Straight Talk®

Exercise Workbook

director

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I. Guess Your Colleagues' Style

This exercise will familiarize you with the four styles. Using the information you can recall from the workshop[1], guess the styles of the members of your immediate work group. This will just be a guess, because you haven't learned all the techniques for interpretation. But it will be fun to have a record of your early impressions later on.

Look at the four squares below. Write the initials of each member of the work group in the box that you think best describes them. Don't forget to include yourself!

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 ▪ 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

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.leading-resources.com.

II. Consider a Communication Link

Put your initials in the box on the Matrix that corresponds to your particular style. Now imagine your boss or someone you work closely with. Based on a primary style (e.g. Director) and secondary style (e.g. Expresser), make a guess as to his or her specific style (Director/Expresser = Initiator) and put their initials in that box. Now draw an arrow between those two boxes. Consider your two communication styles. If you were communicating with her, what would you do to make it more productive? If she were communicating with you, what would she do? Jot down your thoughts in the box below.

Directors		**Expressers**	
Dictator	Initiator	Charmer	Entertainer
Explorer	Persuader	Diplomat	Socializer
Investigator	Organizer	Counselor	Nurturer
Analyzer	Supporter	Provider	Pleaser
Thinkers		**Harmonizers**	

1. Things I should do differently:
▪ ▪ ▪
2. Things he or she should do differently:
▪ ▪ ▪

III. Confirm Your Colleagues' Styles

Let's practice identifying the various styles. Refer back to the box in Exercise 1 where you guessed the styles of your immediate work group. Let's see if those same guesses stand up when you factor in the following information:

Some people set their filters so that more attention is placed on facts; some set them to allow more feelings to come through. Some people set their frames so that their responses are more assertive, some set their frames so that their respond with questions. Using filters and frames, you can distill the four basic styles down to:

Directors: Filter for facts and respond assertively
Expressers: Filter for feelings and respond assertively
Thinkers: Filter for facts and respond by probing
Harmonizers: Filter for feelings and respond by probing

For example, if you identified someone as an Expresser, ask yourself: Do they typically filter for feelings more than facts? Are they more likely to respond by being assertive? If so, then you've confirmed your earlier your choice.

For each set of initials in the box at the end of Exercise 1, determine whether you still agree with your choice, based on your new understanding of filters and frames. Use the box below to change your assessments.

Asserting

	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 ▪ Expressive gestures ▪ Entertaining ▪ Thinks out loud ▪ Speaks rapidly ▪ May be imprecise	
Facts	**Thinker**	**Harmonizer**	**Feelings**
	▪ 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	

Probing

IV. Identify A Colleagues' Primary Style

The following chart will help you sort through another person's style. All you have to do is circle each behavior that applies. Total the squares you circled in each column. The two columns that get the most votes will tell you that person's preferred styles of communicating.

Identifying Communication Styles

Speech	Opinions	Questions	"right" "wrong"	"good" "bad"
Body language	Fast moving, dynamic	Poised	Tentative, cautious	Relaxed
Eye contact	Direct	Indirect	Distant	Inviting
Response to crisis	Risk taking	Risk averse	Analytical	Empathetic
Filters and frames	**Assertive**	**Probing**	**Factual**	**Feeling**

Once you've circled two styles at the bottom of the chart, use this chart to determine their primary style.

If a person is:		His or her style is:
Assertive and factual	→	**Director**
Assertive and feeling	→	**Expresser**
Probing and factual	→	**Thinker**
Probing and feeling	→	**Harmonizer**

V. Identify Your Colleague's 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 three 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 that 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**
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 that combination.

Column A	**Column B**	**Specific Communication Style**
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
Name	Will Jones			
Specific style #1	Diplomat			
Specific style #2	Organizer			

Step 4: For each person you listed, go back to the Participant Workbook and reread the description 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 square 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.

Directors		**Expressers**	
Dictator	Initiator	Charmer	Entertainer
Explorer	Persuader	Diplomat	Socializer
Investigator	Organizer	Counselor	Nurturer
Analyzer	Supporter	Provider	Pleaser
Thinkers		**Harmonizers**	

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:**

   ▪

   ▪

   ▪

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

   ▪

   ▪

   ▪

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

   ▪

   ▪

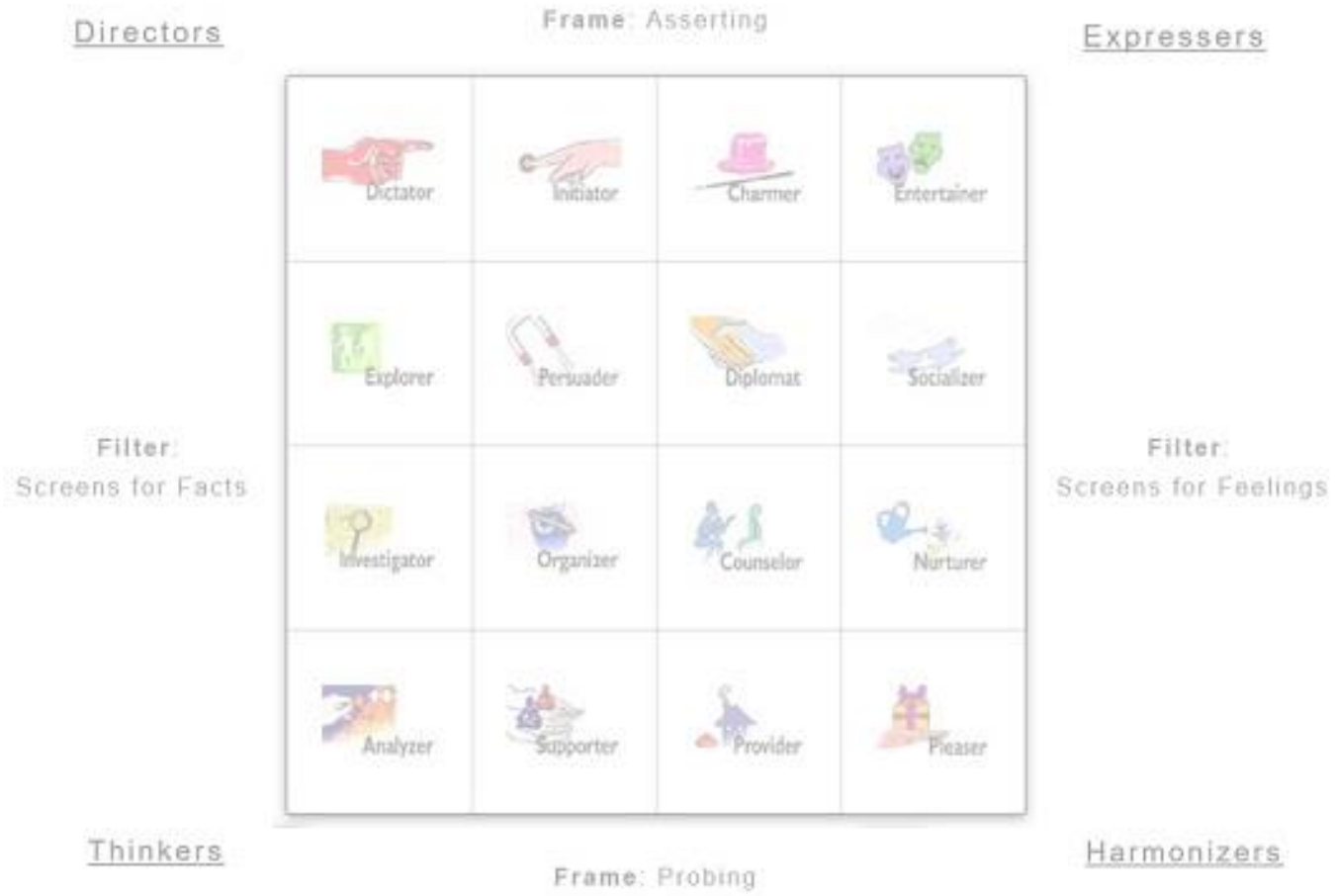
   ▪

VI. Chart Your Life on the Matrix

If you think about the changes in your own life, you know that the people around you have influenced your style of communicating in significant ways. You've had to live up to the expectations of your various teachers and bosses. You've had to learn how to adapt as your work and responsibilities have changed. You've had to learn how to work with different styles of people, with different work teams, in different industries. Over time, you've accumulated a wealth of experience about how to interact effectively with other people.

It's a valuable exercise to chart the course of your life across the Matrix. What was your style when you were at school? When you took your first job? What journey have you taken around the Matrix as you've grown and changed? Write your initials in the square that reflects each style you've used in the past. Use an arrow to trace your journey to where you are now.

What does this tell you about yourself? Are you more comfortable with your style today? Or were you more comfortable with your style in the past? Why? Take some time to write down your thoughts in the space on the next page.



Notes:

VII. The Matrix Game

Limit: two people
Object: to occupy neighboring squares—but not the same square

- Each person begins on the square that represents their style.
- Each person has only one move.
- Each person tries to move to square adjacent to their own.
- The goal is to occupy neighboring squares – but not the same square.

How does this work? Let's say you're a Provider and your colleague is a Charmer. Look at your positions on the Matrix. According to the rules, your goal is to move one square up, hers is to move one square down. If you succeed, then your two pieces will sit on adjacent squares.

You, the Provider, take your step by modifying your style: First, acknowledge that you have different styles. Then say that you want to speak openly and candidly and disclose what you really think and feel – even though that doesn't come naturally to you. Tell her that you value her way of thinking and that you value your relationship enough to make it work better.

The Charmer takes her step by acknowledging that she, too, recognizes the difference in your styles. She says that to communicate more effectively she'll try to listen more carefully and patiently, and be more thoughtful about her reactions. She'll say that she really values your style, and values the relationship enough to make it work better.

As you both begin your conversation, balance the level of inquiry and assertion in your conversation. Pay attention to how much of the time each of you shows real curiosity about the other's intentions, ideas, and motivations. Answer every question as honestly as you can – even if you fear it will embarrass you or make you look weak.

It sounds hard and it is. If it weren't hard, we'd all be doing it. Start to practice using the Matrix to modify your style. You'll start to appreciate the benefits of the Matrix game.

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

Play the Matrix Game

Using the Matrix below, identify your square and the squares of three important colleagues by writing down their initials. Then play the following modified version of the game described in this exercise. Here are the rules:

Limit: for two to four people

Object: to establish a set of ground rules for all players that would create more effective communications

- **Step 1**: Begin on the square that represents your style.
- **Step 2**: Draw arrows toward each of their styles.
- **Step 3**: Determine whether one square touches all the initialized squares. If so, mark that square with a check and go to Step 6.
- **Step 4**: Determine whether two squares touch all the initialized squares. If so, mark those two squares with a check and go to Step 6.
- **Step 5**: Determine whether three squares touch all the initialized squares. Mark those three squares with a check and go to Step 6.
- **Step 6**: Looking at the checked squares, have each player verbalize how to modify his or her style to improve communications among players.
- **Step 7**: Translate these behaviors into a set of specific communication ground rules. List these ground rules on the next page.

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

Example:

Tom, Dick, and Harry are playing the Matrix Game. Tom is an Initiator, Dick is a Socializer, and Harry is a Provider.

Step 5: They check the squares for Persuader, Diplomat, and Counselor.

Step 6: Tom suggests that he needs to ask more questions before he jumps to conclusions. Dick says he needs to be more rigorous about basing his conclusions on facts. And Harry says he needs to be more assertive about his feelings.

Step 7: They agree to the following ground rules:

- Tom will ask more questions and wait until everyone else has spoken before stating his conclusions.
- Dick will probe for missing data he can use to support his arguments.
- Harry will be more assertive about what he thinks needs to be done.

Your ground rules:

1.
2.
3.
4.

VIII. Decode a Dialogue

Here's an exercise to help you tune yourself to the Circle of Assumptions, which you can read about at https://CommunicationStyles.org/the-circle-of-assumptions/.

The box below contains the transcript of a dialogue from a meeting of two people, Abby and Bill. After each sentence, assess whether it is a fact, an interpretation, an evaluation, a conclusion, or an action. If the statement is a question, decide whether it is a genuine question, or a question masquerading as a statement (and if so, what type of statement it is).

The dialogue	***Type of statement***
Abby: "I wish we could get our customer service agents to pick up the phone after two rings.	Evaluation
We lose customers when they don't."	Conclusion
Bill: "You're right.	Evaluation
But we also need a phone system that enables them to see how many callers are waiting.	Interpretation
Then they could make sure everyone got an acceptable level of service."	Conclusion
Abby: "That's a good idea.	Evaluation
I've seen those types of systems.	Fact
But they're too expensive for us."	Evaluation
Bill: "What do you mean?	Evaluation
Every call we lose means as much as $50 in lost sales.	Interpretation
Multiply that times 20 a day, and 300 days a year, and you've got $300,000 in lost sales.	Evaluation
That buys a hell of a phone system."	Conclusion
Abby: "Well you sound like you've already looked into it. Why	Conclusion
don't you bring it up at our next staff meeting."	Conclusion
Bill: "I will.	Action
In fact, I'll call get some quotes before the meeting so we can make a decision."	Action
Abby: "Good idea.	Evaluation
It would be good to get someone other than Sally to join us from Customer Service.	Evaluation
I'm sure she'll try to put the kibosh on this idea."	Conclusion
Bill: "I'll get back to you with some numbers on lost calls so we can play with a P&L before the meeting.	Action
Maybe we can get the boss to okay it right there."	Conclusion
Abby: "Good idea!"	Evaluation

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. Put Your Thoughts Into Action

First, read the blog post on Inner Scripts: https://CommunicationStyles.org/inner-scripts/. Recall a difficult conversation you've had with a colleague, team member, or boss. Write the conversation down verbatim, or reconstruct it best you can. Then follow these steps:

1. Using the Inner Script/Outer Script model, write down what you were feeling or thinking to yourself during the conversation.

2. Analyze the assumptions embedded in how you framed the other person. What motives did you impute?

3. Write down other possible frames of the situation. What different motives might explain their behavior.

4. Write down what you'd like to say to this person, now that you've gone through this exercise. Try to express yourself as clearly as possible. Describe your assumptions. And then describe how you are willing to interpret it. Pose the questions you'd like answered.

5. Ask yourself what's preventing you from having this conversation.

Notes:

X. Choose a Complementary Partner

Following the steps below will help you understand how your style of communicating affects various activities you do throughout the day. And it will help you narrow the list when choosing a business partner.

First, read our blog: https://CommunicationStyles.org/communication-styles-in-business.

Then, fill in your style.

My communication style: _____

Next, using the concepts from the blog post you read, write down words or phrases that describe your approach to the activities indicated.

Time management:

Planning:

Creativity:

Decision making:

Making a presentation:

Then write down the ways you could modify your style that would enable you to be more successful in these activities.

Ways I could modify my style to be more successful:

1.
2.
3.

Finally, write down words or phrases that describe a business partner complements you well.

***Qualities I seek in a business partner**:*

1.
2.
3.

XI. Define Your Meeting Styles

First, read our blog at https://CommunicationStyles.org/managing-meetings/. In the box below, list the meetings you regularly attend. Next to each identify the type of meeting it is – informational, problem solving, brain storming, performance review, or strategic. Then identify protocols: whether an agenda and/or minutes or ground rules are used. Circle any meetings where there's a conflict between the protocols used in your meetings and the protocols needed for straight talk.

Meeting	Type	Protocols used
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Next, list the communication style that prevails in each of your meetings and the appropriate communication style for that type of meeting. Circle any meetings where there's a conflict.

Meeting	Prevailing style	Appropriate style
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

XII. Improve the Quality of Meetings

Review the eleven ground rules of straight talk at CommunicationStyles.org/setting-ground-rules/ and our follow-up: CommunicationStyles.org/the-eleven-ground-rules/. Then, in the box below, list the meetings you regularly attend. Indicate next to each meeting whether following the ground rules would improve the quality of that meeting.

Would ground rules improve this meeting?

Meetings	Yes	No
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

If you indicated that following the ground rules would improve a meeting, list below the names of people whose sign-off would be needed to put the ground rules into effect. What objections might they raise? How would you counter those objections?

Names	Possible objections	Counter arguments
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

XIII. Resolve A Long-Standing Conflict

Write down the names of three or four colleagues or friends with whom you regularly experience conflict. Then write down their styles (or your assessment of their styles). Next, write down what you feel is the source of your conflict with each of them.

Person's Name	Person's Style	Source of the Conflict
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

What would you say to each person to enable you to acknowledge your conflict and move on? Remember to try to express this as a dilemma.

1.
2.
3.
4.

XIV. Identify Your Organization's Culture

On the Matrix below, place the initials of the senior managers of your organization—the CEO, president, COO, and senior vice presidents or division heads—in the squares corresponding to their respective styles of communicating. If you don't know, make your best guess.

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

Notes:

Next, circle the phrases below that best describe your organization's culture.

Director Culture	**Expresser Culture**
▪ Goal oriented ▪ Emphasis on the bottom line ▪ Makes quick decisions ▪ Always on the go ▪ Willing to take risks ▪ Abrupt, not communicative ▪ Lack of meeting time	▪ Idea oriented ▪ Emphasis on people ▪ Entertaining, fun ▪ Willing to take risks ▪ Many meetings ▪ Lack of clear priorities ▪ Difficulty with follow-through
Thinker Culture	**Harmonizer Culture**
▪ Fact and process oriented ▪ Emphasis on precision ▪ Stresses academic credentials ▪ Lots of quality control ▪ Unwilling to take risks ▪ Tendency toward missing deadlines	▪ Relationship oriented ▪ Emphasis on team ▪ Avoids conflict, change ▪ Makes decisions slowly ▪ Not clear about purpose, goals ▪ Tendency toward bureaucracy

Notes:

Finally, based on the patterns you detect in the above Matrix and chart, circle your organization's culture. Then, using the material from the Participant Workbook, list three ways the weaknesses in your organization's culture would be addressed.

Our Organization's Culture (circle one)

Director **Expresser** **Thinker** **Harmonizer**

To address the weaknesses in our culture, we should do the following:

1.
2.
3.

Notes:

XV. Define Your Organization's Problem

Assume you're in charge of defining a major problem that needs to be solved by your organization. Write down four issues that come to mind.

Issues our organization needs to solve:

1.
2.
3.
4.

Tentatively identify which issue is most important.

The most important issue is:

On a separate piece of paper, map all the related issues, using the techniques described in this blog: https://CommunicationStyles.org/issue-mapping/. If the map includes the issues you mentioned above, that's okay.

Of those issues that lie within your organization's ability to control, which do you now regard as the most important?

The most important issue is:

Finally, list some possible solutions to the issue you've defined. Ask yourself what information you would need in order to decide the best solution.

Possible Solutions	Information Needed
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Notes:

XVI. Discover Your Authentic Style

Circle the communication style you use at work on the Matrix below. Next, if you haven't already, take the Communication Styles Profile at GoStraightTalk.com, a second time to discover your authentic style. When you are finished, mark down your authentic style on the Matrix.

If the two styles are not the same, write down three specific career steps or goals that would enable you to reinforce your authentic style. List those goals below.

Career goals that would reinforce my authentic style:

1.
2.
3.

Finally, write down three things you could do in the next month that would help you attain these goals—people to call, letters to write, journals to read, etc. When you're finished, ask yourself what would prevent you from doing these things.

Things to do in the next thirty days:

1.
2.
3.