

# Identify the different styles of communication

Efficiency in communication depends on the speaker's and listener's capacity to understand each other's personalities. Often, two people from the same culture, speaking the same language and pursuing the same goal, do not manage to understand each other or worse, come into conflict. You need to understand the reasons why to be able to do something about it.



## Identify your style of communication

Being aware of your dominant style of communication puts you in a position to tailor your approach to your audience. There are four main styles of communication, which correspond to four different ways of functioning. Your style of communication as a rule reflects the driving force in your life.

### Is action your driving force?

If you are “action” oriented:

- You're straight to the point and enjoy setting yourself challenges. You prefer immediate action over thought and then action. In other words, you cut straight to the chase!
- You're impatient;
- Your speech is peppered with goals to be achieved and tangible results. You never lose sight of your objectives.
- You have a distinct preference for concrete projects with visible and measurable benefits in the short term;
- Your strengths are speed, responsiveness, a will to win and an ability to grasp situations;
- *You need to be careful about:* situations that require forward planning, because you risk being too hasty and shooting at the wrong target.

### Is method your driving force?

If you are “method” oriented:

- You enjoy having clear goals to aim for and an exact methodology to follow;
- You're a reserved type of person: you tend to think things through very carefully, and analyze problems logically. You're cautious, sometimes even wary. You weigh up the pros and cons before committing yourself;
- You express yourself in terms of facts and recognized procedures;
- You've a distinct preference for projects with a structure. You're a firm believer in the benefits of planning, organization and control. Any form of scientific demonstration of fact will arouse your interest;
- Your strengths are meticulousness, logical thinking, and a strong analytical mind;
- *You need to be careful about:* situations that require a creative approach, because you risk closing doors by being overzealous.

### Are interpersonal relations your driving force?

If you are “people” oriented:

- You like talking with other people about how they see things. You strive to meet the needs of others;
- You’re a warm-hearted and spontaneous type of person, and you seek out human contact. You tend to focus on your relations with others rather than the task at hand. You’re understanding of others, and you enjoy helping people;
- You’re quick to talk about your feelings and emotions, and you’re not shy about talking to the people around you. Your favorite words include “love,” “hate,” “needs,” “emotions,” “aspirations”;
- Your favorite projects involve teamwork, and you feel best when working with others;
- *You need to be careful about:* spreading yourself too thinly, and losing sight of your priorities by being too enthusiastic.

### Are ideas your driving force?

If you are “ideas” oriented:

- You enjoy playing around with new ideas, being creative, and trying out new approaches. You’re imaginative and often off-beat;
- You’re a bit of an extrovert, and you enjoy getting people to react. You seek out the best opportunities to promote your ideas and projects. You’re a firm believer in innovation and grand ambitions;
- You enjoy talking about your work and you’re forceful in your manner of speaking. You enjoy capturing your audience’s attention, and you’re good at it. You focus discussions on the future;
- The projects you enjoy the most are the ones that require a wholly new approach. You enjoy being the first one to come up with an idea!
- *You need to be careful about:* getting on the wrong side of your audience by failing to listen to and take on board their needs.

## Identify your audience’s communication style

Having all four styles within a team is an advantage, as long as you know how to reconcile them. Once you have decided which style is yours, you need to analyze the style of your audience.

### Sum up their character

Think of someone you see on a regular basis. It could be a friend, a colleague, your manager, or a team member. Ask yourself what is the general feeling you get from that person. Are they:

- Pragmatic? Interested in facts and figures? (*Action-oriented*)
- Structured? Interested in cause and effect? (*Method-oriented*)
- Spontaneous? (*People-oriented*)
- Expansive, or even egocentric? (*Ideas-oriented*).

### Look at how they approach a problem

Thinking about the same people, ask yourself what they focus on when they describe a problem. Is it:

- Failings and possible solutions? (*Action-oriented*)
- Causes and effects? (*Method-oriented*)
- Human aspects? (*People-oriented*)
- How the problem is likely to evolve, and possible alternative solutions? (*Ideas-oriented*).

### Adapt your communication style

If you need to convince that person, ask yourself if you should:

- Summarize your main points and then conclude swiftly? (*Action-oriented*)
- Introduce your project methodically, point by point? (*Method-oriented*)
- Get them on board by asking for their advice? (*People-oriented*)
- Feed their imagination and flatter their ego? (*Ideas-oriented*)

### Don't forget the context of the conversation

You can learn lots of things in the course of a conversation about the expectations and attitudes of your audience. You need to be alert to these clues. This is even more important when you're dealing with people you don't know. You can't anticipate how they're going to react, as you can with your colleagues. So, you need to be aware of any pointers the context may provide.

Be aware of:

- The roles and responsibilities of your audience will tell you the angle they will see a problem from.  
*For instance, a CFO is obviously going to see things from a financial angle.*
- How questions are worded. You need to respond using the same register.