**SOCIAL STYLES**

**Impact of Styles on Communication & Interpersonal Skills**

A critical component of developing effective communication and interpersonal skills is understanding our personal style and the styles of others whom we are interacting with. Often communication or relationship breakdowns happen as a result of style differences. Each one of us has a unique style that directly impacts the way we understand and perceive the world around us. You have probably heard the saying “perception is reality”, and every person’s perception is different! The act of simply “being” with others can be interesting and challenging at the same time – the way we see ourselves isn’t always the way others see us and vice-versa.

Imagine the difference in the quality of our relationships, if we actually took the time to observe and understand social styles – beginning with ourselves and then focusing on the behaviors of others. At a sub-conscious level, we are often drawn to people with similar styles because it is familiar and comfortable. In order to build strong communication and interpersonal skills, we must step out of our comfort zone and seek to understand styles that are different – especially the ones that make us feel uncomfortable or even defensive at times.

The key to building and maintaining quality relationships rests on our ability to make others feel comfortable or at ease. You can use your knowledge of social styles to adapt your behavior and enhance the ways you communicate with others. Communication is been defined as “the transfer of information” – sounds relatively simple, yet there is nothing simple about it. Albert Mehrabian, a professor from the University of California determined that “effectiveness of communication is based on three factors:

* 7 percent of the effectiveness of communication is based on the words that we use.
* 38 percent of the effectiveness is based on the way we say the words we choose.
* 55 percent of effectiveness is based on on nonverbal cues, such as facial expression.”

(Mehrabian’s Communication Theory. Retrieved from https://www.businessballs.com/communication-skills/mehrabians-communication-theory-verbal-non-verbal-body-language).

**Social Styles**

Over the years, there has been a vast amount of research done on communication and personal styles.

According to Wilson Learning Group, social styles are based on observable behaviors that can be grouped into four general social styles: Analyticals, Drivers, Expressives and Amiables. In order to identify your own social style, complete the following questionnaire.

***\*\* Social Style Questionnaire goes here***

**Description of Social Styles**

**(Wilson Learning, 2004, 2011, Chapters 13 to 16)**

***Ricardo / Gurdas – can you please put this information into a chart format?***

**Analyticals**

***Social Style:*** Detail-oriented. Deliberate. Well-organized. Listens to and studies information carefully before weighing all alternatives. Lets others take the social initiative. Prefers an efficient, businesslike approach. Prefers information presented in a systematic manner. Conservative and practical in business decisions. Technically oriented. Relies on structural approach and factual evidence.

***Observable Behaviors****:* Reserved. Few gestures. Proper speech. Formal posture and appearance. Listens well. Deliberate rate of speech.

***Work Style:*** Fairly independent. Follows structured approaches.

***Attitude about Time:*** Take time to deal with matters objectively and logically. Move with deliberation.

***Attitude about Others:*** Relationships take time to develop, and someone else will probably make the initial effort to make a new contact.

***Strengths:*** Excellent problem solvers who create and find solutions because they rely on facts and logic

***Weaknesses:*** Can be overly critical and picky. They can belabor information gathering to the point of being indecisive.

***Behavior Under Stress:*** Avoids directly confronting the issue at hand.

**Drivers**

***Social Style****:* Businesslike. Results-oriented. Likely to take charge and take initiative. Likes challenges. Makes quick decisions. Direct and to the point. Strong opinions and convictions. Hard-working. Efficient. Confident and competent. Productively coordinates the work of others. Likely to challenge new ideas. Quick to respond. Inclined to correct, modify or add to other’s ideas. Straightforward. Responsible. Makes things happen.

***Observable Behaviors****:* Serious. Formal posture. Restrained gestures. Rapid speech. Direct. Voice inflection varies little, usually to emphasize a point.

***Work Style:*** Independent

***Attitude about Time:*** Use it efficiently to get desired results

***Attitude about Others:*** Relationships are important but secondary until a task is defined and competency to deal with it is established.

***Strengths:*** Provide clear expectations and produce results efficiently and effectively.

***Weaknesses:*** Can be pushy, controlling and don’t always listen to or value the opinions of others

***Behavior Under Stress:*** Autocratic – not taking into account other’s wishes or opinions

**Amiables**

***Social Style:*** Quiet. Unassuming. Supportive. Warm. Friendly listeners. Easy to get along with. Enjoys personal contact. Shares responsibility. Concerned about collaboration, providing support, reaching agreement. Requires extensive data for decision-making. Prefers to have consensus before moving ahead. Often focuses on personal ties before goals.

**Observable Behaviors:** Warm, friendly and open. Relaxed posture. Slow speech. Pleasant and soft voice. Open and eager facial expressions.

***Attitude about Time:*** Take time to establish relationships and to make steady progress through a slow, sure pace.

**Attitude about Others:** People are the most important asset in any project and collaborating with others is the best way to get things done.

***Strengths:*** They have natural skills for coaching, counselling and helping others. They provide support and positive strokes for other people’s work and accomplishments. They are loyal and dedicated to those they work with.

***Weaknesses:*** They can appear to be overly sensitive and emotional. They can emphasize relationships to the point it may be perceived as interfering with tasks or deadlines.

***Behavior Under Stress:*** Accepts reluctantly without protest

**Expressives**

***Social Style:*** Energetic. Inspiring. Emotional. Fast paced. Comfortable taking social initiative. Engages freely in friendly conversation before tackling tasks. Futuristic. Talkative. Intuitive. Willingly shares ideas, insights, dreams and visions. Risk-taker. Competitive. Spirited. Creative. Enthusiastic. Likes an audience. Ambitious.

***Observable Behaviors:*** Energetic and enthusiastic. Gestures that are open and wide. Voice that is loud and varied. Fast-paced and lively.

***Work Style:*** With others

***Attitude about Time:*** Move fast but spend time energizing others, sharing visions, dreams and ideas.

***Strengths:***  Create excitement and involvement. They share vision and ideas. The motivate and inspire others and make people feel good about themselves.

***Weaknesses:*** They can be overly excitable and impulsive. They can sometimes overlook facts and be overly dependent on feelings and intuition. They can loose track of important details.

***Behavior Under Stress:*** Verbally attacks

**Social Styles Exercises:**

* Based on the results of the Social Styles Questionnaire, provide a detailed example of when your social style has benefited you (SAR: situation/action/result) in your work, academic or personal life.
* Describe a situation where you experienced tension or unease working with a style that was different from your own. With your new knowledge of social styles, how would you approach the same situation today to achieve better results?