



## BEHAVIORAL EQ<sup>®</sup>

### Emotional Intelligence & DISC

DISC<sup>®</sup> is a common assessment tool in organizations. The instrument sheds light on employees' behavioral preferences and provides customized strategies employees can use to improve the way they communicate and connect to others.

This paper describes this assessment as well as TRACOM's Behavioral EQ program. We demonstrate how the Behavioral EQ program can be used in conjunction with DISC to help employees take their interpersonal effectiveness to the next level.

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## What is DISC?

The DISC instrument is based on original work done by William Moulton Marston in the 1920s. Marston, who was an academic, psychologist, lawyer, and writer, was interested in individuals' sense of power in relation to their environment and how this manifests itself in terms of human behavior. His books, *Emotions of Normal People* and *Integrative Psychology*, achieved wide recognition and informed theory and development of the DISC Assessment. Today, DISC is a tool intended to improve work productivity, teamwork, and communication by describing individuals' behavior and providing strategies for interpersonal effectiveness. Specifically, DISC offers insight into individuals' behavioral differences across four primary dimensions: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness.

**D**ominance refers to the extent to which an individual places emphasis on achieving results, winning, and affecting the bottom line. Those who are high on this dimension actively deal with challenges, move straight to the point, and are interested in the big picture. They value competency and concrete, immediate results. They are described as demanding, ambitious, fast-paced, and may display a lack of sensitivity or concern for others.

**I**nfluence refers to the extent to which an individual places emphasis on persuading and convincing others. Those who are high on this dimension value relationships and openness and display a palpable sense of optimism and enthusiasm. They are often seen as political, magnetic, and trusting, but could work on reining in their impulsivity and disorganization.

**S**teadiness is the extent to which an individual places emphasis on cooperation, security, and sincerity. Those who are high on this dimension are people-oriented, they prioritize supporting and developing a personal connection with others. They are described as calm, patient, and consistent, but may have trouble adapting to ambiguous situations, promoting themselves, and approaching difficult conversations.

**C**onscientiousness is the extent to which a person places emphasis on quality, accuracy, and competency. Those who are high in Conscientiousness are motivated by opportunities to learn and submit high quality work. They are described as careful, cautious, systematic, and tactful. However, they could benefit from making decisions more quickly and extending friendships.

## What is DISC?

The DISC profile shows learners' pattern across the four dimensions and provides information about such things as the individuals' goals and values, how they try to influence others, what value they bring to their organization, and their potential weaknesses. The profile then offers broad behavioral guidelines for increasing their effectiveness. In other words, the DISC profile is largely descriptive – it gives people a sense of who they are.

Imagine Janine, a sales manager who completes the DISC and receives a high score on Dominance and Conscientiousness — the Creative pattern. Her report suggests that, as a Creative individual, Janine displays a need for results and action, as well as a competing need to thoroughly explore all options and attain accuracy. According to the report, she is not concerned with social poise or developing interpersonal relationships; instead, she's more interested in dominance and achieving unique accomplishments. She brings value to the organization in that she initiates and implements changes, however she could increase effectiveness by displaying greater personal warmth and engaging in more tactful communication.



## Creative Pattern

**Emotions:** accepts aggression; restrains expression

**Goal:** dominance, unique accomplishments

**Judges others by:** personal standards; progressive ideas for accomplishing tasks

**Influences others by:** ability to pace development of systems and innovative approaches

**Value to the organization:** initiates or designs changes

**Overuses:** bluntness; critical or condescending attitude

**Under pressure:** becomes bored with routine work; sulks when restrained; acts independently

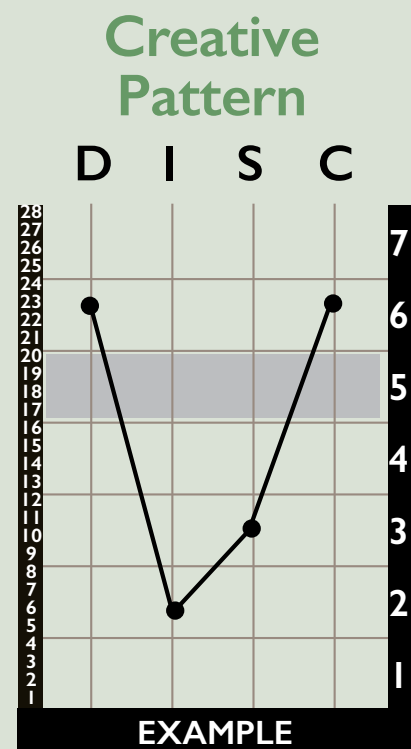
**Fears:** lack of influence; failure to achieve their standards

**Would increase effectiveness with more:** warmth; tactful communication; effective team cooperation; recognition of existing sanctions

People with a Creative Pattern display opposite forces in their behavior. Their desire for tangible results is counterbalanced by an equally strong drive for perfection and their aggressiveness is tempered by sensitivity. Although they think and react quickly, they are restrained by the wish to explore all possible solutions before making a decision.

Creative people exhibit foresight when focusing on projects and they bring about change. Since individuals with a Creative Pattern have a drive for perfection and demonstrate considerable planning ability, the changes they make are likely to be sound, but the method may lack attention to interpersonal relationships.

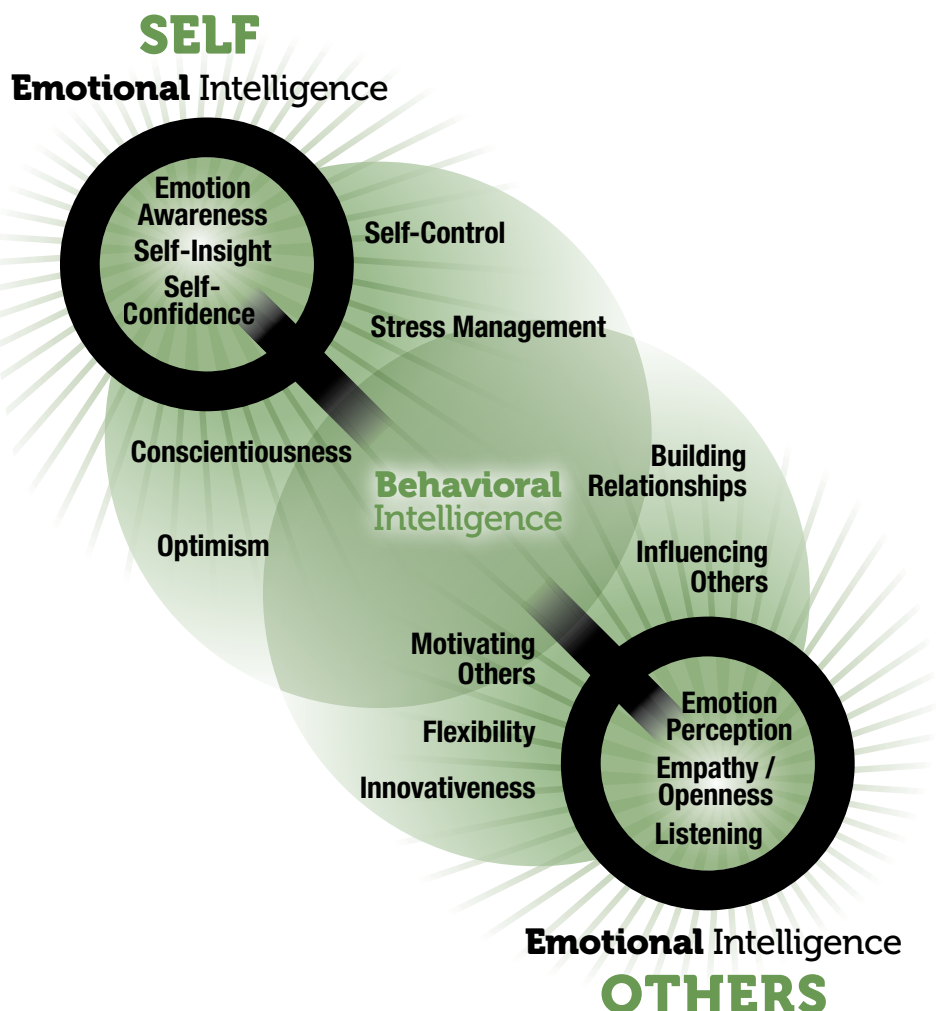
Creative people want freedom to explore, and they want the authority to examine and retest findings. They can make daily decisions quickly but may be extremely cautious when making bigger decisions: "Should I take that promotion?" "Should I move to another location?" In their drive for results and perfection, Creative people may not be concerned about social poise. As a result, they may be cool, aloof or blunt.



Janine returns to work with a new sense of self-awareness. She understands the environment where she thrives and how her strengths benefit the organization. She also wants to improve by being more tactful and cooperative with her team. The problem is that she doesn't understand how to achieve these objectives and how to alter her behavior to optimize her effectiveness. The Behavioral EQ program builds upon DISC by helping Janine manage herself and her relationships.

## What is Behavioral EQ?

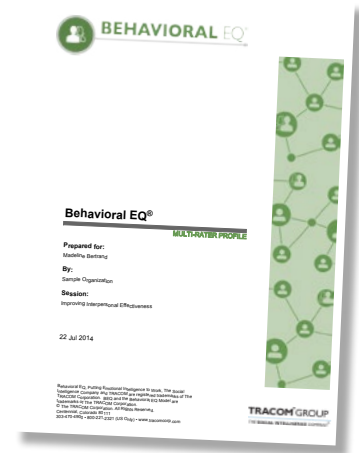
Behavioral EQ is a model of interpersonal effectiveness, comprised of emotional and behavioral intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to how we identify and understand our own emotions and the emotions of others. Behavioral intelligence is more observable to others and refers to how we manage personal behavior and relationships. The Behavioral EQ model consists of fifteen skills that are most meaningful and predictive of job performance including Emotional Awareness, Empathy, Stress Management, and Building Relationships. With DISC, no profile pattern is better than another. People of all patterns can be effective, though certain patterns may naturally thrive or fit better in specific roles and occupations. Behavioral EQ, however, is critically important and linked to outcomes such as increased performance, leadership, customer service, and sales. <sup>1,11,111,111</sup>





## How Behavioral EQ Complements DISC

There are several ways in which the Behavioral EQ program enhances interpersonal effectiveness, beyond what is provided by DISC. First, the Behavioral EQ assessment is multi-rater. This means learners not only complete the assessment about themselves, but they nominate other raters to complete the assessment about them as well. Throughout the report, learners receive a side-by-side comparison of how their self-ratings compare to others' ratings of them. It's very common for learners to see a DISCcrepancy between self-ratings and others' ratings, and this kind of information can be enormously illuminating. Multiple research studies show that self-perceptions are systematically flawed and only mildly to moderately accurate. In general, people overrate their skills, abilities, and character. For example, ninety-four percent of college professors say their work is "above average"<sup>VI</sup> and business leaders believe their company is more likely to succeed than average firms in their industry.<sup>VI</sup> Moreover, acquaintances are much more accurate in their assessment of individuals' performance and ability than the individuals themselves. In one study, surgical residents' self-views did not significantly predict their performance on standardized board exams, while supervisor and peer ratings did.<sup>VII</sup> So, multi-rater feedback is critically important in terms of painting an accurate picture of performance and drawing learners' attention to what they may overlook in themselves. Essentially, DISC provides learners with self-awareness of their behavioral preferences. Behavioral EQ provides learners with a reality check by showing them what co-workers perceive. The combination of the two tools is powerful.



Second, the Behavioral EQ program teaches learners about a fundamental bias that holds humans back from communicating and connecting with others effectively – this is the negativity bias. The negativity bias is the tendency for people to focus on negative, unpleasant information compared to positive or neutral information. This negativity bias means we often feel overwhelmed by challenges, we see threats where none exist, and we damage our relationships by spewing negativity or absorbing others' negativity. Through the course, participants recognize this negativity bias in themselves and how this affects their behavior towards others, and therefore their effectiveness. While this is one example, participants also learn about additional common cognitive biases that affect our beliefs and interactions with others. Learners are introduced to and assessed on a whole new set of skills related to self-management and interpersonal interaction. They gain a clear description of each skill and what high performance on each skill looks like behaviorally.



## How Behavioral EQ Complements DISC — continued

The third way in which Behavioral EQ complements DISC is by teaching learners how to manage their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to optimize interpersonal effectiveness. Through Behavioral EQ training, learners gain concrete strategies based on the latest research in neuroscience and psychology that they can use to increase their effectiveness in each of the skill areas. For example, to improve emotional awareness and stress management skills, participants are encouraged to practice mindfulness. Mindfulness simply means focusing attention and awareness on the present moment. This state can be achieved through meditation, of course, but it can also be achieved by DISConnecting from technology, scheduling daily interactions, and so on. Research shows that mindfulness is associated with less stress and greater energy. It can also help people better understand their emotions and be less reactive.

Additionally, to enhance optimism, participants learn to analyze and challenge their self-talk. Participants learn that humans have a bias toward negative thinking which can take many forms — catastrophizing, personalizing events that aren't our fault, assuming the worst without testing the evidence, and so on. They are taught to challenge these thoughts and replace them with ones that are more logical and optimistic. Research suggests that this strategy has a positive effect on how people feel and behave in response to stress.<sup>VIII</sup>

At the end of the course, with the guidance of a coach, learners create specific, measurable, relevant, and time-based goals toward enhancing their Behavioral EQ at the individual and team level. Research suggests that, when designed appropriately, goals are enormously helpful in terms of inducing behavioral change.



## How Behavioral EQ Complements DISC — continued

Let's return to our example of Janine, who completed DISC and learned that she profiles as a "Creative" individual. This means that she exhibits a need for results and action, as well as a competing need to thoroughly explore all options and attain accuracy. She learns that in order to increase her effectiveness, she needs to display more personal warmth and cooperate with her team. Janine returns to work with a newfound self-awareness but has trouble determining exactly what to do to improve her interpersonal effectiveness. At this point, Janine would derive great benefit from the Behavioral EQ program.



The Behavioral EQ course teaches Janine how she can manage her thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to improve how she communicates and connects with others. She learns that her interpersonal effectiveness depends on fifteen skills including Emotion Awareness, Stress Management, Empathy, and Building Relationships. Her multi-rater assessment reveals that she is challenged in several areas and one of them is emotion awareness. This is surprising to Janine. She had always thought of herself as someone who understands her emotions and their impact on her behavior. Through the course, she becomes aware of her emotional triggers and mentally rehearses appropriate responses. For example, she recognizes that she is "triggered" when her coworkers engage in small talk at the beginning of a meeting rather than move directly toward the meeting objectives. She realizes she unknowingly transfers that anger and anxiety onto her coworkers over the course of the meeting. Janine decides that every time this happens from now on, she will take a deep breath, share something personal about herself, and allow five minutes for small talk before re-orienting everyone back to the meeting agenda. She engages in a mental rehearsal process that is very powerful and primes individuals' brains to respond appropriately when the situation arises in real life. Additionally, Janine learns that she is challenged in empathy/openness. This skill simply refers to one's tendency to consider others' perspectives; be mindful of others, and open and interested in their viewpoints. To develop this skill, Janine decides to regularly ask for others' opinions before moving forward with an action plan. By soliciting others' thoughts in a non-threatening way, she can gain greater insight into what they are thinking and feeling.

At the end of the course, she creates an action plan and commits herself to these two specific behaviors as a way of developing her Behavioral EQ. By focusing on only these strategies and practicing them regularly, they will become habits and improve her effectiveness in critical areas such as leadership and job performance. And, because all of the skills are related, her effort toward enhancing these skills will lead to improvement in other areas. For example, by enhancing her emotional awareness, she will also see improvements in self-insight and self-control.



## Summary

In sum, DISC is aimed toward increasing individuals' self-awareness. With this assessment, participants gain insight into their work habits, preferred environment, fears, unique value, and so on. TRACOM's Behavioral EQ program extends upon DISC to strengthen employees' self-management and interpersonal effectiveness. By offering a multi-rater instrument and delving internally into people's mindset and emotions, the Behavioral EQ course can profoundly influence how employees communicate and relate to one another. And in today's volatile business climate, employees' ability to forge strong work relationships may be critical to organizations' stability and prosperity.

### [Learn More about Behavioral EQ®](#)

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