

Understanding DISC Behavioural Styles

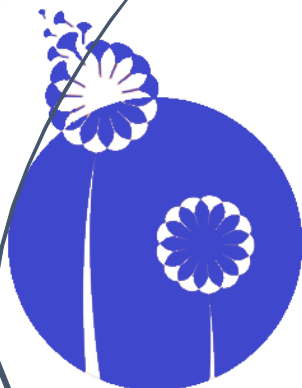
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DISC Behavioural Styles

Dr William Marston published "The Emotions of Normal People"; observing human behaviour he concluded that there were four predominant observable behaviours – the four vectors are summarised in the DISC system as:

D: dominance – how we respond to problems. These individuals like to be direct, they are task orientated, they live for the challenge and are often risk takers.

I: influence – how we work with people. These individuals like to be liked and need to be noticed, they are talkative and optimistic. These are people people.

S: steadiness – how we respond to the pace of our environment. These are great listeners, they are patient, logical and appreciate recognition of their contribution to a situation. They love to build good relationships.

C: compliance – how we respond to procedures or constraints imposed by others. These people need a system and they stick to it. They show great attention to detail, are logical, meticulous, objective and are very task orientated.

Each of us has all of the characteristics to some extent (a spectrum of expression) but usually one or two traits dominate our natural behaviour.

One style is not better than another.

We all adapt our behaviour to suit different circumstances so depending on whether we are at home, with friends, at work, where ever... we adapt our behaviour to suit the circumstances.

Most people choose to exhibit a behaviour which they believe will make them successful – or safe – in that particular environment.

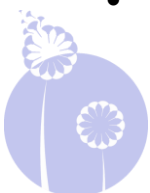
Your behavioural style will influence the things that motivate or inspire you, for example a preference for challenge and freedom or planned steps with greater security... As a manager understands this they can be more effective when planning workloads and supervising workplans.

Each style is associated with a particular emotion

D = anger, I = optimism/trust, S = non-emotion, C = fear

You may have to deal with these emotions in order to communicate your message effectively....

- Diffuse anger by agreeing, empathising and supportive enquiry.
- Clarify exactly what is meant and understood through asking questions for clarification or by paraphrasing what has been said eg "What I think you're saying is...".
- Remember that non-emotion doesn't indicate agreement.
- Provide appropriate safeguards, systems and feedback.
- Challenge the problem, not the person!



Summary of the behavioural styles

Dominance: Very results orientated. Wants to win. Moves fast.

Decisive, direct, determined, demanding, do-er.... Can be defiant.

Do be direct, let them choose, move quickly

Don't waffle or waste time, be too friendly, make them out to be wrong

They want to know the bottom line, results, costs and benefits. They also want "the best", anything that enhances their status.

They don't want your opinion, no choice, taken advantage of, lots of background information.

Influence: People orientated. Loves the experience, to be seen at the centre of things.

Inspiring, impressive, interesting, involved, impressionable.... Can be illogical.

Do be friendly, show enthusiasm, drop names, give incentives

Don't be negative, dwell on detail, expect to finish on time!

They want to know how things will feel better, build teams, influence people, the chance to shine. They also want things that make them look and feel good, identify them as a trend-setter.

They don't want the same as everyone else, lots of hard work, to pay attention to detail.

Steadiness: People orientated. Want security and reliability. Very practical.

Supportive, stable, steady, security, status quo... can be suckers.

Do take time to explain, build trust, have a logical plan, involve the team.

Don't be too fast, push for quick decisions.

They want to know that things will be safe, reliable, practical. That it will also be of value to their family/team/organisation. Reassurance that this is the right thing.

They want boundaries, what you'll do or not, that there is a leader and a back-up plan.

They don't want pressure of any sort, risk, change for change's sake.

Compliance: Results orientated. Wants to get it right, do it by the book.

Correct, cautious, calculating, careful, competent... can be cold.

Do be on time, know your stuff, use lots of facts/figures.

Don't be over-friendly, make mistakes, be inconsistent, try to persuade with emotion.

They want to know exactly what you will do in detail, technical specifications and lots and lots of evidence. They will know and will want to keep to the rules. They also want you to be accurate, honest and to do exactly what you say you'll do.

They don't want any possibility that they will be criticised or lose face, get it wrong, be taken for granted, underestimated.



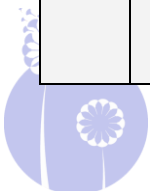
Strengths in a team

Within any team there may be individuals with different predominant behavioural styles.

What are the natural contributions of each type to a successful team?

How can these "strengths" contribute to difficulties within a team?

| | Characteristics | Potential strengths/weaknesses |
|----------|---|--------------------------------|
| D | Ambitious Forceful Decisive Direct Independent Challenging | Strengths? |
| | | Weaknesses? |
| I | Friendly Expressive Enthusiastic Demonstrative Talkative Stimulating | Strengths? |
| | | Weaknesses? |
| S | Methodical Modest Reliable Relaxed Steady Systematic | Strengths? |
| | | Weaknesses? |
| C | Careful Contemplative Conservative Analytical Exacting Deliberative | Strengths? |
| | | Weaknesses? |



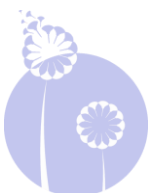
How would you....

Given what we know about how the different behavioural styles affect our preferred forms of communication how would you achieve the following tasks if dealing with individuals showing a preferred dominant high D, I, S or C characteristic.

Consider the forms of words you might use, the setting you would choose etc

- Compliment for a piece of work well done
- Discipline for poor timekeeping
- Assign a challenging project
- Ask them to attend a meeting as a representative

So how do you recognise the predominant styles?



High 'D' Outstanding Characteristics

People with high D behaviours love a challenge and are competitive, decisive individuals. Lack of challenge may cause them to stir up trouble. Competition may bring out the best in them. Other people may perceive them as reckless.

They respect people who rise to challenges and win against the odds.

They make good problem solvers and are willing to work long and hard to solve tough problems. They may overstep the mark to achieve their aims.

People with high D may have a short temper but once they have said what they want to say, they usually forget about it. They are direct, positive and straightforward in the way they deal with people and the problems and challenges that confront them.

They can be abrupt, particularly if their high standards of efficiency are not met. They will also speak their mind, so can be blunt or even sarcastic. Here, they may be misunderstood in that they have no real wish to hurt others. However, they can be seen as bullying and overriding. This, though, is because one of the High D's greatest needs is to achieve results. High D's respond well to flattery, as they are basically egotistical. They like others to think highly of them. They are self-starters and have an independent and individualistic nature.

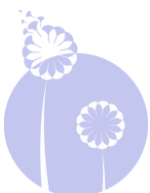
Having authority and responsibility will motivate people with this style to achieve and perform. They aim high to obtain success and thrive on authority and responsibility. They will often join societies and associations to represent their organisation, aware that it will also advance a personal and/or corporate goal.

Generally they enjoy adventure and favour new and innovative activities. Due to their curious nature they will take on a wide range of activities and interests and are perfectly comfortable dealing with many tasks at once and may spread themselves too thinly.

Once the challenge has gone from a project they may lose interest until a new challenge is presented or they move on to or seek out a different challenge and prefer environments where there is plenty of opportunity. They are resourceful, creative individuals.

They can engage in detailed work if it helps them to achieve a goal and does not become routine. They prefer that others deal with routine.

People with high D styles are often impatient. They want to complete a task quickly and move on to new challenges. Their impatience may lead them, early on in their working lives, to switch jobs frequently in search of new challenges and build experience to serve their career ambitions. They may overstep the mark to achieve their aims.



High 'D' Motivational Wants & Needs

The following points may be keys to successfully inspiring the person with high D behaviours:

Wants:

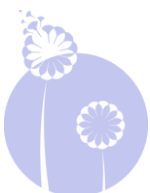
- Challenge
- Power, authority and control over themselves and others
- Prestige and position
- The chance for advancement of position
- Results
- To know the reasons behind things
- To have a wide scope of operation
- To be communicated with in a direct way
- Freedom from controls, supervision and detailed work
- Efficiency both from themselves and others
- New, innovative and varied activities

Needs:

- Negotiated commitment on a person-to-person basis
- To identify more with the organisation
- Tough assignments to conquer
- To learn to pace themselves and relax more
- To know what results they can expect, and what results are expected of them
- To display more empathy towards others
- Techniques based on theoretical, as well as practical experience
- Awareness that rules and regulations exist – and for a reason
- The occasional 'shock' – reminder of boundaries when necessary

When under pressure people with high D behaviours may:

- Overstep authority, over-control
- Be reckless, skim over details
- Tend to bluntness or sarcasm, lack tact or diplomacy
- Take on too much, show impatience with routine work
- Act in their own interest, rather than the team's interest
- Not listen well enough.



High 'I' Outstanding Characteristics

The primary interest for someone with a high I profile is people. They make social contacts easily and are at ease with others developing friendships very quickly. They are sociable, enthusiastic, outgoing and gregarious. Interested in the feelings and emotions of others they readily strike up conversations with strangers as if they were old friends. They are natural persuaders, they easily influence people to their way of thinking. They naturally stimulate and motivate others and believe they can easily persuade people to do what they want.

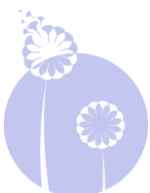
They are natural optimists and will generally see something good in the bleakest of circumstances.

The person with high I behaviours takes pride in their extensive circle of contacts and is happy to be involved with or promote the projects of others. Engagement with too many projects may distract them from their own business and personal goals. They are likely to join societies and associations to satisfy their need to interact with others.

High I behaviours may be superficial and not very deep with those with whom they are in contact. However, this also reflects their open, trusting nature. They can sometimes make decisions based upon a surface analysis of the facts and even be impulsive, jump to conclusions or overestimate the abilities of others.

People with a high I style will be in their element in areas requiring them to be poised, polished and to exhibit their strong people skills. They have a fear of being left out or rejected by others. This will lead them, whether in their personal life or at work, to try not to turn people against themselves. For example, they may be uncomfortable disciplining people whom they manage as they prefer to maintain friendly relationships.

They can be disorganised – favouring people over paperwork and are motivated by a feeling of fun and enjoyment, as well as the experiences that interaction with others can bring. They are expressive, using as they do emotion and gestures to persuade and influence, and show enthusiasm in an outward way for everything that they do.



High 'I' Motivational Wants & Needs

The following points may be keys to successfully inspiring the person with high I behaviours:

Wants:

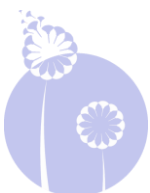
- Popularity and social recognition
- Public recognition of their abilities and achievements – or the chance to gain it
- To have people around to talk to
- Social activities outside work
- Democratic relationships
- Freedom from control, details and data; or assistance in these areas
- Praise and 'psychic income'
- Identification with the company and with other people
- A favourable, easy-going work environment

Needs:

- Better time planning
- To take a more logical view of things
- More emphasis on enhancing the 'bottom line'
- A supervisor who is democratic
- To have some contacts in high places
- More control of emotions and gestures
- To be more direct and urgent
- Analysed data (for reference purposes)
- Closer supervision, and control of performance
- To be more precise and more focused in putting forward views and opinions

When under pressure people with high I behaviours may:

- Prefer popularity over tangible results/hard decisions
- Oversell or be unrealistic
- Let their heart rule their head
- Be inconsistent or situational listeners
- Take things at face value/not pay attention to detail
- Be unrealistic in appraising people or their abilities
- Trust people unconditionally
- Find time planning difficult.



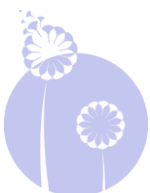
High 'S' Outstanding Characteristics

People with high S behaviours are often friendly in a neighbourly sort of way but are still emotionally guarded, preferring close, intimate relationships with a small circle of contacts. They are often willing to help, and to serve others.

They are happy working in a structured system where they can follow through and complete their work with the minimum of interruption. They like the familiar and change to their environment may make them feel uncomfortable especially if change is unexpected or sudden. They are comfortable and feel secure when identifying as part of a group, a team, they feel like family. They are often possessive of and protective towards that family, making sure that they have the resources they need and are safe from conflict so that people can work harmoniously together.

They prefer to work in a relaxed, systematic and methodical manner using tried and trusted methods and are uncomfortable when asked to complete work at an unrealistic pace. However, they rarely show those emotions, appearing relaxed or undemonstrative even though they may be experiencing internal stress or conflict. As a result, they may put up with or conceal grievances rather than openly confronting an issue and being open to potential conflict.

Being reliable is a major factor of high S behaviour. People who know them or work with them know they can depend on them. People with the high S style make good team workers. They readily co-operate with others and are loyal to their team mates. They are not easily triggered and contribute well to good team working. Their patient, reliable nature means they are content doing necessary routine work, according to their level, as they see it is necessary.



High 'S' Motivational Wants & Needs

The following points may be keys to successfully inspiring the person with high S behaviours:

Wants:

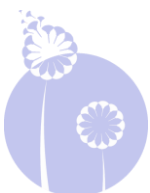
- As little change as possible, and to know the reasons behind change
- Security
- A harmonious life outside work
- People to be sincere and honest with them
- To be appreciated and cared for
- To work with procedures that are tried and trusted
- Limited territory
- Time to accept, and adjust to change
- Close identification with the company
- To be sincerely recognised for his or her hard work

Needs:

- To be informed when change is forthcoming
- Reward – in tangible terms
- To connect - be introduced, when meeting new people or groups
- To be broken in slowly to new activities, and to change
- A deep approach, as opposed to a superficial one
- Reassurance, and interest to be shown to them as people
- Packaged presentation
- To feel that accomplishments have been worthwhile
- Quality products that can be trusted
- Associates who are competent
- To be able to complete what they have started

When under pressure people with high S behaviours may:

- Resist or minimise change, prefer the way things are
- When change occurs, take a long time to adapt
- Have trouble meeting deadlines
- Need help/reassurance before starting new projects
- Await directions rather than take initiative
- Take things too much to heart/hold grudges.



High 'C' Outstanding Characteristics

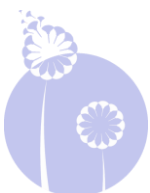
Someone with a high C style will think in an analytical, detail-oriented way where they can gather information and minimise risk or error. They like a feeling of stability and to have an ordered life. Attention to detail is a strength of this style. Dependence on detail, as well as policies and procedures, may be a possible overextension of the High C.

They have a great need to be precise and accurate and their need to get it right means they are unlikely to deviate from previously successful methods, or from methods where they know they are right and are often comfortable creating or following procedures in life and at work.

They appreciate a peaceful environment and often go to great lengths to avoid confrontation or aggression. Depending on their position they may do this by complying and following the rules rather than confronting or challenging. Similarly, they are not aggressive and avoid imposing themselves on others. Their dislike of confrontation generally causes people with high C styles to act with tact and diplomacy. They feel comfortable when they conform to standards, traditions, policies and procedures.

They often prefer to get on with their work, even be in the background rather than center-stage but they appreciate and stand up for the quality of their work being recognised. They can have a sensitive nature and be sensitive to (real or perceived) criticism. They will often defend their position if their correctness is challenged. They are likely to do this using facts, details and information which they are efficient at gathering - they do not like being proved to be wrong or incorrect.

People with a high C style have a strong desire to check information and details before they make decisions. They are often cautious and conservative in the things they do, showing a need to do things correctly and avoid mistakes. Faster-moving people may believe that they act too slowly, but the person with the high C style is comfortable with longer term planning, getting everything ready for the time to take action when all the resources are ready and plans have been perfected.



High 'C' Motivational Wants & Needs

The following points may be keys to successfully inspiring the person with high C behaviour:

Wants:

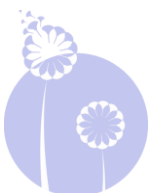
- Standard policies and procedures as a 'rule book' for all to follow
- Safety; protection or removal from aggression or confrontation
- Reassurance that he or she is doing a good job
- To feel a part of things
- One-on-one attention
- Not to be given too much responsibility outwith their area of expertise
- To know there are people around who appreciate the quality of their work
- Information, data and details; factual proof

Needs:

- Work involving precision and details
- The goals set by them, or for them, to be realistic
- To exhibit more confidence and self-esteem
- A wider, more far-reaching view
- Backup support
- All to be clarified and explained; not to be unsure of things
- To identify more with the team
- Not to be overly concerned about details
- To show disagreement when it is called for
- To be introduced to new people
- To be encouraged to be less dependent
- Precise, exact description of tasks

When under pressure people with high C behaviours may:

- Depend on supervision or avoid responsibility
- Hesitate to act without precedent, policies or procedures
- Analyse too much, need full explanations
- Be too factual in expressing ideas
- Become defensive rather than persuasive
- Be too critical of themselves and others.



How do DISC styles profile work in a team?

What is the predominant DISC style in my team?

Effective teams can have different structures. A balanced team may represent all four behavioural styles. However, a team created for high performance in a niche area may be dominated by one particular behavioural style. Individuals within such a team may feel challenged if their style differs from this.

Equally a team with a strongly biased style may need to adapt their communication style to interact with other, different teams.

A predominantly High D style:

Rewards: independence, decisiveness, directness, results, success

Criticises: hesitation, weakness, over-analysis, over-sensitivity

Does your group

- take time to properly evaluate risks?
- waste time with power struggles?
- pay attention to emotional needs of other members?

A predominantly High I style:

Rewards: creativity, enthusiasm, optimism, collaboration

Criticises: rule-making, caution, insensitivity, introversion

Does your group

- follow-through on good ideas?
- work efficiently?
- spend too much time socialising?

A predominantly High S style:

Rewards: co-operation, team-focus, thoughtfulness, loyalty

Criticises: aggressiveness, disruption, unpredictable or inconsistent behaviour

Does your group

- take enough risks?
- avoid change even when it is needed?
- avoid giving feedback that might be unwelcome?

A predominantly High C style:

Rewards: accuracy, attention to detail, punctuality, consistency

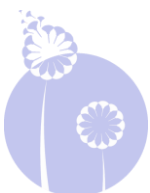
Criticises: mistakes, gut-instinct, incomplete work, over-emotional approaches.

Does your group

- take enough risks?
- balance action with preparation?
- have a social dimension?

Do we need to adapt our communication styles:

- within our team?
- between our teams?
- with key colleagues elsewhere in the organisation?



Going forward?

- How does my personal DISC style help me perform aspects of my role effectively?
- Does this highlight why some things feel more difficult or lead to conflict?
- How can I capitalise on my natural strengths?

(If you don't yet know your personal style you can purchase an online test...)

Within our team...

- **What are our preferences/strengths?**
- **What do we need to watch out for – weaknesses/blindspots?**
- **How do we communicate our goals/vision/progress?**
- **How do we work to solve problems?**
- **What have we learned from the past 6 to 12 months?**
 - What has worked well?
 - What could we do better?
- **How can we prepare for the next 6 to 12 months?**
 - What challenges will we face?
 - What opportunities might present?

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