertive and emotional style. But when you catch him in a relaxed moment, you'll find that his natural style is far less domineering. Having a positive, affirming intent paves the way for open communication. It enables people to feel relaxed and to communicate in their natural style. By using a tone that communicates your desire to *hear* what the other person is saying, you lay the foundation for trust and mutual respect.

As you learn how to identify and use communication styles, pay attention to your intent. Make sure that your own intent is affirming as much as possible. When you feel yourself becoming defensive or controlling, tell people why you are feeling that way. If you explain what is motivating you, and then inquire into the other person's concerns and motivations, you can quickly defuse the situation and find your way back to the positive intent that ensures communication will be productive.

Affirming Intent

The following four examples show how the four different styles of intent might manifest themselves in a typical business situation:

Controlling Intent

"This company has always met its production deadlines. This supplier cannot be allowed to screw up our record. Bringing in this outside help is the only way we can meet our deadline, and we absolutely need to do that."

Relinquishing Intent

"Well, I know this is my department, but I've got more work to do than I can handle. Can't you figure it out on your own?"

Defending Intent

"All I said is that we need to bring in some outside help. I tried to suggest a solution. But every time I take the initiative around here, you tell me I'm wrong!"

Affirming Intent

"I think we can both agree that this company is known for meeting its deadlines. Now we have a problem with a major supplier. I don't know how you feel, but my thinking is that it's a temporary situation. I'd like your input on this, because I think that what we need to do is bring in some outside help so we can continue our track record of meeting deadlines. What do you think?"

In the following sentences, identify the type of intent and rephrase with an affirming intent.

Sentence #1:

"It's not like me to do this, but I'm fed up enough to hand over all this material to your people in marketing and let you deal with it."

Type of Intent: _____

Rephrased with Affirming Intent:

_____

_____

Sentence #2:

"The only way we can improve how people are working around here is if you schedule some process improvement meetings."

Type of Intent: _____

Rephrased with Affirming Intent:

_____

_____

Sentence #3:

"Over half this company agrees that the production schedule should change, and you're out there refusing to listen to reason – are you nuts?"

Type of Intent: _____

Rephrased with Affirming Intent:

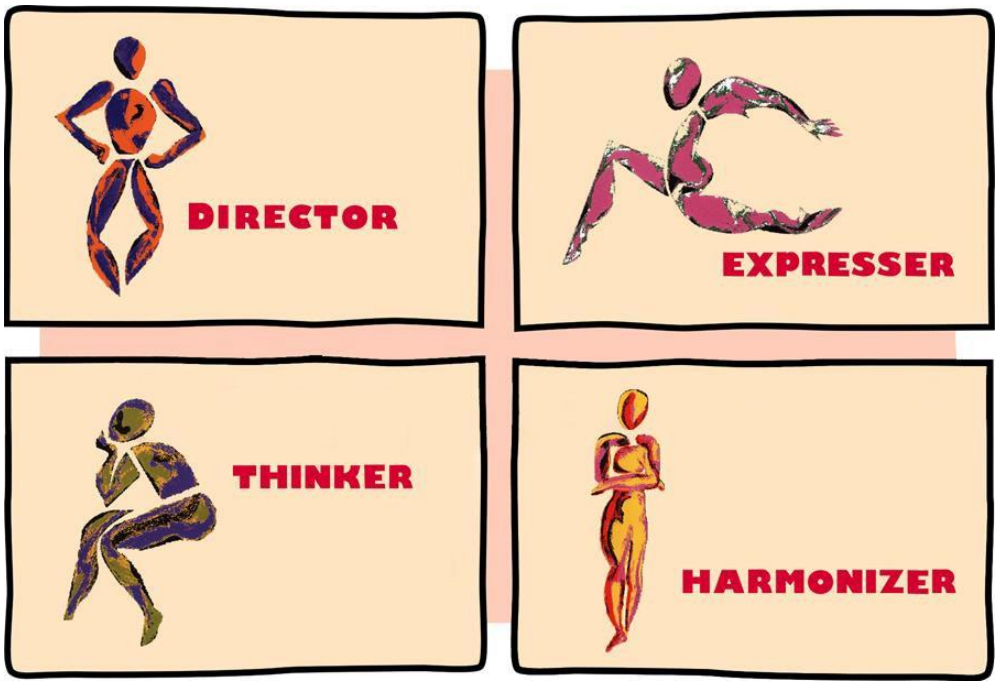
_____

_____

VI. Introduction to Communication Styles

Research shows that people have four different styles of communicating. We call these four styles: Director, Expresser, Thinker and Harmonizer.

Each style has its own way of seeing the world. Each favors a certain way of listening, responding, making decisions, and solving problems. Because people have different styles, chances are that within any team or work group there will be conflicting approaches. Before team members can work together effectively, they need to be aware of these potential conflicts. They need to master certain tools to minimize these conflicts.



Defining Communication Styles

People often talk about someone having a “good” communication style, meaning they get their point across effectively, or a “poor” communication style, meaning they put people off. But in Straight Talk®, the term has a more specific meaning. “Communication style” is defined as the specific way that one listens and responds. What do you focus on? How do you frame your response? What assumptions do you tend to make? Your communication style influences how you approach a problem, how you convey and receive information, and how you make a decision. It frames the world around you and influences everything you do.

VII. What's My Style?

The easiest way to learn your communication style is by taking the free Straight Talk®, assessment available at www.leadingresources.com or at www.straight-talk-now.com. If you haven't done so already, take the assessment now.

There are 16 different styles of communicating. Your individual style is determined by your scores for the four major styles: Director, Expresser, Thinker and Harmonizer.[2]

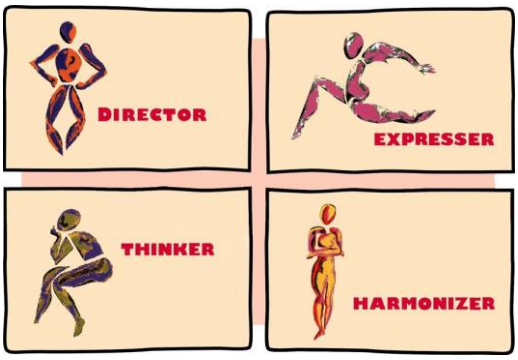
Write your results from your assessment below:

My score for Director: _____

My score for Expresser: _____

My score for Thinker: _____

My score for Harmonizer: _____



Key characteristics of each major style are shown in the chart below.

Director	Expresser
• Goal oriented • Tells it like it is • Makes decisions quickly • Always on the go • Speaks crisply • May be insensitive, intimidating	• People oriented • Animated, easily excited • Makes expressive gestures • Entertaining • Thinks out loud • Speaks rapidly • May be imprecise
Thinker	**Harmonizer**
• Task oriented • Makes lists • Does things "by the book" • Speaks deliberately • Believes there's a right way and a wrong way • May procrastinate	• Relationship oriented • Sensitive to others • Dedicated, loyal • Speaks softly • Avoids conflict • May over-commit

[2] Some people have the same score for two styles. Other people have a strong preference for one style.

Directors

Imagine someone who's focused on big challenges and getting things done – whether it's building a house or starting a new business. This style is the Director.

Directors are big picture people. They don't have time for small talk. In fact, they can be slightly uncomfortable around people. They're quick to make decisions, quick to assign tasks, and always on the move.

Directors tend to focus on doing, not listening. They don't tell long stories or spend much time inquiring into the details of a project. But they do talk about goals, about "getting a jump on the competition," about the importance of getting the job done now. That's how the Director sees the world – focusing on the big picture and getting the job done now.

Directors like to take risks. They like to be change agents. They're willing to make tough decisions and gamble. Directors like to be in charge. Because they focus on the product, not the people and the process, they can at times appear insensitive – even intimidating.

In sum, Directors emphasize action and results. They're great at setting goals. Without the Director's drive, vision, and decisiveness, the world would be a more static place.

Expressers

Think of people who like to express themselves; they talk about their ideas, opinions, feelings and experiences. Expressers are great talkers. They like to gesture and use animated facial expressions to make their point.

Expressers are entertaining to have around. They have several ideas and thoughts running simultaneously. Sometimes those ideas may tumble out of their mouths before they've had a chance to be processed. In fact, thinking aloud is the trademark of the Expresser.

Expressers like to explore new ways to do things. They're willing to take chances, especially if their creative reputation is on the line. They're fun to invite to a brainstorming meeting – always coming up with an out-of-the-box idea. Yet they can also be disorganized and lack follow-through.

Expressers like to stretch themselves. They enjoy change. They don't have a long attention span for things that don't involve or interest them. This can be frustrating for people around them. Expressers can demand a lot of patience. At the same time, they tend to be sensitive to other people's feelings and be supportive of their needs.

In short, Expressers are dynamic, dramatic, exciting, engaging and entertaining. They may not always be organized, but without them the world would be a less exciting place.

Thinkers

Thinkers like to do things the right way (unlike Directors, who prefer to do things right away!). Thinkers are people who like to focus on a single problem – they enjoy the process of working through all the details, nuances, ramifications and implications. Their exacting sense of detail drives them to ask lots of questions.

For example, if a Thinker is considering the purchase of a new computer system, he or she will ask for all the comparative data. All facts will be in order, compared to a list of the desired features. The list is a trademark of the Thinker. Often he or she will postpone the making of a decision until every piece of information is obtained.

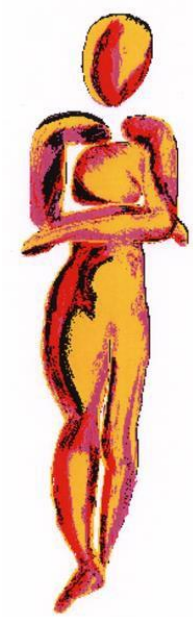
The Thinker possesses a marvelously honed ability to focus entirely on the problem at hand, often analyzing rather than empathizing with the feelings of others. Careful attention to detail makes the Thinker valuable to have around.

As you might surmise, Thinkers tend to be more cautious than either Directors or Expressers. They tend to respect the way things have been done in the past. They also tend to underestimate the amount of time they will need to complete a project. Unlike Directors who rarely miss a deadline, Thinkers give themselves "extensions" to make sure the project is done correctly the first time.

Thinkers are the world's problem solvers. They ask questions and revel in details. They are superbly equipped to think things through. Without them, the world wouldn't work as well as it does.

Harmonizers

Picture someone who empathizes well, who listens to other people's problems, someone who is steady and dependable. This person pitches in when you need a hand or offers a sympathetic ear when your child catches the flu.



Harmonizers are good listeners. They listen to other people's concerns and problems. As a result, people naturally turn to them for comfort in times of trouble. Harmonizers may not be decisive or daring, but they keep people working happily together.

Because they are attuned to people's feelings, Harmonizers like to talk about people – not in the same way that Expressers do, but more quietly, drawing less attention to themselves. Their focus is the group's well-being, and their trademark is being a team player. In social situations, they'll rarely say anything inflammatory or unconventional. Harmonizers prefer to fit in, not stand out.

Harmonizers tend to avoid conflict. Unlike Directors or Expressers, they are not agents of change. Because they like to please others, they often say "yes" to something though it would be better for everyone if they declined. As a result, Harmonizers can take on too much and feel overwhelmed. In short, Harmonizers are caring people whose words express pride in the accomplishments of the team. Without them, the world would be a far less friendly place.

VIII. Communications and Assumptions

Assumptions of Each Communication Style

Each communication style tends to make assumptions about other people because of the way they process and interpret information.

Directors assume:	Expressers 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.	• 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:	**Harmonizers 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.	• 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.

Exercise: Moving the Office

Here's an exercise to try with a group of people who have learned their styles of communication. Imagine that your company has found a new office location across town. All 100 employees will be moving there along with all computer equipment, office supplies, furniture and furnishings. There are five different departments to move, including business operations, marketing, IT, HR, and the executive office.

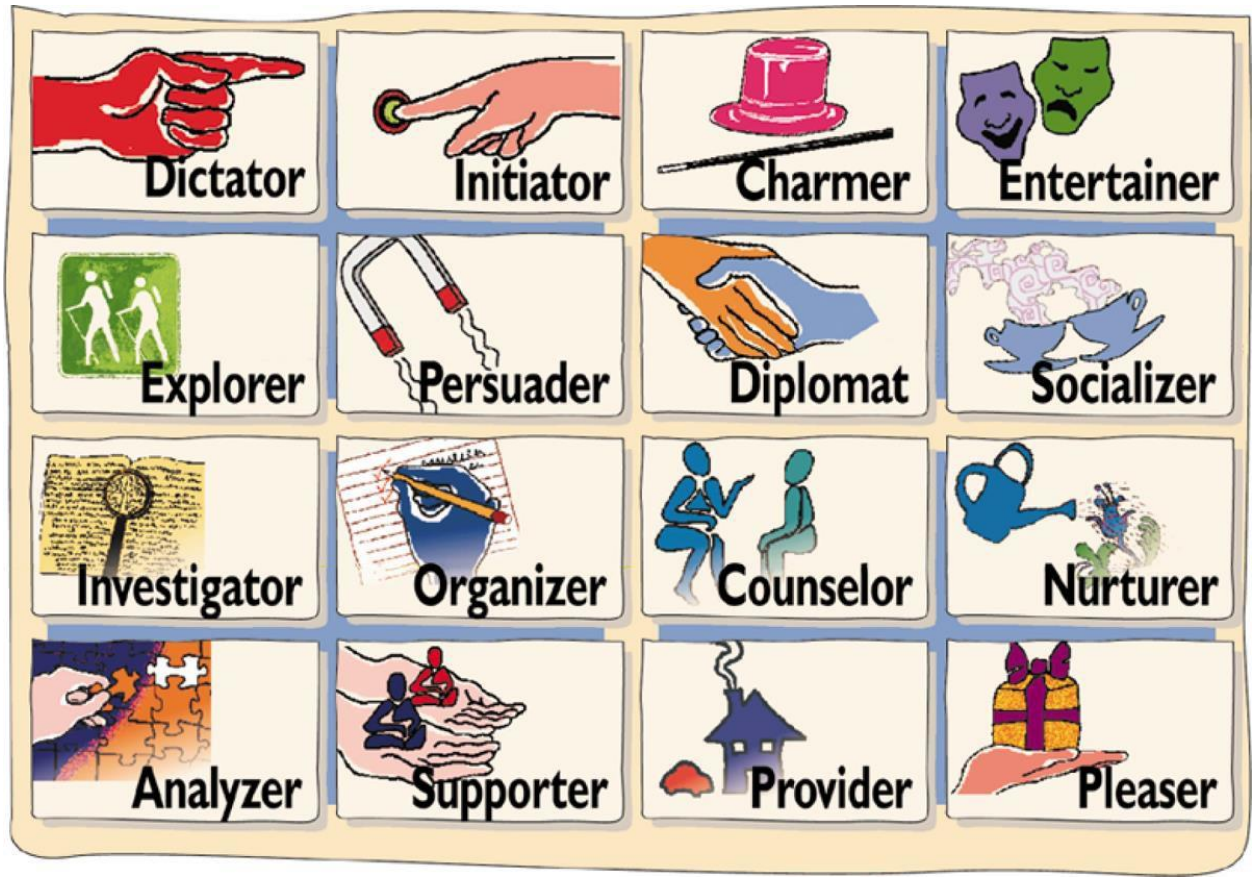
The exercise for the group is to discuss how best to accomplish the move with the minimum disruption to people's work. Some questions you need to ask the group include: Should we close the office to accomplish the move? Should we phase the move, so that certain departments move first? Should we do the move ourselves or hire a moving company?

As you develop the plan, pay close attention to each person's communication style.

Write down the name of each group member in the space below and their styles. Note your observations about how their communication style affects the way they approach this discussion. What assumptions do you observe them making? How do they participate in the discussion? Which styles tend to dominate the discussion?

Name:	Communication Style:	Observations:

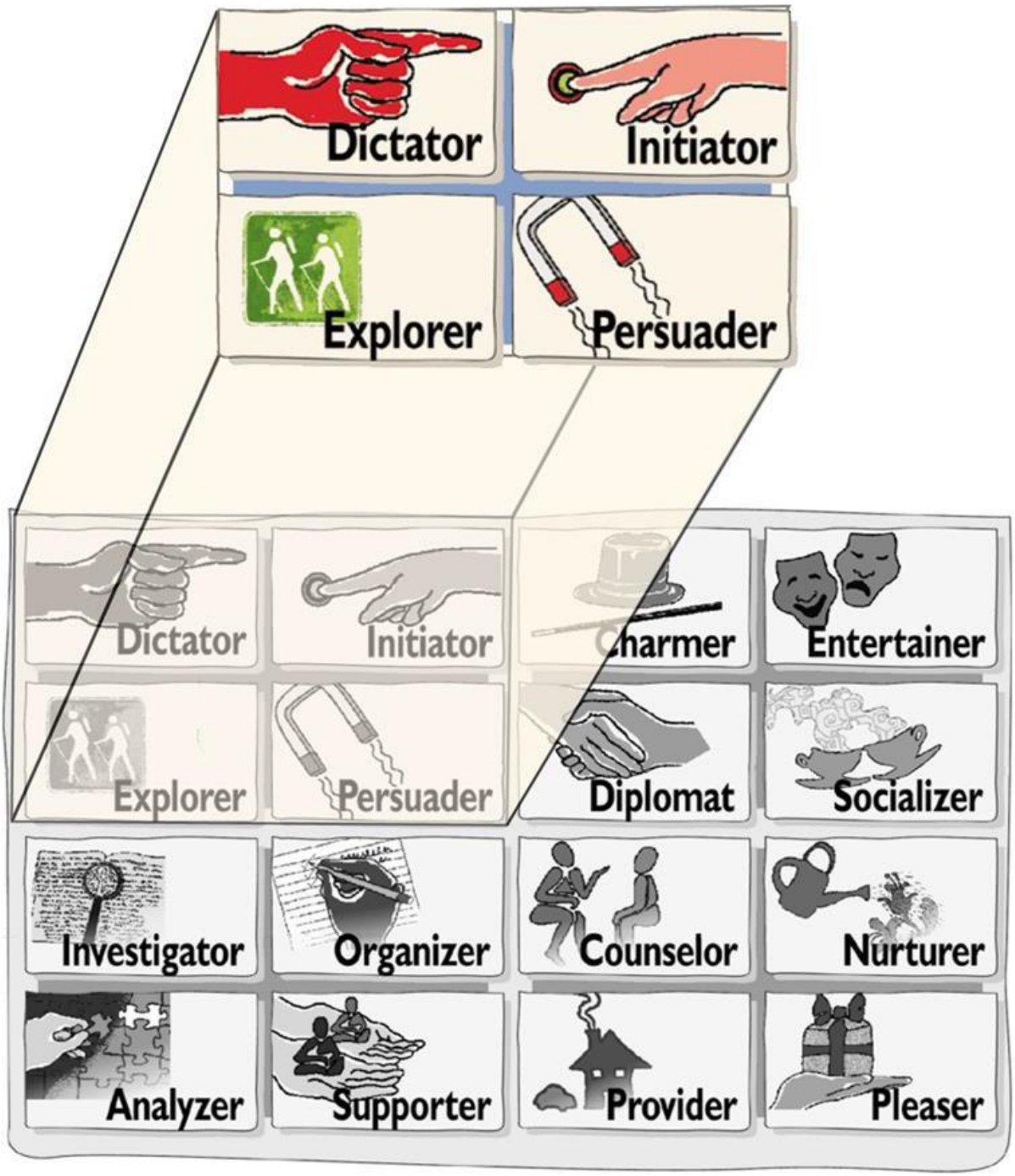
IX. The Matrix of Communication Styles©



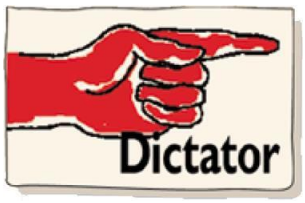
From your assessment, write your individual communication style below.

My Communication Style: _____

Directors


Dictator
Initiator
Explorer
Persuader
Dictator
Initiator
Charmer
Entertainer
Explorer
Persuader
Diplomat
Socializer
Investigator
Organizer
Counselor
Nurturer
Analyzer
Supporter
Provider
Pleaser

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

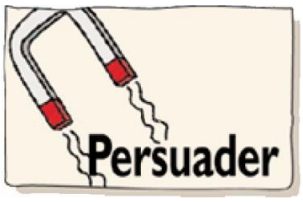
Primary style: Director
Secondary style: Thinker

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 their 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 their 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

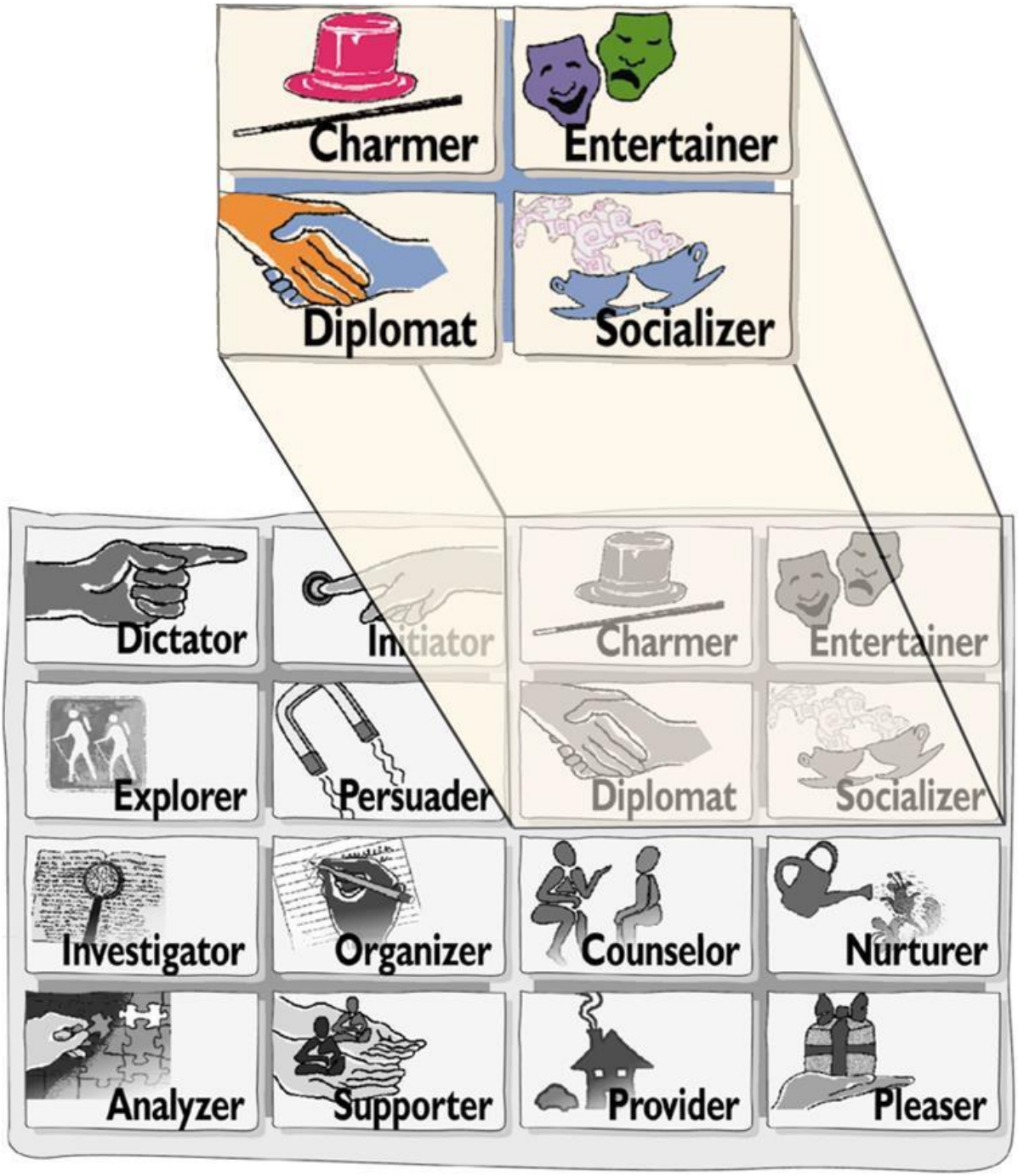
As a Persuader, you possess a pragmatic, people-oriented approach that enables you to get other people to do the things you want. For the most part, you can be warm and friendly. But when your back is up against the wall, you can be cold and dictatorial.

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.

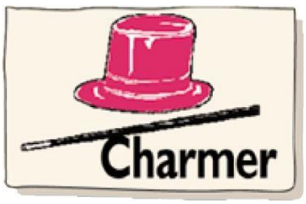
Most of the time, the Persuader is an effective communicator. To improve, work on the following two things: First, precision. You tend to leave out crucial details, leaving your audience uncertain about what to do next. Organize your thoughts in advance and make sure everyone has the same information.

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
Entertainer
Diplomat
Socializer
Dictator
Initiator
Charmer
Entertainer
Explorer
Persuader
Diplomat
Socializer
Investigator
Organizer
Counselor
Nurturer
Analyzer
Supporter
Provider
Pleaser

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

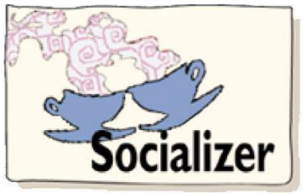
Primary style: Expresser
Secondary style: Thinker

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

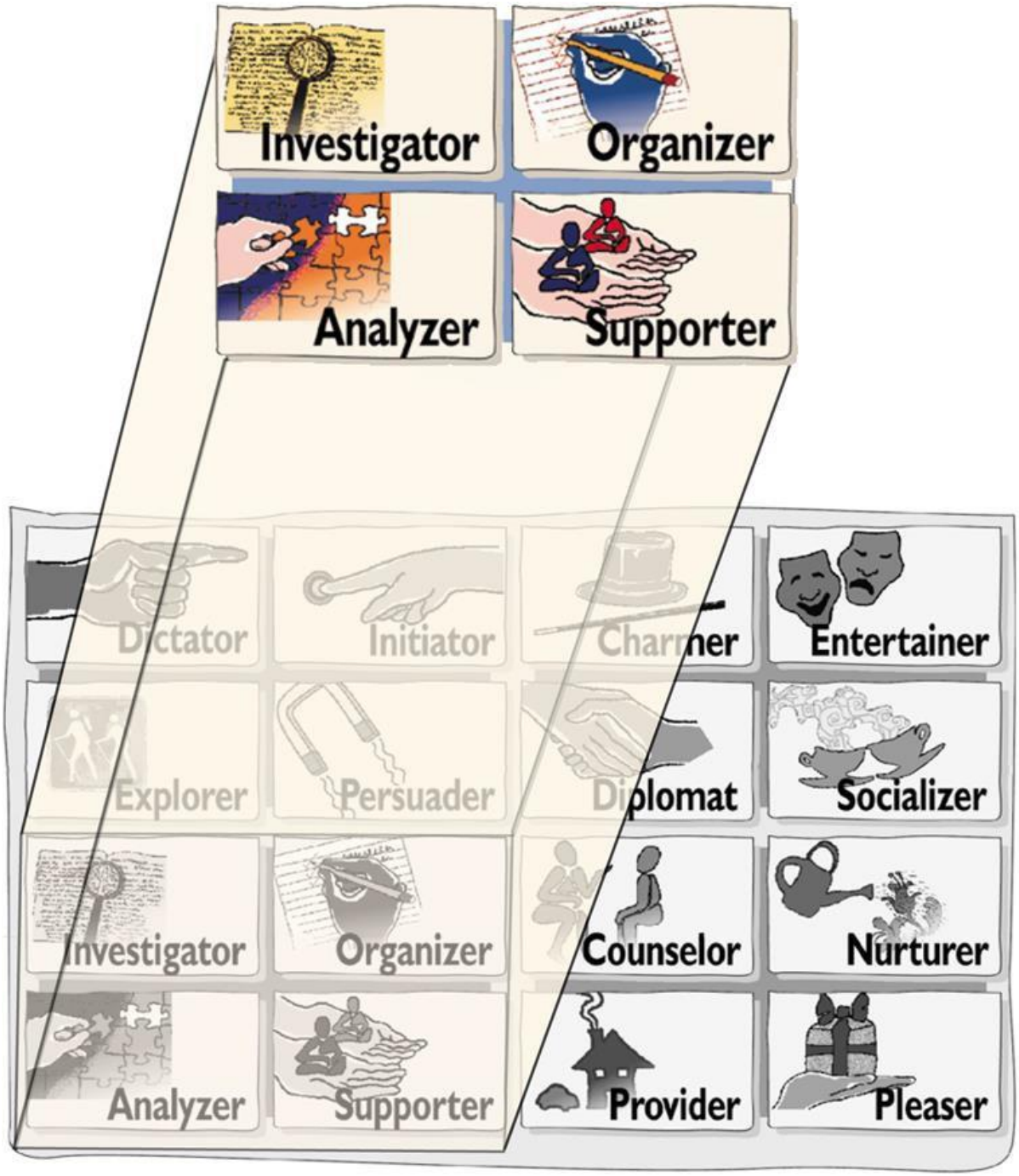
As a Socializer, you're happiest working with other people; you're least happy when working alone. You enjoy meeting new clients, working on project teams and engaging in brainstorming sessions. To your friends, you're loyal to the end. But when you feel unappreciated, you can become withdrawn. In relationships, 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
Organizer
Analyzer
Supporter
Dictator
Initiator
Charmer
Entertainer
Explorer
Persuader
Diplomat
Socializer
Investigator
Organizer
Counselor
Nurturer
Analyzer
Supporter
Provider
Pleaser

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

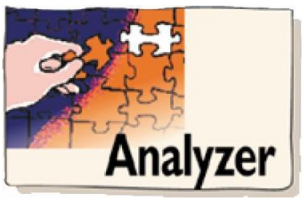
Primary style: Thinker
Secondary style: Expresser

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

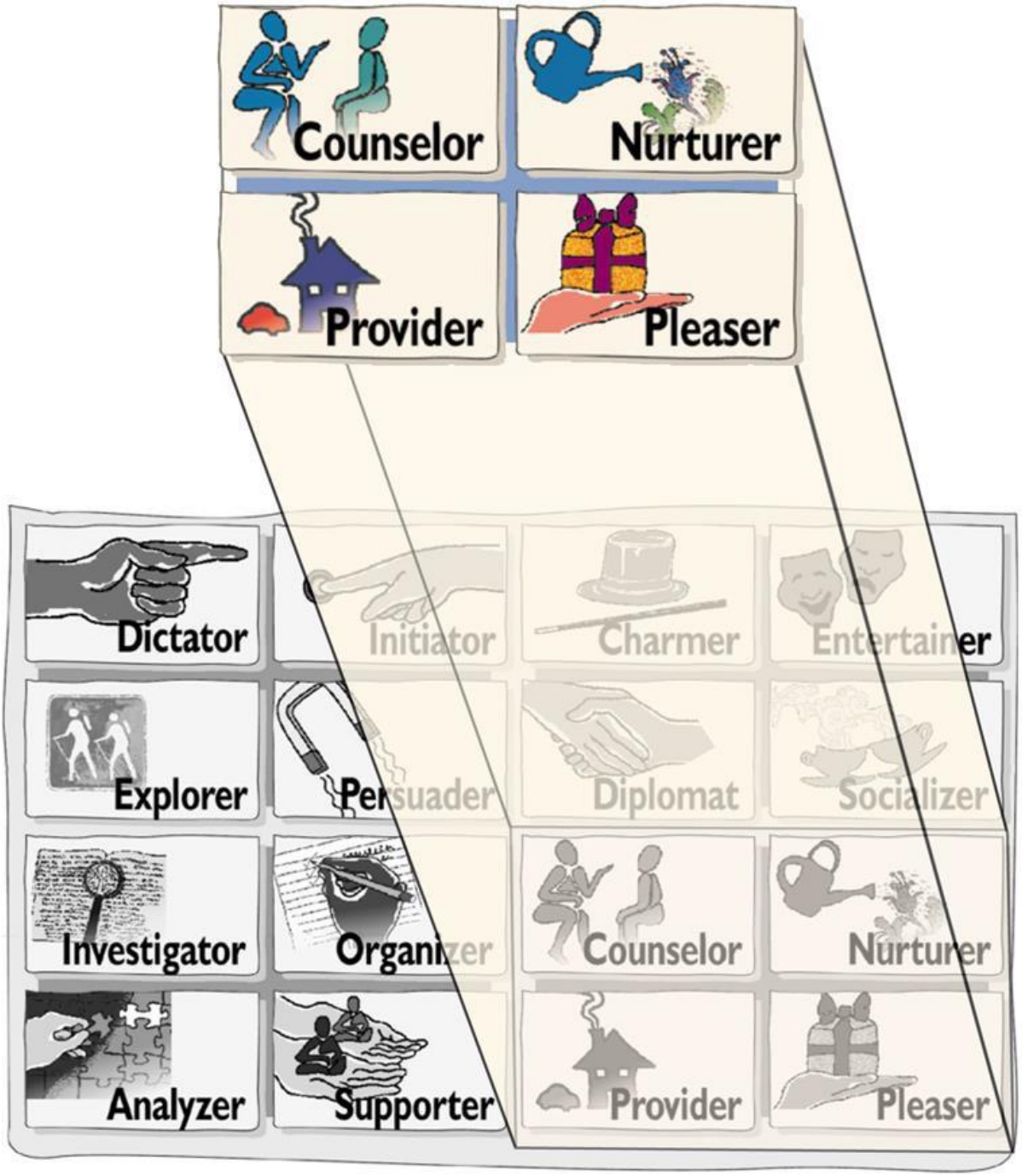
Primary style: Thinker
Secondary style: Harmonizer

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 that 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.

Reflections on My Communication Style

1. Does the description match your perceptions of yourself? Note which characteristics you think are on target, and which are not. Check in with someone you trust and ask whether your perceptions are accurate.

2. Note the names of three people with whom you communicate regularly. After each person's name, write any thoughts, ideas, or feelings you have about how your communication style might affect them. If you have an idea of how you might improve your communication with any of these people, write that down as well.

X. The Language of Each Style

Identifying a Person's Communication Style

You can assess a person's style through observation. By closely watching what people focus on and how they communicate, you can determine their communication style. For example:

Directors	Focus on the big picture and things they want to accomplish; they speak assertively and directly.
Expressers	Focus on their own ideas and feelings; they speak assertively and openly.
Thinkers	Focus on facts and processes; they speak evenly, ask questions and probe for details.
Harmonizers	Focus on people's feelings and the group's well being; they speak softly and ask questions.

The guidelines on the following pages (pages 31 through 34) will help you communicate more effectively with different styles.

The Language of Directors

Listening to Directors

- Maintain eye contact.
- Stand or sit squarely facing him/her.
- Match his or her demeanor.
- Breathe deeply; relax.
- React subtly; nod occasionally.
- Don't interrupt until the Director is finished speaking.
- Remember that most Directors don't intend to be intimidating.

Speaking to Directors

- Assert your own ideas and reactions.
- Couch information in "bottom line" terms.
- Make direct eye contact.
- Present material with minimum of detail.
- Keep questions short and succinct.
- Put follow-up questions in writing.
- Don't wait for them to invite feedback.
- Don't misinterpret their abruptness as a sign of disrespect or criticism.

Needs of Directors

- Freedom, with limits
- Help with details

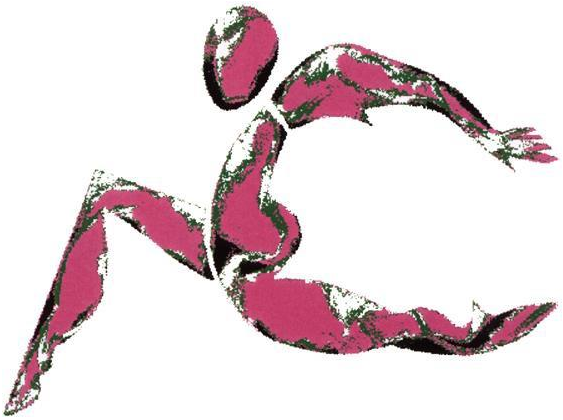
Fears of Directors

- Weakness
- Dependence upon others
- Losing control in their environment
- Being taken advantage of

The Language of Expressers

Listening to Expressers

- Use facial gestures and/or your hands to show you're listening.
- Keep a smile on your face.
- Nod your head vigorously in agreement.
- Interrupt if something's not clear.
- Ask them to clarify exactly what they mean.
- Keep written agreements on actions and deadlines.



Speaking to Expressers

- Express appreciation for their ideas.
- Express your ideas, regardless of how fanciful.
- Present material in terms of options.
- Use gestures; get excited.
- Let yourself "think aloud."
- Reach agreements on actions and deadlines.

Needs of Expressers

- Attention
- People contact
- Help with organization

Fears of Expressers

- Disapproval
- Social rejection
- Loss of influence

The Language of Thinkers

Listening to Thinkers

- Keep a thoughtful expression on your face.
- Maintain intermittent eye contact.
- Be patient, agree on amount of time for discussion.
- Keep notes.
- Ask questions whenever you're unclear.
- Nod; interject comments to show you understand.
- Reach agreements on scope of task, deadlines.

Speaking to Thinkers

- Be precise in giving information.
- Make detailed lists, charts to display information.
- Break down problems into specific parts.
- Take time to review every point thoroughly.
- Ask them questions and solicit their advice.
- Maintain moderate body language and a moderate tone of voice.
- Inquire whether they need additional information.
- Provide information in writing.

Needs of Thinkers

- Caution
- Reasoning / Facts
- Time to contemplate ideas
- Explanation

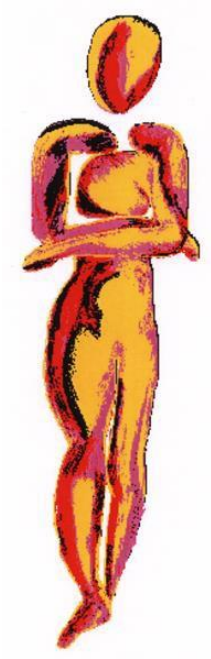
Fears of Thinkers

- Irrationality
- Mistakes
- Criticism of their work
- Slipshod methods

The Language of Harmonizers

Listening to Harmonizers

- Maintain intermittent eye contact.
- Keep a smile on your face.
- Don't use too much body language; remain composed.
- Be prepared for chitchat.
- Listen carefully; real issues may only be raised obliquely.
- Ask questions when unclear.



Speaking to Harmonizers

- Make them feel comfortable; use chitchat.
- Vary your eye contact.
- Present information in people-friendly terms.
- Resolve conflicts by talking about what's best for the group.
- Give them information in the form of questions whenever possible.
- Converse in a quiet manner.
- Avoid saying "no;" find a gentler way of putting it.
- Inquire whether they need additional information.
- Provide additional information via phone or in person if possible.

Needs of Harmonizers

- Appreciation
- Reassurance
- Group identity
- Encouragement

Fears of Harmonizers

- Change
- Conflict
- Loss of stability
- Risk

XI. Management Profiles

The Director' s Approach to Management

If your 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 be bothered with details, so your planning efforts may fall short when it comes to actual implementation.

Directors tend to want to do everything themselves, 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. Directors often make good leaders. But they can also be perceived as self-interested, even ruthless, so 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 Expresser's Approach to Management

If your primary style is Expresser, you excel at brain storming. You love to imagine possible scenarios and come up with bold, creative solutions. You'll leapfrog from idea to idea, hoping to latch onto an idea that gets people excited. 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.

Expressers aren't natural delegators. They're so busy that they don't take the time to plan carefully what resources are required or who's best for the job. When conceiving a project, they tend to describe it one way on Monday, only to describe it differently on Tuesday.

To prevent havoc, 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 edit 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 not focusing on the full ramifications, the Expresser may be setting the stage for further failure later on.

The Expresser is seen as a charismatic, charming leader, with lots of energy and inspiration. People enjoy your company. But to become a more effective manager, the Expresser needs to buckle down and do the detailed analysis, rather than leave it to others. Practice organizing a task so that everybody has their work clearly spelled out with a detailed timeline. Make lists! And monitor people's progress with periodic check-ins.

In terms of time management, the Expresser has two different clocks. One applies to him/herself; the second to everyone else. When he/she's talking, they'll let the clock run on. But when listening, they may grow impatient. This double standard is a trademark of Expressers. To become a successful manager, he/she needs to put everyone, including him/herself, on the same clock.

The Thinker's Approach to Management

If your 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 invite creativity first, and only afterwards give rein to your natural planning abilities.

Thinkers are natural delegators. You logically consider the desired outcomes, the deadlines, and the necessary resources. You're capable of setting up a project management plan that spells out a two-year timeline. 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. In a management role, that can be a fatal error. 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. (Anyone who manages a Thinker should design a compensation system that rewards him for meeting deadlines – and penalizes him when he doesn't!)

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 Harmonizer's Approach to Management

If your primary style is Harmonizer, you excel at identifying 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 popular manager – at least to your employees. 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 discover that a lot of time and money has been wasted, 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 excel at this. You know how to balance what is best for the team with what each individual needs to know to perform more effectively. But you may find it difficult to address highly problematic employees. If you can master the art of dealing up front with conflict, you can become very adept at managing people.

Your approach to time management is fairly well-balanced. However, you may take on too many projects out of a desire to please your superiors. As a result, projects can be delayed, and conflicts can be swept under the rug. When the deadline comes, you're likely to feel overwhelmed.

The better strategy, obviously, is to learn how to say "no." If you can couple your natural skills with setting priorities and deadlines, you can be a very successful manager.

XII. Modifying Your Style

Communication styles are different from personality types. Personality types are relatively fixed and unchangeable, but communication styles are more flexible. In fact, your communication style naturally varies. We play various roles in our lives, and each role tends to rely on one of these communication styles. So as your job changes, or you enter into a new relationship, your style may change too.

You can modify your own communication style once you're aware of the four dimensions in which you can move. The Communication Matrix is a map. The important thing is to understand where you are on the map so you can change your style to fit a given situation and strengthen your weakest communication style. You can practice using other styles just as you would exercise different muscles. The more you practice flexing different styles, the stronger a communicator you become.

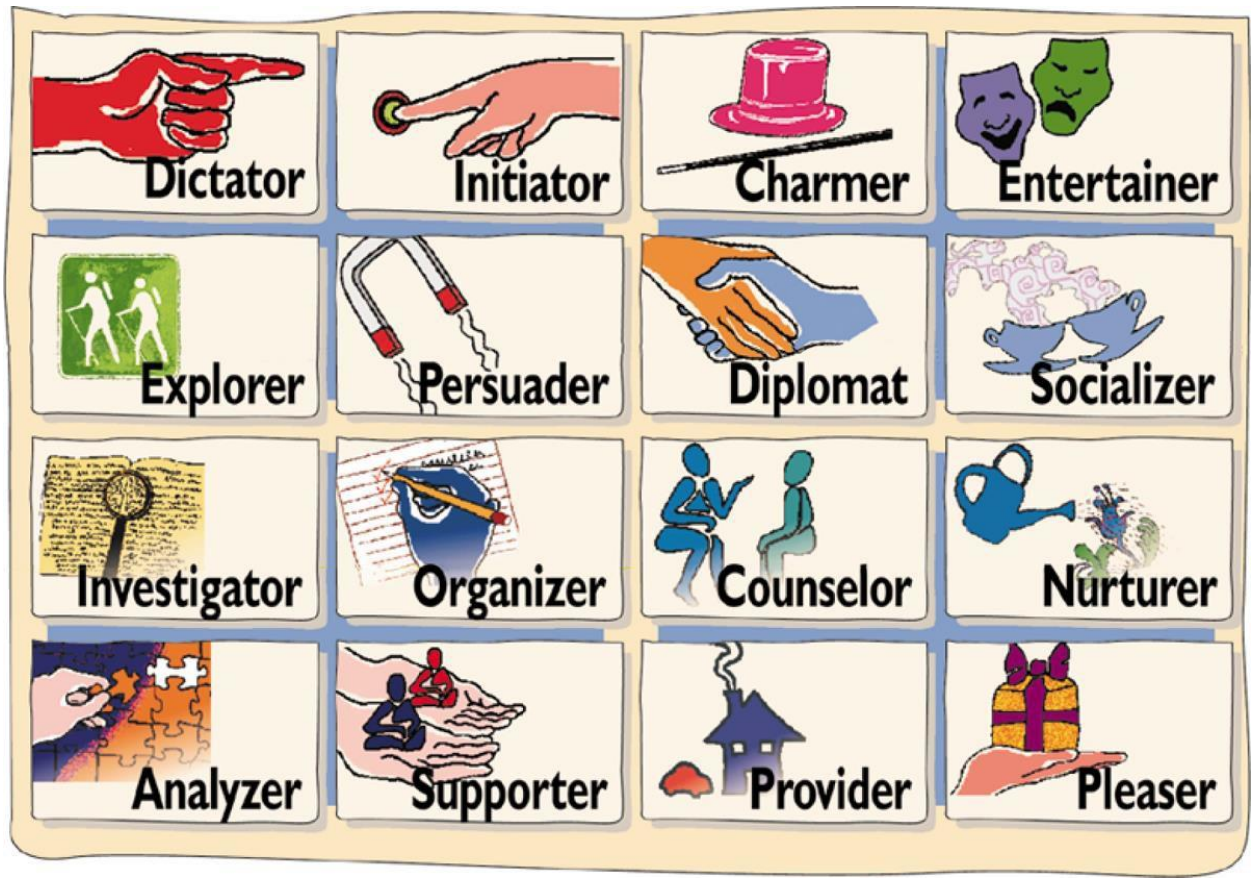
Each communication style is equally important and valuable. However, a particular style might be more effective in a given situation. For example, if you're trying to brainstorm, an Expresser style is valuable. If you're trying to explain a process to a group of engineers, a Thinker style is valuable. If you want to build trust, a Harmonizer style is useful. If you're trying to deal with a crisis, a Director style can be valuable.

Tips About Communication Styles

- Each communication style is equally important and valuable. However, a particular style might be more effective in a given situation. For example, if you're trying to present information to another person, it's best done in their style.
- You can modify your own communication style once you're aware of the four dimensions in which you can move. You can "flex" other styles as you would a muscle. The more you practice flexing different styles in communication with other people, the stronger a communicator you become.
- The Communication Matrix is a map. The most important thing now is to understand where you are on the map. Your goal is to learn how to communicate in styles different from your own.

Matrix of Communication Styles ©

Place your initials in the square indicating your style. Have your colleague or partner place his or her initials in the square, indicating his or her style. Your instructor will give you an exercise that will help you begin to modify your own communication style to better reach that of your colleague or partner.

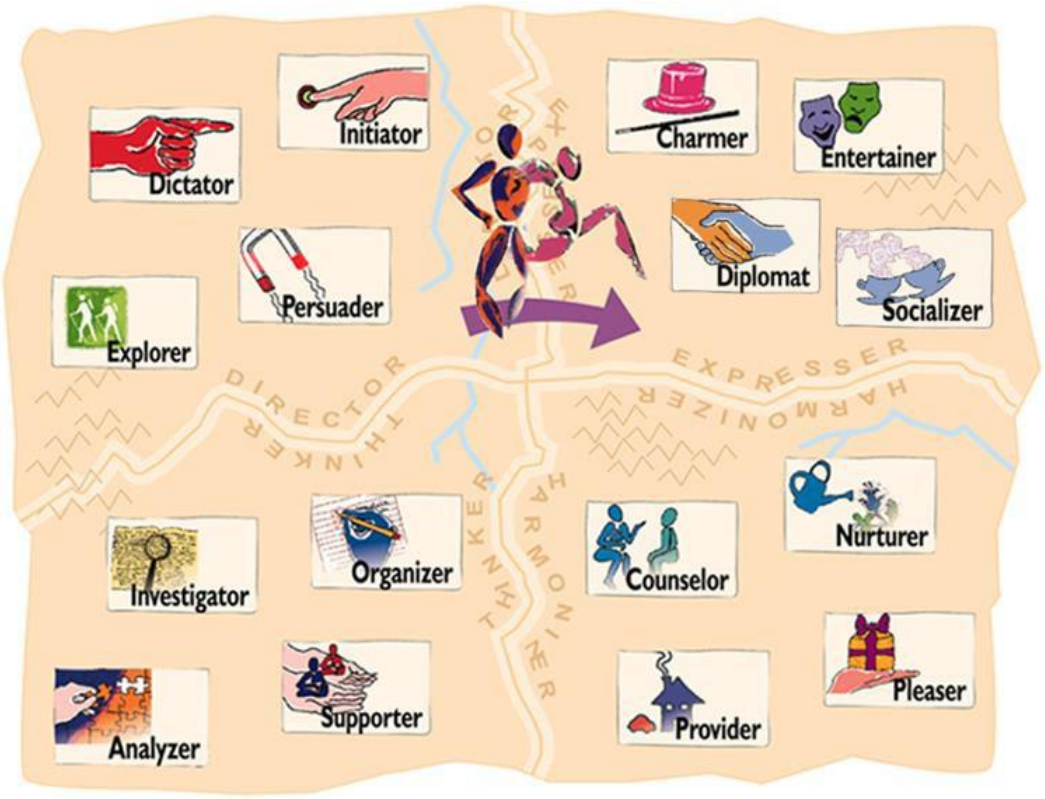


XIII. Resolving Conflicts Among Styles

The four styles see the world differently. They tackle problems differently, they present information differently, they think differently. This leads inevitably to problems in communication.

There are two ways to flex your communication style to improve your communication with others. “Stepping Out” is the first strategy. It’s tailored to a specific individual. It signifies a conscious shift from one style to another – for example, from the style of a Director toward that of an Expresser.

Again, look at the Matrix of Communication Styles as a map. The Director is in one place, and the Expresser is in another. The Director has to go outside of his or her turf to communicate in a way that reaches the Expresser, just as he or she would adopt a different set of behaviors in a foreign country.



Example: Suppose you are a Thinker and you want to invite a colleague to join a volunteer organization to which you belong. Your colleague is a Harmonizer. Rather than communicate like a Thinker, try to communicate like a Harmonizer. Instead of talking about what the group has accomplished, how often you meet, and what is usually on the agenda – you might instead talk about how many great people are in the club, how much fun you usually have at club meetings, and what a great sense of teamwork pervades the organization.

The second strategy for improving your communication style is to work on becoming a well-rounded communicator. This strategy is not tailored to another individual. Instead, you're working on yourself.

The first step is to identify your area of greatest growth potential. Everybody has one! Your lowest score on the Straight Talk® survey indicates the style you most need to work on.

Focusing on the area where you are weak allows you to grow within and become a more well-rounded communicator. It's a long-term approach that yields tremendous results as you learn to bend and flex and improve as a communicator on a more permanent level.

> ***Example***: If your growth potential lies in communicating more like a Thinker, then you would practice becoming more analytical and detailed in your approach, making lists of things to do, asking more detailed questions, burrowing down into a detailed understanding of how something works. (A list of the attributes of each style is on Page 10).

Jodie Foster, star of many films including the Academy Award winning film "The Silence of the Lambs," expressed in an interview that she was not necessarily a brave or strong person in real life, but that she chose parts that showed bravery in order to improve herself in that area. Likewise, you can work to strengthen whatever weaknesses you have in your communication style.

XIV. Managing Conflict

When faced with a conflict, different styles try to manage it in different ways. The following chart shows how each style approaches conflict and responds to it, both in positive and negative ways.

Style	Approach	Positive Response	Typical Intent under conflict	Negative Response
Director	Not adverse to conflict; often the trigger.	Looks at the big picture and searches for common ground; if presented with evidence, will negotiate quick settlement.	Controlling	Jumps to conclusions, becomes dictatorial, autocratic; undermines other people, attacks their authority.
Expresser	Not adverse to conflict; sometimes the trigger.	Expresses his desire to solve the problem; begins searching for creative solutions.	Controlling or Defending	Jumps to conclusions, criticizes other people's behavior and attitudes; attacks people personally, raises his voice.
Thinker	Avoids conflict; normally not the trigger.	Analyzes causes and looks for missing data; studies implications of various solutions.	Defending or Relinquishing	Resents conflict; slows down productivity; avoids dealing with the conflict.
Harmonizer	Avoids conflict; rarely the trigger.	Inquires into other people's feelings and needs; seeks to understand what is best for the group.	Relinquishing	Acquiesces too quickly; withdraws; seeks relief by escape, avoidance.

When conflict occurs, our initial intent is to control, relinquish or defend, rather than to affirm. It is more difficult in an emotionally charged situation to disclose our own feelings in a productive way and to ask other people to express their feelings. Yet an affirming intent is the ideal mode to use when conflict occurs. Why? It allows each party to communicate his or her point of view and thereby gain buy-in to resolving the conflict.

You might ask, “Why shouldn’t I try to persuade or defend? After all, I believe my point of view is correct.”

> ***The answer***: If your initial intent in a highly charged situation is to persuade or to coerce, no one will be persuaded, although they may comply. A leader desires quality communication and relationships. Start by listening, then respond in an affirming mode. It’s better to hear the other points of view than express your own. You will be in a better position to persuade others because they will have felt affirmed and validated.
>
> ***Example***: A co-worker storms into your office, slams the door and says, “That’s the last time you’re doing an end-run around me. Stay the hell out of my business!”
>
> Defending Response: “You have no right to talk like that to me in my office.”
>
> Controlling Response: “I want you to sit down and tell me what this is all about.”
>
> Affirming Response: “I value our relationship. Could you sit with me and tell me what this is all about?”

XV. Straight Talk® with a Colleague

Step 1:

Note below the names of the people with whom you work most frequently. Write what you believe their styles to be. (If they are in the workshop, ask them.) If you can't guess their individual style, try to guess their primary style.

Step 2:

Comparing the style of these people to your own style, predict with whom you're most likely to have style conflicts.

Step 3:

Work out some strategies you could use in communicating with the people on your list with whom you have style conflicts.

Name	Style	Probability of Style Conflict (high, medium, low)	Strategies
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Example: One person on your list is an Initiator (a Director/Expresser). He likes to take charge, make quick decisions, and he tends to keep feelings to himself. You've seen him jump to conclusions, make snap judgments about people, and forget to take into account others' opinions or feelings.

On the other hand, you are a Supporter (a Thinker/Harmonizer). You are patient, cautious and caring. You also have difficulty expressing yourself and tend to avoid dealing with conflicts between people.

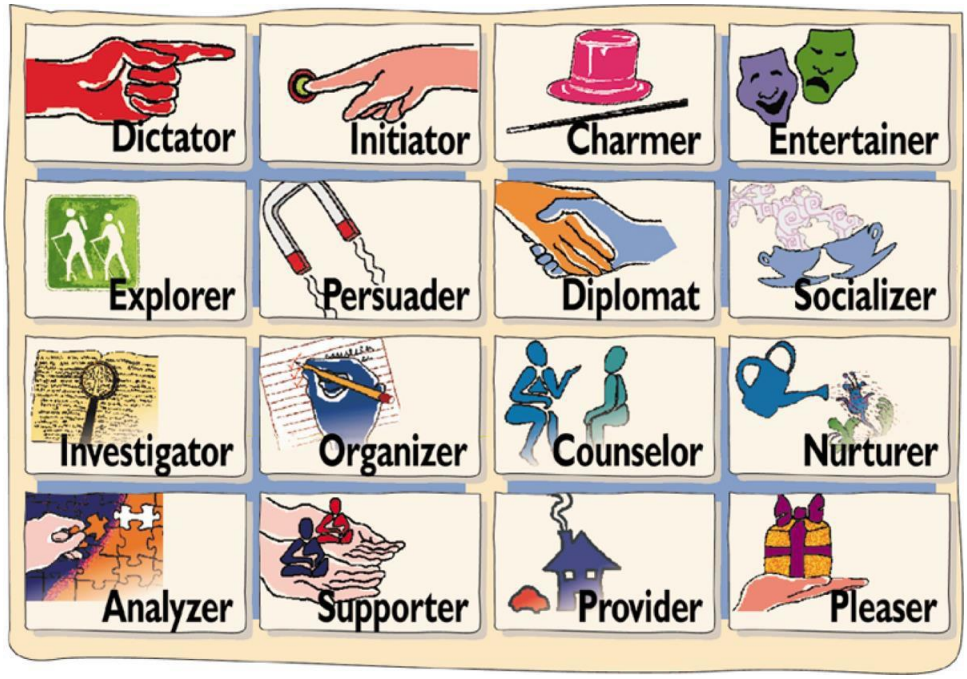
Your communication with the Initiator leaves you baffled and intimidated. You don't understand how he can move so quickly. He seems not to care that people get trampled by his style.

Here's a strategy you might use with the Initiator: suggest to him that you set some simple ground rules for the discussion that include equal talk time and weighing options before making a decision. In terms of modifying your own style, focus on making your points clearly and succinctly and identifying areas of disagreement and addressing them directly.

XVI. Straight Talk® with Your Manager

In the Matrix of Communication Styles below, put your initials in the box that corresponds to your style. Next, put the initials of your manager or supervisor in the appropriate box corresponding with his or her style. If you don't know it, make an educated guess based on what you've learned so far.

Next, consider your interactions. When you communicate with your manager or supervisor, what could you do to make it more productive? When he or she communicates with you, what style or approach might work best with you? Jot down your thoughts below. Be prepared to share with the group.



Things I should do differently to communicate with my manager:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Things my manager should do differently to communicate with me:

_____

_____

_____

_____

XVII. Group Cultures

Every work group or team has a particular style – or culture – that arises from the way the people in that group communicate and work together. By analyzing your group style, you can figure out the strengths and weaknesses of your group and use that information to improve the quality of your group's communication and decision making.

The most successful groups are composed of members who have a balance of communication styles. This ensures a healthy variety of approaches to solving problems – and helps ensure that no assumptions will pass unchecked. The weakest groups are those that are dominated by one particular style.

One observed dynamic is that group leaders or managers tend to be more comfortable with people like themselves. So groups tend to homogenize, to gather people of similar styles, rather than dissimilar styles. Over time, this can cause the group to regard its business in very similar and predictable ways – to literally "go blind." Knowing your group's style can help you add people to the group who will give it more balance.

Group Styles: Strengths and Weaknesses

Each group has strengths and weaknesses. In your efforts to improve a group's culture, focus your attention on these critical areas:

Group Style	Strengths	Weaknesses
Director	Goal-oriented; future oriented; ability to see the big picture; ability to make decisions quickly; willing to take risks.	Impatient with process; insufficient attention to detail; too quick to jump to conclusions and bring topics to closure.
Expresser	Idea-oriented, creative, and fun; ability to embrace new ideas quickly; strong at marketing and sales; willing to take risks.	Easily distracted by tangential issues, not able to complete tasks; mistakes impressions for facts, misses deadlines.
Thinker	Careful and thoughtful; ability to manage complex tasks; process-oriented; good quality control.	Unable to put things into "big picture" context; unwilling to reach closure; too focused on process; unwilling to challenge authority; reluctant to change.
Harmonizer	Nurturing and considerate of others; ability to build trust and teamwork; ability to manage tasks in dependable, reliable way.	Not sufficiently goal oriented; unwilling to offer contrasting viewpoints; unwilling to assert new ideas; conflict averse; reluctant to change.

Improving a Group' s Style

The following chart summarizes how each type of group can restore balance to its communication and decision making.

Group Style: Director	Group Style: Expresser
• Hold regular Q&A meetings with all staff • Recognize importance of people • Push decision-making down through increased information sharing • Make it a rule to decide at each meeting who needs information • Put Harmonizers in key roles	• Create system for tight agreements on next steps and follow-through • Eliminate unnecessary meetings • Induce people to write tight, concise reports • Emphasize financial analysis in all reports and plans • Put Thinkers in key roles
Group Style: Thinker	**Group Style: Harmonizer**
• Hold regular strategic reviews to focus on big picture • Create rewards program for innovation • Use "work out meetings" [3] to eliminate bureaucracy • Reward risk-taking in new projects • Put Expressers in key roles	• Articulate clear goals, objectives and timelines • Streamline decision making wherever possible • Use "work out meetings" [3] to eliminate bureaucracy • Motivate project teams to take risks • Put Directors in key roles

[3] General Electric made work out meetings famous. All managers and staff meet in a large room. Each person lists one change he or she would like to implement, then writes down who needs to

approve the change. Each person then goes around the room to get the necessary sign-off on the spot. Only three outcomes are allowed: Change is immediately approved; change is not approved (with exact reasons listed); or change is to be studied (with a report due in 30-60 days; burden of proof falls on those who denied the change and said that it should not be implemented).

XVIII. Taking it Home

The goal of this workshop was to teach you how to interact more effectively and openly with different types of people using communication styles.

The learning objectives of this workshop were to:

- Raise your awareness about different communication styles;
- Help you appreciate the strengths of different styles;
- Enable you to identify different styles;
- Help you tune your own communication style to be most effective with other people.

Topics covered in the workshop were the following:

- The elements of communication
- Types of intent
- The four primary styles
- The sixteen communication styles
- Modifying your style
- Communicating with customers, colleagues, and managers
- Group styles

In the space provided below, write your thoughts, insights, action plans or ideas about how you can immediately use the information you learned in this workshop. Make a calendar note to refer to these thoughts within five days of the workshop.

1. One of the most important things I learned in this workshop is:

2. The communication style that is the weakest for me is:

3. Ways I can improve my communication style:

4. Think of a person with whom you have some difficulty communicating. List two things you could share with that person to improve communication.

5. What ideas do you have to bring back to your group, organization, or company to help improve your group culture?