

Know Your Members Working Styles

ToolTip #9
Mar 2003



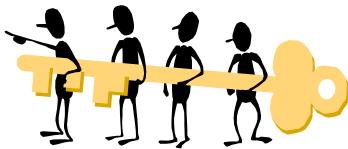
Have you ever tried to work with someone on a committee but could not understand their priorities? Or, have you ever clearly given instructions about a task but find out later that it wasn't done because someone had misinterpreted what you said? If you answered "yes" to these questions, maybe your working style is different than those you don't understand. On the reverse side, there is a summary of a "profiling system" that outlines four working styles. See which one fits you. Then see how you can better work with others. Here is a guide to follow.

FIRST IDENTIFY YOUR OWN WORKING STYLE.



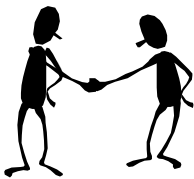
Although outlines of four working styles are presented here, to fully identify your style, you may want to take the full "DiSK" profile test. The descriptions provided here will give you some understanding of your style and how it relates to others. See if you recognize yourself!

THEN, INCREASE YOUR APPRECIATION OF DIFFERENT WORK STYLES.



As you understand your own working style, the next step is to recognize and appreciate other's styles. This is an important key to knowing how to effectively work with your members. What are their needs? What motivates them? How can their strengths add to the team efforts? What are the key working styles that are needed for any project? Usually, a good team needs a little bit of every working style to be most effective.

AND, IDENTIFY & MINIMIZE POTENTIAL CONFLICTS WITH OTHERS.



Working style profiles can help you minimize conflicts with others by first helping you understand and respect the value of others, laying a good foundation for solid working relationship and then secondly, by better understanding the other person's needs. Some tips for the different styles are found on the other side. Maybe the next time the room is full of people with a working style that just want to get the job done ("D's" perhaps), you will take time to account for others. Maybe you will write items on a big flip chart so that the "S's" and the "C's" will be comfortable that details are not forgotten. You also might limit the amount of time each person can talk in the meeting but provide a social "break time" to accommodate those talkative "I's".

BASIC DISK WORKING STYLES

D = DOMINANCE

A "D" wants to get things done quickly and will sometimes run over people in doing so. They tend to take a direct, aggressive approach which may result in "I win/you lose" situations. They thrive on new opportunities and challenges.

Communication Tips:

- Use direct, to-the-point communication without a lot of social chatter
- Check at the end of the discussion to make sure everything was heard.

Resolving Conflicts:

- Avoid "right/wrong" debates by stating your differences without judgement.
- Ask them what is necessary to have a win/win solution.
- Wrap up the discussion by stating what each person has committed to do.

To Create a Positive Climate:

- Accept their need for variety and change.
- Let them direct the efforts of others.
- Provide choices for activities.

I = INFLUENCE

An "I" is your quintessential "people person". They will always take time to talk and put people's feelings ahead of "getting the job done". They are sometimes disorganized and are not great with details.

Communication Tips:

- Use informal, open discussions in social environments.
- Provide opportunities to share stories and ideas.
- Use two-way dialogues in responding to their feelings.

Resolving Conflicts:

- An "I" will avoid direct, open conflict so recognize their discomfort with conflict or loss of approval.
- State the issue factually without criticism of them.
- Limit their attempts to minimize the problem or sidetrack the discussion.

To Create a Positive Climate:

- Provide opportunities to interact positively with others.
- Allow time for verbalizing their thoughts, feelings, ideas
- Assist them in following up on details
- Provide enthusiastic, verbal recognition.

S = STEADINESS

An "S" is a team player and will cooperate with others to carry out the task. They tend to appreciate security and do not handle change well. Patience is an 'S' virtue

Communication Tips:

- Provide regular opportunities for informal discussions
- Draw out information about their concerns, worries or conflicts with others.
- Initiate discussions in a friendly, low-key manner.

Resolving Conflicts:

- An "S" will avoid aggression, hostility or conflict so draw out uncomfortable issues by asking open-ended questions (how, what, where, when).
- State the need to resolve the conflict in order to maintain stability and harmony in the relationship.
- Ask them what they would need to resolve the issue in a way that was reasonable and effective.

To Create a Positive Climate:

- Acknowledge how their efforts are helpful to others.
- Provide opportunities to cooperate with others.
- When suggesting change, lay out a step-by-step plan.
- Let them direct the efforts of others.

C = CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

A "C" is a perfectionist. They systematically take care of details. They are logical and want to make sure all of the steps, all of the details are defined before moving on.

Communication Tips:

- Use formal communication in new situations, avoiding personal questions.
- Use logical statements rather than emotional expressions.
- Check for points of disagreement or misunderstanding.

Resolving Conflicts:

- A "C" tends to initially withdraw from open conflict but may become defensive or aggressive.
- Recognize their need to think about the situation before responding & schedule a time for a follow-up discussion.
- Ask what they would need to resolve a conflict on a "win/win" basis.

To Create a Positive Climate:

- Provide opportunities to demonstrate their expertise
- Accept their need to be "right" & have discomfort with mistakes
- Provide situations where a systematic approach helps.