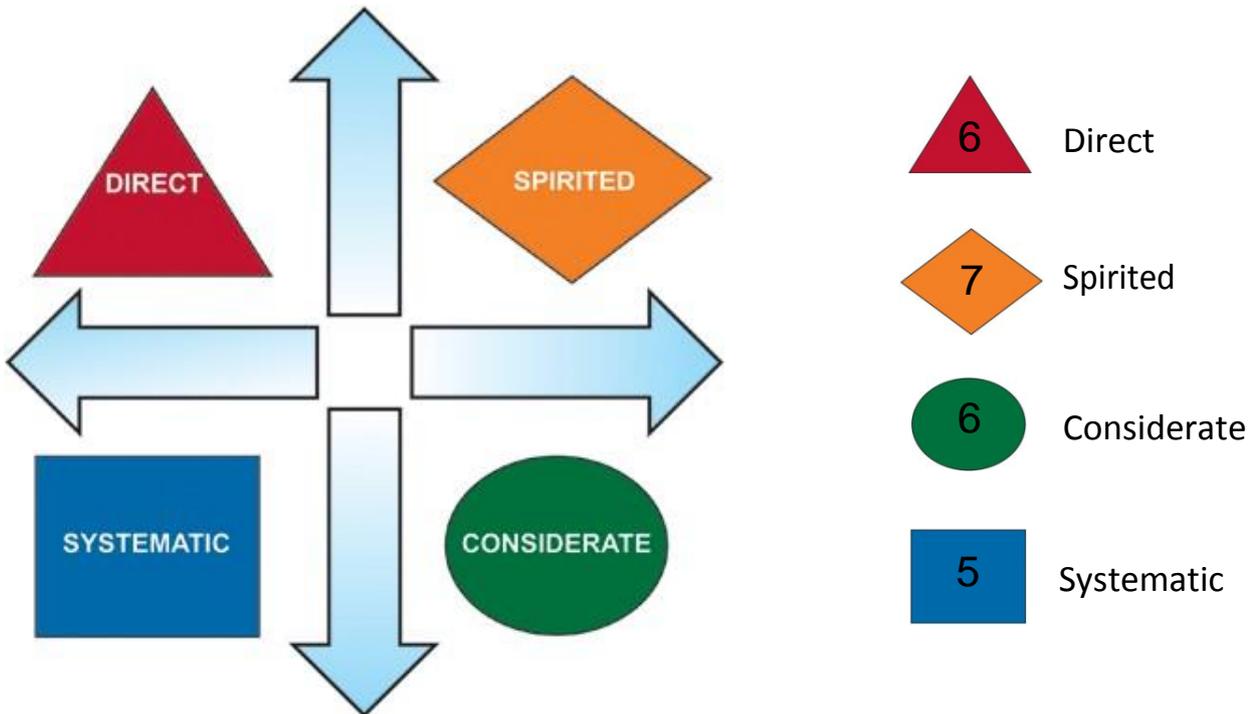


Communication Style Profile



What Is Communication Style?

Most people think of communication as a verbal or written exchange between two or more people. However, you will discover that it is far more complex than this simple perception. In addition to what we say, communication involves how we say it, what our body language conveys, and even how we organize our personal space.

Four Types of Communication

What's My Communication Style? focuses on four different forms of communication: verbal, paraverbal, body language, and personal space. Each of these elements adds a layer of complexity to communication.

Verbal

You have complete control over the words you use in a statement, but the meaning of those words may not be shared by the person with whom you are speaking. Differences in age, experience, and background can result in differing interpretations of the same statement. The better you understand both your own style and the styles of others, the better you can adapt your communication.

Paraverbal

It is not just the words you say but also the way you say them that communicates meaning. This is called paraverbal communication and it includes how quickly one speaks and pauses, as well as voice tone and intensity. Paraverbal cues help you interpret the meaning of what someone is saying. Without these cues, you would be unable to interpret speech forms such as sarcasm. Taking turns in conversation is also determined by paraverbal cues. When someone trails off or lowers his voice, that can be a sign it is the other party's turn to speak. Like verbal communication, a mismatch of styles can make interpretation more difficult, and consequently, understanding communication styles can enhance reception.

Body Language

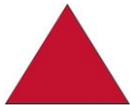
The way you stand, shake hands, and maintain eye contact are all forms of body language that communicate meaning to others. Body language can communicate attentiveness, emotions, and reactions. Facial expressions are another form of body language. The cliché "It's written all over your face" says it all: your facial expressions can reveal your true response to what someone says even before you formulate a response in words. Body language is also heavily influenced by your communication style. Preferences for eye contact, gesturing, and touch are usually quite pronounced and it is easier to read another person's body language message if you know his/her style.

Personal Space

The final type of communication is the use of personal space, which includes not only the space between you and others, but also your personal appearance, your choice of decorations, and how you arrange your workspace. Interpersonal distance, or how close people are physically to one another, has been studied extensively, and researchers have outlined four zones of interpersonal distance: intimate, personal, social, and public. How close you prefer to be to others in all of these zones is a function of your communication style. Whether your work or home space is cluttered or neat, organized or disorganized is also a function of your communication style.

Four Types of Communication,

All four forms of communication play a role in our ability to send messages. Verbal communication is the most easily controlled form, but it is important to think about how you use the other forms of communication and how others are interpreting your messages. It is beneficial to understand these forms of communication as a receiver of messages in order to better understand the sender's intent and motivations. The chart below shows how each communication style influences the different forms of communication.

	 DIRECT	 SPIRITED	 CONSIDERATE	 SYSTEMATIC
Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n decisive n direct speech n doesn't stop to say hello 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n generalizes n persuasive n expresses opinions readily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n listens n close, personal language n supportive language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n precise language n avoids emotions n focuses on specific details
Paraverbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n speaks quickly n loud tones n formal speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n loud tones n animated n lots of voice inflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n speaks slowly n soft tones n patient speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n even delivery n brief speech n little vocal variety
Body Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n direct eye contact n bold visual appearance n firm handshake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n quick actions n lots of body movement n enthusiastic handshake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n slow movement n likes hugging n gentle handshake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n poker face n avoids touching n controlled movement
Personal Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n keeps physical distance n work space suggests power n displays planning calendars in work space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n cluttered workspace n personal slogans in office n likes close physical space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n family pictures in workspace n likes side-by-side seating n carries sentimental items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n a strong sense of personal space n charts, graphs in office n tidy desktop

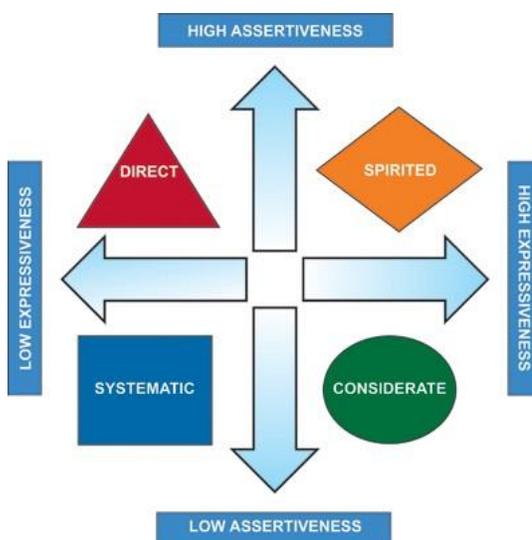
Two Dimensions of Communication Style

Although each individual is unique, there are categorical commonalities in personality style as reflected in how we communicate. Your personality style is determined by your level of *assertiveness* and *expressiveness*.

Assertiveness is the effort that a person makes to influence or control the thoughts or actions of others. People who are assertive *tell* others how things should be and are task-oriented, active, and confident. People who are less assertive *ask* others how things should be and are process-oriented, deliberate, and attentive.

Expressiveness is the effort that a person makes to control his emotions when relating to others. People who are expressive display their emotions and are versatile, sociable, and demonstrative. People who are less expressive control their emotions and are focused, independent, and private.

The various combinations of the degrees of assertiveness and expressiveness result in four possible styles: *Direct*, *Spirited*, *Considerate*, and *Systematic*. The styles shown in the illustration below, are the basis of the HRDQ Style Model.



Although many people have a clearly dominant communication style, others communicate using several styles, perhaps using different styles in different situations. However, because communication takes many forms (e.g., language, facial expressions), some participants' scores might indicate greater communication flexibility.

If your dominant style score is below 9, you are probably comfortable using more than one style to communicate. If your scores indicate that you have two equally dominant styles, you probably communicate with both comfortably, perhaps switching back and forth between styles depending on the situation.

If you have three or more equally scored styles, you might communicate with all of these styles comfortably. However, it is fairly uncommon for a person to be completely comfortable using three or more communication styles, and if you suspect your scores may not be reflective of your actual communication behavior, use the charts throughout this guide to clarify your preferred style(s).

Communication Style Strengths

Each communication style has definite strengths. Knowledge of your strengths allows you to draw on them as needed and to find situations in which your strengths are a benefit. Knowledge of the strengths of others allows you to anticipate their reactions and adapt your style to respond appropriately.

Directions: Place a checkmark beside each behavior that best describes your behavior. Use the lines below to list additional positive behaviors you demonstrate.



Direct

Direct people take charge of their lives. You prefer to be in control and you are decisive in your actions. Direct people thrive on competition. You enjoy the challenge of a fight but enjoy the win even more. You maintain a fast pace as you work single-mindedly on your goals. Direct people are good in positions of authority that require independence. You possess strong leadership skills and get things done. You are not afraid to take risks to get what you want.

Gets to the bottom line

Speaks forcefully

Maintains eye contact

Presents position strongly

Prefers to be in control

Tends to be decisive

Thrives on competition

Likes to take risks

Others: _____



Spirited

Spirited people are enthusiastic and friendly. You prefer to be around other people and thrive in the spotlight. You are able to generate motivation and excitement in others because of your positive focus and lively nature. Spirited people work at a fast pace because they prefer stimulation, and are well suited to high-profile positions in which public presentations are important. You are a spontaneous person who is quick and takes decisive action. You excel at building alliances and using relationships to accomplish work.

Likes to be persuasive

Tends to be a good storyteller

Focuses on the big picture

Uses motivational speech

Prefers to be with other people

Works at a fast pace

Builds strong alliances

Generates enthusiasm

Others: _____

Communication Style Strengths, Continued



Considerate

Considerate people value warm, personal relationships. You have good counseling skills, and others come to you because you are a good listener. Considerate people are cooperative and enjoy being part of a team. You are reliable and steady, and you are always aware of others' feelings. You work best in an environment in which teamwork is essential. You are well suited for any profession that requires you to care for others.

q Listens well

q Is a good counselor

q Uses supportive language

q Builds trust

q Values relationships

q Enjoys being part of a team

q Cares for others

q Tends to be reliable and steady

Others:



Systematic

Systematic people are accurate and objective. You prefer to make decisions based on facts, not emotions. Systematic people rely on data and are excellent problem solvers. You tend to be persistent in your analyses, maintaining a critical focus throughout your work. Systematic people are orderly and prefer to work in an organized environment with clear guidelines. You thrive in task-oriented positions that require independent work.

q Presents precisely

q Seeks information

q Speaks efficiently

q Has a well-organized workspace

q Makes decisions based on facts

q Excels at problem solving

q Prefers clear guidelines

q Works independently

Others:

Communication Style Trouble Spots

Just as each style has strengths, each style also has potential trouble spots. These trouble spots stem from the simple fact that any good thing can become a problem if taken to an extreme.

Directions: Place a checkmark beside each trouble spot that describes your behavior. Use the lines below to list any other potential trouble spots you tend to exhibit.



Direct

Direct people may cross the line from controlling to overbearing. You like to get things done quickly. However, you might overlook fine details that can lead to mistakes. Direct people are not necessarily good at focusing on feelings, and tend to discount them as unimportant. You tend to view situations as competitive, making those around you uncomfortable and tense. Direct people may become workaholics when their strengths are carried to an extreme.

Is a poor listener

Is impatient with others

Does not heed advice

Likes to argue

Likes to compete

Discounts feelings

Overlooks details

Tends to be a workaholic

Others: _____



Spirited

Spirited people tend to intensify their verbal behavior. You might exaggerate a story for effect or respond to criticism with verbal attacks. You also tend to generalize when outlining an idea, glossing over important details that might diminish enthusiastic support. Spirited people are rarely concerned with deadlines and may not manage their time effectively.

Does not hear details

Tends to exaggerate

Generalizes

Can be overdramatic

Responds poorly to criticism

Glosses over details

Tends to miss deadlines

Does not manage time efficiently

Others: _____

Communication Style Trouble Spots, *Continued*



Considerate

Considerate people tend to avoid change and prefer to do what is comfortable. You dislike conflict, often telling others what you think they want to hear. You have wants and needs that ca linger under the surface until you become resentful. Interactions with others can become tense as a result.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids conflict | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefers what is comfortable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gives in easily | <input type="checkbox"/> Allows own needs to linger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps opinions to oneself | <input type="checkbox"/> Resists change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overemphasizes feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> Tells others what they want to hear |

Others: _____



Systematic

Systematic people may continually seek more information to make them feel confident. Your need for facts and data can delay decision making. You are uncomfortable with emotions and avoid expressing them at all costs. Systematic people tend to put quality and accuracy ahead of feelings, even if it might hurt others, and are often perceived as impersonal.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focuses too much on details | <input type="checkbox"/> Puts accuracy ahead of feelings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fears personal disclosure | <input type="checkbox"/> Tends to be impersonal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can be terse | <input type="checkbox"/> Delays decision making |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uses little variety in vocal tones | <input type="checkbox"/> Does not take risks |

Others: _____

Interacting With Other Communication Styles

Misunderstandings are often a result of style differences. For example, a Spirited person and a Systematic person may have tense interactions because of the different speeds at which they make decisions. Although each of us has a predominant personality style that drives our behavior and our communication, we must learn to be flexible so that we can communicate with people whose personality styles vary from our own. The first step is to learn how to identify another person's style.

How to Speed Read Communication Style

Once you can identify another person's style, you can adapt behavior to accommodate that person. This will make that person feel more at ease, and it helps you both achieve your goals more readily. For example, it will be much easier to convince a Systematic person to accept a decision if you are armed with concrete facts rather than general impressions. Even if you are a Spirited person who prefers general impressions, it will serve you well to be flexible in this situation and offer those details.

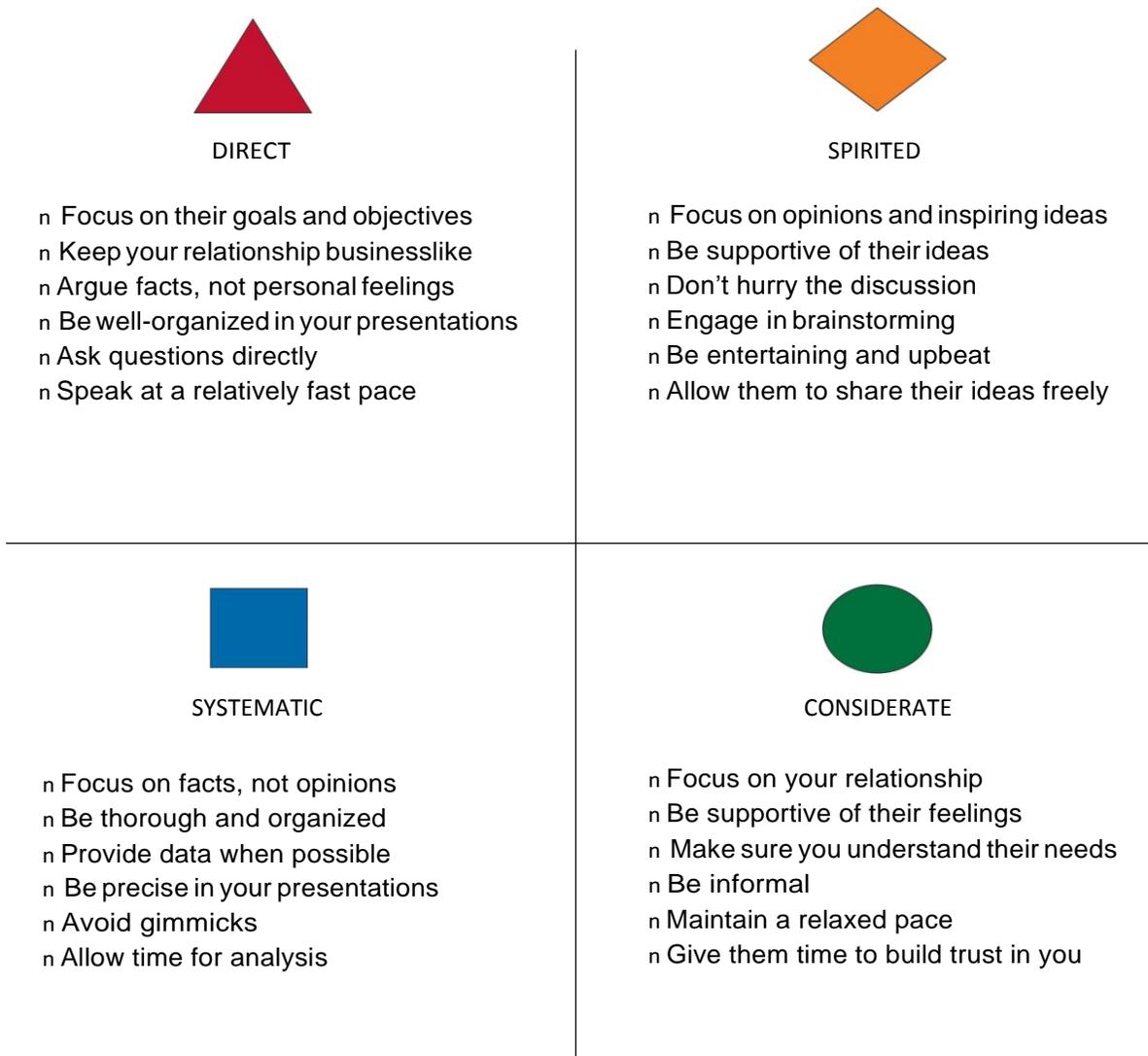
The table below offers some clues that will help you quickly identify another person's communication style:

				
	DIRECT	SPIRITED	CONSIDERATE	SYSTEMATIC
Talking	n Gets to the point	n Tells good stories	n Doesn't offer opinions	n Precise
Listening	n Poor listener	n Doesn't hear details	n Sympathetic listener	n Seeks facts
Handshake	n Firm	n Enthusiastic	n Gentle	n Brief
Personal Space	n Maintains distance	n Likes to be close	n Likes hugging	n Avoids touching
Movement	n Bold	n Quick	n Slow	n Controlled
Workspace	n Suggests power	n Cluttered	n Displays photos	n Tidy

Flexing Your Communication Style

It takes some willingness and effort to expand beyond one's own style to interact with others. It is generally appreciated, however, and may make the difference between success and failure in an interaction.

The chart below provides some tips to help you improve communication with any of the four styles:





Applying What You've Learned, Continued

5. What can you do to control or avoid those potential trouble spots?

6. Which communication styles do you communicate with most effectively?

7. Which communication styles do you communicate with least effectively?

8. What specific challenges do you face in your everyday interactions?

9. What can you do to overcome these challenges now that you understand the importance of communication style?



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