

**SUCCESS STORY**

# Thailand School for Missionaries' Children Leads with SOCIAL STYLE



Grace International School

**INDUSTRY:**

Education

**CHALLENGE:**

*"You can see the light come on in learners when you're training them: 'I need to dig deep into Versatility to better connect with others.'"*

JURRIAN VAN DER STRAATEN  
Executive Director

**SOLUTION:**

SOCIAL STYLE

## OVERVIEW

For decades, SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility training has helped leaders of all styles enhance their interpersonal effectiveness and workplace interactions. Now, the world's most effective interpersonal skills model is proving to be effective for the leaders of a school in Thailand that educates the children of missionaries from around the globe.

The model was introduced to the leadership team of Grace International School in the Northern city of Chiang Mai. What makes Grace International so distinctive is that its students are the children of missionaries who have come to the area from all over the world to volunteer, work and live.

The program's sponsor, TRACOM Cares, works with non-profits and academic organizations to provide affordable exposure to essential personal and organizational effectiveness skills training.

Grace opened its doors in 1999 to students representing 36 organizations that have parents serving in seven different countries. Its mission is "to provide an integrated education from a Christian worldview, so students can face the challenges of today's world." Currently, the school enrolls more than 500 students who benefit from core curriculum, special needs services, fine arts, extracurricular sports and ministry opportunities.

The SOCIAL STYLE workshop, titled Producing Results with Others, was taught by the school's executive director, Jurrian van der Straaten. After many years as a police officer in his native country of Holland, van der Straaten and his wife decided to become missionaries and moved to Thailand in 2003. Since that time, he has served in several volunteer capacities before becoming the senior executive at Grace in 2015.

He was introduced to SOCIAL STYLE by Peter Matthews, a senior partner at EY, who visited the school in 2016. "I first became aware of GIS when one of my close friends from the UK moved there to teach in 2005," Matthews said. "Over time, I visited regularly and became friendly with Jurrian as he took

the leadership position. Through my discussions with him, it became evident that building a leadership team was one of his key challenges, and a significant part of that was helping the senior leaders to understand both themselves, and to understand their colleagues. So I recommended TRACOM to him.”

## THE SOLUTION

TRACOM, which has been a training partner of EY’s for a number of years, worked with van der Straaten virtually to certify him in SOCIAL STYLE so he could teach the concept to the school’s current and future leaders. By bringing this thinking into the school, he set out to help his leadership team better understand their own behaviors while learning how to adapt to others’ preferred behaviors.

Since Grace’s high school classes include advanced placement courses for college-bound students, the effect of Social Intelligence training will prove valuable in continuing their education and developing careers. Graduates from Grace have gone on to some of the most notable universities in the world, including Berklee College of Music, US Air Force and Naval Academies, Seoul National University, Boston College, Johns Hopkins, Northwestern, Cornell, Yale, the Universities of Auckland, Canterbury and Queensland, and many others.

## RESULTS

Grace continues to grow, and has begun the first phase of construction on a larger campus to allow education for more volunteers’ and workers’ families. This continuous growth puts added pressure on staff and faculty to communicate clearly and effectively.

Van der Straaten is keen to explore whether Versatility could be integrated into the Grace curriculum. When comparing SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility to other behavioral models, he sees one key advantage:

“Versatility is what makes this different—and better,” he said. “You can see the light come on in learners when you’re training them: ‘I need to dig deep into Versatility to better connect with others.’”

For someone who’s seen a lot of diverse curricula and learning models, van der Straaten was also impressed by TRACOM’s breadth of training materials and how well aligned they are. “This made it very easy for me to teach,” he said.

“I am very grateful for the support TRACOM has given the school, and delighted with the result,” added Matthews, the EY executive.

“People responded well to the learning. We worked on the concepts and debriefed our Social Style and Versatility profiles,” he added, acknowledging that the learning is just beginning. “We’re looking forward to diving deeper into applying all that we’ve learned.”

At Grace International School, it isn’t just missionaries’ children who are learning new skills every day. The school’s leadership team has begun its journey toward a better understanding of human behavior in order to enhance interpersonal effectiveness.

*“I see the leadership team using SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility to help establish the desire to understand others. I already see it being used in meetings and interactions. The development of their own character, as well as an appreciation and understanding of their peers, will set up the students for success in life.”*

JURRIAN VAN DER STRAATEN  
Executive Director