

Work Styles aka Communication Styles - Handout

Emotive Style

People whose dominant style is emotive often engage in action-oriented behavior as they talk. It's all about speed. They may talk rapidly, appear to be constantly on the go, and use vigorous hand gestures to express their views. Emotive individuals often prefer informality and like to be on a first-name basis. The emotive person will tend to share personal views openly. Emotive communicators possess a natural persuasiveness, and can be dramatic and forceful when trying to convince others of their views. They may also communicate in colorful, highly individual ways, using words and analogies in an idiosyncratic, poetic, and artistic manner.

To others, they may appear flighty, unfocused, or illogical. To more reserved thinkers, the open expression of affect, particularly anger, may be perceived as overly forceful and uncomfortable.

Other common attributes: Have a short attention span, thrive on chaos with concentrated bursts of energy (a deadline means "I need to get started!"), think out loud (talk to themselves), skilled at nodding "uh-huh" but have already checked out, hate details (like manuals and rules) but like gadgets, and answers emails as soon as they're written. Their strength: Naturally intuitive and convincing. Best career: Sales, entrepreneurs, trainers, and artists. Their secret: Fear of being controlled.

Reflective Style

The term "reflective" describes people who fully and thoughtfully consider all information before expressing an opinion or coming to a decision. They do not seem to be in a hurry, and they often exhibit emotional control. Reflective communicators tend to express their opinions in a formal and deliberate manner. They prefer orderliness, and often show other traits of compulsivity, such as preferring elaborate detail and organization. They appreciate agendas, and tend to review and fully consider details prior to making decisions.

To others, they may appear preoccupied and, at times, unresponsive. Others may see them as withdrawn, stalling, being unwilling or unable to act, or resistive to dialogue.

Other common attributes: Love details (including manuals and rules), lists and predictability (keep a meticulous calendar), hate to be late or lost, and save emails with the "keep as new" button. Their strength: The job will be done correctly. Best career: Accountants, researchers, and computer programmers. Their secret: Fear of being out of control.

Directive Style

People using the directive style often project a serious attitude and an all-business, no nonsense approach when communicating. They tend to express strong opinions, use firm gestures, and speak in determined voice tones. They often project the image of someone who wants to take control of a given situation. They are task oriented, and they tend to communicate logically and cognitively, often without

consideration of the interpersonal and social needs of others. They may also be uncomfortable being informal with co-workers.

Others may perceive them as autocratic, dictatorial, and devoid of sensitivity or concern. They are often accused of not being much fun. They may be perceived as indifferent because they may not project warmth or interpersonal niceties. They may be accused of not hearing the feelings or needs of other people, but others know where they stand.

Other common attributes: Not impressed by titles--only competence--challenge ideas but don't mean it personally, define self by the task, won't answer the "how are you question" sincerely, don't like to deal with emotions (or emotional people). Emails are to the point! Their strength is that they get the job done. Best career: Managers, politicians, engineers, and strategic planners. Their secret: Fear that people will find out they're not as competent as people think they are.

Supportive Style

Supportives tend to listen attentively, which is a unique advantage in many work situations. They often will avoid the use of power and rely on friendly persuasion to convince people of their view. They prefer to display warmth and cooperation in their communications. Supportives often express opinions in a thoughtful and deliberate manner, with considerable attention to the manner in which they are expressing them. They appear to be low-key in decision-making, because the supporter will often prefer and encourage consensus or group decisions. Relationships are key, the task is secondary.

Others may see them as "wishy-washy," unable or unwilling to take a stand or express a firm opinion. Because they are relationship oriented, they may not express their personal views or opinions in a firm, unequivocal manner. They are often the agency's "Dear Abby," however, and often have food or candy in a nicely decorated office (probably including photographs of friends or family).

Other common attributes: Touchers, huggers and resident "counselors." They may not have good filters to know who to trust, however, and can sometimes get burned. Their emails are personal and lovely letters. Their strength: Very people oriented. Best career: Helping professions. Their secret: Fear that people will find out they are not really as nice as people think they are.

Summary

This presentation is in no way meant to totally categorize or limit the very complicated work styles that all people possess. Obviously, genetics, family, education, gender roles, and culture play a part in influencing the preferred work style. There do, however, consistently seem to be four work styles that represent dominant preferences of most people in communicating and working with others. It is said that if 100 people are placed in a room, 90 of them will display one of these four styles as a dominant style. To prevent miscommunication because of conflicts in style, individuals must understand their own preferred styles as well as how they may be perceived by persons with different styles.

There is no right or wrong style. People do tend to work best with those whose communication style is diagonally across from them, as they compliment each other's strengths. Those same people, however, may get on each other's nerves. Using one's natural style, one's dominant style, gives an individual energy. Using an unnatural style tires a person. When a person gets angry, he or she often reverts to his or her diagonally opposite style (like the evil twin). Suggestion: Individuals shouldn't try to communicate with a person who is angry because he is not really himself.

*Source: Carolyn Gellerman, The Boeing Company