

### **Communication is One of the Keys to Success**

(I want to acknowledge the creator of this assessment.  
If I knew your name, it would appear right here!)

What is your communications style? Do you understand your communications style? Can you identify the communication style of others? “Know thyself” is the first step in learning to communicate effectively with others whose styles differs from your own according to Mitchell L. Winick.

#### **Understanding communication behavior**

It is important to begin a discussion about communication skills with one basic understanding. From Hippocrates all the way through modern industrial psychologists, individuals studying human interaction have agreed that communication behavior follows specific patterns. Hippocrates called these patterns “the four temperaments”. Carl Jung described them using such terms as “intuitor, thinker, feeler, and sensor”.

The Myers-Briggs type indicator, perhaps the best-known personality assessment used in American business, identifies 16 factors such as extroversion, introversion, sensing, intuition, thinking, feeling, judgment, and perception that defined personality types.

Other effective assessments use combinations of colors, animals, birds, and special terms to categorize individual characteristics. Although each of these methods uses different language to describe personality, they all provide the same result, a framework to understand how people are different. These tools are frequently used by consultants and coaches to help clients improve communication in their organizations. However, they can be just as effective in helping consultants improve their own communication with their clients.

#### **Assessing communications style**

A communications style assessment identifies the strengths and weaknesses of your current communications style, compares your style to others, and provides guidelines for improving both written and verbal communication. Such an assessment is a tool to provide insight into how we see ourselves and how we react to other people. It also helps us see how our interaction with others is based on assumptions that may not always be correct. The objective is to achieve a better understanding of differences in communication style in order to improve our effectiveness in communicating with others.

Unfortunately, the biblical “Golden rule” is not necessarily the best approach. If we treat everyone, as we want to be treated, the result is that we are effective only with those who share our communications style. Most behavioral experts agree that this approach limits or communication success rate less than 25%. This type of miscommunication, although unintentional, is likely to be one of the most significant underlying factors in unsuccessful business relationships.

## **Train Thyself**

Just as the shoemaker's children wear no shoes; it is common for business people to go for years without evaluating their own communication style and the impact of that style on relationships. Let's modify an old adage and apply it here: Train Thyself.

Take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire. Then use the accompanying charts to find examples of methods for improving communication with individuals whose communication styles differ from your own. Although the questionnaire is a simple and very basic tool derived from a combination of other assessments, it is a useful reminder that, by investing time in our own skill development, we can significantly improve the most important aspect of success, effective communication.

## **What is your communications style?**

The following questionnaire will help illustrate the differences in individual communication styles. The questions have been selected and modified from several personality inventories. It is important to note that answers to the five questions illustrate different communication styles on a very superficial level. The questionnaire is not intended to serve as a personality assessment. As complex individuals, none of us can be accurately characterized by five questions in four basic categories. However, even this simple approach can be effectively used as a training tool to improve communication skills.

After you have completed the questionnaire, review the issues related to your basic communication style summarized in the chart on the next page. Although it is natural to assume that we all have the same communication preferences, note the differences between your characteristics and the other three basic communication styles. You will increase your communication effectiveness by understanding how individual styles are different, recognizing those differences, and learning to communicate in a manner that better meets the other person's communication expectations.

Rate each set of answers using the following scale:

6 = the phrase that best describes you

4 = the phrase next most like you

3 = the phrase next most like you

1 = the phrase least descriptive of you

**I am likely to impress others as:**

- A. Results oriented
- B. Relationship oriented
- C. Practical oriented
- D. Action oriented

**The work I enjoy most is:**

- A. Results oriented so that effort and time spent is justified.
- B. Stimulating and thought provoking with people I enjoy
- C. Well planned, organized and with a clear purpose
- D. Challenging, novel and not repetitive

**I like to make sure that:**

- A. My efforts show results today
- B. My actions are meaningful to the people they impact
- C. I plan carefully and follow the plan
- D. I am motivated, enthusiastic and energetic in my work

**I feel most satisfied when I:**

- A. Get more done than anyone else
- B. In a position to help others
- C. Solve problems with facts and careful analysis
- D. Can come up with a new idea to meet a challenge

**I enjoy it when others see me as:**

- A. A person who can be counted on to get things done
- B. Someone who is trustworthy, sensitive and creative
- C. Someone who is organized and efficient
- D. A person who loves a challenge

**Add up the totals for each:**

- A \_\_\_\_\_ Red
- B \_\_\_\_\_ Green
- C \_\_\_\_\_ Yellow
- D \_\_\_\_\_ Blue

Circle your highest score. Go to next page.

## How to Identify Different Communication Styles

The following charts illustrate different communication style characteristics. Use the chart to identify your “color” style and then compare the differences between your style and the other three “color” categories. You can also use the chart to help identify the communication styles of prospective clients, staff and others in your firm. Knowing someone’s style can help you determine the method, tone, orientation, and content that will most effectively communicate your message to them.

### YOU KNOW THE PERSON IS

	<b>RED</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	<b>YELLOW</b>	<b>BLUE</b>
<b>Office Hints</b>	formal arrangement displays honors and achievements work stacked by type	individual style motivational items chaos, very disorganized	very functional job-related items neat, very organized	casual with an open arrangement family photos lots of paper and clutter
<b>Body Language</b>	direct eye contact businesslike firm handshake	solid eye contact friendly, smiles easily broad gestures	indirect eye contact shows little emotion closed gestures	variable eye contact reserved, but friendly open gestures
<b>Speaking Style</b>	direct, decisive short conversations interrupts, to the point	spontaneous, quick tells stories, jokes talks more than listens	deliberate, reserved organized, logical asks detailed questions	thoughtful, casual tells people stories, listens, polite non-confrontational
<b>Expectations</b>	<b>RESULTS</b> bottom=line frankness efficiency	<b>CREATIVITY</b> enthusiasm innovation, novelty adventure, action	<b>THOROUGHNESS</b> detailed information systematic approach accuracy, logic	<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b> trust, loyalty friendly, personal no confrontation
<b>Focus</b>	objectives	ideas	process	feelings
<b>Strengths</b>	pragmatic confident assertive	imaginative creative enthusiastic	objective analytical thorough	empathetic loyal, trustworthy persuasive
<b>Weaknesses</b>	aggressive domineering impatient	unorganized unrealistic impractical	rigid indecisive impersonal	overly sensitive internalizes avoids conflict

Use the guidelines in this chart to identify the best approach to getting a decision from individuals with different communication styles. Refer to the previous chart to identify communication styles.

**IF THE PERSON IS.....**

	<b>RED</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	<b>YELLOW</b>	<b>BLUE</b>
<b>Best approach is:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In person or by phone</li> <li>- Expect short conversation</li> <li>- Discuss results first</li> <li>- Provide clear choices</li> <li>- Be direct, concise</li> <li>- Follow-up only if asked</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In person or in a group</li> <li>- Allow time to talk</li> <li>- Show enthusiasm</li> <li>- Listen/discuss new ideas</li> <li>- Use testimonials</li> <li>- Follow-up in person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In writing</li> <li>- Allow time to review</li> <li>- Discuss proven results</li> <li>- Expect detailed questions</li> <li>- Follow-up in writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In person</li> <li>- Get to know them</li> <li>- Emphasize relationship</li> <li>- Personalize benefits</li> <li>- Follow-up call or visit</li> </ul>
<b>Method and timing of decisions are:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On the spot if it meets immediate needs and gets results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On the spot if level of enthusiasm is high and idea is exciting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Slowly and thoughtfully</li> <li>- Needs chance to review information and analyze carefully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thoughtfully. Needs chance to consider whether to trust you</li> </ul>
<b>Way to get a final decision is:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Push for a decision on the spot. A delay in decision is likely a "no"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pin down specifics to avoid initial enthusiasm being misinterpreted as a final decision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Get approval in writing</li> <li>- Expect to be held to the specific terms of the agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Get and give a personal commitment. Focus on long term benefit and future work</li> </ul>