

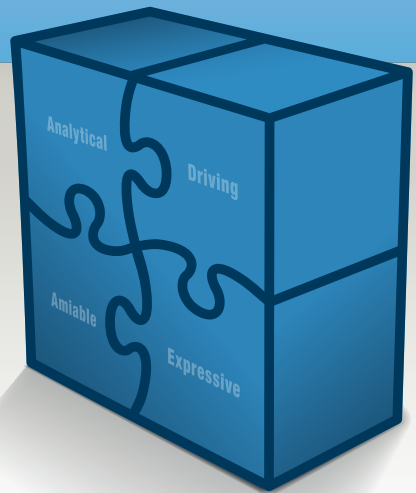
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# **SOCIAL STYLE<sup>®</sup> & Versatility**

## **FACILITATOR HANDBOOK**

**The Definitive  
Guide to the  
World's  
Most-Used  
Interpersonal  
Skills Model**



**Casey M. Mulqueen, PhD | David Collins**

# **SOCIAL STYLE® & Versatility Facilitator Handbook**

**Casey M. Mulqueen, PhD  
David Collins**

**TRACOM Press, Centennial, Colorado**

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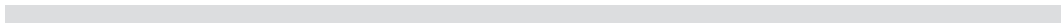
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David is a frequent speaker and the author of numerous articles including a cover story for Talent Management Magazine. He is a graduate of Syracuse University.



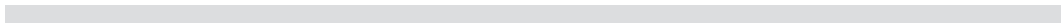
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# Forward

What's Old is New Again – And More Relevant than Ever!

In the late 1950s, an industrial psychologist named David Merrill was approached to help identify what distinguished successful individuals from the less successful. Merrill and his colleagues developed a statistically validated selection instrument that became the gold standard for recruiting and selecting candidates in the insurance industry. That work evolved into the SOCIAL STYLE Model™ and expanded to include managers and senior executives in addition to sales professionals.

Merrill didn't invent the concept of interpersonal effectiveness. But SOCIAL STYLE represented the best effort to quantify the specific elements of interpersonal effectiveness. And in doing so, gave organizations actionable ways to identify and build those skills.

Fifty years later, the understanding of and need for SOCIAL STYLE is greater than ever. The scope and global nature of business are dramatically different now, but the validity of SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility as a determinant of high performance remains.

Thousands of organizations and millions of individuals have used SOCIAL STYLE to improve their personal and organizational performance. Consider a few examples:

- A global hotel network has built SOCIAL STYLE into its worldwide customer quality program. Style concepts are taught along with Six Sigma skills and quality management to ensure that customers receive a rewarding experience whether they're staying in Brazil, Bali or Buffalo. More than 100,000 employees have participated in the program.
- The world's largest consulting organization incorporates SOCIAL STYLE in five specific training and development efforts including business development, team orientation, leadership development and project management. They recognize that STYLE concepts help support their corporate culture and allow them to nimbly manage the fast-paced and often-challenging world of consulting and client engagements.

- William M. Klepper, Ph.D., professor of management at Columbia Graduate School of Business has taught SOCIAL STYLEs within his MBA courses and Executive Education programs for over twenty years. His book, *The CEO's Boss: Tough Love in the Boardroom* (Columbia Business School Publishing, 2010) applies the Style concepts to Executive Leadership and Corporate Governance.

Through economic booms and recessions. In remote countries and dominant world economies. From small businesses to Fortune 100 members, organizations seeking to improve their performance have found that the relevance of SOCIAL STYLE concepts combined with the ease of putting those concepts to use, make it the clear winner among interpersonal effectiveness programs.

In my 35 years of helping organizations succeed, I've seen products and companies come and go. But I've also seen that fundamentals of business success remain consistent. The ability to work effectively with others is one of those fundamentals. And SOCIAL STYLE has been proven (See Colorado State University study on page 192) to outperform the competition.

If you're a new facilitator of SOCIAL STYLE, I welcome you to a group of experts that truly are changing the way business is done. I know you will find this experience rewarding.

If you have previously taught SOCIAL STYLE, you no doubt have seen how Style training is an eye-opening and work-life-changing experience from many. I think you will find this book to be an interesting and helpful resource in building your expertise.

And as the CEO of one of the world's largest global construction firms once told me, "Once you get the people equation right, the rest of the job is easy!" SOCIAL STYLE is the clear choice for helping individuals get it right.

**John Myers**

Executive Vice President  
The TRACOM Group

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## Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to this book, both in substance and in support, and we would like to acknowledge them here.

Dr. David Merrill and Roger Reid, the founders of the SOCIAL STYLE Model and The TRACOM Group, without whom none of this would have been possible.

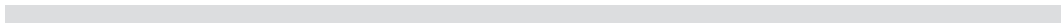
Dr. Peter Chen at the University of South Australia conducts ongoing research on reliability and validity, as well as norm development.

Dr. Kurt Kraiger and his graduate students at Colorado State University studied the relationship between Versatility and emotional intelligence. In addition, Dr. Kraiger and Dr. Steve Kirkpatrick examined the effectiveness of SOCIAL STYLE and other interpersonal skills development programs.

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David Stone and Dr. Steve Kirkpatrick for their helpful comments and contributions.



## Chapter

# 1

# Introduction

## Overview

SOCIAL STYLE® is a model for understanding people’s behavioral styles and using this information to interact more effectively with others. SOCIAL STYLE is determined by observable “say and do” behaviors that represent a theme or pattern of typical behaviors. These behaviors are habits we develop over our lifetimes as ways of interacting with other people. Once you know how a person, such as a co-worker, typically behaves, you can predict how that individual will probably behave in future circumstances. Being able to anticipate a behavior pattern enables you to build relationships more effectively because you can work with others in the ways they prefer. This ultimately results in those people working effectively and productively with you.

The SOCIAL STYLE Model describes four primary behavioral Styles: Driving, Expressive, Amiable, and Analytical. Each Style has predictable ways of behaving across a wide variety of scenarios, and in particular in broad areas such as their interactions with others, use of time, and preferred ways of making decisions. Since it was first discovered in the 1960s, the model has been used by millions of individuals and thousands of organizations worldwide to enhance individual and team performance.

As a professional who is preparing to facilitate SOCIAL STYLE programs, you need to acquire a solid grounding in the Model, its history, applications, and

many other details of Style and Versatility. This book is intended to be a resource for you, and will help prepare you to facilitate the various Style programs and use associated products. It is the most in-depth source of content about Style and Versatility, and will be an effective aid for you in mastering the Model.

After reading this book, you will:

- Understand how the Model was developed and how it has been refined over the years
- Be able to describe Style and Versatility in detail
- Understand how Style and Versatility impact personal and organizational performance
- Have access to white papers and resources that describe the benefits of Style and Versatility

## Available Resources

In addition to this book, you may find it helpful to consult other resources, including:

- TRACOM's SOCIAL STYLE website, [tracom.com](http://tracom.com). Here you will find the most up-to-date information about SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility, including new research and white papers.
- Improving Managerial Effectiveness with Versatility: Applications Guide. This guide shows managers how to apply SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility knowledge in ways that increase their own interpersonal effectiveness and productivity as well as that of their direct reports.
- Improving Sales Effectiveness with Versatility: Applications Guide. This guide shows sales professionals how to understand Style to build rapport, overcome objections, and achieve commitments in the sales process.
- Improving Personal Effectiveness with Versatility: Applications Guide. The purpose of this guide is to increase the reader's effectiveness and productivity when relating to others in the workplace.
- Managing Conflict with Style eLearning. Studies have shown that managers spend up to 42% of their work time dealing with conflict and nonproductive behavior in the workplace (Watson, C. & Hoffman,

R. (1996). *Managers as Negotiators*. *Leadership Quarterly*, 7 (1). This eLearning module provides specific advice on how to use Style to anticipate conflicts, reduce their occurrence, minimize their impact and repair damage after a conflict occurs.

- **Coaching with Style eLearning.** This eLearning module shows how to apply SOCIAL STYLE techniques to the coaching process. It provides specific advice to help coaches build better relationships, improve communications, reduce tension and improve workplace productivity.
- **Working in Teams with Style eLearning.** This eLearning module teaches how SOCIAL STYLE skills can improve team performance. It provides specific advice to help teams quickly and effectively take form, undertake their responsibilities and ultimately operate at optimal performance.
- **Enhancing Emotional Intelligence with Style eLearning.** Research has shown that emotional intelligence (EQ) is important for success at work, and its importance increases the higher one moves in an organization (Goleman D., 1998; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Using simple language, this eLearning module explains how to enhance EQ at work by recognizing how people of each Style display and interpret EQ behaviors differently.
- **Achieving Higher Versatility.** This book comprehensively describes Versatility — what it is, why it is important, and how to enhance it at work. It describes how people of each Style interpret versatile behaviors, and how to increase Versatility with people of each Style.

## How To Use This Book

This book is organized to provide you with information in a sequential manner. It is recommended that you read it from start to finish. As you begin to facilitate sessions, you can return to specific sections in order to enhance or refresh your understanding. The book is laid out in the following sections:

1. Importance of Interpersonal Effectiveness at Work
2. Attempts to Describe Human Behavior: A Brief History
3. History and Development of the SOCIAL STYLE Model
4. SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility Basics



5. SOCIAL STYLE In Depth
6. Versatility In Depth
7. Glossary and Key Definitions
8. Additional Resources
9. Appendix: TRACOM Research
10. Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions

## Experienced Facilitators: This Book at a Glance

If you are an experienced facilitator with a history of delivering SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility training, you will find this book to be a helpful refresher as well as a repository of newer information. There are certain areas to pay special attention to, since they are the newest areas of development and progression of the Model. In particular, it is important that you become well versed in the Versatility aspects of the Model. The ways in which TRACOM measures and conceptualizes Versatility has evolved over the years. The chapter on “Versatility In Depth” provides a comprehensive overview of the topic, along with examples of how each Style of person exhibits low and high Versatility. You will also want to familiarize yourself with some of the newer research, reported in an appendix. The newest updates on the Model are always available at [tracom.com](http://tracom.com).

## Chapter

# 2

# What is Interpersonal Effectiveness and Why is it Important?

Interpersonal effectiveness is the extent to which a person interacts productively with others, earns their respect and support, and gains their trust. Having good interpersonal skills is important for a variety of reasons, but in the workplace it has become an increasingly valuable commodity. Industrialized nations have moved into a knowledge-based economy, and one of the side effects of this modern economy is the necessity for people to work closely with one another in order to solve problems, develop products and systems, and serve customers. In most industries, employees' abilities to work productively together can differentiate successful companies from those that fail.

The Versatility component of TRACOM's Model is a measure of behaviors that leads to interpersonal effectiveness. Specifically, it is a measure of behavioral effectiveness at the workplace. It measures people's behaviors in four broad areas – Image, Presentation, Competence, and Feedback. These will be described in detail later in this book. TRACOM measures these four areas because our research over the years has identified them as critical to workplace effectiveness. People who display low Versatility tend to focus on their own comfort levels, whereas people with high Versatility focus on others they work with, and this is displayed in specific behaviors.

Of course, TRACOM isn't the only organization to study the relationship between interpersonal skills and workplace success. There has been an

extensive amount of research showing that interpersonal skills are strong predictors of business and professional success, in addition to cognitive ability and technical knowledge (Goleman, 1998; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). In an analysis of job competencies at 286 organizations worldwide, it was found that 18 of the 21 competencies for distinguishing superior from average performers were interpersonal in nature (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). In a survey of 726 human resource and performance professionals, the top three most valued competencies in organizations were management leadership, technical knowledge, and people skills (BPM Forum & Success Factors, 2007). Intelligence rated near the bottom of the value scale.

TRACOM has been conducting research on its Model since the 1960s. During that time we've consistently found that Versatility is related to effectiveness and productivity. This is true across job functions, industries, and cultures. The following is a brief review of some of our research. White papers are available for download from TRACOM's website ([tracom.com](http://tracom.com)).

## The Impact of Interpersonal Effectiveness

As far back as the late 1960s, TRACOM began to conduct research on its new Versatility Model. We found a significant correlation between Versatility and measures of job competence and attitude. This relationship was found across job functions such as programmers, sales people, accountants, and managers. These studies also showed that Style was not a predictor of success. People of all Styles were successful or unsuccessful. It was Versatility that distinguished between those who were most successful and those who were less so.

Below are brief descriptions of more recent research by TRACOM.

### **TRACOM Research**

A 2005 study by TRACOM showed that Versatility is highly related to effective job performance. TRACOM studied a group of 127 managers and found that managers with high Versatility were rated as significantly more effective across a variety of performance categories than their lower Versatility counterparts. For example, managers with high Versatility were rated as significantly better at leading teams and coaching others, and were seen as more likely to be promoted. In addition, these managers received significantly higher compensation than low Versatility managers – an average 29% higher salary.

A study conducted with a multinational defense contractor found that managers with high Versatility were significantly more effective at promoting diversity and inclusiveness within their departments and teams than managers with low Versatility. These managers frequently engaged in activities such as seeking out others' perspectives, valuing different opinions, recognizing employees for their contributions, and fostering a welcoming team environment. In 2012 this research was published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, the Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture.

A 2011 study showed that Versatility is highly related to effective diversity and inclusiveness (D&I) practices. Research on 143 managers at a large multinational defense contractor found that managers with high Versatility were rated significantly more effective at promoting D&I than managers with lower Versatility. Importantly, these evaluations came from the managers' direct reports, those in the best position to determine D&I behaviors. Managers with high Versatility were more likely to engage in behaviors such as actively trying to understand others' experiences and perspectives, recognizing employees' contributions, fostering a welcoming environment for the team, and valuing different opinions. Highly Versatile managers were rated up to 17% more effective on these behaviors than low Versatile managers. This research was published in the Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture in 2012.

In a 2008 study specifically about coaching, TRACOM found that virtually all managers – 97% – said that understanding Style made them more effective as coaches. Likewise, 82% said that as a result of SOCIAL STYLE training, it became easier for them to give coaching feedback to people, even if the feedback was negative.

In order to understand how Style awareness can impact the sales process, in 2006 TRACOM surveyed a random sample of sales people who had been through one of our training programs. As a result of training, virtually all respondents – 94% – said they were better able to identify the Style preferences of their customers. In addition, more than 94% of sales people said that they are more conscious about how their behavior impacts their customers, and 87% found that tailoring their approach to each customer's SOCIAL STYLE led to a greater sense of trust and confidence in the sales person. Significantly, over half of these individuals said they closed sales they otherwise might not have.

In order to understand levels of conflict and how it is impacted by Style, in 2008 TRACOM surveyed a random sample of people who had gone through one of our Style training programs. Not surprisingly, we found that “competing priorities” and “lack of information” were the top sources of conflict. However, almost half of people said that “interpersonal differences” are also a significant source of conflict, and two-thirds said that these differences made already existing conflicts even worse. Survey participants strongly believed that understanding individuals’ behavioral differences made an important difference in both preventing and resolving conflict. After SOCIAL STYLE training, 86% of respondents stated they were more confident in their ability to handle conflict and 71% said they had used their knowledge of Style to avoid or prevent potential conflict situations.

## Chapter

# 3

# Attempts to Describe Human Behavior: A Brief History

Funny as it may sound, it is human nature to try and understand human nature. Fundamentally, we all seek some understanding of one another. This has always had practical origins. Human beings are social creatures, and in order to live together in relative harmony, we have always needed to understand one another on a meaningful level.

Throughout history, philosophers, psychologists, and others have attempted to understand and define human traits and behaviors, especially those that lead to effective leadership or performance. Most of these efforts have tried to describe behavior with some form of practical model that could be applied across situations and circumstances.

Some models of behavior have been more successful than others. Briefly, here are some famous historical models that helped lay the foundations for this line of research:

- The Greek philosopher Socrates wrote about patterns of human behavior. He noted that some people are inclined toward thinking while others are disposed to taking action. He also wrote that some people strive to achieve their purposes, while others place more value on relationships.
- Hippocrates, another Greek philosopher, taught that people have four “humors”: blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. He believed

that behavioral traits resulted from biological functions, in particular body fluids.

- The physician Galen expanded on Hippocrates' theory, referring to the "four temperaments": choleric, melancholic, sanguine, and phlegmatic. In his theory of behavior, Galen included emotions, mental ability, and self-awareness. This theory of behavior and human temperament remained popular for centuries.
- In the twentieth century, the psychologist Hans Eysenck was one of the first to analyze individual differences using a psychometric approach that included statistical measurement. He measured two factors, neuroticism (the tendency to experience negative emotions) and extraversion (the tendency to enjoy positive events, particularly social ones). Individuals score in a range from low to high on both of these dimensions, and by pairing these two dimensions with one another, Eysenck noted how they were similar to Galen's four temperaments.

In recent years scientists, notably psychologists, biologists, and neuroscientists have utilized increasingly sophisticated techniques to understand and measure models of personality and behavior.

## Behavior and Personality

It is important to understand the relationship between behavior and personality, as this is a critical component of the SOCIAL STYLE Model. The Model focuses on behavior, not personality, though the two concepts are not always easily distinguished from one another.

Personality is a set of characteristics that uniquely influence a person's thoughts, motivations, and behaviors. It can be thought of as the combination of our thoughts, beliefs, motivations, and actions. The word "personality" originates from the Latin *persona*, which means "mask." In the modern world we have come to interpret a mask as something that is used to hide who we really are. However, in ancient theatre, the mask was not used to disguise the identity of a character, but rather was used to represent or typify that character. In other words, the audience interpreted a character based on his or her outward behavior, in this case facial expressiveness.

Behavior is what we say and do, thus it is every observable act that we engage in. Behavior is only one component of our personalities, but it is the most noticeable aspect of our personalities. Other people rely heavily on our behavior to understand who we are and what motivates us.

In the history of attempts to understand humans, researchers fluctuated between studying underlying personality traits and outward behavior. Neither approach is necessarily superior; they simply have different goals.

Research on personality has been chiefly effective for two purposes. First, it has found ways to help people gain insight into themselves and their temperaments. As an example of its usefulness in the workplace, personality theory can be helpful for trying to determine a suitable occupation. An introverted person may decide that he would be more comfortable and successful as an engineer than as a motivational speaker. Personality theory's second major area of contribution has been in the field of clinical psychology. Personality research has discovered ways for diagnosing and understanding serious mental disorders, for example schizophrenia and narcissism. This insight into the mind has been invaluable for determining courses of treatment for psychiatric disorders.

In nonclinical applications, the study of behavior has proven more relevant than personality theory. Since behavior is so obvious and meaningful to those we interact with, it has become the most effective approach for interpersonal understanding, particularly in the workplace. This is particularly true now that societies have moved into a knowledge-based economy. Rather than working with machines, most of us spend our time working with other people, even if a lot of our time is spent in front of a computer. Whenever we work with others, we have to respond to their behavior. Therefore, understanding behavior is critical for working effectively with others.

The following section discusses research in the modern era that demonstrated the usefulness of the behavioral approach for understanding others. By reading this brief history, you will begin to understand how behavior is related to workplace effectiveness, and why the SOCIAL STYLE Model is so useful.



## Early Behavioral Research

Studies of personality and behavior made great strides in the twentieth century. The behavioral approach became most useful for understanding work life and, in particular, leadership.

There has always been particular emphasis on understanding leadership – what makes leaders successful or unsuccessful. By the end of World War II the field of psychology was becoming dominated by behaviorism and a very practical desire to study leadership behavior. Prior to this, most studies of leadership focused on personality traits, but these studies failed to identify individual traits that predicted successful leadership. Also, these traits simply weren't observable to others, so they had limited usefulness.

In 1945, a group of researchers at the Office of Naval Research and, more extensively, at Ohio State University, sought to determine the behaviors of effective leaders, instead of their personality traits. These researchers attempted to answer a simple question: “What behaviors do effective leaders exhibit?”

First, researchers generated a lengthy list of behaviors that all leaders were known or thought to exhibit. Next, they asked people in various work situations to tell them which of those behaviors good leaders exhibit. The result was a list of 150 behavioral statements designed to measure effective leadership. These statements were used to develop the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ).

People used the LBDQ to rate their leaders on how frequently they engaged in certain behaviors. Using factor analysis, a statistical technique that clusters common behaviors together into meaningful categories, or factors, the researchers found that two factors accounted for most of leader behavior. These two factors were labeled Consideration (people-oriented behavior) and Initiating Structure (task-oriented behavior).

The Ohio State University leadership studies were critical for two reasons. First, they were the first attempt to scientifically study the behavior of leaders, as opposed to their personalities. Second, they based their studies of behavior on the perceptions of the leaders' followers. Prior to these studies, most research had focused on individuals' perceptions of themselves, without accounting for the insight that others who work with those individuals would

have. The unreliability and inaccuracy of self-perception has been repeatedly noted since ancient times. As you will read later in this book, it has also been scientifically described by TRACOM's research.

Following the Ohio State University studies, researchers continued to try to refine measures of leadership behavior. However, their findings were inconsistent and mired in various theories and approaches.

Disappointing efforts to find the best leadership behaviors led the organizational psychologist Fred Fiedler to look at the question from a new perspective. Fiedler decided that it doesn't make sense to look at a person's leadership Style in a vacuum and not consider the circumstances of leadership — or environment.

According to Fiedler, there is no ideal leader. Both task-oriented and relationship-oriented leaders can be effective if their leadership orientation fits the situation. In essence, there are no good or bad leaders, since any leader can be effective depending on a good match with the requirements of the situation. A leader who is effective in one situation may or may not be effective in a much different situation. Fiedler found that a relationship-oriented leadership Style worked with some people in some situations and that a task-oriented leadership Style worked better in other situations.

This historical research in behavioral Style concepts laid the foundation for the research that created the SOCIAL STYLE Model and produced some conclusions similar to those drawn by TRACOM's research. Next, we examine how this research developed.

## Chapter

# 4

# History and Development of the SOCIAL STYLE Model and Versatility

Prior efforts to describe behavioral styles and effective leadership laid the foundation for TRACOM's SOCIAL STYLE research.

Research in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries eclipsed previous progress on two fronts: advances in behavioral psychology and in techniques for measuring behavior and analyzing data.

Psychologists also advanced the concept that some behavior is stable while some is more fluid. This is important because these fluid behaviors underlie TRACOM's Versatility Model.

## Impetus to Create SOCIAL STYLE

The first efforts to create what became the SOCIAL STYLE Model were attempts to help individuals whose jobs required them to be effective with others: managers, sales professionals, and sales managers. This model evolved from the consulting work of three partners: Roger Reid, David Merrill, Ph.D., and Gordon Brunson (Reid, Merrill, Brunson and Associates; RMBA).

In 1963, RMBA sold a sales selection program to the insurance industry. This program was a statistically validated psychological evaluation. In discussing the future direction of their company, the three partners developed the idea of an even more effective evaluation tool.

Managers often had difficulty using complex psychological instruments for selecting and developing their personnel. RMBA decided that an easier, more practical model would prove valuable. They began with the idea that an instrument that measures the impressions of people who know the individuals, rather than a self-report measure, would be most relevant.

Without a true understanding of an individual's typical pattern of behavior, a hiring organization could not determine that individual's potential for success. At that point in time, standard selection processes included an interview or a psychological evaluation based entirely on self-reporting. This approach did not incorporate a view of the applicant's actual behavior, only the information he or she offered. This technique was not a powerful predictor of a salesperson's or manager's success, since one of the best predictors of future behavior is one's past behavior.

## Early Development of the SOCIAL STYLE Model

Concurrent with the work of RMBA, James Taylor, a psychologist with the Martin Corporation in Denver, began a research project to determine how accurately people can describe the behavior of others. He used a checklist containing over two thousand descriptive words. Using that checklist, he had three individuals describe a single acquaintance. With this technique, he amassed a large data set.

Based on content analysis of Dr. Taylor's data, Dr. David Merrill reduced the list to 600 descriptors. Using the shorter list, he enlarged the sample and expanded it to a wider range of occupations.

Dr. Merrill and his team used factor analysis to analyze the data and extract patterns. Factor analysis is a statistical technique that is used to uncover patterns and meaning from data. In some respects, the initial results were disappointing. No complex and sophisticated picture of behavioral patterns emerged. Instead, the identification of essential factors showed that people do not perceive as many variables in real-life behavior as fiction and drama might suggest.

However, there were two strong and independent factors. These two factors emerged based upon how the data analysis clustered certain descriptors

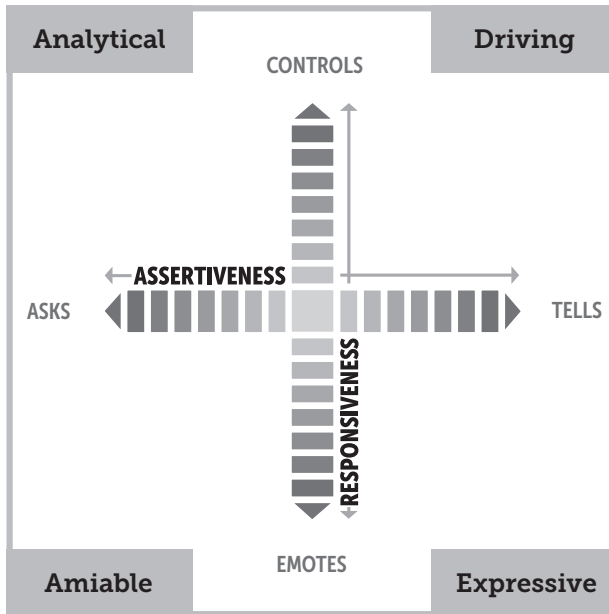
together. In this manner, the stronger factor was labeled “Assertiveness.” The second label was the next strongest factor, “Responsiveness.”

Assertiveness describes behavior along a continuum from “asking” to “telling.” It is an indicator of how forcefully a person presents him or herself when interacting with others. People who are more tell assertive tend to speak faster, louder, and more often. They are directive with their hands and body motions and usually maintain direct eye contact while speaking with others. People who are more ask assertive tend to speak slower, are quieter, and speak less often. They are relaxed in their body posture and will maintain less direct eye contact when interacting with others.

Responsiveness describes behavior along a continuum from “controlling” to “emoting.” It is an indicator of how much a person displays his or her emotions. People who are more controlling tend to focus on tasks, speak about facts, and talk in a monotone voice. They are somewhat rigid, do not move their hands while talking, and have controlled facial expressions. People who are more emoting tend to focus on people, use stories when talking, and use more inflections in their voices. They are casual and animated, and tend to gesticulate with their hands while talking.

The third and final factor, and the most difficult to identify, was “Versatility.” The content seemed to indicate that the person being described excelled in the workplace and had achieved a high status among co-workers and others. These individuals were highly regarded in the workplace – their co-workers respected them and supported their actions. For this reason, it was temporarily called the “Star” scale. Later study clarified the significance of high versus low scores on this dimension.

## The SOCIAL STYLE Model Emerges



When the initial research was done, it was apparent that Assertiveness and Responsiveness described types of behavior that were largely independent from one another (they were not statistically correlated with one another). That independence is critical. A person's behavioral pattern can lie anywhere along one scale regardless of where his or her behavioral pattern is found along the other scale. For example, a highly Tell Assertive person could exhibit any range of behaviors along the Responsiveness scale.

An important point to this early research is that these behavior patterns could be observed by people's acquaintances and co-workers. When asked to describe someone using the behaviors of Assertiveness and Responsiveness, the person's co-workers could agree on how the person behaved along both dimensions.

Because the two dimensions are independent, a person's Style could occur in various patterns. To represent how this happens, Assertiveness and Responsiveness were depicted graphically at right angles to one another. This is how the SOCIAL STYLE Model was created. By putting the scales at right

angles, intersecting at their mid-points, the Model described four general behavior patterns. Using a grid was arbitrary, but it was a convenient and easy way to depict the four Styles.

After developing the grid and studying the behaviors further, the researchers discovered common themes among each of the four Styles. Through interviews and observations of many people, they noticed that people of the same Style tended to engage in a common set of similar behaviors. Notably, people's co-workers and acquaintances could recognize and describe these patterns. For example, people with an Amiable Style were commonly described as trusting, supportive, and approachable.

### **Versatility Emerges**

While the existence of Assertiveness and Responsiveness became apparent early in the research process, the third "Star" scale was still a mystery. Dr. Merrill and Mr. Reid knew that the scale differentiated people who succeeded at work from those who were less successful, but they didn't understand exactly why this was occurring. To understand and make use of this third scale, they needed more information about what it was measuring.

To get a better understanding of this scale, Merrill and Reid conducted extensive interviews with the managers and colleagues of people who were rated both high and low on this scale. They asked people to describe these individuals, and in particular what behaviors led some of them to greater success than others.

The information gathered from this interview process led not only to the naming of the scale – Versatility – but also to uncovering the four "sources of Versatility." The researchers found that people with high Versatility were consistently described as excelling in four distinct areas, which the researchers named Image, Presentation, Competence, and Feedback.

These interviews also uncovered another significant feature of Versatility. Those with high Versatility were consistently described as understanding others well, and focusing on meeting others' needs. They seemed to understand other people's behavioral preferences, and were successful in working with others through this understanding. In contrast, those with low Versatility were described as focusing primarily on meeting their own needs without regard to other people's preferences.

Versatility is covered later in this book, but for now, it is helpful to have a definition of each of the four sources:

Image is a measure of the appropriateness of a person's dress. It is the simplest aspect of Versatility, and merely indicates whether a person dresses according to established norms. In addition to dress, there are other factors that can affect Image. For instance, how a person "carries himself" and physical presence will affect others' perceptions of Image.

Presentation measures a person's ability to deliver information in organizational settings. It includes comfort level when presenting to groups, organization and clarity of the delivery, and how comfortable the group feels about the interaction. Presentation includes behavior that is shown during formal presentations, including meetings.

Competence is an evaluation of a number of capacities that affect others' abilities to achieve their own goals. It includes dependability, perseverance, and flexibility. It also gauges optimism and ability to help solve problems. Competence is a large component of Versatility, since several types of behavior are being measured within this dimension.

Feedback evaluates people's verbal and nonverbal communication skills that affect their ability to both understand others and in turn make themselves clear when communicating. This includes the ability to listen and understand others' points of view, respond accordingly, and develop mutually beneficial relationships. Feedback is a critical component of Versatility. Because it involves the ability to communicate meaningfully with others, it is often the part of Versatility that is most meaningful to co-workers.

### **Versatility and Social Endorsement**

When Versatility was first described by Merrill and Reid, they used the term "Social Endorsement" to describe and explain the concept. They used this term because they discovered that when people were described as behaving with high Versatility, the outcome was that their co-workers supported, or endorsed, their behavior. Thus, over time the two terms, "Versatility" and "Social Endorsement," became interchangeable.

In this book we no longer describe Versatility using the phrase "Social Endorsement." Like many expressions that were commonly used during the



era in which they were coined, the phrase is no longer easily understood by many people today. Instead, we point out that Versatility is comprised of a set of behaviors. When people engage in these behaviors, it leads to interpersonal effectiveness and associated desirable outcomes, such as support and respect.

### **Early Applications**

The first application of the Model was in selecting sales people. This was done in the insurance and banking industries, and in two other large companies – General Electric and Gates Rubber Company. Candidates were evaluated on their Versatility scores, since Versatility had been shown to distinguish between successful and unsuccessful sales performance.

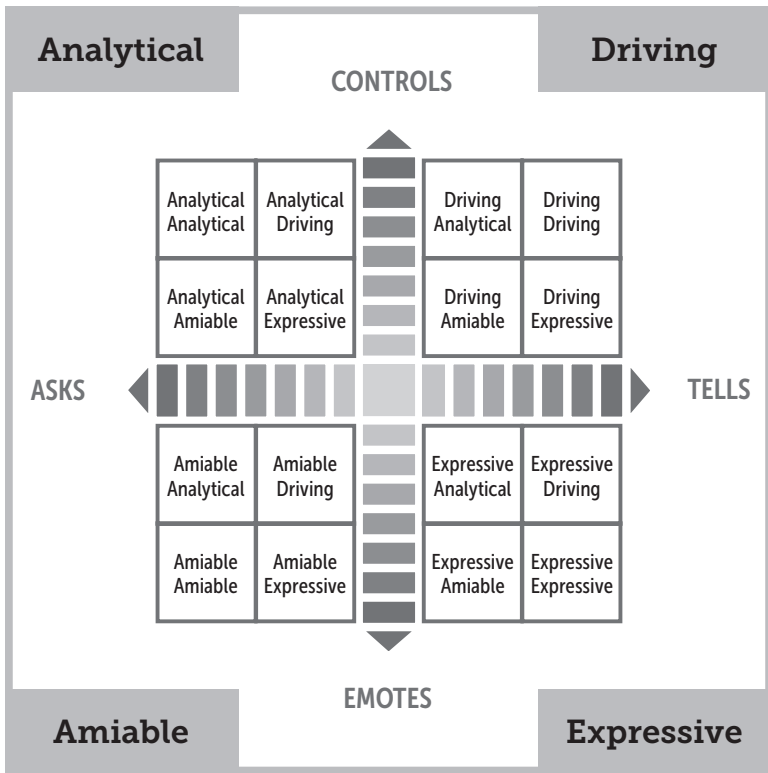
As the use of the Model spread and the numbers of profiles grew, it became necessary to develop a separate entity for managing the prediction and selection business, and Personnel Predictions and Research (PPR) was formed. The rising demand for published support material led the company to purchase the Mountain Empire Publishing Company (MEPI).

The three entities – RMBA, PPR, and MEPI – were formally merged in the late 1970s, becoming The TRACOM Corporation.

As use of the Model became more valued, its application expanded into other areas. In particular, it became a valuable tool in the training of sales people and managers across a broad range of industries. TRACOM and its clients came to realize that providing people with an understanding of the Model and how it could be used to help them at work was even more beneficial than using it as a selection tool. Over time, the use of the Model for selection was discontinued in favor of using it for professional development. TRACOM has not supported using the Model for job selection or placement since the 1980s.

### **Early Style Language**

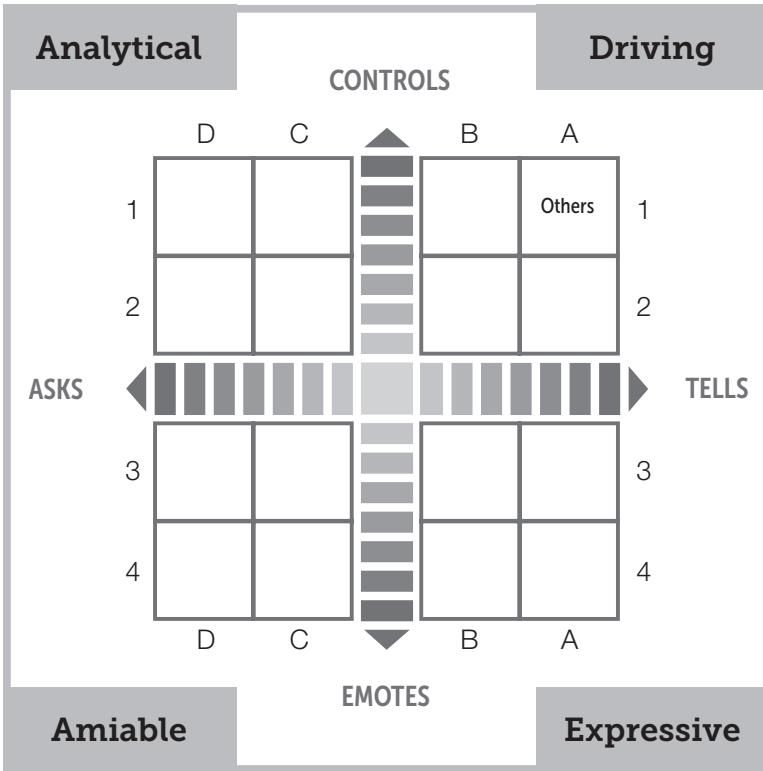
Early in the Model's history, TRACOM used a distinctive naming convention to describe people's Styles, as shown on the following graph. These names were meant to differentiate among the Styles and to provide people with a relative comparison of where they stood on the Style profile.



Creative as they were, these names became problematic as the use of the Model became more widespread. The names were meant to indicate that there are behavioral differences within each Style. For example, not all Amiable people are alike; there are degrees of behavioral difference along both the Assertiveness and Responsiveness scales. However, people were often confused by them. “Am I still an Analytical if I’m not an Analytical Analytical? How Analytical am I?”

To address this problem, TRACOM developed an alphanumeric system to plot people’s Styles in very specific ways. Each Style quadrant now has four sub-quadrants. For Assertiveness the quadrants range from A to D (Tell to Ask). Responsiveness ranges from 1 to 4 (Controlled to Emoting). These sub-quadrants will be described in greater detail later in this book.

In the following example instead of the label Driving Driving we now refer to this person as an A1 Driving Style.



An interesting bit of trivia is why the sub-quadrants were arranged in this particular manner. People often wonder why Assertiveness is arranged from right to left (A to D), instead of the more usual left to right orientation. Dr. Merrill, the lead researcher and developer of the Model, had a Driving Style. In particular, he was a Driving Driving, as they said at the time, and he had a very competitive nature. So, the outer Driving sub-quadrant became A1!

You can find more detailed information about the history and development of the SOCIAL STYLE Model in the book People Styles and Effective Performance by D. Merrill and R. Reid. The reference for this book is listed in the References section at the end of this book.

## SOCIAL STYLE Today

Today, SOCIAL STYLE has a global reputation for adding value in not only the development of sales people, managers, and staff, but also in improving people's abilities to build and maintain relationships in the workplace and in their personal lives.

Research has shown that Style is universal among humans. Millions of people worldwide – from six continents and more than 35 countries – have received SOCIAL STYLE Profiles. The three scales have been normed and validated across many cultures and languages.

Beginning in 2001, a new measurement system was developed and researched. This new measure was released to the public in 2003. Two primary motives led to the decision to revise and expand the original profile instrument.

First, the original questionnaire is a list of descriptive adjectives developed in the 1960s. The natural evolution of language has made some of these adjectives less frequently used in today's idiomatic English. In addition, the popular meanings of some of the adjectives have changed over the years. For example, one of the adjectives, "religious," was at one time a relatively common way to describe someone who is conscientious and dutiful. However, some people now automatically interpret the word in its theological sense.

The second and more important motive to update the measurement system was due to recent research on interpersonal effectiveness, in particular, in the area called emotional intelligence. For example, one central aspect of the application of the SOCIAL STYLE Model is to "Know Yourself, Control Yourself, Know Others, and Do Something For Others." These correspond very closely to the four dimensions of emotional intelligence outlined by Daniel Goleman and his colleagues: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management. In addition, several of the emotional intelligence competencies are very similar to those that define TRACOM's Versatility concept, such as conscientiousness, empathy, and optimism.

TRACOM wanted to expand on its Versatility concept and measure its more specific components. Thus, a central aspect of the new measurement questionnaire is its emphasis on measuring the four components of Versatility — Image, Presentation, Competence, and Feedback.

The current questionnaire uses behavioral items tied to an agreement rating scale, rather than a list of adjectives tied to a yes/no/don't know scale. An example is: "This person speaks frequently during meetings" (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree).

The major contribution of the new measurement system has been enhancements to the Versatility Model. These enhancements will be described in detail later in this book.

## Chapter

# 5

# SOCIAL STYLE

## Basics

This section and the next one titled “Versatility Basics” describe the most fundamental aspects of SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility. Much of the common knowledge required to facilitate Style programs is in these two sections. More specific information about how the Model works will be provided in the detailed sections that follow later in the book.

### SOCIAL STYLE Basics

We have described SOCIAL STYLE as a pattern of behavior that people tend to use in their interactions with others. Those patterns can be described according to four broad Styles: Driving, Expressive, Amiable, and Analytical. Style is based on observable behavior, verbal and non-verbal, that co-workers agree upon as typical of a person’s behavior.

Now let’s talk about where Style comes from. It is important for you to understand this concept, as it provides a solid grounding for understanding the root of Style behaviors. You are probably familiar with the nature/nurture debate. For decades some scientists have argued that our personalities and behavior are formed entirely as expressions of our genes. Others have argued the opposite – that we develop as individuals primarily based on our environments and how we are raised. This debate has been very difficult to solve because it requires longitudinal research over the course of individuals’ lifetimes, not to mention a great deal of sophisticated measurement.

Thanks to some dedicated scientists, just this type of research is available (Loehlin, 1992). Much of this research has been conducted with twins – those who were raised together, and the much more rare cases of twins who were raised in separate households. Twin studies are necessary because twins are the only people who share both genetics and environment in common.

As most people would guess, this research has determined that both genetics and environment contribute to who we eventually become. Much of this research examined personality attributes, not behavioral styles, but similar results can be assumed. The details of the research are complex, but essentially genetics accounts for only a slight portion of the similarity in personalities among twins. As twins grow into adolescence and young adulthood, their unique experiences (different environments) account for the majority of their individual personality development.

You may be able to notice this in your own life. If you have brothers and sisters, think about the similarities you shared when you were growing up, as compared to the people you have become as adults. Are you more or less similar now than you were when you were children? For most people, the answer is less similar. This is because you have entered the world outside of your childhoods, and your unique experiences have had major effects on your development.

## Where Does Style Come From?

With Style, we can assume that genetics accounts for some of our behavior. For example, some of us are predisposed toward being talkative while others are predisposed toward being quieter. This is a natural expression of our genes. As we grow older and experience the world around us, some behaviors are reinforcing while others are not. Fairly early in life, usually by late adolescence or early adulthood, we stabilize into a behavioral Style that works for us, and this Style is greatly influenced by our environments.

If a person's colleagues were to follow him around for a couple of days and record his behavior, they would see some interesting results. First, the observers would say that the person engaged in a wide range of behaviors. Next, they would notice that he used some behaviors more than others; some a lot more.

Behavioral psychology has demonstrated that, to a certain degree, people develop behavior patterns based on what is most effective for them. By “most effective” we mean that some behaviors are more likely to get the responses the person desires. Also, we engage in behaviors that are most comfortable for our particular temperaments.

Simply put, one uses some behaviors more than others because they are the behaviors that make the person most comfortable in relating to others. These behaviors became comfortable for each individual early in life. As each person used them more often, they became behavioral habits. Since these patterns work over time for each individual, fundamentally changing them becomes less likely as an individual matures into adulthood.

As an example, think about a young girl who is just entering grade school. Through a combination of genetics and her home environment, she is already predisposed to being quieter and less outgoing than many of her schoolmates. She does not forcefully assert herself in the classroom or try hard to get attention from the teacher. Instead, over time she discovers that the best way to get the type of recognition she wants is to only raise her hand when she is certain she knows the answer to a question. As she begins to become more confident in her surroundings, she asks the teacher thoughtful questions about topics. Her classmates begin to treat her as if she is a smart person who can help them if they need it. They also seek her out during recess because they’ve learned that she is reticent, and they want to include her in their play. The responses this girl gets from her behavior – approval from the teacher without the risk of embarrassment, and just enough attention from her classmates to help her eventually develop friendships – is reinforcing. She is likely to continue with this type of behavior into the future.

### **The Role of Tension in Style**

The example above highlights an important component in the development of Style – tension. Certain behaviors are reinforcing for us, and this leads to us using them with frequency. Many of the behavioral habits we’ve acquired are the result of behaviors that have been effective for reducing our tension levels. We experience some form of tension and engage in behaviors to try and reduce the tension. Those behaviors that are successful in reducing the tension are likely to be repeated.



In behavioral psychology, patterns of behavior are formed through a series of responses to stimuli, and reinforcement of those behaviors. The model below shows the behavioral explanation of how individuals develop their Style patterns.



In the example given previously, the school girl felt tension at the thought of speaking in front of the class. Her tension was fear of judgment by her teacher and classmates. This led her to remain quiet while many of her classmates spoke freely. However, this was only a temporary reduction of her tension. She still had things to say and wanted to be engaged with her teacher and classmates. Besides, her teacher had a habit of calling on the kids who never spoke, and this could lead to even more embarrassment! By raising her hand only when she was certain of what she was going to say, she got rid of the tension. She was judged favorably and got the responses she wanted. Each time she behaved in a similar way, her behavior was reinforced because it continued to reduce her tension.

This is a simple model, but it helps to explain how behavioral patterns are formed. When behaviors work, you use them frequently. Thus, others see your behaviors as habitual and, therefore, predictable.

There are many examples of both unhealthy and healthy responses to tension. For example, in response to various forms of tension, some people drink alcohol while others exercise. Tension is reduced by both behaviors, but one is clearly healthier than the other.

Tension exists in interpersonal relationships, and people can learn how to manage this tension so that relationships are maintained at productive levels. Participants in Style programs will learn to do this by becoming aware of the behavior patterns they use to reduce their tension.

## Predicting Behavior

Style is determined by a theme or pattern of typical behaviors. These behaviors are habits one develops over long periods of time to interact with other people in varying situations and environments. Style is built on collecting multiple observations of one's behavior patterns and describing those patterns as seen by multiple people.

Style is consistent across a wide variety of situations, and therefore can be used to predict how people are likely to behave. A person who is known to be highly Analytical in Style can be predicted to speak more slowly, make decisions slowly and deliberately, and to control the display of emotions. This degree of prediction makes the Model very useful when interacting with others, and especially when getting to know new co-workers.

Being able to anticipate a behavior pattern enables you to build relationships more effectively by capitalizing on the strengths of that pattern and avoiding or appropriately dealing with the weaknesses. Before learning to predict behavior, however, you need to understand the types of behavior that help make up a person's Style.

### “Say and Do” Observable Behaviors

The dimensions making up the SOCIAL STYLE Model are based on what people see another saying or doing in their interactions. These dimensions do not include judgments, assumptions, or biases about the individual.

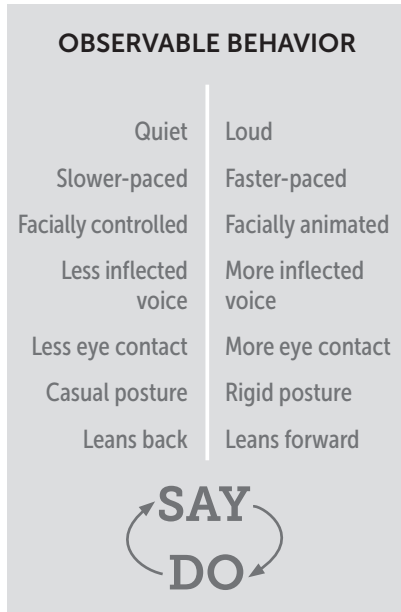
Significantly, the Model does not attempt to explain why one said or did something. Therefore, observable behaviors provide an objective basis for describing past behavior. Since past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior, the Model describes patterns of behavior that are likely to recur over time.

The “say and do” behaviors that comprise the Model include only those behaviors used in normal interaction with others. An individual's behavior when alone, or when acting or playing a part, is not part of the Model.

Likewise, other less common behavior, such as how a person behaves in a life-threatening emergency or while experiencing extreme grief, should not be used in trying to describe a person's Style.

The “Say and Do” behaviors listed below are not “either-or” propositions. Rather, they represent continuums. For example, from quieter to louder or from less to more eye contact.

**Observable “Say and Do” Behaviors**



**Behavior and its Relation to Personality**

Earlier we discussed behavior and personality. Understanding the distinction between SOCIAL STYLE and personality is important for facilitators to understand and explain. People often use the two terms interchangeably, as if they are synonymous. People will often ask whether they are the same: “Is my Style my personality?” Or, “Is the SOCIAL STYLE Profile a personality test?”

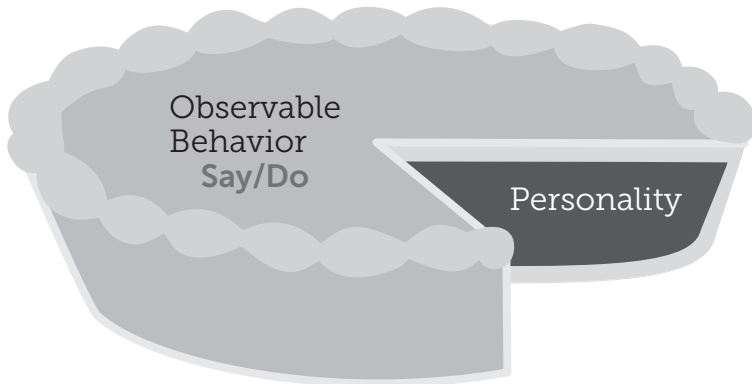
Every person has a unique personality made up of a collection of emotional patterns, mental processes, thought patterns, and values and behaviors, which are all influenced by genetics and personal experience. Accurately and comprehensively describing and explaining an individual’s personality is very

difficult. More importantly, it would not contribute very much to understanding how others perceive that individual and his or her behavior at work.

In a simple analogy, personality can be compared to a pie. The inside of the pie, much like one's personality, is out of direct view and contains a mix of ingredients that gives the pie a unique texture and flavor. Behavior is like the crust, the outer part of the pie that everyone can see and describe in more or less the same way.

SOCIAL STYLE only deals with observable behaviors, that part of the personality that can be objectively seen and heard.

Like the crust of the Personality Pie, SOCIAL STYLE behaviors are particular patterns of activity that people can observe and agree upon for describing a person's behavior.



## Assertiveness and Responsiveness

As we've discussed, a person's Style is a result of behavior along two continuums, Assertiveness and Responsiveness. This section provides more detail about these two dimensions of behavior.

Assertiveness<sup>1</sup> is a measure of the degree to which one tends to ask or tell when interacting with others. It is a reflection of how others see a person influencing others.

<sup>1</sup> NOTE: This definition is different from the one found in "Assertiveness training." Here, we are measuring the different degrees to which individuals are tell assertive or ask assertive.

Those who are more tell assertive tend to state their opinions with assurance, confidence and force. They make positive statements and declarations and attempt to direct the actions of others.

## Assertiveness



Those who are more ask assertive tend to be more cautious and reserved about sharing their opinions. They attempt to influence the thinking and actions of others in a quieter, lower-key manner through the questions they ask, and the points they make.

## Responsiveness



Responsiveness is a measure of the degree to which others see one as tending to control his or her emotions (i.e., keeping feelings and emotions inside), or emote (i.e., outwardly displaying feelings and emotions with others). In part, it is also a measure of the extent to which one reacts to emotional influences, appeals or displays.

Those who control feelings usually react less to emotional appeals and are more likely to focus on ideas, things, data and tasks. They are also less likely to share their feelings publicly. Those who are more emoting tend to share their emotions and readily express anger, joy, happiness or hurt feelings. They are also more likely to respond to emotional appeals and influences.

Remember from the Introduction section that these scales are independent. Any individual can exhibit a behavior pattern anywhere along the two scales.

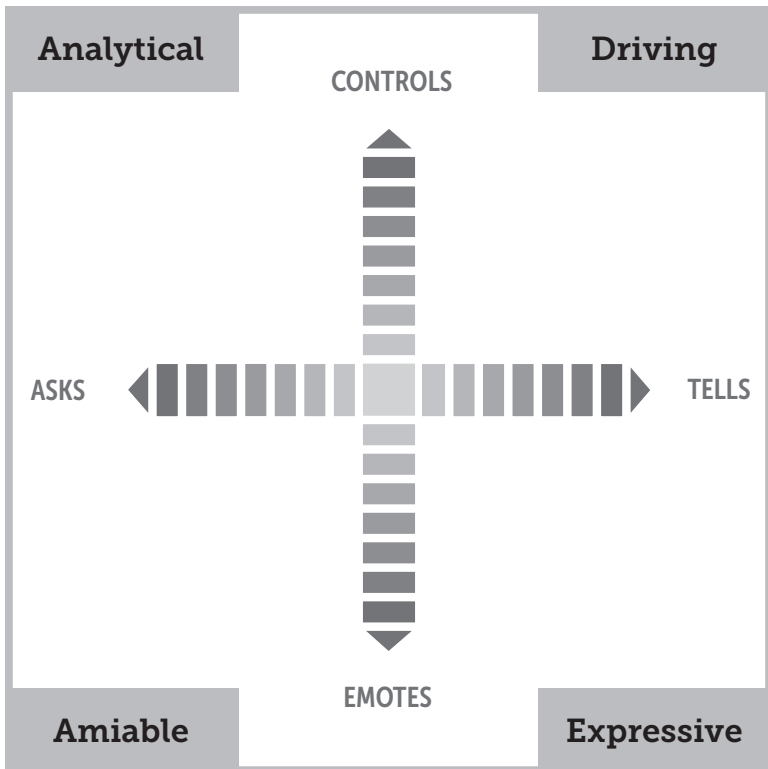
The SOCIAL STYLE Model combines the two dimensions of behavior to form four quadrants:

More controlling and telling = **Driving Style**

More emoting and telling = **Expressive Style**

More emoting and asking = **Amiable Style**

More controlling and asking = **Analytical Style**



Each Style is defined by observable behaviors involving the pace at which one usually tends to take action, the tendency to focus on details versus generalities, preference for formal versus informal approaches, and inclination for reserved versus open display of body language and facial expressions.

## Major Themes of Each Style

Now that we've discussed how Style is formed, and the major dimensions of behavior, let's learn more about each Style. Each of the four Styles has unique characteristics. These are specific behaviors that people of an individual Style tend to engage in. These behaviors distinguish one Style from another. For example, Expressive Style people are much more likely to speak with a loud volume than Analytical Style people. Following are common themes for each of the four Styles.



## Driving Style

### **“Let’s get it done now!”**

Driving Style people have a strong need for results, and they try to satisfy this need by taking action. They usually speak directly and often, letting others know their opinions. Their main Style challenge, or Growth Action, is to listen. It is difficult for them to pause and listen to what is being said by others, or to actively solicit the input of others.

These people are seen by others as active, forceful, determined, and direct. They initiate social interactions. They focus their efforts, and try to influence the efforts of others, toward the goals and objectives they want to get accomplished. They want to achieve their objectives quickly. They are typically described by others as cool, less personable, guarded, and sometimes aloof, as they typically do not openly show their feelings or reveal the depth of their emotions.

Driving Style people are:

- Active, forceful, and sometimes aggressive
- Direct, initiating social contact
- Focused on goals and objectives that need to get done
- Willing to challenge the ideas and views of others
- Willing to take risks and make quick decisions
- Impatient with others if things don’t move as quickly as desired
- Cool, distant, guarded, and aloof at times
- Emotionally controlled with others
- Formal, self-sufficient, serious, and usually deal with the reasoning and logic behind actions and decisions
- Competitive when interacting with others
- Focused on the immediate time frame with relatively little concern for the past or future
- May seek control through the use of position or coercive power
- Disciplined in their use of time





## Expressive Style

### **“I have an idea and its going to be great!”**

Expressive Style people have a strong need for personal approval, which results in them behaving in a very outgoing and spontaneous way. Like Driving Style people, they speak directly and frequently, but also loudly and in a more emotional way. Their behaviors can sometimes go too far, and result in their Growth Action – to check their behavior. Their challenge is to stop and monitor their own behavior, which is sometimes impulsive.

These people tend to be much more willing to make their inner feelings known to others. They can sometimes appear to react impulsively, and openly show both positive and negative feelings. Others typically describe them as personable, talkative, and sometimes opinionated.

Expressive Style people are:

- Direct and seek to be involved in activities and with others
- Active, spontaneous, forceful, and make their presence known
- Reactive and impulsive about showing both positive and negative feelings
- Emotionally open in their display of feelings
- Open and communicative with others even when it may not be appropriate to do so
- Quick to decide, and make decisions based on intuition
- Assertive in their attempts to influence others
- Casual, general, imprecise, and impulsive
- Dramatic
- Focused on the future, with intuitive visions and outspoken spontaneity
- Imaginative and creative
- May make mistakes, and have frequent changes in direction and focus because of their desire to act on opinions, hunches, and intuitions, rather than facts and data
- May seek to influence others through the use of charisma
- Undisciplined in their use of time



## Amiable Style

### “One for all and all for one!”

Amiable Style people have a strong need for personal security, which means they like to be secure in their relationships with others. Because of this need, they naturally focus on maintaining good relationships. They usually speak less often than Driving or Expressive Style people, are relaxed in their interactions, and focus on people or stories. Their Growth Action is to initiate, which means to take more risk by expressing their viewpoints or making a first move in a situation.

These people openly display their feelings to others. However, they appear less demanding and generally agreeable. They are interested in achieving a good rapport with others, who often describe them as informal, casual, and easygoing. They tend to be sensitive to keeping relationships with others on a friendly, personal basis.

Amiable Style people are:

- Approachable, concerned, and supportive
- Trusting in their personal relationships
- Unlikely to impose their views on others
- Emotionally open in their display of feelings
- Informal, casual, and easygoing
- Sensitive to keeping relationships on a friendly basis
- Slow to decide, and make decisions based on impacts on relationships
- Often less concerned about the efficiency of their actions
- Focused on the present
- Likely to interpret the world on a personal basis by getting involved in the feelings and relationships between people
- Likely to get things done with and through others
- Effective at social networking
- Likely to stick with the comfortable and the known
- Likely to avoid decisions that might involve personal risks and conflict in relationships
- May try to influence others through the use of rewards
- Sometimes undisciplined in their use of time



## Analytical Style

### “Just the facts!”

Analytical Style people have a strong need to be right, meaning that they want to be correct in terms of their approaches to situations or their use of information when solving problems. Because of this need, they tend to focus on processes and procedures. They typically speak slowly and deliberately, and are emotionally controlled. Their Growth Action is to declare, meaning they need to assert themselves and share their opinions while resisting the urge to hesitate or be indirect in their beliefs.

These people are typically described by others as quiet, logical, and sometimes reserved. They sometimes appear distant from others and may not communicate with them unless there is a specific need to do so. They tend to make decisions thoughtfully and act deliberately. Other people usually see them as cautious, careful, and thorough.

Analytical Style people are:

- Reserved, unaggressive, and avoid appearing dominant
- Tentative and may not communicate with others unless there is a specific need to do so
- Slow to make decisions, and act thoughtfully
- Likely to make decisions based on reasoning and logic
- Unlikely to impose on others
- Cautious, careful, and thorough
- Formal, stiff, and proper
- Cautious about becoming personally involved with others
- Precise, specific, and critical
- Cool, distant, and detached
- Focused on the past
- Likely to live life according to facts, principles, processes, logic and consistency
- Likely to behave in ways that fit into their overall theory and ideas about the world
- Sometimes unenthusiastic
- May try to influence others through the use of personal expertise
- Generally disciplined in their use of time

## Are all Styles Created Equal?

Participants in Style programs often wonder if one Style is better than another. Some people even believe that certain Styles are more likely to succeed at certain professions, tasks, or roles. No Style is preferable to another. TRACOM's research has found that Style does not predict success at any occupation. (Versatility, however, has been found to predict performance. This is discussed later.)

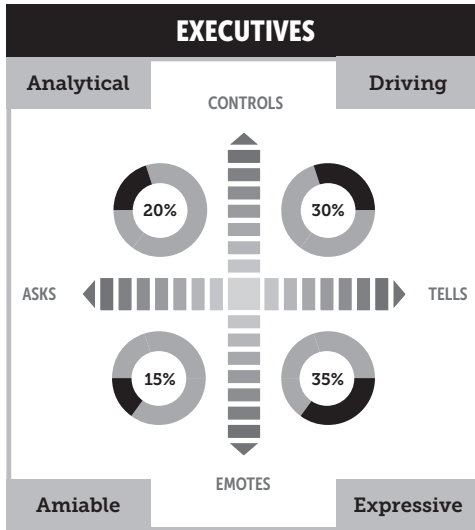
What is often true is that people of a particular Style will be attracted to certain occupations and roles. For example, Analytical Style people tend to be overrepresented among accountants, engineers, and information technology workers. Many Driving Style individuals tend to prefer roles where they can influence others, such as management. Expressive Style people are commonly found in marketing and retail occupations. Likewise, Amiable Style people are also attracted to these roles, in addition to human resources and teaching.

To be clear, this does not mean that there are no successful managers or engineers with Amiable or Expressive Styles, and no successful marketing and teaching professionals with Driving or Analytical Styles. Research shows that this is absolutely not the case. What is true is that people are often attracted to roles that require behaviors that are comfortable for them. People whose Style behaviors match occupational behavior demands feel more comfortable in those roles. TRACOM's research has never found a single occupation where more than 50% of the people have a single Style.

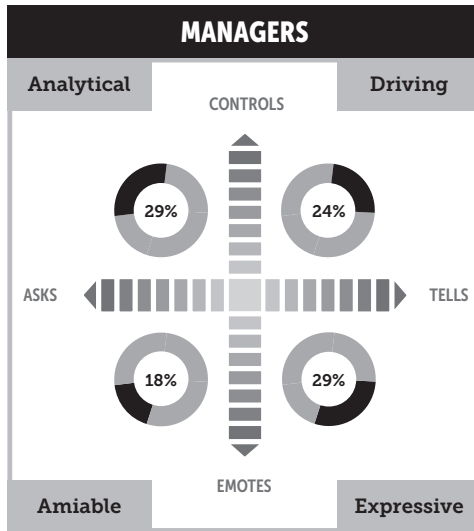
The following are some examples of Style breakdowns by job level, industry, and occupation. You can refer to the latest Technical Report or TRACOM's website for the most up-to-date information on this topic.

**Style by Job Level\***

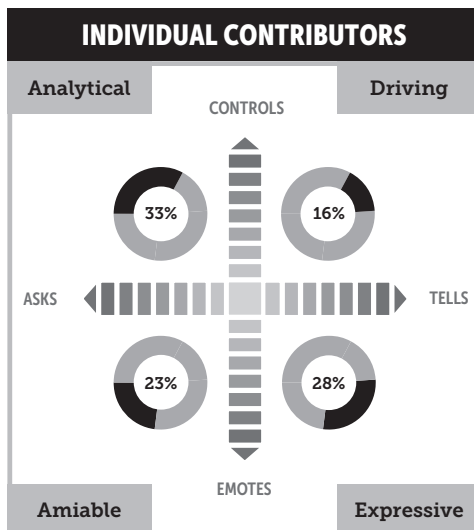
When reviewed by job level, we’ve found that many people who are highest in their organizations, mostly executives, have Tell-Assertive Styles – Driving and Expressive.



\* TRACOM regularly updates this information. Check for more recent information at [tracom.com](http://tracom.com).



In contrast, managers and individual contributors are more evenly split among the Styles.



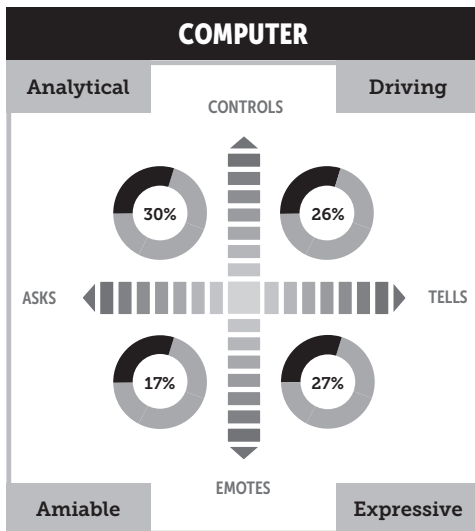
Why are executives seen as more Tell Assertive than others? There are at least three possibilities:

- **Role demands.** By the nature of their jobs, executives have to direct others, so they alter their behavior to become more Tell Assertive. Many of them may have to make this adjustment regardless of their natural Style.
- **Role perception.** Many executives may behave the same as they always have, but because of their formal roles they are perceived as more Tell Assertive. In other words, people see the term “executive” and automatically assume that these individuals are more Tell Assertive than they actually are.
- **Selection.** It may be the case that in many companies Tell Assertive people are more likely to be promoted. These individuals are more likely than Ask Assertive people to, well, assert themselves. Therefore they may have a higher likelihood of being promoted into more senior roles.

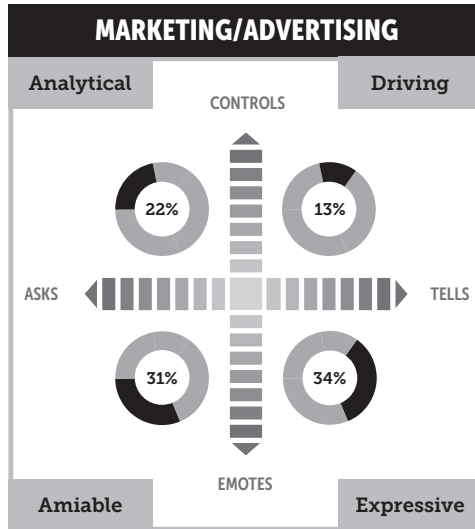
### Style by Industry

There are some noticeable Style-related differences when we look at industry.

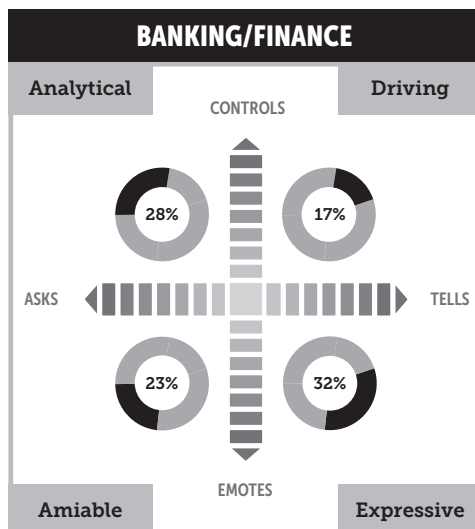
Within the computer industry, not surprisingly, the Analytical Style is heavily represented. What is also noticeable is that the majority of individuals are on the Control end of the Responsiveness scale.



In contrast, within the marketing and advertising industry, the majority of people profiled are on the Emote end of the Responsiveness continuum – Expressive and Amiable Styles.



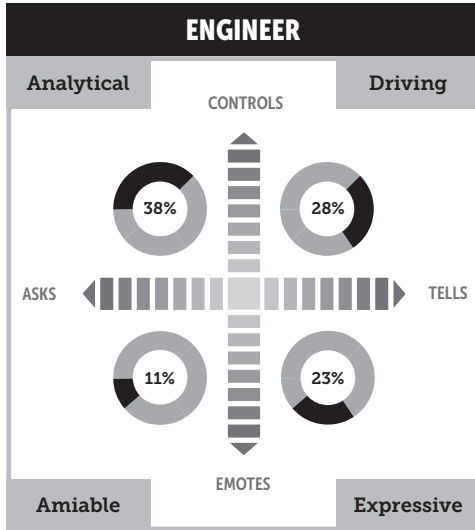
Within banking and finance, there is a more even distribution, though many people are profiled as Analytical and Expressive – Styles that are opposite to one another.



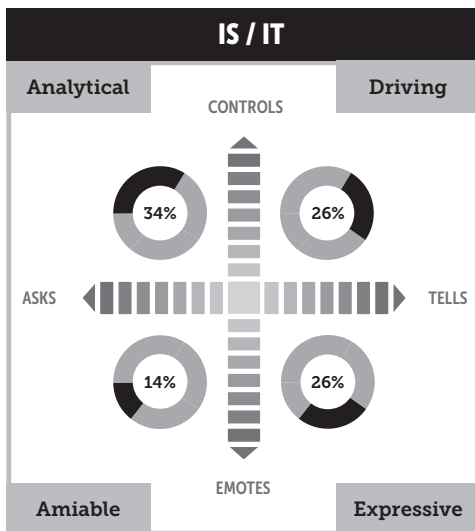


### Style by Occupation

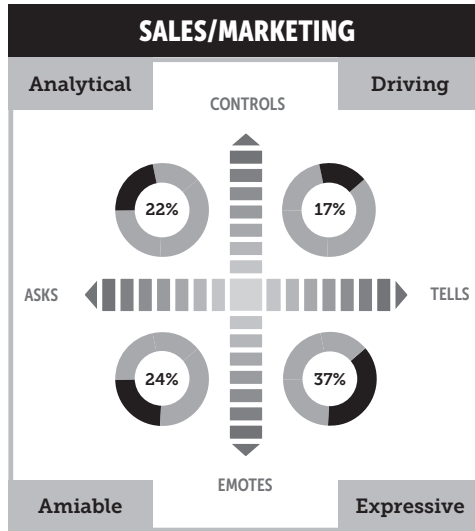
When viewed on the whole, occupations also have some unique Style differences. For example engineers are heavily concentrated on the Control end of the Responsiveness continuum. This makes sense, since engineering requires detail-oriented work, therefore Analytical and Driving Style people would naturally be drawn to this occupation.



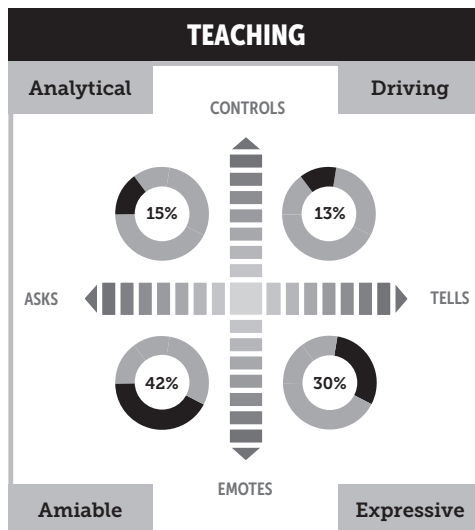
A similar pattern is found among those in the information technology role.



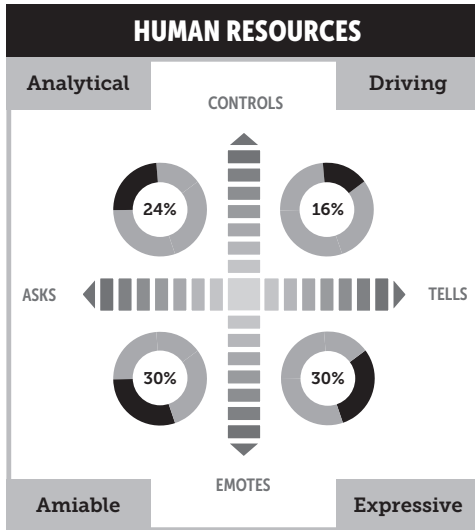
A more opposite result is found among those in the sales and marketing function. Here, most individuals were profiled as Emote Responsive. This is reasonable because individuals who are more outgoing are likely to be attracted to these roles.



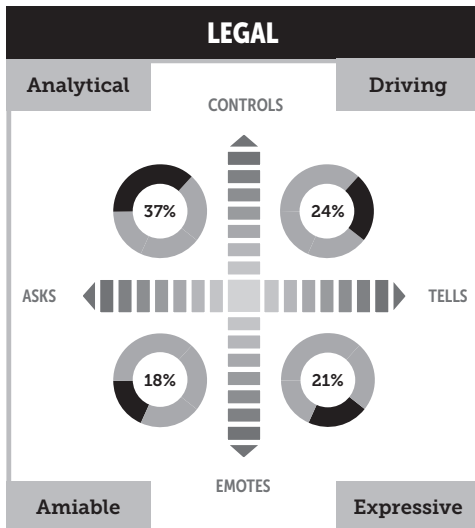
Similarly, teachers have a very heavy representation of Amiable and Expressive Style individuals. Most of us can probably remember at least one teacher who had an Amiable Style. However, while Driving Style teachers are more rare, they may be even more memorable!



The human resources occupation has a similar pattern to teachers, though a higher proportion of Analytical Style people are represented.



Not all occupations have clear-cut Style distinctions. For example, the legal field has a more normal distribution of Styles.



## Does Style Ever Change?

TRACOM's research has shown that Style remains relatively consistent across time. Like most human characteristics, a certain degree of variability across time is to be expected, though for Style behaviors these are slight. Versatility is more likely to change, since those behaviors can be learned and adjusted.

Research has shown that behavior and personality evolve into early adulthood, and become fairly stable as people grow older. Style remains relatively consistent across time, though some situations can cause a person's Style to change, at least temporarily. For example, dramatic life changes or traumatic events (e.g., divorce, serious illness) can cause Style changes.

Within a work environment, it is possible for people's perceptions of a person's Style to change. For example, if an Analytical Style person is promoted into management, he or she may be required to become more Tell Assertive in order to direct the activities of others. This can cause perceptions of his or her Style to change somewhat, at least in the short term.

An important point to remember is that measurement of human behavior is different from measurement of physical phenomena, such as height or weight. When you measure your height, this is an exact measurement, with no error. Thankfully, human beings are not so consistent. To a certain degree, our behavior fluctuates. In addition, different people's perceptions of our behavior will also vary slightly. So measurement of human behavior is never an exact science.

## Is Style at Home Different From Style at Work?

One's Style is one's Style in every environment. Style usually remains very consistent. Nonetheless, at home, one's roles – sibling, parent, spouse, son or daughter – may include more frequent uses of certain behavior patterns than at work. The same can sometimes be said of behaviors at play, at a party, or in other roles.

If participants in a program insist that they have a different Style at home, remind them of subtle differences between various environments and how this might impact Style. However, ask them to check with their spouse or roommate about their behavior. Encourage them to share their profile with

these individuals, and get their feedback about whether they display similar behaviors at home.

## Do we Intuitively Know our own Styles?

How we see ourselves is often different from how others see us. In fact, TRACOM's research over the years has consistently found that self-perception of Style only matches other people's perception of Style for approximately 50% of the people who complete multi-rater profiles. This means that about half of all people who are profiled using a multi-rater instrument will have a discrepancy between their perceptions of their behavior and how their co-workers see them in daily interactions.

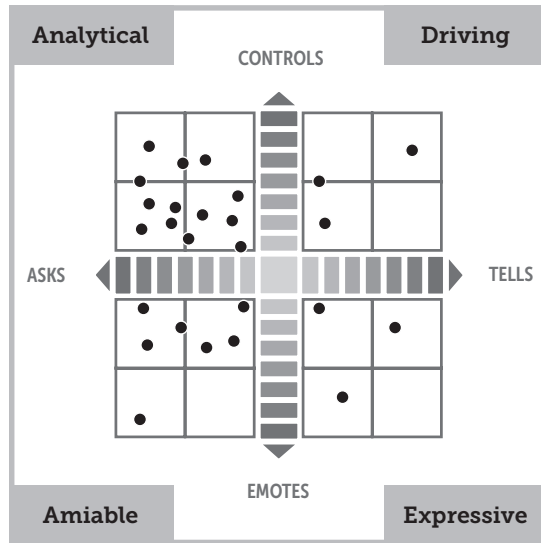
There are a variety of possible reasons why this occurs. People often hope to be seen in certain ways. They may feel that certain behaviors are more desirable than others. In fact, some people will claim that certain Styles are favored or even expected within their workplaces. Alternatively, some individuals may simply wish they were a certain way, when in fact they are not. In many cases, individuals simply do not take the time to reflect on their outward behavior and how it can be seen by others.

Regardless of the reasons for any bias in how people view their own behavior, the fact remains that perception is reality. Taking into account other people's perceptions leads to self-understanding. This is important in order to understand how our behavior is interpreted by others. Self-monitoring of our own behavior is a critical step in learning to work more effectively with others.

## What is Not True About Style?

Style is not a box. People do not always respond, in all situations, according to their primary Style patterns. For instance, an Amiable Style person who finds himself in an emergency situation may exhibit Driving Style behaviors in response to the situation.

Consider the pattern of dots in the following graphic. Imagine that each dot represents someone's behavior in response to a different social interaction with others. Over the course of a few days or a week, notice that the behavior occurs at points all over the Model, but the cloud of dots centers in the Analytical Style quadrant.



For example, if we used a video camera and followed a person for 100 days, during that time the video would show examples of all four Styles' behavior patterns. However, it would also show that over time the individual's behavior tended toward one of the Styles more often than the others.

The Style descriptions in this book illustrate common patterns of behavior observed among the four Styles. However, not all people of a Driving Style will exhibit all of the behaviors listed as descriptors for the Driving Style. The same is true for the other Styles. That much specificity could border on a caricature of each Style, which is not the intent. The purpose is to give a large sample of the behaviors observed among people of each Style, not to describe how all people of that Style behave all the time, or even most of the time.

### **A Note About Shortcut Language**

Since the four Styles were first defined, people have taken the liberty of calling people with a Driving Style, "Drivers," people with an Expressive Style "Expressives," and so on. Many people who are familiar with Style take this shortcut. However, properly speaking, a person with a Driving Style is more than a "Driver," and Expressive Style people are not merely summed up as "Expressives."

All people use all four of the Styles from time to time, in different circumstances and different environments. Even the most Amiable of those with an Amiable Style, the most Analytical of the Analytical Style individuals, will at times display behaviors of their opposite Styles.

The key issues to remember about this verbal shortcut are these:

- Some people express sensitivity, even anger, at any effort to label them or put them in a box. It is important to know that Style is a pattern of behaviors, not a definition of a person.
- Second, the more varied one's behavior patterns are, the more Versatility that individual typically displays. For example, a highly versatile person of any Style will show behaviors associated with the other Styles more often than a person with less Versatility.

## SOCIAL STYLE in Summary

In this introduction we've discussed most of the basic knowledge that you'll need to understand SOCIAL STYLE. In the SOCIAL STYLE In Depth section of this book, you will learn more about the mechanics of Style and how it is measured. You will also learn more about each of the Styles and how they prefer to work and interact with others.

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## Chapter

# 6

## Versatility Basics

Having a firm grasp of Style will help people understand their own and others' behavioral preferences. Versatility is the concept that helps connect Style with interpersonal effectiveness. Style shows people that there are different behavioral preferences. Through Style awareness, people gain insight into their own behavioral strengths and weaknesses. They also learn to identify other people's Styles, giving them insight into other's behavioral preferences. With this knowledge in hand, people can then begin to "Do Something For Others," which is where Versatility is utilized.

Recall from the previous discussion on interpersonal effectiveness, we highlighted research showing how important interpersonal skills are for workplace performance. In particular, we highlighted findings showing that Versatility is related to many positive outcomes, such as leadership effectiveness, conflict management, and even salary. Thus, it is important to learn about Versatility and how it relates to Style.

### Versatility Defined

Versatility is a measure of interpersonal effectiveness that leads to support and respect of others. Like Style, it is a measure of behavior. However, unlike Style behaviors that are automatic and habitual, versatile behaviors require conscious awareness and effort, at least initially. These are the behaviors we perform in order to meet the expectations of others.



Most people are aware of the Golden Rule – treat people the way you would like them to treat you. Versatility employs what David Merrill termed the Platinum Rule – treat people the way they want to be treated. The difference may seem subtle, but it is critical. What it implies is that different people have different ways in which they want to be treated and interacted with. All people are not the same; therefore, you cannot assume that others want to be treated the same way you want to be treated.

This is why Style awareness is so important and linked to Versatility. By understanding a person's Style, you will be able to employ versatile behaviors more effectively. Examples of low and high Versatility will help to underscore these points.

A person who is acting with low Versatility is typically characterized by two things: he is displaying poor Style awareness and he is focused on meeting his own needs. He does not understand, or does not care about, other people's preferences; therefore, he does not attempt to adjust to those preferences. Likewise, he is focused primarily on meeting his own needs without considering the expectations of others. This is displayed through his behavior.

For example, he abruptly interrupts his co-workers and tells them how things should be done. When they try to communicate their viewpoints, he doesn't allow them to finish and moves the discussion on to the next topic on his agenda. He barely shows an awareness of their presence, much less their opinions or needs. This person is behaving with low Versatility because he is entirely focused on meeting his own needs, and also is completely unaware of the Style preferences of his co-workers.

In contrast, a person who is behaving with high Versatility actively displays two attributes: Style awareness and an appropriate focus on other people's expectations or needs. During a meeting, she actively listens to her co-workers and lets them know that she understands their viewpoints, even if she doesn't agree with them. Before moving on to other topics, she ensures that their expectations have been met, and she does this in a way that considers their Style orientations. For instance, if one of her co-workers has an Analytical Style she might ask if the discussion is taking all important information into consideration before coming to a decision.

The support and respect that individuals earn from others may increase or decrease. The more support and respect one earns, the more effective one is likely to be. A high level of Versatility is virtually always a good thing.

In the next section we discuss some of the fundamentals of Versatility, and how it is evaluated by the people we interact with.

## How Versatility is Evaluated

Before discussing the specific strategy that TRACOM uses to measure Versatility, let's discuss how Versatile behaviors came to be valued, and how people naturally evaluate these behaviors in others.

Human beings are complex – we have a myriad of motives, desires and goals. Fundamentally, however, there are certain motivations that virtually all of us share, especially in our work lives. We want to have good relationships with the people we work with, and we want to be valued, respected, and rewarded by our employers. In fact, longitudinal research has shown that these are consistently among the most important factors for happiness at work (Randstad, 2008).

In order to meet these needs we engage in certain behaviors at work. We try to do our jobs to the best of our abilities, help others when we can, and generally keep the best interests of the company in mind. This is our way of upholding our end of the employee-employer bargain, and it is also rewarding in that it helps us feel valued and respected.

In turn, over time certain behaviors have become rewarded by society in general, and the workplace in particular. There are certain behaviors that are generally seen as benefiting the common good. Some of these behaviors include reliability in getting things done on time and to high standards, being optimistic about a group's ability to achieve goals, and communicating effectively with others. These are only a few of the behaviors that are rewarded; there are of course others. The point is that virtually all people would agree these are desirable behaviors and are rewarded in one way or another at work.

While these behaviors are valued and rewarded, they are often interpreted slightly differently by people of different Styles. We all view the world through our unique Style lenses. For example, a Driving Style person can

view reliability differently than an Expressive Style person. The Driving Style person is likely to place higher importance on getting work done on time, even if it is not perfect. An Expressive Style person is likely to place higher value on the creativity of a piece of work rather than meeting a time commitment.

Thus, while versatile behaviors are commonly valued by all people, there are often subtle, Style-related nuances to how these behaviors are interpreted. We will discuss more about how Style and Versatility are related later.

## **Evaluation Over Time**

People often evaluate one another's Versatility subconsciously. Of course, we don't have a specific model or framework in mind when we do this. We aren't necessarily thinking consciously about Versatility, but there are certain behaviors that we pay attention to and make judgments about. Even if we are consciously judging a person's behavior, we might not say anything to the person about our judgments.

We react to people's behavior in four broad areas: Image, Presentation, Competence, and Feedback. When learning about Versatility, it is helpful to think of these four components as part of a timeline, beginning with Image.

Imagine that you are meeting a new person at work, a recently hired man. When you first meet someone, the only indication you have about him as a person is what you see. You see the way he dresses, his hairstyle and demeanor. You will almost always form some sort of impression about this person based on these things, consciously or not.

For example, if the first time you see him he is dressed in a fashionable suit and is well groomed, you will probably form a positive impression of his Image. You will think that he is a person who cares about his appearance and puts effort into the way he dresses and looks.

After you have met this person and performed your quick assessment, he would speak to you (or a group you're in). What are the things you notice at this point? You will probably pay attention to his voice, its inflection and volume. You will observe the type of language he uses, how clear he is, and whether he asks you questions. You will evaluate how effective he is at helping you understand his viewpoints. This is Presentation.

For example, during your first team meeting with this new person he introduces himself to the team and provides information on his background and experience. You notice that he is somewhat soft-spoken, but speaks clearly. When describing his previous work experiences, he clearly relates how they are relevant to the work he will be performing in his new company. Before finishing with his introduction he also asks if anybody has any questions for him. He comes across to you as well-spoken, organized, and aware of others in the team and the information they may want from him.

So far you have already gotten through Image and Presentation. Pretty quick and easy, right? Once again, the evaluations you have made about this fictional person may be largely unconscious, or at least unspoken.

As time passes, you work more closely with this new colleague. You observe him in a variety of situations. You see the work he produces, how efficient he is, and how effective he is at meeting priorities and deadlines. You see how he responds to change and unexpected events. You begin to get an understanding of how he is going to react in most situations. This is Competence.

For example, you notice that he is very detail focused. His work is thorough and he does not like to present work that is incomplete or below his standards. However, when unexpected changes occur, such as changing priorities or adjustments to project plans, he does not adjust well. It takes some time for him to shift his focus to new tasks or accept new plans. You come to believe that he is the type of person who gets very involved in his work and produces work that is of high quality, but he has difficulty with large or unexpected changes.

Imagine now that you have worked with this person for awhile. You have gotten to know him better and have achieved a level of comfort with him. You are now able to pay closer attention to how he interacts with a variety of people, especially on a personal basis. How does he interact with his co-workers? You notice how well he listens to people in team meetings, and how he responds to them. You notice whether he is attuned to the needs and behavior of different people. You see how well he gets along with the rest of the company and whether he forms friendships with anybody. You also notice subtleties of his behavior, such as the way he lets people know that he understands their needs. This is Feedback.

For example, you notice that in team meetings he is not very talkative, only speaking up when he has something specific to contribute. It's clear that he is

listening to others because when he does speak, he takes others' information into account. When the team leader is focused on deadlines or work that needs to be accomplished, he seems to understand this need by responding with bottom-line statements, such as "I can have this task finished by May 9th," or "I'll need eight days to complete this project." You also notice that he tends to keep to himself in the office. He is personable with those on his team and pleasant around others, but does not go out of his way to interact with people in other departments.

By this time, you have developed a good understanding of this man's behavior. With a good amount of accuracy you can predict how he will behave most of the time and in most circumstances, and you find yourself adjusting for this behavior in your interactions with him.

As you can see from this example, Versatility continues throughout time. As you work with people, some aspects of Versatility become less important over time while others become more important. Depending on the circumstances, they all work in conjunction, as some are more necessary in specific situations.

People use their Versatility skills to do something for others. A person with high Versatility understands how to communicate and interact with people in a way that makes them comfortable, and that ultimately leads to productive work relationships.

You probably know some people who seem to intuitively grasp this; they are interpersonally effective with a wide variety of people. The truth is that it comes more naturally to some people than to others. For those of us who have more difficulty with these abilities, the good news is that these skills can be learned and practiced.

## Versatility and Tension

As mentioned previously, in the context of Style, tension is defined as a force that causes productive action. Too much tension causes a discomfort that prevents progress. Too little tension means that there is too little focus to cause productive action. A similar pattern occurs with tension and Versatility.

It is sometimes difficult to behave with high Versatility. None of us can be perfect all the time, after all, particularly when we're operating under a lot of stress. During difficult times we often lose control of the behaviors we would

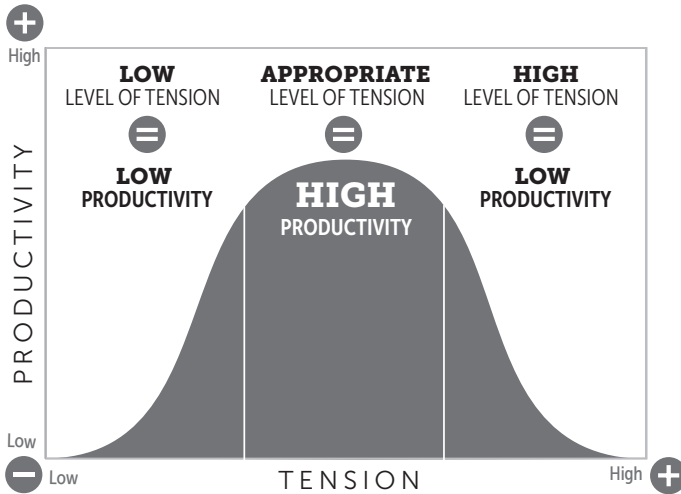
normally like to engage in, such as Versatility behaviors, and revert back to our more natural and basic behaviors.

For example, think about the work of a software developer. It's easy for her to operate comfortably when she is under normal time frames and circumstances. She can meet her requirements and in general behave with high Versatility without too much effort or thought. On the other hand, if she is suddenly given an extremely tight and unrealistic deadline, with multiple competing demands, it will not be as easy for her to behave with high Versatility. Because she is suddenly under a lot of stress, some of her "nice to have" behavior is likely to disappear in favor of more automatic behavior. She won't be as thoughtful about meeting other people's needs or working as effectively with them as she had previously. Under these circumstances others would probably view her as behaving with low Versatility.

Similar to Style and tension, a balanced level of tension leads to a level of activity and focus that gets results. Having an appropriate balance of tension will usually meet the conditions necessary for people to behave with high Versatility. Of course, acting with high Versatility is a choice, unlike our more natural Style behaviors.

Even under circumstances of high tension, people can display high Versatility. For example, at times people at work engage in heated discussions and arguments. These situations are often very tense. A person who is behaving with high Versatility will understand the short-term nature of this tension and the longer-term impacts it may have. She will also quickly recognize the tension that is building in the person she's arguing with. People with higher Versatility more accurately and quickly perceive others' tension and respond in ways that reduce the other person's tension. People with lower Versatility focus more on their own tension.

The relationship between tension and productivity is depicted in the following graph.



## Versatility and Style

Previously, we noted that a person's level of Versatility is independent of his or her Style. A person with low Versatility can have any Style. Likewise, people of any given Style will range from low to high Versatility. While levels of Versatility are independent of Style, the two are still connected in subtle ways. This section discusses the relationship between Style and Versatility. Specifically, we discuss how Style can influence Versatility in two ways.

First, people sometimes display Versatility in Style-specific ways. This is particularly true of low Versatility. The ways in which a Driving Style person displays low Versatility can be distinguished from the ways in which an Amiable Style person shows low Versatility.

Second, our perceptions of other people's Versatility is often filtered through our own Style. Analytical Style people will interpret and define versatile behavior somewhat differently than Expressive Style people. This is related to our different behavioral preferences and expectations.

## How Versatility Is Displayed by Styles

As an example of how people display Versatility in their own Style-specific ways, consider the Driving Style. These people sometimes have a problem with listening carefully to others. They may listen only at a superficial level, without understanding the underlying messages that others are communicating. This is a natural behavioral tendency for them, and it requires effort on their part to resist it.

An example will help to demonstrate this phenomenon. A Driving Style boss has just returned to her office after a meeting, and is preparing for her next task. Her assistant knocks on the door and politely asks what she is doing for lunch. Without hesitation, and barely looking at her assistant, the woman responds that she has a dozen things to get done and will be working at her desk while eating. The assistant hesitantly walks away, and the woman doesn't give the interaction a second thought. What she failed to recognize was that her assistant was asking her if she would like to have lunch together, probably so he could discuss some important things with her. This is a nuance of behavior that a Driving Style person with low Versatility would not perceive.

Of course, members of the other Styles can also display low, and high, Versatility in their own Style-bound ways. Expressive Style people often improvise their way through situations. They are often unprepared for a given situation and will respond with an impromptu display that sometimes relies on charm or humor. Amiable Style people have such a strong need to maintain relationships that they will go along with others solely because they want to minimize interpersonal conflict. They will not express their opinions or say what they want or need. Finally, Analytical Style people are often very slow. They are slow to act, but are also slow in conversation, often drawing out explanations or conversations beyond what other people want or need.

## How Style Influences Perceptions of Versatility

The second way that Style can influence Versatility is through our own perceptions of other people's behavior. Because each Style of person has his or her particular preferences, we can have slightly different ways of looking at Versatility.

For example, imagine giving a formal presentation to four people, one of each Style. Each of these individuals is likely to have different perceptions of you.



The Driving Style person will want you to be efficient and brief, and keep your focus on the goals. The Expressive Style person will want you to show some excitement, and use humor and stories to make your points. The Amiable Style person will respond well if you involve her in the presentation by asking for her input. Finally, the Analytical Style person will expect you to be well organized and detailed in your approach.

As this example points out, it can be a challenge to be all things to all people. However, this is not what Versatility is about. In this example, you would be well received by using a combination of approaches during the course of your presentation.

Though people's Style lenses can influence the way they perceive Versatility, there are still some core Versatile behaviors that will always be seen a certain way regardless of Style. For example, if you constantly submit work that is late and below acceptable quality, you will be described as unreliable. Your Style and the Styles of those you work with won't matter. Alternatively, if your work is consistently professional, people will describe you in very positive terms regardless of your Style or theirs.

## Versatility: A Single Transaction or a Long-term Investment?

In an example given previously, we discussed giving a presentation to a group of four people, one of each Style. This example can be used to highlight a distinction between short-term and long-term Versatility. Giving a presentation under these circumstances is only a single event. If this group of people was entirely new to you, you would either gain or lose a brief, short-term form of Versatility. If you combined different approaches to meet the various expectations of the four people, you would win short-term Versatility. They would think highly of you – for the time being.

However, for most people Versatility is a long-term affair. It is earned over many situations and across time, and can be thought of as an “average” of your interactions with co-workers. The goal is to behave with high Versatility consistently. As members and employees of organizations, most of us will be judged in the long-term.

When we start a new job, we are all given a certain baseline of credit for our abilities. People expect and want us to succeed and be helpful. Over time, we either support this expectation by working well, or we undermine it by failing.

It is helpful to use an analogy to describe the relationship between short- and long-term Versatility. Versatility is like a bank account. We have a certain amount of funds in our accounts, and we either add or subtract to those funds based on how we behave. Many positive interactions will result in funds being accumulated over time. Our co-workers can see us as rich or poor, but it depends mostly on us.

## Are People Aware of Their Own Versatility?

Earlier we discussed whether people are aware of their own Styles. TRACOM's research has found that about half the people we've profiled have not had accurate awareness of their Styles.

It is not surprising that many people have blind spots in their self-awareness. To an extent, this is true for everybody. However, Style is different from Versatility, since there is no wrong Style. Getting feedback about our performance at work can be difficult. Unlike Style, Versatility feedback implies a qualitative judgment. Higher Versatility is good and lower Versatility is undesirable. When people believe they have high Versatility, but are rated as low by their co-workers, it can be difficult to accept.

TRACOM has conducted research on this topic. When it comes to people who are rated as having low Versatility, we found that:

- Only 1 of 4 people with low Versatility saw themselves as having low Versatility.

The most obvious reason for these findings is that people have blind spots in their self-perceptions. It makes sense that people with low Versatility would have blind spots, since one of the characteristics of these individuals is their lack of self-understanding and the impact their behavior has on others.

Regarding individuals rated as having high Versatility, we found that:

- More than 2 of 4 people with high Versatility saw themselves as having lower Versatility.

One potential reason that people with high Versatility rate themselves lower is that these individuals have a sense of modesty about their skills, and always see room for improvement in their interactions with others. Research on 360-degree feedback has also found that people who are rated high tend to deflate their own scores.

## How Consistent Is Versatility?

Fortunately, behaviors that enhance Versatility can be learned, practiced, and improved. By actively working on these behaviors, individuals can influence others' perceptions, thereby increasing their respect and support over time.

When working on behaviors that lead to high Versatility, persistence and consistency are important. In order for people to view someone as having high Versatility, they need to see these behaviors practiced consistently over a period of time. Erratic displays of high and low Versatility behaviors will not earn support and respect over the long-term. Likewise, although everyone has bad days when they don't behave with high Versatility, brief episodes of low Versatility can do damage that takes time to repair.

This does not imply that people should be so flexible in their behavior that they come across as insincere. People quickly perceive insincere and ingenuous behavior. When people sense deception, it damages trust, and this in turn can erode support and respect.

## Versatility in Summary

We've discussed many things in this introduction to Versatility. Keep in mind that it can take some time to understand Versatility. You will learn more about the mechanics of Versatility and how it is measured in the "Versatility In Depth" section of this book.

As you begin to learn about Versatility, there are several important things to keep in mind.

First, **working to increase Versatility is a choice**. The behaviors that lead to high Versatility are within an individual's control. Once you learn about Versatility, you will be able to consciously think about your behavior and work on skills that lead to higher Versatility. For some people, just learning

about these behaviors is an eye-opener, since they have simply never thought about such things. By applying the new behaviors, people can often see immediate results.

Second, **people's perceptions of Versatility are often subconscious or unspoken.** For example, when giving a presentation to a potential new customer, if you included slides that were cluttered, illegible and unclear, the customer would instantly form an impression about you. You would likely be perceived as unprepared, confusing and unprofessional. However, the customer might not actually tell you what she is thinking. She could keep it to herself, but this first impression could affect her opinion of you and your abilities in the future.

Third, **perceptions of Versatility fluctuate with different groups of people.** For example, imagine a person who leads two teams. At his job he supervises a team of software engineers. During his off hours he coaches a grade-school basketball team. With both teams, he is very communicative about goals and priorities. However, the engineers are given a great deal of freedom to work in ways that are most effective for them as individuals, and to offer creative solutions to problems. On the other hand, the basketball team members are told very specifically what they need to do and how best to accomplish their goals. The coach is not making any adjustments for this team or their individual preferences. This man is likely to score higher on Versatility from his team of engineers than he would from his basketball team.

Fourth, **it is not always possible to display high Versatility consistently.** Even people with very high Versatility occasionally slip up. This is expected and normal. The goal is to try to act with high Versatility as often as possible, though this is not always possible. Remember that Versatility is a long-term investment, not a short-term interaction. Also, the phrase "what have you done for me lately?" can apply to Versatility. Try to display Versatility often.

Fifth, **Versatility is perceived differently by people of different Styles.** For example, people with Expressive and Analytical Styles sometimes approach priorities differently. An Expressive Style person might judge dependability by placing emphasis on getting information quickly, whereas an Analytical Style person might emphasize accuracy over speed. It is important to pay attention to people's Styles when applying Versatility.

Finally, **Versatility is different from likeability**. A person can be well liked by others, but not necessarily display high Versatility. The opposite can also be true. It is important to distinguish people's intentions from their behavior, or the impact of their behavior. We sometimes have very good intentions in mind when working and interacting with others, but our behavior can be interpreted as derogatory or unconstructive.

You are probably starting to get the idea that Versatility is all about working well with people of all Styles. In fact, high Versatility is the result of *applying* appropriate behaviors effectively in different scenarios. The behaviors underlying Versatility can be applied in a variety of situations.

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## Chapter

# 7

# SOCIAL STYLE in Depth

The SOCIAL STYLE Basics section of this book provided much of the general information you need to understand Style. Now, let's go further under the surface and uncover even more information about Style.

In this section, you will learn just about all there is to know about SOCIAL STYLE – how to determine a person's Style, how it is measured, and most importantly, how it expresses itself in day-to-day work life.

## How Do You Determine Someone's SOCIAL STYLE?

People regularly make observations about others' behaviors. Based on these observations, we sometimes make judgments. Much of the time, these judgments, and even the observations, are either subconscious or unspoken. For example, during a team meeting you might observe one of your co-workers talking loudly, gesturing with her hands, showing frustration on her face, and interrupting other team members. These behaviors are obvious enough that you might pass judgment on this person as rude and obtrusive. However, in many circumstances you wouldn't directly confront this person about her behavior. In this example, if you observed this person in a completely objective way, focusing only on her outward behavior, you could describe her as Tell Assertive and Emote Responsive. This is the process for determining someone's Style. It

requires that you set aside immediate judgment and bias, and focus solely on a person's outward behavior. From this behavior, you can determine a person's standing on the Assertiveness and Responsiveness dimensions.

Though it takes some getting used to, the process for determining someone's Style is straightforward. Once you learn which behaviors to look for, it is relatively easy to determine people's Styles. One word of caution though – do not jump to conclusions prematurely. Observe behavior in a variety of situations, and look for common patterns. In this way you will have confidence in your Style diagnosis. As we discussed previously, every person, at some point, may exhibit behavior common to each of the four Styles. If placed in certain situations, an Amiable Style person might respond with Driving Style tendencies. For this reason, it is essential to observe a person over a period of time to accurately determine his or her Style.

In the following sections we discuss Assertiveness and Responsiveness in more detail.

## **Assertiveness**

As already pointed out, Assertiveness is the degree to which a person tends to tell versus ask. A Tell Assertive person tends to outwardly express his or her thoughts, and likes to direct others. Examples of behavior of a Tell Assertive person include: faster pace of speech, more eye contact, and making more statements.

An Ask Assertive person will tend to ask questions and direct activity through requests. These individuals tend to exhibit a slower pace of speech, have less eye contact, and are quiet.

Two examples will help clarify the distinction between Ask and Tell Assertiveness:

- Tell Assertive — “Please meet with the marketing team in five minutes.”
- Ask Assertive — “Would you mind meeting with the marketing team in five minutes?”

We all know people who are either more Ask or more Tell Assertive. Think about the people you work with. Some of them will typically use Ask Assertive

behaviors. They speak in a softer tone of voice and at a slower pace. They don't always make eye contact and tend to lean back while interacting with others. In contrast, your Tell Assertive co-workers generally speak more loudly and at a faster pace. They have more eye contact and lean forward during interactions. Think about your own behavior. Would you consider yourself more Ask or Tell Assertive?

The following are examples of how others perceive the actions of people who exhibit Ask and Tell Assertive behaviors. While we may not always focus on specific behaviors, we form impressions based on behavior.



### **Ask Assertive**

These individuals are described as reserved, easygoing and unaggressive. They avoid appearing dominant or using their position power.

They tend to keep their thoughts to themselves. They are tentative and avoid imposing on others. They may not communicate without a specific need to do so.

These individuals make decisions thoughtfully and act slowly. They are cooperative with others. They seem to listen and look for opportunities to support the ideas and opinions of others.

### **Tell Assertive**

These individuals are described as active, forceful and aggressive. They are direct, making their presence known. They tend to tell others what they think, and use position power to direct the actions of others.

They seek to know what is going on. They initiate contact with others, and communicate with others even when it may not be desirable to do so.

These individuals make decisions and act quickly. They challenge others, and can appear to confront others about their ideas and opinions.



## Responsiveness

As previously discussed, Responsiveness refers to the degree to which one's behavior openly shows emotion or controls emotion. Emotive behaviors include gestures, facial expressions, tone and inflection of the voice, body posture, and movements. Behaviors toward the emoting end of the Responsiveness scale indicate that a person is displaying emotions openly. Behaviors on the controlling end of the scale reveal less of the person's underlying emotion.

Two examples will help to clarify the distinction between Control and Emote Responsiveness:

Upon hearing that a large account has been won, the person responds:

- Control Responsive: "That's great. Good news!" While clearly happy, the person displays very little animation or enthusiasm in her voice.
- Emote Responsive: "That's fantastic!! I knew we would win that account!" The person gives a hearty slap on the back and runs off to tell other people about the news.

As with Assertiveness, think about the people you work with. Some behave in a more Controlled manner while others are more Emoting. Your Controlled co-workers tend to have neutral facial expressions and don't gesture with their hands when talking. In contrast, your Emoting co-workers display what they're experiencing on their face, by smiling, laughing, frowning, and so on. They are also more likely to move their hands when talking. Think about your own behavior. Would you consider yourself more Control or Emote Responsive?

The following are examples of how others perceive the actions of people who exhibit Controlled and Emoting Responsiveness behaviors. While we may not always focus on specific behaviors, we form impressions based on behavior.

### Control Responsive

These individuals are often described as self-sufficient, and sometimes indifferent to the feelings of others. They tend to deal with the reasoning and logic behind actions and decisions.

They are precise, specific, and can be critical. They can appear concerned with getting things done efficiently, and are sometimes demanding of themselves and others.

These people are often perceived as formal, proper, and sometimes stiff in social relationships. They tend to keep themselves at a distance, and avoid personal involvements with others. They communicate cautiously with measured opinions and actions.

### Emote Responsive

These individuals are described as self-indulging, and sometimes attention-seeking. They tend to get involved with the feelings of others about relationships and actions.

They are seen as imprecise, general in their descriptions and can appear unconcerned about the efficiency of their actions. They are often easygoing with themselves and others.

These individuals are often perceived as informal, casual and playful in social relationships. They tend to get involved with others on a personal basis. They communicate openly and impulsively, often with dramatic opinions and answers.

There is a critical point to remember about Responsiveness. This is a measure of outward behavior, not internal emotion or feelings. People sometimes think that Control Responsive individuals do not experience emotions as strongly as Emote Responsive individuals, or that they do not have feelings. This is not true. All people experience emotions and have feelings, and outward behavior



is not always an indicator of the strength of those emotions. People who are Control Responsive simply limit their display of emotion.

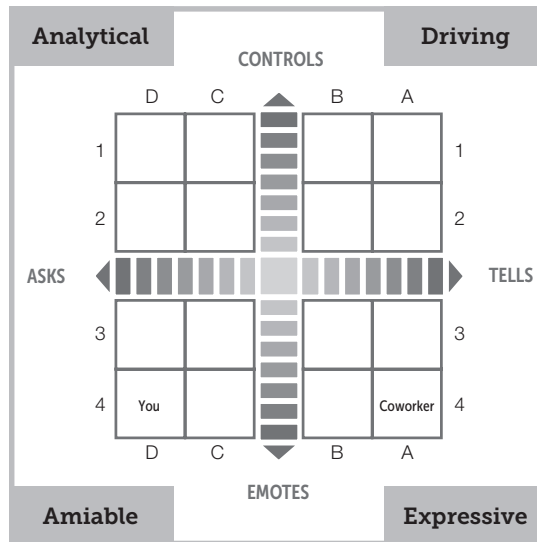
## How Do You Compare Yourself to Others?

Imagine that you have diagnosed your behavior and determined that you are Ask Assertive and Emote Responsive. This is a good starting point toward understanding your Style – you are likely Amiable, at least in your own estimation. However, at some point you might wonder if you are more or less Amiable than some of your co-workers who also seem to be Ask Assertive and Emote Responsive. They share some similar behaviors with you, yet they are subtly different in many of their actions. Are they still Amiable? Are you actually Amiable?

These questions are answered through a process known as norming. Norms, or normative comparisons as they are technically called, provide a mechanism for people to compare themselves with one another. You have probably encountered norms before, though you may not have realized it. When you were in school you probably took at least one standardized exam. In the United States two such exams are the SAT and ACT. These exams are normed in order to provide test scores that are meaningful for the users of those scores, notably college and university admissions staff. By looking at an applicant's numeric score, they can determine where that person stands relative to everyone else who took the same exam. This is accomplished by creating percentiles. For example, if a person scores 500 on the SAT and the percentile for a score of 500 is 47, this means that he scored higher than 47% of the people who took the test.

In a similar way, TRACOM creates norms for the SOCIAL STYLE Profile. This makes it possible for people to understand their behavior relative to others, even others who share their Style. These norms are represented on the graph in the profile report, and were briefly described earlier in this book. Recall that Assertiveness is measured from more Telling to more Asking (A to D), and Responsiveness is measured from more Controlling to more Emoting (1 to 4). By overlapping these two dimensions, the Style grid is formed with corresponding alphanumeric sub-quadrants.

An example will help you understand how norms are used. Imagine that you are a D4 Amiable, and your co-worker profiles as an A4 Expressive Style.



This means that you have behaviors that are much more Ask Assertive than your co-worker. This is because Assertiveness is measured from more Telling (A) to more Asking (D), and you are significantly more Asking than your co-worker. However, your Responsiveness behaviors are seen as very similar. This is because Responsiveness is measured from more Controlled (1) to more Emoting (4), and you share the same score on this dimension. These sub-quadrants, and the differences between them, are described in detail below.

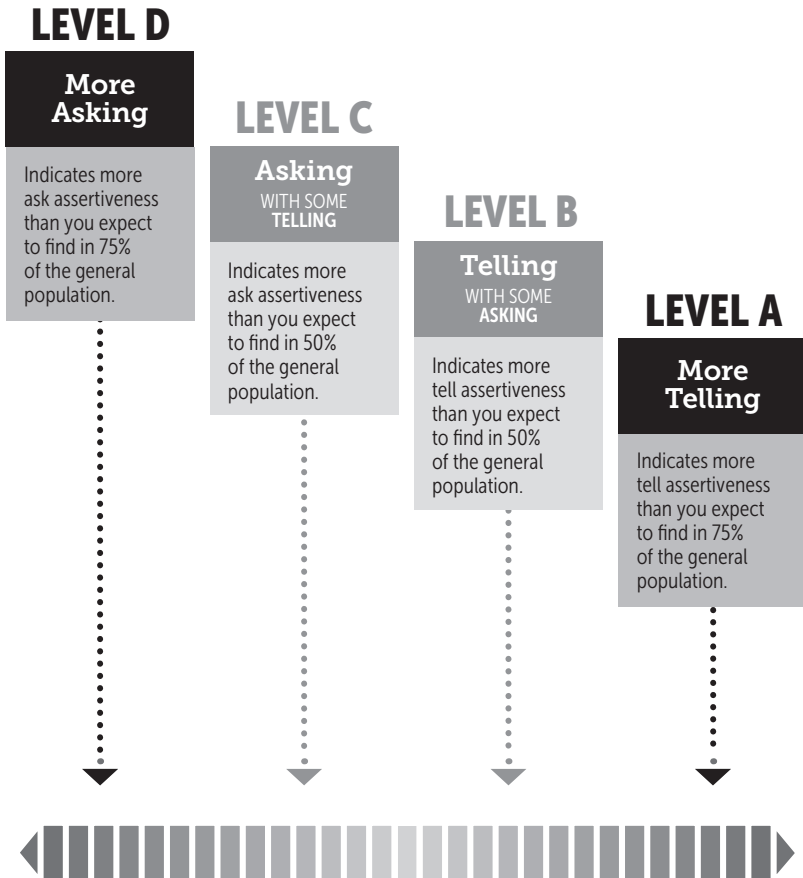
In addition to providing a frame-of-reference for people to view their profiles, norms provide other benefits. First, by regularly developing norms, TRACOM ensures that they are up-to-date. Over time, a population's scores on measures like Style can "drift." For example, for many decades the U.S. population's scores on well-known measures of intelligence have been migrating higher. This is good because it means that we are getting smarter! However, in order to maintain a realistic and relative comparison, these tests are regularly re-normed and a new average score is obtained. People are then compared against this new definition of "average." This means that by the standards of 1930 I may have been considered brilliant, but by today's higher standards, I am merely average. A similar phenomenon occasionally happens with Style behaviors, though the change is less dramatic.

Finally, a significant benefit of norms is that they can be applied to cultures across the world. TRACOM's research shows that Style is a global concept; it exists across nationalities. However, every culture has its own unique attributes, and this is sometimes reflected in the way Style is displayed. For example, in China displays of Assertiveness are generally more direct than in western societies. If we compared China and the U.S. on this dimension, the Chinese average would be higher (more Tell Assertive) than the U.S. average. This does not mean that Ask Assertiveness does not exist in China, it is simply displayed differently. Therefore, we develop norms for China that adjust for their cultural attributes. This provides a more meaningful measure of Style for people in China because they are being measured relative to others within their culture. TRACOM develops norms for many cultures throughout the world.

Following, we describe the process that we use to norm Assertiveness and Responsiveness.

## Assertiveness Measurement

Assertiveness is divided into quartiles, from more Telling (A) to more Asking (D). This is done by statistically dividing the population based on their raw numeric scores on this dimension. The population is divided in a way that results in 25% of people falling into each quartile.



We divide the population into quartiles because our research has found that these are meaningful distinctions. A person who is in the “D” quadrant is practically more Ask Assertive than a person who falls in the “C” quadrant. Therefore, there is a meaningful Style-related difference in their behavior. This

difference is reflected in the feedback that is given in our multi-rater profiles. These profiles contain interpretations of Style, and these interpretations are different for people who fall in each quartile.

We should note that the difference between “A” and “B” is much more subtle than the difference between “A” and “C” or “A” and “D.” People who score near one another have more subtle differences in Assertiveness behavior, while those who score far apart have more dramatic and obvious behavioral differences.

#### *Level “A”*

People who fall into the “A” category are the most Tell Assertive of individuals. Their behavior is more Tell Assertive than 75% of the population. These individuals profile as either Driving or Expressive.

#### *Level “B”*

These individuals are more tell Assertive than 50% of the population, and therefore are still on the higher end of this dimension. They are more Ask Assertive than 25% of the population. They are not as Tell Assertive as people who score “A,” though they also profile as either Driving or Expressive.

#### *Level “C”*

These people are more Ask Assertive than 50% of the population. They are more Tell Assertive than 25% of the population. These individuals profile as either Analytical or Amiable.

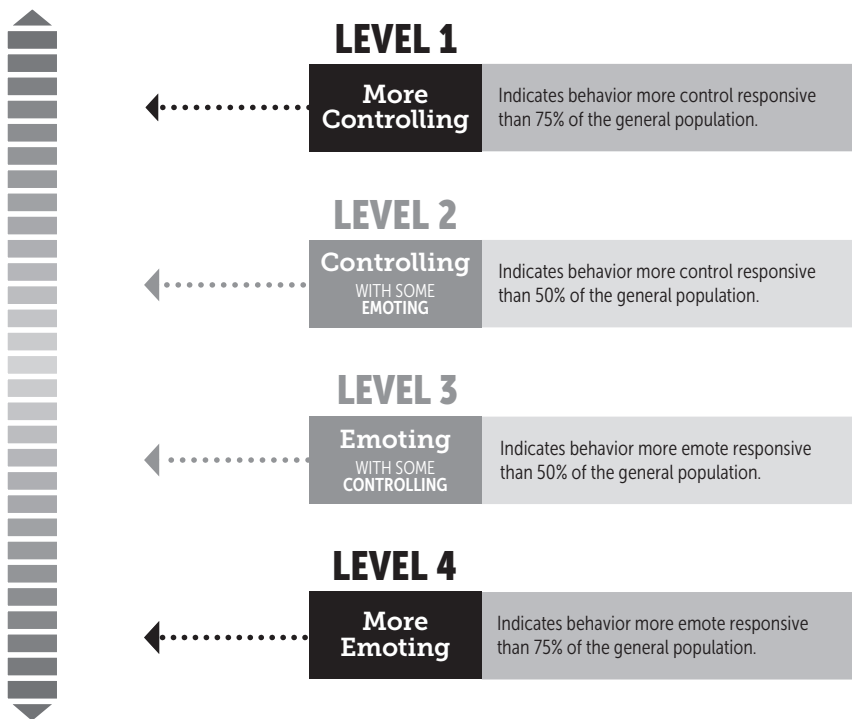
#### *Level “D”*

These individuals are the most Ask Assertive of the population. Their behavior is more Ask Assertive than 75% of the population. They profile as either Analytical or Amiable.

## Responsiveness Measurement

Responsiveness is divided into quartiles, from more Controlled (1) to more Emoting (4). This is done the same way that scores on Assertiveness are quartiled – by statistically dividing the population based on their raw numeric scores. The population is divided in a way that results in 25% of people falling into each quartile.

Once again, there are meaningful distinctions between these quartiles. A person who scores a “1” is more controlled in her display of emotions than a person who scores a “2.” Though, as we pointed out with Assertiveness, these two individuals are more subtly different in their behavior from a person who scores “1” and a person who scores “4.”





*Level “1”*

These individuals are the most emotionally controlled of people. They are more controlled than 75% of the population, and profile as either Analytical or Driving.

*Level “2”*

These people are more emotionally controlled than 50% of the population, and are more emoting than 25% of the population. They also profile as either Analytical or Driving.

*Level “3”*

These individuals are more emoting than 50% of the population. They are more controlled than 25% of the population, and profile as either Expressive or Amiable.

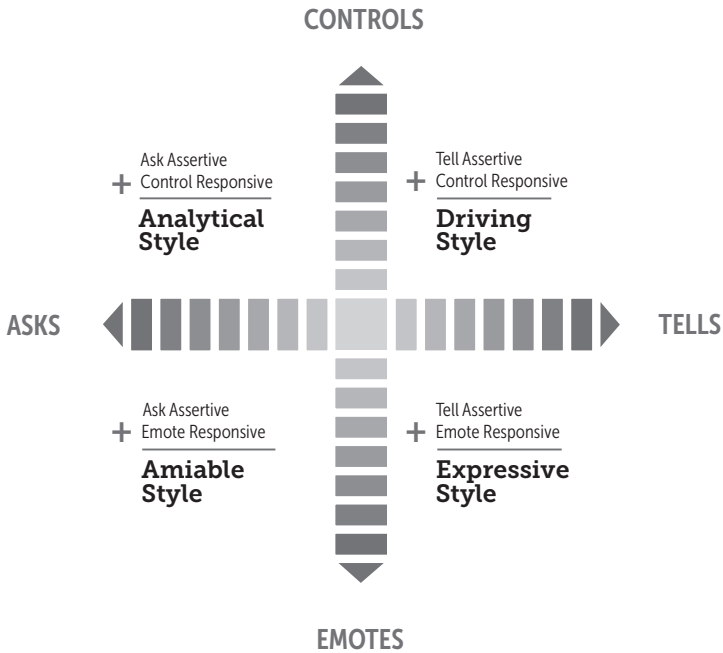
*Level “4”*

These individuals are the most emoting of people. They are more emoting than 75% of the population, and profile as either Expressive or Amiable.

For more detailed information about how Assertiveness and Responsiveness are normed, refer to the SOCIAL STYLE & Versatility Technical Report.

By putting the two dimensions of Assertiveness and Responsiveness together, you can identify the four SOCIAL STYLES.

## Reliability and Validity



The SOCIAL STYLE profiles measure Behavioral Style. But behavior, like all psychological phenomena, is different from things that can be easily and accurately measured in the physical world, such as weight and height. So how do we know that we are accurately measuring behavior? In order to make this claim, the instrument has to adhere to standards that have been set forth by the scientific community. In particular, research evidence should correspond to criteria set forth in the “Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing” (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999), which provides benchmarks for developing psychological measurement instruments. These standards are aligned with international standards, such as the European Test User Standards (European Federation of Psychologists’ Associations and European Association of Work and Organizational Psychologists, 2005). This evidence comes in two primary forms: reliability and validity.

Reliability determines whether an instrument measures in a way that is consistent and dependable. For example, imagine that you have a brick, and stamped on the side of the brick is the phrase “50 pounds.” The brick feels light to you so you decide to verify its weight by weighing it yourself. You put it on a scale and it registers that it weighs 50 pounds. Just to be extra sure, you weigh it every day for a week, using the same scale, and every day the brick registers as weighing 50 pounds. Although by now you can be reasonably sure of the brick’s weight, you wonder if maybe your scale is faulty. So you weigh the brick on 10 different scales, and every scale tells you that the brick weighs 50 pounds. You can now be sure that the brick weighs 50 pounds, and your measurement is reliable.

The example of the brick points out two unique but similar aspects of a reliable measurement system. First, is one of the measures dependable? The first scale was dependable because every day it indicated that the brick weighed 50 pounds. We can be confident that the first scale is a dependable measure of weight. Second, if using more than one measure, are these measures consistent with one another? By using multiple scales, we showed that they were consistent in their measures; they all indicated that the brick weighed 50 pounds. Therefore we can be confident that all of these scales are consistently agreeing with one another about the weight of objects. You will see how these concepts relate to the measurement of SOCIAL STYLE soon, but first let’s discuss the importance of validity.

Validity determines whether an instrument measures accurately. In other words, does it measure what it proposes to measure? Let’s return to the example of the brick. If, after determining that your weight scales were reliable using the procedure above, you placed the same brick on a brand new scale and it told you that the brick weighed 30 pounds, you would not be able to place faith in this new scale. In fact, you would conclude that this new scale does not measure “weight” accurately at all. It is giving you a measurement that is in pounds, but it is way off base in terms of its accuracy. Because of its unacceptable lack of accuracy, this new scale is not valid for its intended purpose of measuring weight.

TRACOM regularly assesses the reliability and validity of its Profile instrument. Here, we provide a general overview of this evidence. Specific information about reliability and validity studies can be found in the SOCIAL STYLE & Versatility Technical Report.

## Reliability

Several types of reliability evidence exist for the Profile. Here we present two of the most important types of reliability evidence, internal consistency and inter-rater reliability.

### Internal Consistency

One of the most common and established methods for establishing the reliability evidence for instruments like the SOCIAL STYLE Profile is internal consistency. Internal consistency measures the degree of correlation among survey items that claim to measure the same thing. (A survey item is a single behavioral statement on a survey). Just as the 10 weight scales were consistent with one another about the weight of the brick, each item on our measurement scales should be consistent with one another.

Each scale on the Profile is measured using a set of items. For example, the Assertiveness scale currently consists of 15 items. If all items on the Assertiveness scale are truly measuring the same thing then they should correlate with one another to a certain degree – they should be internally consistent.

The Profile survey scales were analyzed for internal consistency reliability using a statistic called coefficient alpha. Alpha values range from 0.0 (no relationship among the scale items) to 1.0 (perfect internal consistency). Scale alpha values on the Profile instrument are all above 0.7, which is the benchmark for acceptability. In the case of alpha, having values that are too high is not a good thing. For example, if alpha were 1.0 this would indicate that the scale items are completely redundant with one another, meaning that asking a single item provides as much information as asking 15 items. In the previous example, we don't need 10 weight scales to measure the weight of the brick because they are perfectly consistent with one another. Using one is as good as using another. This is usually the case when it comes to measuring things in the physical world (think of temperature, height, and distance). However, for behavioral measures such as SOCIAL STYLE, every item on a scale provides unique information, so they should never be perfectly correlated.

### Inter-rater Reliability

The second type of reliability evidence is called inter-rater reliability. Our multi-rater Profiles are generated based on the ratings of at least three

colleagues (a self-score is reported separately). For these Profiles, reliability evidence comes from the consistency in judgments among raters. In other words, would my colleagues all view me as relatively similar, with “ask” assertive and “control” responsive tendencies (Analytical Style), or would some of them view me differently? This question is answered through analysis of inter-rater reliability.

Inter-rater reliability was calculated using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). Like internal consistency, values range from 0.0 to 1.0, with higher values indicating greater consistency among raters.

Two forms of ICC were calculated – an average ICC for a single rater and an average ICC for all raters who evaluated each participant, described below.

- Average ICC for a single rater. This indicates the reliability (or relative consistency) for any given individual rater who is observing someone’s behavior across all dimensions of the Profile instrument. In other words, does a given individual evaluate a person consistently as he or she is responding to the questionnaire?
- Average ICC across raters. This indicates the reliability (or relative consistency) for all of the raters who evaluate any single individual. In other words, is there consistency among the individuals who are evaluating a person across all Profile dimensions?

These forms of ICC were calculated from a random sample of over 9,000 participants. The average ICC for a single rater was 0.96, while the average ICC across raters was 0.99. These values indicate excellent consistency both for individual raters and for groups of individuals who evaluate a participant’s behavior using the Profile instrument.

## Validity

As mentioned previously, validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure, and also the interpretation of scores and the appropriateness of inferences drawn from those scores. TRACOM evaluates validity using a rigorous model that includes different types of evidence. Here, we discuss just one form of validity, called impact validity. This form of validity determines the Profile’s usefulness and applicability

in the workplace. We highlight this type of evidence because it is the most meaningful for facilitators and others who are using the Profiles.

### **Versatility and Managerial Performance**

In 2005, TRACOM partnered with an international publishing company to examine the relationship between Versatility and managers' job performances. We conducted this study to answer three primary questions:

1. Is Versatility related to managerial effectiveness?
2. Is there a meaningful difference in performance between managers with lower Versatility and managers with higher Versatility?
3. To what extent can Versatility and SOCIAL STYLE predict managerial performance?

Compared with managers lower in Versatility, we believed that managers higher in Versatility would perform at a higher level of effectiveness across a range of behaviors, from technical skill to coaching ability. We also believed that Versatility would contribute unique variance, or predictability, to job performance, whereas SOCIAL STYLE would not. In the past we've found that SOCIAL STYLE is independent of job performance, and that individuals can succeed in their chosen fields regardless of their particular Style.

We found evidence for all three of these questions.

#### ***Relationship Between Versatility and Managerial Effectiveness***

This research study found that Versatility is a strong indicator of workplace effectiveness. As Versatility increases, so do evaluations of job performance. Versatility was highly correlated with various important components of managers' jobs. For example, ability to coach others (0.44), ability to work well within a team (0.47), ability to establish effective relationships with direct reports (0.51), and effectiveness as a team leader (0.47), just to name a few.

To put these numbers into context, it's helpful to examine some correlations among variables that are commonly understood by most people: taking aspirin daily and reduced risk of death by heart attack (0.02), antihistamine use and reduced runny nose and sneezing (0.11), SAT scores and subsequent college GPA (0.20), effect of alcohol on aggressive behavior (0.23), and relationship between weight and height among U.S. adults (0.44) (Meyer et al., 2001). Thus

the correlations of Versatility with managerial performance are strong and meaningful, indicating that the higher a manager's Versatility, the higher his/her performance will be.

### ***Difference in Effectiveness Between Managers with Lower and Higher Versatility***

Correlation analysis indicated that Versatility is positively and significantly related to workplace effectiveness. We wanted to examine specifically the differences in performance between managers with lower Versatility and managers with higher Versatility. We hypothesized that managers would differ significantly across job performance measures depending on their Versatility category.

We tested this hypothesis using analysis of variance (ANOVA). We found significant differences in job performance ratings between managers with lower Versatility and those with higher Versatility. Managers with higher Versatility had significantly higher job performance ratings on 46 of the 47 performance measures.

These findings indicate that managers' levels of Versatility are related to their effectiveness across many key indicators of job performance.

### ***Versatility and SOCIAL STYLE as Predictors of Job Performance***

Our third question was whether Versatility can predict job performance. We also wanted to test for the predictive effects of Assertiveness and Responsiveness, the two components that make up SOCIAL STYLE. Our hypothesis was that SOCIAL STYLE is independent of effectiveness, and that a person of any Style can be equally effective in a managerial position, whereas Versatility can to some extent predict performance.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test how well each of the three measures predicted overall job performance. Both Assertiveness and Responsiveness were found to be nonsignificant contributors to variance in job performance. However, Versatility accounted for 15% of the variance in overall job performance, comparable to intelligence and personality. This means that overall job performance is independent of a person's Assertiveness and Responsiveness, but is meaningfully affected by Versatility.

## Comparison to Myers-Briggs and DiSC

Individuals and organizations have a choice of personal development programs to use. Therefore, it is important that TRACOM provide evidence of how our Model compares to other major providers of such programs.

A 2007 study by the Center for Organizational Excellence at Colorado State University and Regis Learning Solutions, an affiliate of Regis University, compared the effectiveness of interpersonal skills training programs based on Inscape's DiSC model, TRACOM Group's SOCIAL STYLE Model, and CPP's Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).

A total of 213 participants were trained on one of the three interpersonal skills training programs by a facilitator certified to deliver training on that specific program. Evaluation of the programs corresponded to three of Kirkpatrick's (1994) four levels of training evaluation. The three levels assessed were reaction, learning and behavior. The fourth level, results or return on investment, was not evaluated. The study found that:

- Participants in all three training programs held very positive reactions to the training, with MBTI participants indicating slightly higher levels of satisfaction than DiSC or SOCIAL STYLE participants ("Reaction" measure).
- Participants in the SOCIAL STYLE training scored significantly higher than participants in the DiSC and MBTI programs on a measure of retention of key knowledge covered in training ("Learning" measure).
- Participants in the SOCIAL STYLE training scored significantly higher than participants in the DiSC and MBTI programs on two measures of participants' skill at analyzing and responding to the interpersonal behaviors of others ("Behavior" measure).

Thus, in terms of the effectiveness of the three programs for changing the knowledge and behavioral skills of participants, the authors concluded that there was "a clear advantage for SOCIAL STYLE training. Specifically, training supporting the SOCIAL STYLE Model was found to be the most effective for improving interpersonal skills related to analyzing and responding to the behaviors of others" (Kraiger & Kirkpatrick, 2007).



These studies provide evidence for the impact, and thus validity, of the SOCIAL STYLE Model. Participants in programs are often eager to hear about this type of evidence, and it helps to motivate people by giving them an understanding of the importance and impact of the Model.

## Key Points to Remember

Before we move on to an in-depth discussion of each Style, there are a few key points to remember about the Model. Keeping these in mind will help as you learn more about each Style. The SOCIAL STYLE Model:

- Measures behavior, not personality, intelligence or motivation.
- Results from empirical research on how people describe others.
- Combines two statistically independent dimensions.
- Has statistical reliability and validity.
- Has norms developed for cultures throughout the world.
- Has evidence for its effectiveness.

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## Chapter

# 8

## Style – Key Characteristics

So far we've discussed many of the mechanics of the Model – how Style behaviors are displayed and scored, how the Model is organized, and some of the evidence for its effectiveness. Now we want to turn to more complete descriptions of each of the Styles.

This section will provide you with a firm grasp of Style behavior. You will learn how people of each Style operate on a day-to-day basis. This knowledge is fundamental to understanding and teaching others about Style. It enables you to have a grasp of what Style looks like in practice.

Each Style has its own theme, and there are several elements that make up a Style theme. These elements are:

- Style Need
- Style Orientation
- Style Growth Action
- Style Under Tension and Stress
- Bucket Dumping
- Style Action Toward Others, Approach to Time, and Decision-making

Each of these is described here.

## Style Need

Each Style has a particular need. People of each Style are heavily motivated to meet their Style-specific need. It is difficult to describe precisely why these needs are so strong, except to say that they represent a conglomeration of the primary motivations of people of each Style. When we don't meet our Style-specific need, we feel stress and discomfort.

As an analogy, consider sleep, a fundamental human need. We all need sleep, and to this day scientists are still not certain exactly why we need it. At very deep levels, it serves to regenerate neural connections, and even helps to process memory. Still, it serves many functions that we are not even aware of. If we don't get sleep, we feel not only tired but stressed. If we are deprived of sleep for long enough, we will do just about anything to get it. Our minds will actually take control of our bodies and essentially shut down, even if our eyes are open and we are standing.

In a similar way, if people are deprived of their Style-specific need, they will become increasingly uncomfortable and stressed. We will describe each need in detail, but briefly here are the Style Needs:

- Driving Style – Need for results
- Expressive Style – Need for personal approval
- Amiable Style – Need for personal security
- Analytical Style – Need to be right

## Style Orientation

People of each Style have a way that they go about meeting their need. This is called Style Orientation. You can think of Style Orientation as a behavioral way in which people meet their fundamental need. In some way, people engage in behavior to meet their needs.

For example, Expressive Style people have a need for personal approval. In order to meet this need, they have to engage in some behavior. These individuals meet their need by being spontaneous. For example, they will attempt to be funny in order to draw attention to themselves, or will speak

about themselves in a group even when others have not given any indication that they are interested in what the person has to say. They meet their need for personal approval through an orientation toward spontaneity.

Each Style has an Orientation that they use to get their needs met. Briefly, here are the Style Orientations:

- Driving Style – Orientation is to take action
- Expressive Style – Orientation is to be spontaneous
- Amiable Style – Orientation is to maintain relationships
- Analytical Style – Orientation is to think

## Style Growth Action

Because needs are so strong, we are likely to engage in behavior that has the best chance of helping us meet our needs. Since these behaviors (orientations) have succeeded for us so often, we tend to use them frequently. This leaves other sets of behavior that we do not engage in very often. We might view these less frequently used behaviors as frustrating. This is because they often get in the way of helping us meet our needs. For this reason, we tend to disregard these behaviors in favor of our Style Orientation behaviors.

For example, imagine we surveyed the co-workers of a Driving Style person, asking the question “If this person should do just one thing more often, what would it be?” There is a good chance that most co-workers would respond by saying that this person should “do a better job of listening.” This is because Driving Style people meet their need by taking action, and for them listening gets in the way of taking action. It forces them to stop and take account of what others are saying and doing. Therefore, they do not listen as often or as attentively as they should. It is an infrequent behavior for them.

Behaviors that are used infrequently, and that can be frustrating for others, represent Growth Actions. A particular Growth Action is viewed by others as a fundamental weakness of a person’s Style.

Each Style has a Growth Action, and it represents a primary aspect of behavior that is ignored or overlooked during interactions with other people. Instead, people prefer to engage in behaviors that are common and comfortable for their Style.

Briefly, the Growth Actions are:

- Driving Style – Growth Action is to actively listen to others
- Expressive Style – Growth Action is to check their behavior
- Amiable Style – Growth Action is to initiate their will
- Analytical Style – Growth Action is to declare a stance

## Style Under Tension and Stress

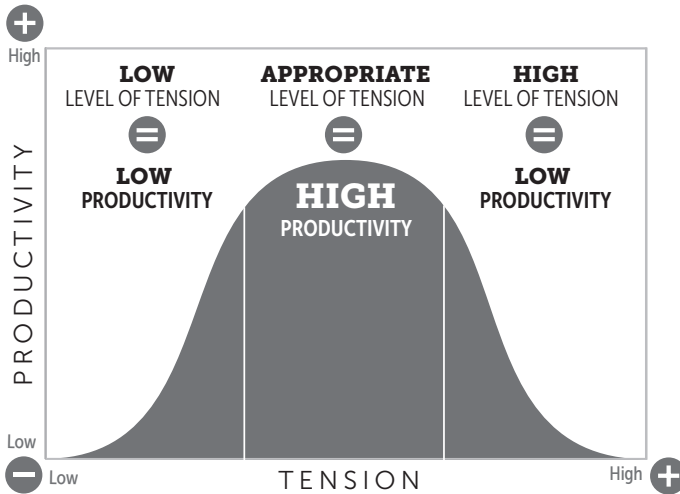
In order to get things done, a certain degree of tension is necessary. For example, if a manager gives a direct report an assignment with no deadline, that person will feel very little tension. She will not feel motivated to make significant progress on the project. However, if the deadline for the assignment is the end of the week, she will experience enough tension that she will make efforts to complete the project on time. This is an appropriate amount of tension.

Sometimes tension can be too high and overwhelming, in which case, it becomes stressful. If the manager tells the same person that the deadline has been moved up to tomorrow morning, chances are her tension level will rise dramatically. In fact, it will become stressful and she will have difficulty completing the task.

As long as it is at a reasonable level, tension leads people to act. In fact, it is one of the forces that leads people to develop their particular Styles. Therefore, tension is not something that needs to be avoided, but it does need to be managed at appropriate levels when possible.

When it comes to behaving with high Versatility, tension plays an important role. When a person is working under conditions of low or moderate tension, it is relatively easy to display high Versatility. Because stress levels are manageable, a person can go out of her way to meet other people's needs and work productively with them. But as tension levels increase substantially, it is harder for us to focus on others' Style Needs and Orientations and behave with high Versatility. We feel overwhelmed and need to escape the tension in some way, and this often results in focusing on our own Style Need and Orientation, resulting in low Versatility.

As the following figure shows, too little tension leads to inaction, because people are too comfortable with the status quo. Too much tension causes a kind of paralysis – we are so anxious that we have a hard time engaging in productive activity, especially in terms of working well with others. All situations and interpersonal relationships contain some element of tension – some greater, some less.



When people are working in stressful situations, they tend to engage in something called Backup Behavior. This occurs when an individual is unable to meet her Style needs. In particular, it occurs when a person is trying to meet her Style needs by engaging in her typical Style behaviors, but is frustrated in this attempt. This leads to more stress and results in an exaggerated form of Style behavior used by a person to reduce her stress. In the graph, Backup Behavior occurs on the right side, in the area of high tension or stress.

You can think of Backup Behavior as being similar to a fight-or-flight mechanism. When animals are threatened, they either find a way to escape or they are forced to fight whatever is threatening them. Humans have developed a less physical form of this same mechanism. Even for Amiable and Analytical Styles, their Backup Behavior is an attempt to fight off the excess tension.

Backup Behavior can be a significant contributing factor in unproductive relationships because the individual in backup mode is not concerned with

the effects such behavior is having on others. Backup behavior always occurs within the interpersonal relationship that caused the stress, and it is the most ineffective use of Style behavior.

It is important for facilitators to understand Backup Behavior and help participants learn these concepts because:

- By recognizing their own Backup Behavior, they can understand how it causes a higher level of tension in others and results in unproductive relationships.
- Understanding Backup Behavior puts a person in a better position to manage tension and maintain a productive relationship.
- This knowledge empowers the person to recognize that an individual exhibiting Backup Behavior is under extreme tension. Therefore, the person can understand that the behavior is defensive and self-serving.
- Since the behavior is extreme, it allows others to identify the Style of the individual more readily and manage the relationship tension in a more effective manner.

Briefly, here is how each Style exhibits Backup Behavior:

- The **Driving Style** becomes autocratic, often trying to take charge of situations and force others to act in order to accomplish a task or reach a goal. They will try to dominate situations, including meetings and conversations, sometimes rolling over others.
- The **Expressive Style** attacks, often becoming angry and venting his feelings about the situation. They are occasionally abusive in their relationships when they are frustrated with a specific person.
- The **Amiable Style** acquiesces, often complying without actually giving any commitment. They don't want to risk damaging the relationship so they will not state their true opinions.
- The **Analytical Style** avoids, often withdrawing from situations. This form of retreating is their way of escaping situations rather than dealing productively with them.

All Backup Behaviors defend against the discomfort of stress. They occur in circumstances where the stress of a situation has become too intense, and show little concern for any impacts on others.

On occasion some people will engage in their Backup Behavior, but it will not result in reducing their stress. They might then display behavior that is similar or the same as the Backup Behavior of a different Style. For example, if avoiding a situation does not result in decreasing the stress that an Analytical Style person is feeling, she may respond by taking full control of the situation in an autocratic manner, which is the Backup Behavior for the Driving Style. Similarly, if after attacking or confronting co-workers does not lower the tension of an Expressive Style person, he may simply acquiesce and go along with the team.

There is no known pattern for this form of behavior. An Analytical Style person will not necessarily move into the Driving Style Backup Behavior, or vice versa. We refer to this phenomenon as the “Z” pattern of Backup Behavior. This is because a person will typically move to an adjacent Style of Backup Behavior before moving on to yet another form of Backup Behavior. On the SOCIAL STYLE grid, the pattern can resemble a “Z.”

## Bucket Dumping

There is another way in which people vent their stress that we call Bucket Dumping. Imagine that a person has a bucket that gets filled with stress; eventually the bucket becomes too heavy of a burden and the person has to dump it.

Bucket Dumping differs from Backup Behavior in specific ways. Most importantly, Bucket Dumping occurs outside of the relationships that are causing the stress. For example, if a person gets reprimanded by her boss, and generally has a bad day, and she later expresses her frustration by yelling at her spouse, this is a form of Bucket Dumping. Another way in which Bucket Dumping differs from Backup Behavior is that Bucket Dumping can occur in healthy ways. In the previous example, if the woman expressed and released her stress by jogging, painting, or listening to music, this would be a more healthy way of dumping her bucket.



## Style Action Toward Others, Approach to Time, and Decision Making

We have reviewed how each Style has a Need, Orientation, and Growth Action. These are important to understand because they fundamentally impact how people behave at work. In particular, they impact three specific areas of people's work lives – how they act toward others, approach time, and make decisions. How people approach these three aspects of work are influenced directly by their Style Needs and Orientations. During stressful times, they are also influenced by Backup Behavior.

At work, each Style has particular ways that they act toward others. For example, Driving Style people are very direct. Remember, their need is results and they achieve this need by having an orientation toward taking action. This need and orientation propels them to behave in specific ways with others. Most notably, they are fast, action-oriented and can come across to others as insensitive and having unrealistic demands.

Each Style also has a specific way in which they approach time. As you can probably guess, some Styles are more rushed than others. To continue our example, Driving Style people are impatient. They like things to be done yesterday. They are also impatient with people who they believe are wasting their time. Once again, this is a direct result of their need and orientation. They want results quickly, and when people waste their time, this is in direct conflict with their need.

Likewise, Need and Orientation impact how people make decisions. For example, Driving Style people tend to make decisions quickly. They are usually logical in their approach, but they decide quickly, and once they have made a decision they want to move forward. Again, this approach is a direct result of their need for results and their orientation for taking action.

These three sets of behaviors – actions toward others, use of time, and approach to making decisions – are common and predictable attributes of the four Styles. Now that we've reviewed these elements, let's discuss how they manifest themselves for each Style. Understanding these can help a person to be more effective with others.



## Driving Style

Need: Results

Orientation: Action

Growth Action: To Listen

Backup Behavior:

Autocratic — Takes Control

## Driving Style In Depth

Earlier we mentioned that the Driving Style Need can be summed up in one word: results. These people prefer to deal with business issues first, focusing on their desired outcomes.

Their Style Orientation is action. In order to meet their Need, they are highly compelled to be active and move toward their goals.

Their Growth Action is to listen. Listening is a real challenge for these individuals, and their lack of listening often leads to difficulties for them. Listening is difficult because it forces them to slow down, and this is the opposite of their Orientation.

Driving Style people have a series of strengths and weaknesses, summarized below.

### Strengths

- On teams, they tend to keep the group focused on its purpose and targeted results
- They thrive on variety and challenges; they will meet a challenge because it is there
- They are persistent and tenacious
- They sort information according to what is significant in terms of accomplishing their goal versus spending long periods of time analyzing information
- They are decisive
- They are action-oriented
- They initiate innovation and change

## Weaknesses

- They tend to be poor listeners
- They are impatient, and create anxiety in others
- “Fire, ready, aim” – they tend to start moving forward without a solid plan
- Their worst fear is loss of control or that someone will take advantage of them; consequently, they tend to be argumentative and overbearing at times
- By not fully listening, they do not acknowledge others’ thoughts, ideas, and feelings
- They sometimes overrule people, or are blunt and sarcastic
- They are inattentive to details and can be dissatisfied with routine work
- They may resist participation as part of a team

## Actions Toward Others

The Driving Style person is typically more oriented toward results and tasks than he or she is toward relationships and people. As a result, he or she may appear uncommunicative, cool, formal, independent, and competitive in relationships with others.

A Driving Style individual tends to initiate clear action. However, the personal reasons for such action may not be obvious to co-workers because he or she seldom sees a need to share personal motives or feelings. They tend to focus on efficiency or productivity rather than on taking the time to develop warm interpersonal relationships with co-workers. Thus, co-workers may feel that they really don’t get to know these individuals on a close, personal basis.

In discussions about people, Driving Style individuals seem to display an attitude that suggests they have learned how to work with others only because they must do so in order to achieve their objectives, and not because they enjoy interacting with people on a personal basis. This is because in their need for results they often view others as mechanisms for achieving their own needs. However, they often can appear very pleasant and even charming – on their terms. These individuals may appear to treat people as objects rather than individuals. Keep in mind, however, that although they may control how they

share emotions and feelings, this does not mean they don't have them. They simply prefer not to openly display them.

Driving Style people respond well to co-workers who support their conclusions and the actions needed to implement those conclusions. This is because they view this positive support as a way to move forward in achieving their goals. However, it may sometimes be difficult for them to move forward because they may not openly and fully communicate their objectives and underlying motives, unless doing so is necessary for achieving the goal.

Driving Style individuals respond well when they are asked specific questions about an objective they have identified as important. They want to get a job done and are usually willing to describe what outcomes they are striving to achieve. They appreciate assistance that can help with achieving stated objectives and prefer “what” and “when” questions rather than off-track discussions of “how,” “who,” or “why.”

Driving Style individuals appreciate efforts that support the results they want, more than things done for them personally. This Style prefers an emphasis on outcomes and goals, instead of personal support and encouragement. In addition, these people prefer working with others who help them identify options, indicate how they can contribute to achieving them, and ask which of these actions they would prefer taking.

When others disagree with the specifics or objectives of Driving Style individuals, they listen more carefully to arguments based on facts and logic and ones that identify realistic alternatives, rather than personal challenges or philosophical viewpoints.

### **Approach to Time**

Driving Style individuals have little tolerance for actions or discussions that they deem a waste of time. As pointed out earlier, if they feel their time is being wasted, this prevents them from meeting their need for results. They prefer getting to the point and staying on target. They prefer co-workers who show respect for their time, recognize the importance of sticking to a schedule, and can sense when they want to move on. For example, they like meetings to end on time. When it is necessary to continue beyond the agreed-upon time frame, the person prefers to be given a choice of whether to continue the meeting or schedule a second meeting.

A Driving Style individual can find it a misuse of time if co-workers use work time to build personal relationships. These individuals typically prefer co-workers who are disciplined in their use of time, are able to move quickly, and focus on business. The further a co-worker's behavior appears to stray from that objective, the more restless they become. Equally, as co-workers use their time efficiently, their work relationship with the Driving Style person tends to improve. While not becoming as personally warm and approachable as individuals with Expressive or Amiable Styles, co-workers frequently discover signs of a Driving Style person thawing out and warming up after real progress has been made toward achieving some goal or objective at work.

### **Customary Approach to Decision Making**

When making a decision, a Driving Style individual prefers to be provided with facts, useful information, and viable options. These individuals enjoy having power and like making their own decisions. They don't like someone telling them exactly what to do or what not to do.

In addition, when making a decision, a Driving Style person wants to know the probability for the success or effectiveness of the various options. They are likely to choose alternatives with good probabilities of success, but may occasionally select a less-likely-to-succeed alternative. This is because their need for results is more important than accuracy or certainty, and therefore, they are willing to take calculated risks. While the Driving Style individual can accept risks, this person may be considering facts in addition to the ones presented. Thus, those wishing to influence this person's choices should use solid, salient facts to make their case.

### **Backup Behavior and the Driving Style**

A Driving Style individual uses autocratic Backup Behavior. He or she takes charge of the situation and the people in it, and seeks total control in order to achieve his or her desired objective. Perceived by others as overbearing, this autocratic approach represents a natural, predictable method of behavior when the going gets rough for those with a Driving Style.

Another careful look reveals this is an extension of the typically impersonal, unresponsive, assertive behavior of the Driving Style. Thus, the Backup Behavior for the Driving Style is autocratic.

Autocratic behavior seeks two objectives:

1. To reduce the tension of the present circumstance that isn't going well (a need for control).
2. To achieve something in the process (taking action).

The attempt to take over is not perceived as a mature interaction. Rather, it represents a selfish move to have things just the way the individual with a Driving Style wants them. That will make him or her feel better no matter what it does to the relationship.



## Expressive Style

Need: Personal Approval

Orientation: Spontaneity

Growth Action: To Check

Backup Behavior:

Attacks — Verbally Confrontational

## Expressive Style In Depth

The Expressive Style Need is personal approval. These individuals need to be recognized and know that their contributions are valued by others. Because of this, they like to relate to others on a personal basis.

Their Style Orientation is spontaneity. Acting in spontaneous and outgoing ways helps them meet their need for personal approval. This can lead to creativity, imagination, or inspired action. It can also lead to misunderstanding. Spontaneity can come across at times as impulsiveness. These individuals can change directions quickly, moving from one subject or task to another.

The Expressive Style's Growth Action is to check. This means that they do not check their behavior as often as they should; they sometimes go overboard in their behavior. For example, they will make inappropriate jokes without stopping to consider that these can be offensive to others. Also, in their enthusiasm of the moment they can rush into action without pausing to consider others' viewpoints or needs. They need to manage their impulsiveness. Expressive Style people can earn support and respect from others by taking the extra time to look at – or check – the finer points of an issue or situation.

### Strengths

- They build strong, lasting networks with others
- They can sell ideas, and they get cooperation from others
- On a team, they make good ambassadors to others in the organization and to customers or vendors
- They can be strong in situations that require building bridges to others
- They tend to have good judgment about how others are feeling, and about their attitudes in a situation

- They have a strong ability to influence and persuade others
- They can be creative and innovative

### **Weaknesses**

- They tend to make overly optimistic estimates of how long things will take, or how much they will cost
- Under pressure, they can become disorganized or disoriented
- They make decisions on the basis of hunches or intuition, rather than analysis or logic
- They do not pay attention to details and processes
- They are sometimes more concerned with popularity than tangible results
- They act impulsively and can be unrealistic in appraising people

### **Actions Toward Others**

The Expressive Style person appears communicative, fun, exciting, warm, approachable, and competitive. They generally approach situations in a more casual manner than other Styles of people. These individuals often openly share their feelings and thoughts with co-workers. They appear to want others as friends – but in the role of followers or personal supporters of their aspirations rather than as competitors. Again, their actions toward others are a direct result of attempting to meet their need for personal approval. They do this by being spontaneous in the ways mentioned here.

These people consider power and politics important because they can enhance personal recognition and help recruit supporters to the cause. While relationships and people are meaningful to them, these relationships may lack depth and be short-lived.

Expressive Style people tend to get along well with co-workers who provide support for their desires and intuitions. This is because they see these people as showing approval of them. They willingly share their opinions (on almost everything), future goals, and information about what they think others need to do to achieve objectives. If asked, they will also tell what they are doing personally to reach those objectives. In fact, they prefer discussions about people and their future goals to discussions about specific actions that must be taken to achieve an end result.



The Expressive Style individual sometimes commits to a goal without necessarily agreeing to the processes that lead to the goal. This is because they are generally not detail oriented. This can lead to problems if co-workers proceed on the belief that everything will somehow work out for the best. Because the individual typically shows little interest in how others plan to reach agreed-upon objectives, he or she usually has limited interest in details such as “who,” “what,” and “how.” Thus, these individuals appreciate co-workers who take the initiative to handle details and follow up to ensure that necessary things are actually done.

Expressive Style individuals like to spend time exploring mutually stimulating ideas and possible solutions. They do not like to be rushed in a conversation that does not allow them to build on the ideas of others. These individuals also like to get some credit for their contribution to the effort. Remember, they are creative, fun, and exciting, and they seek support for their aspirations from co-workers.

These individuals feel a strong need to defend personal positions they have taken, so co-workers are advised to use caution when challenging them. Challenging them is in direct contrast to their need for approval. Instead, they prefer to hear about alternative solutions that co-workers can both share and enthusiastically support.

### **Best Use of Time**

Expressive Style individuals tend to move quickly in their actions, with less discipline about time. They rapidly get into a social interaction and appreciate co-workers who try to stimulate them by developing and presenting clear pictures or motivational stories about people or situations that support ideas in a positive way.

The Expressive Style person acts quickly and can change a course of action rapidly and unexpectedly. Thus, this person appreciates it when others take responsibility for keeping activities on a timetable and on focusing on specifics, as long as the relationship is maintained on a friendly and enthusiastic basis. Having the specifics summarized in writing can help the person stay on task and on time.

Because the Expressive Style individual has a less disciplined use of time, a 30-minute meeting is only a guideline from his or her point of view. If this

person gets excited about the content of the discussion, a meeting can go on significantly longer than scheduled and flow in many directions. They appreciate it when others do not unnecessarily cut an exciting interaction short just because the clock on the wall says it's time to go.

### **Customary Approach to Decision Making**

The Expressive Style person tends to take risks based on the opinions of people that he or she considers important, prominent, or successful. In fact, the opinions of others can often mean more in this person's decision-making process than mere facts or logic. Thus, the person's decisions can sometimes be swayed to take on additional risk if notable or prominent people support a particular course of action.

Expressive Style people tend to respond to special benefits, immediate rewards, and extra incentives for their willingness to take risks and move rapidly in making a decision. Personal social recognition or prestige sometimes provides the extra incentive necessary for making a decision.

### **Backup Behavior and the Expressive Style**

Under high tension, the Expressive Style individual tends to become angry, perhaps abusive, and vents his or her feelings. This is called Attack behavior. It is a natural outlet and a predictable way to behave for these people. If you look carefully, you will recognize this attacking mode as an extension of the Expressive Style. It is emotional and assertive. It includes highly emotional tell Assertive statements about the other person.

Attack behavior stems from the desire to eliminate the intolerable tension present in the relationship. It is selfish behavior because the individual no longer seeks to work productively with another person. Attack behavior damages others, making the relationship less effective. Tension is not directed into effective or productive activities.



## Amiable Style

Need: Personal Security  
Orientation: Relationships

Growth Action: To Initiate  
Backup Behavior:  
Acquiesces — Appears to Give In

## Amiable Style In Depth

The Amiable Style Need is personal security. Before they feel comfortable dealing with the issues at hand, these individuals prefer to have a well-established, safe relationship.

The Style Orientation of the Amiable Style is relationships. They meet their need for personal security by approaching others in a cooperative, friendly, and supportive manner, and building a personal connection.

These individual's Growth Action is to initiate. Others would show more support and respect for these individuals if they would take the lead in an appropriate way when the situation calls for it. They need to deal with a situation head on, and take a personal stand without being swayed by its impact on relationships. This willingness to make an effort to initiate action will help move things forward, even if it involves personal risk. This behavior will most likely result in establishing even stronger relationships over time.

### Strengths

- They are loyal and trustworthy
- They form long-lasting bonds and friendships
- They execute processes and procedures reliably and consistently
- They attend to details and protocol
- They consider others' feelings and needs
- They build strong and lasting professional networks

### Weaknesses

- They can be challenged by innovation and change

- They tend to avoid direct confrontation, even when personally involved in conflict
- They resolve conflict by complying or withdrawing too frequently
- They will go along a mistaken pathway, rather than asserting their viewpoint
- They forgive slights and oversights, though they do not forget

### **Actions Toward Others**

The Amiable Style is the most people-oriented of the Styles. To them, people count as people rather than as ways to achieve results or recognition. They prefer cooperating and collaborating with others rather than competing with them. This makes sense, since their need is to be on a secure basis with others. They do not seek power over others as an important personal objective. Thus, they achieve objectives with people through understanding and mutual respect rather than through force and authority.

These people get along well with co-workers who adopt an interactive approach that supports their feelings and relationships with others. Typically, these individuals seek the recommendations and personal support of others, and they readily accept advice from friendly, understanding co-workers who take the initiative to treat them genuinely. They are comfortable sharing information about personal subjects, such as family, hobbies, or personal pursuits, and they enjoy exploring areas of common interest that help build a personal connection with others.

In order to avoid confrontations, this Style of person can be too quick to reach agreement. The apprehensions and concerns may later become apparent when the person withholds full cooperation and support, despite his or her earlier agreement. These individuals appreciate the co-worker who takes the initiative to talk through potentially volatile issues before seeking his or her concurrence.

The Amiable Style individual tends to get along well with co-workers who also work cooperatively. He or she wants to do things on a joint basis as a means of achieving his or her personal objectives. However, to avoid possible conflict, this person may understate personal goals, so that others may need to clarify the specifics in terms of “why,” “who,” “how,” and “what” that the Amiable Style individual expects to achieve.

The Amiable Style person values co-workers who realistically state what they can do to achieve mutually agreed-upon objectives. This Style of individual tends to take it personally and is quickly alienated when co-workers overstate what they can do and do not fully deliver on their promises or fulfill their commitments.

In heated discussions, an Amiable Style person prefers focusing on personal opinions and feelings to examining facts and data. If co-workers disagree with this person too openly, they should expect him or her to have hurt feelings and, if the disagreement is loud, to see it as a personal attack.

### **Best Use of Time**

The Amiable Style individual tends to move slowly, and with less time discipline. Because this Style of individual tends to avoid direct confrontations, others may feel that they can exert themselves and quickly achieve their objectives. Because the person has a slower pace, faster paced co-workers may quickly move forward, believing that he or she has agreed to a course of action when, in fact, he or she has not. In such circumstances, these people may later resist implementation of objectives, even though it might have appeared as if they had agreed to them.

An Amiable Style individual tends to achieve results that are more lasting when others display a willingness to spend some time, listen, and respond. In such circumstances, this individual is more likely to share both positive feelings (such as hopes), as well as negative feelings (such as apprehensions).

The Amiable Style person wants time allowed for small talk, and values co-workers who genuinely want to hear what he or she has to say. However, these individuals must make an extra effort to ensure that the talking and socializing does not become so important that it is difficult to get back to the task at hand.

### **Customary Approach to Decision Making**

The Amiable Style individual values the input of others with whom he or she has established a personal relationship. Thus, this person's decision-making process can be influenced by such others, even if they are not formally involved in the decision or the outcome. Remember, these individuals are not risk takers and attempt to reduce risk by ensuring that any actions taken will not damage ongoing personal relationships.

This Style of individual often wants others with whom he has a trusted relationship to make specific recommendations for safe choices that minimize risk. This person also wants reassurances from others that he will stand behind their recommendations. In contrast to the Driving Style, the Amiable Style individual really doesn't want options and probabilities. Instead, he or she seeks a clear, specific solution with maximum assurances that this is the right decision with no need to look at other options. Typically, the need to feel safe in the decision-making process gets very high priority from an Amiable Style person. If this person does not feel secure in acting on a recommendation, he or she will tend to involve others in the decision process, which can draw out the time it takes to come to a decision.

### **Backup Behavior and the Amiable Style**

Acquiescent Backup Behavior occurs when an Amiable Style individual does not wish to engage in a conflict-filled or tension-producing relationship. In this acquiescent mode the person displays a quiet "Don't fight, go along with it" attitude that seeks to minimize conflict.

Once again, this Backup Behavior makes sense, since these individuals have such a strong need for personal security and are oriented toward maintaining harmonious relationships. You will recognize this Backup Behavior as the Amiable Style in extreme. Unfortunately, there is no real effort to participate in a relationship. You will see Ask Assertive behavior bordering on the noncommittal about almost everything, plus Responsiveness in the form of giving in rather than withdrawing.

Acquiescing meets a selfish need to reduce anxiety. However, it can make an interaction nonproductive. Acquiescence looks like agreement. In reality, it includes neither agreement nor any form of commitment. It provides nothing solid on which others can rely. While everyone can and does give in from time to time, this behavior typifies the Amiable Style when under too much pressure.



## Analytical Style

Need: To Be Right

Orientation: Thinking

Growth Action: To Declare

Backup Behavior:

Withdraws — Avoids the Situation

## Analytical Style In Depth

The Need for the Analytical Style is to be right. These individuals are most comfortable when they can establish or rely on processes, facts and methodologies to minimize the potential for an incorrect or unforeseeable outcome. They like hard facts to support their actions and decisions.

The Analytical Style's Orientation is thinking. This is how they meet their need to be right. Instead of acting quickly, they would rather think through the details of a situation before moving forward with a plan.

The Growth Action for these people is to declare. In other words, they generally hesitate to take a firm stand on issues. This makes sense, since being decisive invites the opportunity to be wrong. It is in direct contradiction to their need to be right and orientation toward a thoughtful approach.

These people have a natural tendency to take time to evaluate and carefully mull things over. By taking their Growth Action to declare, they make an effort to share information appropriately, to take a stand on an issue, and to share their perceptions more readily. They need to keep others' needs in mind and at least provide some preliminary conclusions. Others will usually accept a tentative or imperfect conclusion, and show support and respect for their efforts to provide some direction, even if it does mean later revisions.

### Strengths

- They pay attention to details
- They plan, track, and focus on a set course
- They have a rational and logical approach
- They are persistent toward an outcome
- They anticipate issues, barriers, and problems

- They are dependable and thorough
- They are cooperative and not competitive

### **Weaknesses**

- They can be slow to make decisions and commit to a course of action
- They have a low sense of urgency. They would rather be 100% right than 99% right and a week early
- They can be nonresponsive to others' emotions and needs
- They are sometimes uncomfortable interacting with others in large groups
- They can be overly reliant on feedback and direction from supervisors
- They can resist delegating tasks to others
- They may yield their position in order to avoid controversy, but as a result will not be fully committed

### **Actions Toward Others**

The Analytical Style individual can appear uncommunicative, distant, formal, cool, and independent. These people are cooperative in their actions, as long as they have some freedom to organize their own efforts. This is a natural extension of their need to be right and Orientation toward thinking.

They tend to be cautious about extending friendships or personal warmth, and initially will be more concerned with how to do things without the need for personal involvements. Paradoxically, people and friendships may be very important to them, even though they may not seem to be at first. Analytical Style people don't want to rush into a relationship until they understand how they can manage the relationship. They have a "show me" attitude. They tend to be suspicious of power and will avoid becoming involved with others who have power or leverage until they see a system or a predictable pattern in the way power is used.

The Analytical Style person appreciates co-workers who support his or her principles and thoughtful approach. This Style of person also appreciates colleagues who help in gathering facts and data. He or she wants to be sure that others understand the problem without being too quick with any solution, and they seek assurances that their decisions are "right" and based on accurate data.



The Analytical Style person values co-workers who stick with specifics and deliver what they promise. If a co-worker has not provided detail and supporting information, the individual will likely conclude that this co-worker is overselling or overstating what he or she can or will do.

### **Best Use of Time**

The Analytical Style person has a strong time discipline, coupled with a slow pace to action. He or she moves with deliberateness and takes the time to review carefully all facts and data available – and thus requires others to be patient. This Style of individual does not respond well to being rushed by co-workers, even when they have established a relationship. A forceful approach or an insistent attitude typically alienates these individuals. However, once this individual has made a commitment, he or she will do everything stated, as promised.

The Analytical Style individual appreciates co-workers who take the time to prepare well, and can become irritated when co-workers attempt to substitute thinking on their feet, social skills, or personal charm for doing their homework. The Analytical Style person especially appreciates it when co-workers take time before a meeting to make sure they have their facts straight and data to back up what they are saying. He or she will want to know if a co-worker is truly knowledgeable or just bluffing. Even though the Analytical Style person is likely to be uncommunicative, cool, and distant, he or she is also likely to be cooperative. If a co-worker moves too quickly, this individual's slow actions may be mistaken for uncooperativeness. However, the problem may be that the co-worker simply hasn't given the person sufficient time to "think about it."

The Analytical Style individual appreciates it when co-workers keep their approach realistic and business-oriented. Co-workers' approaches to interacting with this Style of person will work best when it is well thought-out, based on common sense, and not too flashy. Because the Analytical Style person demonstrates a strong time discipline coupled with a slow pace to action, he or she appreciates time to reflect and think things through.

### **Customary Approach to Decision Making**

The Analytical Style person tends to make decisions based on facts and verifiable information. Co-workers must provide proof that what they say can

be backed by relevant facts. This Style of individual needs this evidence to be tangible, realistic, and convincing – not someone’s opinion. In addition, he or she requires assurance that any decision made today will be valid in the future. However, because the Analytical Style person tends to avoid risks, he or she may continue to display caution and deliberateness.

To influence an Analytical Style individual’s decision, co-workers need to indicate the specific things they can and will do to support the decision once it is made. He or she wants co-workers to be methodical about making their “can do” and “will do” contributions on the schedule they mutually establish. Also, they must stay with it or notify the Analytical Style person when and why they are deviating from the schedule. This Style of person expects co-workers to demonstrate actions that assure no surprises down the road. Co-workers’ performance and follow-through do more to build the relationships than anything they can say.

An individual with an Analytical Style is not easily swayed by name dropping or by making personal appeals. Gimmicks or clever manipulations that others might think will help in getting a fast decision quickly alienate this Style of person. People with this Style expect co-workers to live with the fact that it may take some time for them to reach a decision. New information may cause them to withdraw support for one path, in favor of another. Their options always remain open. However, once the person has made a decision, he or she will stick with it, and that will help to form the basis for more productive interactions in the future.

### **Backup Behavior and the Analytical Style**

The Backup Behavior for the Analytical Style is to avoid. Like all Backup Behavior, it represents his or her way of seeking to reduce tension within a relationship. In essence, it is a withdrawal from conflict, and an attempt to handle the problem by being alone and avoiding people. It is also a form of escapism, since these people do not like to deal directly with conflict.

This behavior carries the Analytical Style to an extreme. The individual becomes Ask Assertive and Control Responsive to the point of actually avoiding interaction. The need for more information and the desire to “think it over” can be examples of this Style’s Backup Behavior, but not always.

Once again, the motivation for this behavior stems from the need for personal release of interpersonal tension. The basic result is frequently an escape from the relationship and a retreat into self-serving solitude. This behavior is not forward moving or interpersonally productive. Avoidance as a form of backup can happen even before others sense the tension. It frequently occurs before others perceive that the interaction has become stressful.

## Potentially Toxic Relationships

On occasion, two people of different Styles fall into a pattern of conflict. Of course, there is nothing new about conflict. It is common in workplaces, and there is a distinction between conflict that is productive and conflict that leads to a multitude of undesirable consequences.

The type of conflict we are describing results from Style-related behaviors that cause two people to fall into a pattern of conflict. This is not about co-workers arguing about the best marketing strategy for a new product, or the best solution to a problem. (Though, of course, Style differences can intensify these types of situations).

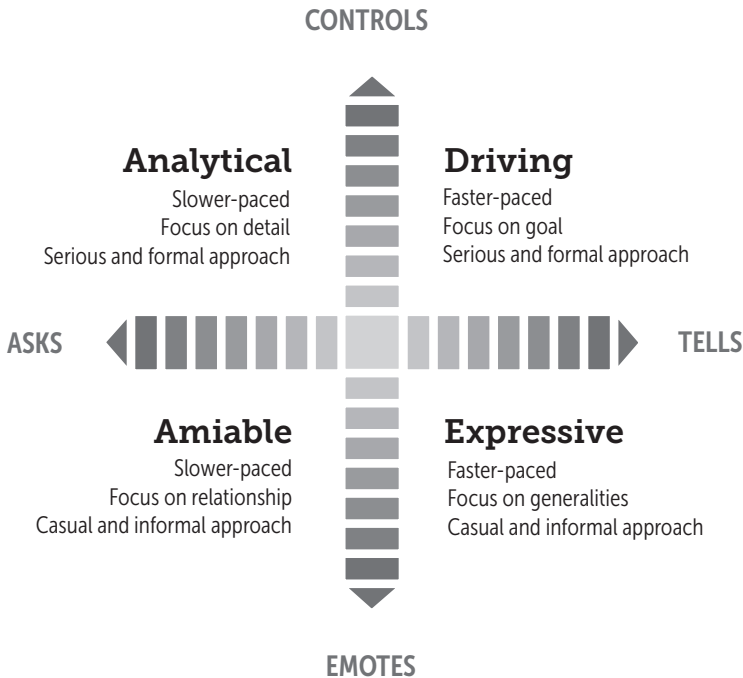
When a relationship turns sour because of fundamental differences in Style behaviors, this is called a Toxic Relationship. Toxic Relationships often result in conflicts.

The greatest potential for a Toxic Relationship occurs on the diagonal of the Model. That is, between Analytical and Expressive, and Amiable and Driving Styles. This is because these Style pairs have the most stark behavioral differences on both the Assertiveness and Responsiveness dimensions.

For example:

- The Analytical is slower-paced while the Expressive is faster-paced.
- The Analytical focuses on detail while the Expressive focuses on generalities.
- The Analytical has a serious and formal approach while the Expressive prefers a casual and informal approach.
- The Driving is faster-paced than the Amiable.

- The Driving focuses on tasks while the Amiable focuses on the impacts actions have on people.
- The Driving approaches situations seriously while the Amiable prefers to be light-hearted with others.



A toxic relationship can also exist between Styles that differ on only one dimension. For example, both the Amiable and the Expressive are on the same end of the Responsiveness scale, but not on the Assertiveness scale. Thus, one is slower-paced and the other is faster-paced. This difference in pace, as well as other Assertiveness-related differences, can cause conflict.

Finally, a Toxic Relationship can also exist between two individuals with the same Styles. Conflict can occur in these relationships because of the similarity in Style preferences.

For example:

- Two individuals with a Driving Style can have interpersonal tension because of a conflict over differences in the results each wants, as well as over who is in control. Since both don't listen well, this can also lead to tension and conflict.
- Two individuals with an Expressive Style may compete as to who gets the personal approval they both need. They might also clash as a result of one another's optimism and tendency to underestimate how long things may take or how much they will cost.
- Two individuals with an Amiable Style may compete in receiving the personal security they both need. They may also tend to acquiesce to one another to the point where their relationship exhibits passive-aggressive behaviors.<sup>2</sup>
- Two individuals with an Analytical Style may differ in deciding which one has the right approach, or the right interpretation of information. They may also argue as a result of one another's desire to avoid making decisions or acting quickly.

## Summary of SOCIAL STYLE

This section has provided a great deal of information about SOCIAL STYLE. The following chart lists some of the most important information to keep in mind about Style. It can be used as a handy reference when in need for general Style attributes and behaviors.

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<sup>2</sup> Passive-aggressive behavior is a pattern in which a person seems to comply with the desires and needs of others, but actually passively resists them, in the process becoming increasingly hostile and angry. The pattern may persist for a long time without the individual expressing that anger, except through passive, indirect means.

<b>Behavior Categories</b>	<b>Driving</b>	<b>Expressive</b>	<b>Amiable</b>	<b>Analytical</b>
<i>Need</i>	Results	Personal approval	Personal security	To be right
<i>Orientation</i>	Taking action	Spontaneity	Relationships	Thinking
<i>Growth Action</i>	To listen	To check behavior	To initiate	To declare
<i>Backup Behavior</i>	Autocratic	Attack	Acquiesce	Withdraw
<i>General Appearance</i>	Functional Bold Displays authority	Attention-grabbing Colorful	Casual Comfortable Conforming	Formal Traditional Well-groomed Follows dress code
<i>Pace</i>	Brisk Hurried toward the mission or purpose Impatient	Energetic Stops to chat along the way Impatient	Comfortable gait, unhurried Pleasant to all Smiles a lot	Reserved Slow Appears aloof at times
<i>Gestures</i>	Makes hand movements, especially for emphasis Big gestures	Sweeping, expansive motions Readable facial expressions Physical closeness	Some hand gestures, but avoids large, sweeping movements	Reserved; few or no gestures Avoids physical contact Keeps distance
<i>Workplace</i>	Accomplishments displayed Stacks of papers related to multiple projects Status-conscious	Colorful; decorative Lots of memorabilia Group photos Can appear disorganized	Serene environment Harmonious Personal belongings, family photos Orderly	Functional, practical Graphs, charts, artwork that challenges people to think Appears messy, but can find things
<i>Natural Task Behavior</i>	Quick, decisive Determined Competitive	Enthusiastic Optimistic Sociable Team-focused	Sincere Nonthreatening Calm Tolerant	Cautious Logical Thoughtful Detailed
<i>Communication Style</i>	Outspoken Direct Confrontational Blunt	Engaging Persuasive Emotional Expressive	Honest; sometimes blunt Accommodating Polite	Imposes standards Focuses on details Impersonal chit chat
<i>Listening Style</i>	Interrupts often Attends to highlights Examines critical details Impatient	Overly talkative Wants to dialogue, exchange ideas Impatient	Considerate Patient Needs time to process Empathetic	Listens for data & logical proof Focused Perfectionist Shows little emotion

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## Chapter

# 9

## Versatility In Depth

The Versatility Basics section of this book covered much of the information that you will need to understand and explain Versatility. This section reviews more detailed information, including examples of what Versatility actually looks like in daily life. We also describe the four sources of Versatility in great detail. This section provides the most descriptive information about Versatility.

Recall that earlier we had discussed the importance of interpersonal skills for workplace effectiveness. People with better interpersonal skills are more effective and successful at work. This point is worth reinforcing. Hard research in this area is relatively new, but the evidence for the impact of interpersonal abilities is accumulating. For example, intelligence (IQ) is often used as a predictor of success for many occupations and industries. In part, this is true because measures of IQ have been available for many decades. However, recent research shows that IQ is merely a minimum criterion for success. Along with technical skills, such as computer programming, people need to have sufficient intellect to function in their jobs. For example, people need to have enough cognitive ability to solve problems. However, once the minimum “threshold” skills of IQ and technical knowledge have been met, interpersonal skills distinguish between those who are successful and those who are not (Goleman, 1998). Further, the higher a position in an organization, the more interpersonal skills matter. Goleman (1998) found that 85% of the competencies of leaders were in the domain of interpersonal skills.

TRACOM has found similar effects. Our research has shown that there is a slight tendency for Versatility to increase with job level. This is a step-ladder phenomenon – executives have higher Versatility than managers, and managers have higher Versatility than individual contributors. This would indicate that Versatility is at least one thing that helps individuals to rise through the ranks. Other research shows that people with high Versatility are, in fact, seen as more effective in their job performance than people with low Versatility.

## Do We Display Versatility Differently with Different Groups of People?

People often wonder if we behave differently depending on the types of people we are interacting with. Of course, the answer is not as clear-cut as a simple yes or no. When describing SOCIAL STYLE we stated that people's Style behaviors tend to be consistent across situations. This is true; we are who we are.

However, in certain ways people will behave differently with different groups of people. This behavior tends to be the types of behavior that are under our control, such as Versatility. This is nothing new. From your own experiences in your career you may be familiar with 360-degree feedback tools. The whole rationale for these tools is that people are perceived differently by different groups, usually peers, direct reports, and bosses. It's no mistake that these instruments focus on behavior that can be changed or controlled.

Versatility is the same. It is under our control, and most of us will display it differently depending on who we are interacting with. We do not always do this, but we all do it some of the time. For example, a manager may be very aware of her behavior when she is interacting with her supervisors. She is attuned to their needs and expectations, as well as their behavioral Styles, and she is very conscious about adjusting her behavior accordingly. However, when interacting with her direct reports she may feel more at ease, perhaps even lazy in her Versatility behaviors. She does not adjust her behavior to meet their needs. Instead, she may expect them to adjust to her.

It is important to understand this aspect of Versatility upfront. It is a part of becoming more self-aware of our own behavior and how it might be



interpreted by others. As you will see, it is not easy to behave with Versatility all the time or with all people. To a large degree it involves conscious choices about when, and with whom, to behave with social skill.

Before describing the four sources of Versatility, let's look at some examples of Versatility. What does it look like in the day-to-day workplace? For each SOCIAL STYLE, we will describe both low and high Versatility.

## High and Low Versatility – What Does it Look Like?

How do you know when someone is displaying low Versatility? Sometimes it's like bad art; we know it when we see it but we can't quite describe it. Even high Versatility can be difficult to put into words, but we certainly feel better when we're working with people who practice it.

The truth is, when you ask someone to think of a person with low Versatility and describe that person's behavior, they can easily give you examples. And they can give detailed examples of specific behaviors that represent low Versatility. However, when you ask them to describe the behavior of a person with high Versatility, the list tends to be shorter and less clear. This is because low Versatility stands out like an oversized thumb. Not only is it obvious, but it makes a very personal impact on us, so we remember it. On the other hand, high Versatility is often more subtle. We feel good about the interaction, and that is usually enough.

For this reason, the descriptions of low Versatility given in this section are longer than the descriptions of high Versatility. By understanding how not to behave, the behaviors that we should engage in become more evident.

Some aspects of low Versatility will be common across Styles. For example, a person who consistently submits low quality work will be described by co-workers as "unreliable" no matter what his Style. This is a reflection of Competence. But low Versatility often takes on Style-related characteristics. You'll find that this behavior is often characterized by acting in Style-bound ways – rigidly adhering to Style behaviors without displaying any behaviors of other Styles.

Likewise, high Versatility behaviors are often the polar opposites of what is found among people acting with low Versatility. People who act with high

Versatility are aware of how they impact others, and consciously behave in a way that minimizes stress or tension for others.

As you read the descriptions given in the following sections, it is important to remember that Style is independent of Versatility. People often wonder how an Amiable Style person can have low Versatility, since their orientation is toward maintaining relationships. As you read the description for Amiable Style people with low Versatility, you will probably be reminded of some people you know. Likewise, some people think that all Driving Style people have low Versatility, and of course this is not true.

This section describes common examples of low and high Versatility for each Style. The behaviors are not broken out by the four sources of Versatility. Rather, the goal is to give examples that display common behaviors that are associated with the four Versatility components, but in Style-specific ways.



## Driving Style

### *Low Versatility*

Driving Style people's Growth Action is to listen, and this deficiency is a key characteristic among those who are behaving with low Versatility. They have a problem with listening because they are in a rush to take action in order to achieve results. They often listen only at a superficial level, without understanding the underlying messages that others are communicating.

Related to their poor listening skills, these individuals often come across as insensitive or uncaring. They do not display interest in matters that are important to others, such as personal issues, career goals or feelings about work. This is an outcome of their focus on their own need and orientation. Though it may not be their intent, they are perceived as discounting what other people say or want. They often will not remember personal information about their co-workers, or at least will not bring it up in conversation. It is as if this personal information goes in and out of them. Personal details about others tend to get pushed aside, since they consider it less important than other information. In the short-term, the Driving Style person might get what she needs, but this focus on short-term needs will often result in long-term consequences. For example, remembering and caring about other people's personal interests and lives is critical for building relationships.

These people are often highly impatient. They are constantly trying to move things along, without waiting for others or for information they might need. For example, when leading a new group a Driving Style person will not allow time for the group to get to know one another or develop rapport before launching into the work. They consider their own priorities to be the most important, and will push to achieve their agendas. Of course, this often backfires because they don't have buy-in or commitment from others. They also might rush into a decision, only to realize later that the decision was faulty because they didn't have all the information they needed.

One of the key characteristics of Driving Style people who are displaying low Versatility is their extreme need to control. They will try to control processes, outcomes and people. For example, during meetings they will dominate discussion, trying to control the conversation so it goes in the direction they desire. They will freely interrupt others without apology. This can have both short- and long-term consequences. In the short-term, people will feel run over and disregarded, while in the long-term they might not support the Driving Style person's agenda or expend any effort to help the person.

These individuals are often very secretive. They keep information to themselves, and this frustrates other people because they may need this information in order to succeed at their jobs. Related to this, they don't disclose their feelings. This makes it difficult for other people to form meaningful relationships with them. Some Driving Style people struggle to understand their feelings, so in a very real sense they are unable to reveal their emotions to others.

Driving Style people tend to be formal, and this can make others uncomfortable. This is especially true when the person is in a position of power or authority. Their formality makes them hard to read, and since they are reluctant communicators, other people are left feeling as though they don't understand what the person is thinking.

Similar to Analytical Style people, these individuals tend to be very rational, to the point where they discount other ways of approaching issues. They inherently see the logical approach as the most valuable. This can result in two problems. First, the person does not take into account other approaches that are equally valuable to their own. Second, it leaves others feeling as though their input is not valued.

These individuals sometimes put others through trials in order to evaluate their competence. For example, during a meeting a Driving Style person might ask an individual to respond to very difficult questions, or to otherwise prove their abilities. They often use public settings to put others on the hot seat. Of course, this can cause resentment among the people who are being put through this treatment.

There are other more subtle ways that Driving Style people will show low Versatility. For example, when on the phone with someone, the person might read e-mails or attempt to do some other task that distracts him from paying attention to the conversation. This is another form of impatience. Like some of the other behaviors described above, this can leave other people feeling like they are not important or that their time is not as valuable as the Driving Style person's time.

### ***High Versatility***

When behaving with high Versatility, Driving Style people are real assets to organizations and are helpful for their co-workers. They are able to keep projects moving ahead, but instead of taking all control they get input and buy-in from others. In particular, they display good Feedback skills by actively listening to others, understanding their viewpoints and why they have them, and responding to them. The skilled use of Feedback is particularly noteworthy among Driving Style individuals because it involves a high degree of listening, which is their Growth Action.

Like all people who are using high Versatility, these individuals are aware of the impact they have on others and consciously monitor their behavior. They make an effort to work on their listening skills, as well as getting to know others on a personal level. This benefits them by helping others to be more comfortable, which in turn, affects their working relationships and ability to get things done. They display this by slowing down and taking the time to get to know others. Even if they are in a hurry, they will ask people how they are. They will ask them about their families, or any other subject that they know the person is interested in. Critically, they show genuine interest in others. Merely asking the questions does not suffice.

Instead of being secretive, these people are upfront in sharing their knowledge and opinions. This is not done in an aggressive manner. Rather, they provide their opinions directly but not bluntly. They let others know where they stand,

and by displaying their openness, they allow others to express themselves and to trust them. Further, they make sure to gather input from people prior to making decisions. This helps not only the other people who are involved, but almost always results in more informed decisions.

While Driving Style people are always oriented toward taking action, when displaying high Versatility they are able to maintain patience. They keep things moving along without unnecessarily rushing others. They understand the different skills and value that their co-workers bring to projects, and they allow them the time and focus they may need to succeed at their tasks.

### ***Challenges and Benefits***

In order for Driving Style people to act in ways that lead to high Versatility, they have to diminish many of their natural tendencies. They want to dominate discussions, but they have to make sure to involve others. They want to control things, but they have to give up some of that control. They want to move quickly, but they have to slow down. Inevitably, all of these behaviors help them achieve their need for results, so it can be difficult for them to moderate these tendencies.

Acting in ways that lead to high Versatility has two primary benefits for Driving Style people. First, relationships with co-workers will be much stronger, and this in turn will have ongoing benefits. People will trust the individual and will be more willing to actively collaborate with him. Second, the person's decisions and work effectiveness will be improved. This happens by taking into account other viewpoints and information, resulting in more informed decisions and higher quality work.



### **Expressive Style**

#### ***Low Versatility***

The Growth Action for Expressive Style people is to check their behavior. This casual lack of control is a hallmark of low Versatility behavior among these individuals. They do not take the time to consider what is appropriate for situations and audiences, and this comes across in their mannerisms, dress, the types of stories they tell and other behaviors. They behave this way because their need for personal approval is so strong that they are not interested in evaluating the impact their behavior might be having on others.

A characteristic of these people is their habit for improvisation. They are often unprepared for a given situation and will respond with an impromptu display that sometimes relies on charm or humor. They will often display charisma rather than substance. They never hesitate to speak up or share their opinions, but they will often skirt real issues by relying on their personality to cover up their lack of insight or knowledge. They quickly move from smooth to slick. There are both immediate and long-term consequences of this behavior. In the immediate moment it can leave people feeling frustrated, since they might be relying on the person for meaningful input. If this behavior occurs often, others will simply come to believe that the person lacks competence and ability.

Low Versatility often shows itself through exaggerated Style behaviors. Expressive Style people seek recognition, and this often comes across as a strong need to be the center of attention. This can display itself in a number of ways including publicly pointing out their achievements or efforts, acting as the office clown, and self-aggrandizement. They are especially prone to disclosing personal information about themselves that is inappropriate or even offensive to others. In moderation, some of these behaviors can be appropriate and even helpful to a given situation. However, when this behavior becomes frequent it is distracting, unproductive, and is used as a cover for inadequacies.

The Backup Behavior of Expressive Style people is to attack, and this will sometimes be displayed in combination with low Versatility behaviors. The attack can come as a full frontal assault or can be less aggressive. They will sometimes bring up issues that are unrelated to the matter at hand, and will criticize others on a personal level. In more subtle forms, they might publicly call attention to an issue that is meant to embarrass a co-worker or put her in a difficult spot, even when not actively in confrontation with the person. On occasion, the person is not even aware that he is attacking someone. This is an example of a person who is not checking his behavior, since he seems to have no awareness of the consequences he has on others. Of course, the major consequence is that people will not trust him and may be very hesitant to work closely with him.

These individuals typically approach time in a very undisciplined way, and it is difficult to get them to commit to specifics. Related to this, they often do not follow through on other's expectations. For example, when discussing outcomes and next steps after a meeting, such a person will be ambiguous about his commitments even though others in the meeting will have clear

definitions of what needs to happen. When the next meeting comes around, this person will show up but will be unprepared. His tendency is to show up late to events, and not prepare ahead of time. This can result in feelings of resentment among others, who may feel that they are carrying an unfair share of the workload.

When displaying low Versatility, Expressive Style people will sometimes discount the logic of a course of action. Others may have a real need and rationale for being precise about something, but because these people approach situations in a very loose and free way, they will disregard the more logical approach. This can leave others feeling discounted and frustrated.

### ***High Versatility***

A key feature of behaviors that lead to high Versatility for Expressive Style people is their ability to take their Growth Action – checking their behavior. Like all people who act with high Versatility, they are aware of their own behavior and they actively monitor their impact on others. This is especially important for Expressive Style individuals because their expansive behavior can easily become overwhelming and lead to tension for others. When acting with high Versatility, they recognize this and rein in their tendencies in order to meet the needs of others and different situations. This allows them to become more attuned to how others respond to their behavior. Where appropriate, their contribution of emotions or humor to situations is valuable because it helps to build or solidify relationships. This can help make workgroups more cohesive and productive.

For example, during a meeting a person with high Versatility will make jokes that are not offensive, but charming. The intent of the joke is to make people comfortable, not to embarrass anyone. Instead of trying to dominate the meeting, the person will listen and not interrupt others when they are speaking. Critically, the use of these high Versatility behaviors is not meant to draw attention to the Expressive Style person. Remember that the need for personal approval is strong for these individuals, and when they act with high Versatility they are not focused on their own need.

When these people display high Versatility, they are showing substance in addition to charisma. Their natural sociability endears them to others; however, they do not rely only on this. They are prepared and actively contribute to

projects. This leaves others feeling not only good about the interaction, but confident in the person's abilities.

Because they show an awareness of other people's strengths, these individuals will often show respect for co-workers who contribute in a more logical manner than themselves. This is very valuable for them because by first showing their understanding of a logical approach, they win credibility from their co-workers. This allows them the opportunity to bring emotions and humor into the situation without risking alienating others.

Expressive Style individuals can be excellent for relieving group tension. Their easy use of humor helps put others at ease and allows for fun within work settings. When attuned to people and situations, they are better than any other Style at using humor and personal feelings to make others comfortable.

### ***Challenges and Benefits***

Expressive Style people like to be outgoing, which can sometimes come across as verbose and offensive. They run into difficulty because in order to behave in ways that lead to higher Versatility, they need to apply their Style "brakes." Remember that their Growth Action is to check their behavior. They want to be outgoing and fun, but they need to understand that not everyone responds well to these behaviors, so they have to moderate these tendencies. They want to be spontaneous and funny, but they need to realize that blatant humor is not always appropriate or appreciated. They want to be the center of attention, but they need to allow other people to have the spotlight sometimes.

As with all Styles, acting in ways that leads to high Versatility will benefit Expressive Style people by improving their working relationships and personal effectiveness. Relationships will be improved because people will be able to interact with them without feeling overwhelmed. Instead of constantly walking on pins, wondering when the person is going to go on the attack, others can interact with the person without being overly cautious or fearful of retribution. Their personal effectiveness will be improved because people will see substance behind the dramatic displays. Instead of relying solely on their ability to network with others, they will garner recognition through their skills and competence.



 **Amiable Style*****Low Versatility***

Low Versatility is sometimes harder to recognize with Amiable Style people because their behaviors are not as active as some of the other Styles. As with other Styles, much of their low Versatility behavior contains elements of their backup behavior (acquiescing) and Growth Action (to initiate). The phrase “going along to get along” applies to these individuals. Again, the root of much of this behavior is to fulfill their fundamental need, which is to maintain good relationships.

These people have such a strong need to maintain relationships that they will go along with others solely because they want to minimize interpersonal conflict. They will not express their opinions or say what they want or need. For example, when asked their preference for a course of action, they’ll say “whatever is easiest for you” or “I’m fine with whatever you want.” Paradoxically, this habit of not meeting their own needs actually makes it harder for others to interact with them. Their efforts to make things convenient for others can be an inconvenience for both parties. This can result in frustration for others.

These people’s acquiescence can be a disservice to others who are relying on them to be active contributors, and who want them to state their opinions. Like many people who are behaving with low Versatility, it may not be their intent to cause tension for others. They may think their behavior is acceptable because they are not disagreeing with anyone. However, not only does this behavior not contribute to productivity and effectiveness, but it can make others feel that the Amiable Style person is not open to them. By constantly focusing on the other person and what they think will make him or her happy, these individuals send a message that their true selves are closed off. This can make other people feel like they aren’t worthy of a meaningful relationship, resulting in others feeling closed off from the person.

In a more extreme form of this behavior an Amiable Style person will actively disagree with a point of view, but will not share his disagreement or opinion, instead choosing to go along with the crowd. However, while on the surface he has agreed to something, in reality he has not agreed to a course of action. This is a problem because the lack of agreement will continue to surface in this

person's behavior. For example, he may be abrupt toward others and respond with brief critical remarks. Also, he might share his critical opinions with others at work that are part of his inner circle, but will not directly confront the source of his disagreement. This results in the conflict continuing indefinitely, without any meaningful resolution. In the long-term this hurts the Amiable Style person because his grievances are never put forth. It also is unhelpful to others, who should hear and respond to the issues.

These individuals are sometimes seen as fickle in their relationships and opinions. This might seem surprising since maintaining relationships is such a strong need for them. But it is just this need that creates the tendency to be erratic with others. For example, an Amiable Style person will support and agree with a person who is being critical of something or someone, but will then turn around and criticize this same individual when talking with someone else. In this sense, these individuals tend to "love the ones they're with." This can result in feelings of betrayal among their associates, and also a loss of trust.

Amiable Style people who are displaying low Versatility often have problems with change, especially when it impacts their working relationships. They may show resistance to change, especially if they were not involved in making the decision. This type of inflexibility is a part of the Competence component of Versatility. The consequences for this are that the change might occur in spite of their resistance, without allowing them the opportunity to have meaningful input. It also has longer-term consequences in that the person will continue to feel resentment about the decision.

These people are rather undisciplined in their use of time. They generally are not in a rush to complete tasks, even when the situation requires them to be. They tend to waste quite a bit of time talking with others instead of focusing on what needs to be accomplished. For example, during a meeting they can quickly get off topic and talk about other matters. It can be difficult for people of other Styles to refocus the meeting, especially if there are many Amiable Style people in the group. This can result in people feeling like their own time is being wasted.

These individuals have a propensity to act based on their emotions, even if something has already been agreed to. They will want to change course mid-stream if someone or something has appealed to their emotions. For

example, if criteria have been set that excludes people from a certain department from participating in a developmental activity, an Amiable Style person who is in charge of the activity might accept some individuals from that department just because they asked him if they could participate. In these situations their intent is usually to do good, but they often push the boundaries of limits that have already been established. This can result in people not trusting them to maintain agreements, or not having confidence in them to make tough decisions.

### ***High Versatility***

When behaving with high Versatility, Amiable Style people are very skilled at getting people to work together in a productive way. They create a calm and friendly environment, while also staying industrious. They are consummate at networking, and build relationships with a variety of people. This benefits themselves as well as the people they put into contact with one another. They often know the people to turn to for a variety of circumstances.

Since they are naturally focused on relationships, these individuals are skilled mediators. When conflicts arise, Amiable Style people show high Versatility by working through the issues with both parties, including themselves if they are part of the conflict. They remain optimistic during difficult times, and this optimism helps their co-workers persevere and remain focused. These individuals display their optimism in very forward and obvious ways. They are cheerful with others and verbally express their favorable opinions about topics. For example, during meetings they will show their enthusiasm about projects or about good news that is being delivered. This kind of outward cheerfulness is often contagious, and results in a work environment that is friendly and productive.

An aspect of Versatility that is particularly noticeable among these individuals is their use of Feedback skills. They are very good listeners and are able to communicate meaningfully with a variety of people. Further, they are truly concerned with other people's well-being, and this empathy helps others to trust them. In the long-term, this can result in people having a high degree of trust in the person and their intentions.

As an example of this, Amiable Style people have a very good memory for important facts about other's lives. They will remember something that might be only briefly mentioned in conversation, but that is obviously important

for the person who mentions it. At appropriate times, they will recall this information and bring it up with the other person. This displays a true empathy and concern for the other individual.

The use of Feedback skills among Amiable Style people is a slight exception to the rule given previously – that Versatility is independent of Style. TRACOM’s research shows that there is a small but meaningful relationship between high Feedback skills and Responsiveness. On average, those higher in Responsiveness are also slightly higher in Feedback. Therefore, Expressive Style people also have this natural advantage.

### ***Challenges and Benefits***

Their focus on maintaining friendly relationships is often what keeps Amiable Style people from behaving in ways that lead to higher Versatility. They want to get along well with everyone, but they need to realize that professional disagreements are acceptable and are not taken personally by everyone. They may prefer to maintain the status quo, but sometimes change is necessary, and it is better to have some influence on the matter than to go along unwillingly. They want to be helpful to others, but there are times when this is not possible. Taking these actions is difficult because they are contrary to some of the fundamental behaviors that are common for Amiable Style people.

Acting in ways that lead to high Versatility is beneficial for relationships and overall effectiveness. Relationships can be improved because people will actually have greater trust in the Amiable Style person. When these individuals are forthcoming in their opinions, other people will be clear about where they stand and will have a better understanding of how to approach and interact with them. Likewise, their personal effectiveness will increase for many of the same reasons. By appropriately asserting themselves, they will have greater influence within the team or organization. Inevitably this can increase not only their effectiveness, but also their own personal satisfaction.



### **Analytical Style**

#### ***Low Versatility***

Analytical Style people have a need to be “right.” This need is often expressed in how they approach time, processes, and principles. Problems occur when these individuals do not share what is on their minds regarding these things.

This leaves other people frustrated and without an understanding of what these people need. As a consequence, the person not only might not get what she needs immediately, but might not have a voice in longer-term or more substantial matters.

When displaying low Versatility behaviors, Analytical Style people are often very slow. They are slow to act, but are also slow in conversation, often drawing out explanations or conversations beyond what other people want or need. Their slow pace is often a mechanism for ensuring that things are done according to their own definition of what is right. This is ultimately self-serving and over time becomes very frustrating for their co-workers and others. This can result in people becoming impatient with them, and in trying to work around them rather than with them.

These individuals will often engage in a variety of behaviors that are indicative of their backup behavior, avoidance. In extreme circumstances they might actually try to walk away from a situation or physically isolate themselves. More commonly, they will disengage by remaining silent and withdrawing in subtle ways. When behaving this way, they will not meaningfully contribute to conversations and can be noncommittal regarding decisions or outcomes. When trying to communicate with them, they might not give timely responses to e-mails or calls. This mechanism of “going dark” highlights particularly poor use of Feedback skills, and is a passive-aggressive form of avoidance. The short-term consequence of these activities is that others will not be able to respond to them because they have been unclear about their opinions. If they behave this way over a period of time, they risk becoming completely disengaged from others and from important decisions or events that they might otherwise have some influence on.

Another expression of low Versatility with Analytical Style people is stubbornness. They will cling to their position without appropriately responding to others' ideas or alternatives. Although people of all Styles can be stubborn, Analytical Style people can be especially rigid once they have established a position on something. As a consequence, they can alienate others or make them feel that their opinions are unworthy.

These individuals are very cautious. They will hesitate to take action on something, many times losing an opportunity because of their indecisiveness. Another way they express caution is by keeping information to themselves.

They will not disclose information unless they absolutely have to, or will delay disclosing for too long. This can result not only in lost opportunities, but it can frustrate other people who are expecting them to provide information in a timely way.

Sarcasm is one of the more subtle expressions of low Versatility that is common with Analytical Style people. The person uses biting humor to send a critical message without being overtly hostile. In a similar way, they can be perceived as judgmental, critical or moralistic in their attitudes. These are often outward manifestations of what, in their minds, they believe is right. The consequence is that they leave people feeling offended and alienated.

### ***High Versatility***

When acting in ways that lead to high Versatility, Analytical Style people use their organizational skills to influence processes, but without being rigid. They listen with an open mind and are willing to change their opinions. They actively contribute and will support group decisions. Along with this openness, they display a less critical mindset and are not as picky or judgmental about other people or situations. This results in much easier working relationships, as well as better decisions.

These individuals are forthright in expressing their opinions. Instead of holding back, they actively state their ideas and are vocal members of group discussions. When situations call for it, they will make decisions in a timely way. Though they tend to act cautiously, they will resist this urge when it is unnecessary and will act decisively. This helps others to achieve their goals without having to wait for the Analytical Style person to take action.

Analytical Style people will sometimes use subtle or dry humor to break tension or bring levity to a situation. In such situations their humor is not mocking, but is more of a way to communicate with others their less serious side. In fact, these people often show a personal part of themselves as a way of opening up to others. In Style terms, they add more Emote Responsiveness behaviors to their repertoire in order to counteract their normally controlled exteriors. This helps others to see a more animated side of them, which is often helpful for developing personal relationships.

### *Challenges and Benefits*

In order to act in ways that lead to high Versatility, Analytical Style people have to temper their need to be right. They want to act cautiously and slowly, but they need to take more risks and be quicker to act. They want to take a methodical approach to problems and tasks, but they sometimes need to be less systematic. They prefer to stay in the background, but they need to be more upfront in stating their opinions. These behaviors are all contrary to the behaviors that are most comfortable for Analytical Style people, and this is why it can be difficult for them to act in ways that lead to high Versatility.

The benefits of enacting high Versatility behaviors are improved relationships and greater effectiveness. These individuals can improve their relationships by allowing others to experience them on a more personal level. By showing the more human side of themselves, others will feel closer to them and have a greater understanding of their needs. This can lead to the many benefits of trusting relationships, both personal and professional. These individuals can increase their personal effectiveness because using more directive behaviors provides others with information they need, and also opens up resources that can help Analytical Style people succeed in their jobs. For example, by providing their input directly and making quicker decisions, work can be accomplished more efficiently. This is particularly true if the person involves other people in the process, instead of trying to do things alone.

## How Can Versatility Be Learned?

Versatility is a set of behaviors that can be learned and applied. This point has been made already in this book, but it is critical. After reading the descriptions of low and high Versatility, you are probably beginning to understand why these behaviors can be learned and applied. Let's briefly discuss this.

One major reason why more people do not behave with high Versatility is because they are simply not aware of these behaviors. Learning about Versatility can be an eye-opening experience for many people. They have never thought about these things before, and suddenly they have a model for how to improve their interactions and effectiveness. Not only does it provide a framework for improving interpersonal effectiveness, but it is attainable. Although it may be a challenge, any person can apply these behaviors to their everyday work lives.

The other reason why Versatility can be learned is because the behaviors are not fixed. Remember that Style is mostly a fixed set of behaviors. It would be hard to change our Style. But Versatility is different. We can change the way we dress and our appearance. We can learn to present ourselves more effectively in meetings. We can learn to be more flexible and innovative, not to mention how to listen more carefully to others and pay attention to their needs.

The name “Versatility” was chosen because it describes a broad set of behaviors that people engage in, but the name also implies that it is a set of behaviors that can be learned and applied. We can all be versatile and learn new ways of behaving.



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## Chapter

# 10

# How is this Knowledge Applied to Increase Interpersonal Effectiveness?

The whole point of learning about Style and Versatility is to increase interpersonal effectiveness. Through Style awareness, we understand how to interact with people in ways that make them comfortable and help them meet their Style-specific needs. Inevitably, this leads to higher productivity. Understanding Versatility is also integral, as has been pointed out already.

There are four steps to increasing interpersonal effectiveness, culminating in “doing something for others,” where Versatility comes into play:

1. Know yourself
2. Control yourself
3. Know others
4. Do something for others

## Know Yourself

Interacting more effectively with others begins with self-understanding. By completing the SOCIAL STYLE questionnaire, and reading their Profile reports, people learn about behaviors that are commonly associated with their Style.

More importantly, they learn how others tend to perceive people who exhibit those behaviors. By objectively considering and reflecting on those

perceptions, one might begin to ask such questions as, “How do I present myself to others on a day-to-day basis?” “What are the specific strengths that I bring to my workplace relationships?” and “How do I let my Style weakness (Growth Action) affect my relationships with others?”

No one excels in all areas of social interaction, so it is a good idea to learn to leverage strengths to one’s advantage, while working to improve weaknesses. To do this, one must realistically assess his or her own Style, and fully consider the way he or she behaves around co-workers and the effect it has on them. Based upon that self-awareness, one can thoughtfully determine how to approach interpersonal interactions to improve relationships and effectiveness.

## Control Yourself

With Style awareness comes the ability to control Style behaviors. By understanding the impact we have on others, we can try to neutralize our own Style behaviors, when this is appropriate. For example, an Analytical Style person with good awareness understands that his own slowness to act or commit to a decision is impacting the team. Therefore, he adjusts his behavior and makes a decision that helps the team move forward. This is outside his comfort zone, but he understands that his hesitancy to commit to a decision is not in the team’s best interests, and is probably not necessary. So he adjusts his behavior.

This ability to control behavior is especially important during moments of high tension. Understanding how our own behavior is contributing to the tension allows us the control to minimize our contribution to the stress. By controlling our Style-bound behavior, we essentially take Style differences off the table.

Learning to control Style behaviors by applying Style “brakes” is especially important for people who tend to exhibit extreme Style behaviors. For example, an extreme Driving Style individual may seem to co-workers as overcontrolling. That individual needs to slow down, listen attentively to others, and understand that his or her way isn’t necessarily the best way.

Along the same lines, consider an extreme Amiable Style individual who is seen by others as overly compliant for always going along with others and not voicing opinions. Such a person needs to make efforts to make himself more valuable to the team by taking initiative to offer ideas and input – even if it might temporarily jeopardize the harmony in the team.

Of course, people cannot, and should not, put the brakes on every Style behavior. Instead, they should focus on behaviors that get in the way of productive relationships. And no Style behavior can or should be put in check indefinitely, because that will become a source of unnecessary tension. People need to understand themselves well enough to know their own Style tendencies and control them as necessary to maintain productive relationships.

One other aspect of controlling yourself involves helping others to feel comfortable during their interactions with you. When interacting with another person, particularly during initial encounters, you can control your own Style-related behaviors. By doing this, the other person will not have to react to your Style-related behaviors. This creates a situation where the other person is free to act in her own stylistic ways, making it easier for you to observe her Style behaviors. This is an important stride toward “knowing others.”

## Know Others

The next step toward working more effectively with others is to identify their Style. Do this by observing what they “say” and “do” in different work situations over a period of time. By observing people in different situations, you will get clues about their behavioral preferences under different levels of tension. Since people sometimes act in ways that are characteristic of different Styles, it is necessary to make enough observations to establish a pattern of behavior.

### Determining Others’ Styles

One of the cornerstones of Style programs is teaching participants how to identify other people’s Styles, without the benefit of a SOCIAL STYLE Profile report. This is important because in order to use Style to work more effectively with others, it is necessary to determine their Styles.

Remember that determining other people’s Styles is relatively easy. The behavior is there for all to see and hear. It is just a matter of understanding how to categorize that behavior in a meaningful way. Assertiveness, Responsiveness, and Versatility provide a framework for understanding behavior in a meaningful way.

The following steps are useful for determining Style.

1. Using the Assertiveness and Responsiveness scales, identify those verbal and nonverbal behaviors that you observe the individual exhibiting most frequently. As you make your observations, be sure to follow the Rules for Observing Style, which is covered in the next section.
2. After making a sufficient number of observations, a pattern of behavior should emerge. Usually, one scale will emerge first. For example, a person's behavior may clearly indicate a pattern of Ask Assertiveness, and this will become obvious more quickly than his or her position on Responsiveness.
3. Plot the person's SOCIAL STYLE by identifying in which quadrant most behaviors occur when the scales are intersected.
4. Consider your initial identification of Style as tentative. Accurately identifying another person's Style takes practice.
5. Verify your tentative Style identification over time through ongoing observation of the individual.

### **Rules for Observing Behaviors**

Observing individuals to identify their Style is not particularly difficult, but there are some pitfalls that you can avoid by following six rules. These guidelines are important. TRACOM developed these rules based on years of experience in working with the Model.

1. Avoid jumping to conclusions about another person's Style. It takes multiple observations, made over a period of time, and under a variety of circumstances to reveal a pattern of behavior. Remember, given the right circumstances, you might observe an individual exhibiting behaviors associated with any of the four Styles. Don't let those out-of-character behaviors mislead you.
2. Remain objective. Your personal feelings about someone can only hinder the accuracy and objectivity of your observations. Try to forget how you are feeling and concentrate instead on observing their "say and do" behaviors.

3. Avoid making “like and dislike” judgments about the behaviors that you observe. Making these kinds of judgments is a natural response that, more often than not, gets in the way of an objective observation.
4. Separate Style clues from assigned authority or roles. We naturally tend to associate the roles people play with stereotypes. For example, in real life all IT people are not Analytical, all executives are not Driving, and all sales people are not Expressive. Avoid jumping to these kinds of conclusions when observing the behaviors of others.
5. Moderate stress clarifies Style. It is fairly easy for most people to be versatile when they are comfortable with the level of tension they are feeling. The more versatile they are overall, the more difficult it is to identify their Style. However, when people become uncomfortable with the level of tension they are feeling, they typically rely on patterns of behavior (Style) that have worked well for them in the past.
6. Get out of the way. It is difficult to objectively observe the behavior of others when you are part of the action, or when they are busy reacting to you and your Style. Give them a chance to show their Style by watching how they interact with co-workers when you are not personally involved with the situation.

## Do Something for Others

After successfully completing the first three steps, the final step in improving Versatility is to “do something for others.” Simply put, this step means adjusting one’s own behavior in ways that allow your co-workers to act comfortably according to their own Style.

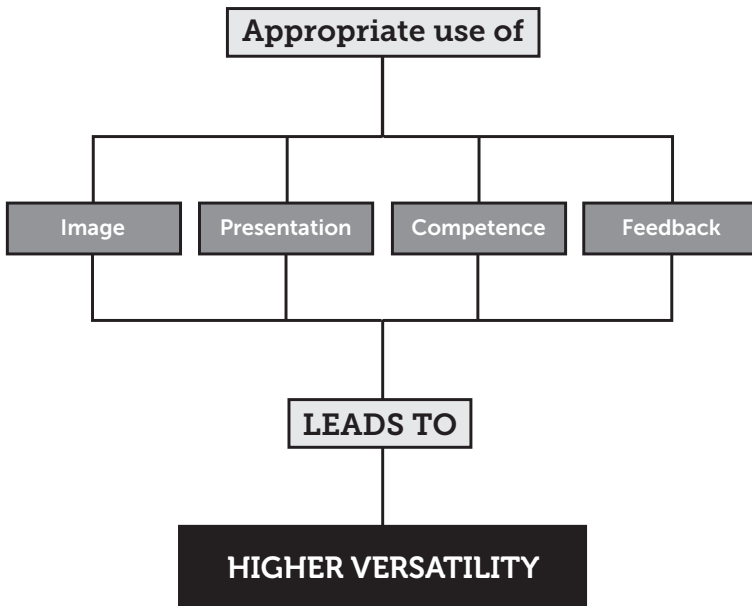
Treating co-workers the way they wish to be treated helps remove potential Style conflicts, and can enhance mutual productivity and effectiveness. Adjusting one’s approach to accommodate a co-worker’s SOCIAL STYLE does not mean compromising on issues of substance. Doing something for others is a matter of Style; it is not about going along with or supporting ideas or actions in which you do not believe. While accommodating Style Needs is obviously not the solution to every problem at work, adeptly working with a person’s Style Need, rather than against it, helps ensure that Style is part of the solution and not part of the problem.

This may sound familiar to what you learned in the previous section called “Control Yourself.” It is true that there is some overlap, since controlling your Style tendencies is a part of doing something for others. However, when we talk about doing something for others we are focusing more on specific behaviors that underlie Versatility.

In the sections that follow, you will learn more about how to apply the four sources of Versatility in the workplace. In particular, these sections address how one can adjust behavior to interact more productively with people of different Styles, and specific actions one can take to increase personal effectiveness in common interactions at work.

## Applying the Four Sources of Versatility

Recall that when one adjusts behavior in the four broad areas of Image, Presentation, Competence, and Feedback to accommodate the Style preferences of co-workers, they tend to view this person as more “Versatile.” This is true whether or not those co-workers are aware that one is making adjustments to accommodate their Style.



In the following sections we describe the four sources of Versatility, along with ways in which Style impacts each source of Versatility and how people of different Styles respond to the source of Versatility. We want to point out that these statements are generalizations about people of each Style. Though common, you should not expect all people of a Style to exhibit these characteristics.



### Image

Co-workers assess Image by making judgments, usually subconsciously, about the appropriateness of one's dress, demeanor, and the organization of one's work area. From what they observe, they make judgments about whether an individual projects an image that is within established norms for his or her role and responsibilities at work.

An Image that others feel is out of the norm tends to get in the way of effective interpersonal communication. For example, consider a person with an Expressive Style who likes to assert his individuality by wearing flamboyant attire when business-casual is the norm. Think about a Driving Style individual who comes across like a drill sergeant even in casual situations. Regardless of Style, if one's work area continually appears to be in disarray, co-workers will need to overcome the negative impressions created by that Image in order to have productive interactions with him or her.

Image is most important in initial interactions with co-workers. Negative impressions of Image can usually be overcome over time with high Versatility in the areas of Presentation, Competence, and Feedback. However, one can avoid the negative Image problem by "doing something" for co-workers, such as making any necessary adjustments to dress, demeanor, and organization in the work area. Ideally, such adjustments should simultaneously meet both one's own needs and help to make co-workers more comfortable when interacting.

As an example of how Image displays itself regardless of Style, consider an executive who shows up at the company party wearing a suit and tie, even though jeans are the norm. People might be a little uncomfortable interacting with him, unless he shows high Versatility by adjusting to the situation by taking off his tie and jacket.

One other aspect of Image is worth consideration. A part of Image is how a person “carries” him or herself. In other words, demeanor can impact perceptions of Image. In general, a self-confident demeanor is appreciated by all people regardless of their Style.

### ***How Does Style Impact Image?***

Appropriately dressing and presenting yourself for different circumstances, and having a functional and comfortable workspace are at the heart of Image. To a certain degree your Image is a reflection of your own personal Style and tastes. Your clothing and the way you decorate, or don’t decorate, your personal space is an indication of your Style.

Driving Style people tend to be more formal and conservative in their appearance than some of the other Styles. They generally will not wear flamboyant clothing in terms of style or color. Even if a dress code is very relaxed, many of these individuals will prefer to dress in a more formal way. Their workspaces are often organized with the sole purpose of productivity. They might have some family pictures and personal items, but the primary concern will be getting work done. This does not necessarily mean that their work areas are neat or tidy. In fact, they can sometimes seem to be in disarray, but this is usually a reflection of the pace and focus of their work.

Expressive Style people are usually the most likely of all Styles to dress in a unique and colorful way. They will often use their clothing and appearance as a way to express their individuality and tastes, and they may be particularly prone to showing name brands and logos. In a similar way, their workspaces often include many indications of their interests and personal lives. They like to surround themselves with pictures of family and friends, and also with memorabilia and even toys. When entering the office or workspace of an Expressive Style person, there are often a lot of colorful objects to grab a person’s attention.

Amiable Style people are generally more casual in their choice of clothing. They prefer to be comfortable and project an easily approachable Image, and this comes across in their dress and demeanor. They are similar to Expressive Style people in this regard, though they are usually less flashy in their choice of clothing. Their work areas are often treated as an extension of their homes. They like to display objects that are meaningful to them, such as family photos



and memorabilia. They also tend to add personal touches to their areas that make their spaces more comfortable and intimate, such as works of art.

Analytical Style people are similar to Driving Style individuals in that they tend to dress more conservatively. They might not expend much effort on their work clothing, considering it to be just a “uniform” that they wear. In some instances they can be rigid about their appearance, not wanting to deviate from their own standards of professional attire, even when the company norm is more relaxed. Their work areas tend to be organized for efficiency. They may not be neat, but they are organized in a way that helps them to work effectively. Of all the Styles, they might be the least likely to display personal photos or objects. However, these individuals will often display items that hint at their personal interests, or that are mentally challenging such as works of art.

### ***How Do Styles Respond to Image?***

It is important to keep in mind that people of different Styles often have different expectations about Image, and this can impact their perceptions of you. When it is necessary to project a good Image for a specific individual, awareness of the person’s Style can help you to plan accordingly.

Driving Style people tend to be formal in their dress and appearance, and depending on the circumstances of your workplace, they might expect you to dress in a similar way, especially if you have interactions with customers. However, they place high value on professional competence, so if you have proven your abilities to them, they may be more open to your own personal tastes in clothing and appearance. These individuals prefer a work area that is organized to help them get things done. They may look for the same in your work area, however they are likely to be more interested in how well you get work done rather than how you decorate your work area.

Expressive Style people look for freedom of personal expression in their work and appearance, and they will generally be open to your own individual preferences in this regard. They might even appreciate it when you wear less formal attire or can create opportunities to do so. These individuals often display achievements and inspirational items – along with humorous ones. They want you to be energetic, and if possible, relax time constraints when you enter their work environment.

Amiable Style people prefer a personable and friendly Image. To build rapport with them, especially during initial encounters, it may be helpful if you dress less formally. It also might be appreciated if you can create occasions that allow for casual attire. These individuals often create an inviting and homey environment, which may include pictures of family and friends, or significant events with work teams. When you are in their environment, it will usually be appreciated if you recognize these personal touches and comment on them. Of course, you should not do this merely because you think it's important. These individuals will recognize your lack of sincerity.

Analytical Style people often project a formal, conventional and punctual Image. Depending on their position of authority and the norms of your workplace, they might be somewhat judgmental of nontraditional garb. These individuals seek accuracy and thoroughness, and they typically prefer work environments that support solitary and deliberate pursuits for doing their work. They might be generally accepting of other types of workspaces, as long as the person displays some semblance of organization.



### Presentation

Co-workers assess Presentation by making judgments, again mostly subconsciously, about the ability to deliver information in different settings at work. Presentation includes their assessment of the comfort level when making a group presentation, of organization and delivery, and of how comfortable they feel about the interaction.

When a person feels uncomfortable when making Presentations to co-workers, chances are his or her co-workers also feel that uneasiness. To increase one's abilities in this area, focus concern on confidence in the topic and materials, on how well it is organized, and on an appropriate choice of words and topics to accommodate the audience.

In addition, think about how the Styles of both presenter and recipients may affect the message. For example, a presenter with an Analytical Style might need to consider whether he or she has too much detail and not enough big picture descriptions. Those who have an Amiable Style might want to make sure that they are getting to the point quickly enough for their audience, and are presenting ideas in a bold enough way to challenge others' thinking.

During Presentations to co-workers, be sure to continually look for signs of confusion or boredom, and periodically ask whether they have questions. This will help to keep them engaged and might lead to a two-way conversation, which inherently has a higher comfort level for most people.

Choice of words, and the audience's ability to understand and relate to those words, are critical. For example, a presenter who is relatively young compared to his or her co-workers may be prone to using slang he learned during his high school or college years. Older co-workers might view this person's abilities as similar to those of their teenage children, rather than those of a business colleague. Similarly, an older presenter trying to engage an audience of younger people must remain aware of differences of not only Style, but of approaches to work and the workplace and how these differ across generations.

### ***How Does Style Impact Presentation?***

Like all other aspects of Versatility, Presentation can be impacted by a person's Style.

Driving Style individuals are usually very businesslike, getting to the point quickly. They speak forcefully, but are rather muted in their facial expressions. If the meeting agenda is within their control, they will generally take command of the meeting to make their points and ensure that their objectives are met. They can be blunt when sharing their opinions, which is an expression of their direct approach. While they may not be loud talkers, they will generally speak with enough volume that everyone in the room can hear them.

Expressive Style people are generally the most outgoing of the Styles during meetings and Presentations. They tend to speak loudly and often, especially if they are the ones running the meeting. They will use hand gestures and display a great deal of facial animation. They may sometimes be disorganized in their focus, starting on one topic and quickly moving to new topics. Like Driving Style people, they can often be very frank in the way they express their opinions, and they will act this way when providing both positive and negative comments.

Amiable Style people usually like to be conversational, bringing others into the discussion. Their voices will be more inflected than a Driving Style person's, but they will speak in a relatively quiet tone. They express themselves with hand gestures and facial animation, but this is usually less obvious than with

Expressive Style people. They tend to express their opinions in a way that reflects their focus on the team or workgroup, and in particular the impacts that actions will have on their team.

Analytical Style people will usually want to cover all aspects of a topic in detail, often in a linear or time-bound way. They tend to speak slowly and in a subdued voice, displaying few obvious hand or body gestures. Their focus is often on processes and procedures, and they will generally want to center on these topics during meetings. They prefer to get others' input, so they will ask questions and spend a relatively large amount of time listening to others' viewpoints before responding.

### ***How Do Styles Respond to Presentation?***

When presenting to people, it is important to be aware of the Style preferences of the audience.

When appealing to Driving Style audience members, remember to clearly state the goal of your Presentation and focus on achieving that goal throughout the Presentation. This will help them meet their need for results. Be efficient and brief in your presentation, since this will help them feel that their time is being well-spent.

Expressive Style people want to be involved in the discussion. They will respond well when the presenter allows them opportunities to express themselves. They generally will not need specific requests, since they naturally assert themselves in groups. Show excitement about what you are presenting, since this will appeal to their affinity for stimulation. Recall that these individuals typically have a need for big-picture thinking and strategic approaches, so provide a broad, visual depiction of the goal of your Presentation.

Amiable Style people also want to be involved, though they are less likely to want to talk than Expressive Style people. Instead, they will look for the presenter to invite them to share their opinions. For example, the presenter can directly ask for their opinions by asking them to share their thoughts. This is a comfortable way to involve these individuals. Ask them their opinions about the topic at hand, and demonstrate active listening. Be alert to any nonverbal signals that they are experiencing doubt or insecurity about the information you are presenting. Because they most likely will not be willing to come right

out and disagree with your points, you might have to ask them questions to get the concerns out in the open. These individuals will also be particularly mindful of how the presenter relates to other colleagues, and whether he or she treats them considerately and with respect.

Analytical Style people will expect a presenter to be organized and give enough details to support his or her position. They generally will not be eager for the presenter to involve them in the discussion, but if they have strong opinions about a topic, they will want the opportunity to speak. Similar to the Amiable Style, the presenter can invite them to share their opinions by asking open-ended questions. Provide logical conclusions and step-by-step action plans at the presentation's conclusion to help them understand what will occur next. Doing so will help them be more willing to participate in future efforts.



## Competence

Co-workers assess Competence based both on how good one is at achieving his or her individual goals, and how much help and support one provides them in achieving theirs. Competence includes a number of abilities, including dependability, perseverance, and flexibility. Competence is also influenced by one's level of optimism and creativity in terms of solving problems and offering unique ideas.

People at work tend to view one another's Competence through the prism of their own Style preferences concerning use of time, actions toward others, and approaches to decision-making. For example, a Driving Style co-worker might judge Competence, in part, based on how quickly a co-worker can get something done. In contrast, an Amiable Style co-worker might be less concerned with speed and more concerned with how well one works with others while performing a task.

One can increase co-workers' perceptions of Competence by taking a number of actions that reinforce their positive evaluations. For example, reliability in getting things done in a time frame comfortable to others, being flexible in regard to shifting priorities, being open to new perspectives and different ways of doing things, offering creative ideas, and staying optimistic and enthusiastic.

### *How Does Style Impact Competence?*

Style influences the way people display Competence behaviors in a number of important ways.

Because Driving Style people achieve their need for results through taking action, some of the behaviors that lead to Competence might seem like a natural for them. For example, they might often be perceived as dependable, since they like to get things done quickly, and as persistent, since they drive toward goals. These individuals usually don't show optimism through exciting speeches or a cheerful presence. Rather, their optimism comes across as confidence that things will turn out all right, and that positive outcomes will happen through taking a course of action. In terms of flexibility, some Driving Style people tend to see changes as challenges that should be met head on. They may actually be faster to respond to changes than is comfortable for people of other Styles. As natural risk-takers, these people generally are not afraid of new ideas. They may generate their own ideas and solutions or, if practicing their listening skills, will take the time to solicit others' ideas and work with them.

Expressive Style people have a natural orientation toward spontaneity, so they might display flexibility to new circumstances and adaptability to change more readily than some others. Their creativity will sometimes show itself through generating ideas, especially since they are generally big-picture thinkers. When feeling optimistic, these individuals will show it through their enthusiasm and outward energy. Expressive Style people are not as influenced by time constraints as some of the other Styles, so they may display dependability somewhat differently. This is not to say that they are incapable of taking responsibility for their work or for meeting deadlines; people of all Styles do these things. However, they may have different understandings of time frames and what other's expectations are.

Amiable Style individuals are focused on relationships, and this can often come across in how they display Competence behaviors. For example, they might persevere through problems by involving others and focusing on working as a team, rather than trying to tackle every problem on their own. When feeling hopeful about things, they will generally be cheerful toward co-workers and display energy around work activities. Their personal creativity is also often most apparent when it involves some form of group activity. For

example, an Amiable Style person might develop a new process that eases the workloads of fellow team members, as well as herself. The desire to please others is strong for these people, and to the extent that they agree with decisions and processes, they will display their reliability by meeting their responsibilities and deadlines.

Analytical Style individuals tend to be somewhat reserved, and this can come across in their Competence behaviors. Rather than being very vocal and obvious in their actions, they will sometimes show their perseverance by quietly moving forward and working through problems, often by themselves. When change occurs, they will generally want to find some assurance that the change is positive before committing themselves. Rapid transitions from one situation to another can be challenging for them. When coming up with new ideas or solutions to problems, they will often want time alone to think before offering their input to the larger group. Because they tend to be emotionally controlled, their displays of optimism might not be as forthright as they are for people of other Styles. In fact, their enthusiasm might be so subdued that others don't realize that they are actually excited.

### ***How Do Styles Respond to Competence?***

Driving Style people are always in a hurry, so it is important to establish your reliability and credibility early. Until they see this, they may be hesitant to trust you. Follow through on your commitments, and show that you can adapt to changing needs. Explicitly state your opinions without automatically deferring to their opinions or demands. Driving Style people don't usually focus on relationships. Therefore, when priorities shift, they show a greater focus on the outcome to be achieved rather than on the interpersonal repercussions of the situation. These individuals will appreciate your efforts to articulate bottom line results or benefits of your decisions or actions.

When working with Expressive Style individuals, initially it is important to show enthusiasm. They appreciate working closely with people, and you can use this as an opportunity to display your abilities. These people can sometimes move quickly from topic to topic, or priority to priority. You can show your flexibility by keeping pace with them, but also helping them refocus when necessary. When giving ideas, avoid overemphasizing details, and frame your solutions in big picture terms using descriptive language where possible. Show self-confidence with these individuals to inspire their confidence in you.

With Amiable Style co-workers, emphasize your relationship and how you will work together toward common goals. Instead of emphasizing tasks and your process for accomplishing them, underscore the positive impacts your approach will have on people and the organization. They will think more highly of you when you offer ideas to them, rather than working out everything on your own. This allows them to be a part of the process, which is an important need for them. It is very important to follow up on your commitments, particularly since this builds trust. Be aware that failure to follow up on your commitments in a timely manner can cause a great deal of tension in your relationship with these people. Finally, show enthusiasm when working with Amiable Style people. They are very personable and group-oriented, so let them know that you're a part of the team and want to work with them.

With Analytical Style people, initially it is important to show your focus and abilities. Let them know that you can be trusted, and that you have meaningful contributions to offer. Tell them how you plan to approach a task or situation. This meets their propensity for influencing processes, as well as their need for information. When you have ideas, present them in a logical way. Explain the benefits of your idea and how it can be implemented. Because Analytical Style individuals might be uncomfortable with emotional situations or conflicts, maintain a calm and rational demeanor even when crises arise. You can show your optimism by staying positive during these times and letting them know that you'll support them as much as possible. It can sometimes take awhile to get to know these people on a personal basis. Once you have worked with them for awhile and proven your abilities, they will usually become more personable and open.



### Feedback

Strong perceptions of Feedback as a source of Versatility begin with wisdom of seeking “first to understand and then to be understood.” Feedback includes listening carefully and attentively to others, and responding in a way that reflects that understanding and helps build a mutually productive relationship. A critical component of Feedback is empathy – the ability to understand others' situations and take this into account during interactions.



As a point of clarification, TRACOM's use of the term "Feedback" is distinct from how this term is often used in organizations. Many people automatically associate this concept with giving professional performance feedback, coaching, or advice. Our use of the term is broader than this. Feedback skills are critical for engaging in these activities, but they extend beyond these events or instances.

You can think of Feedback skills as a personal radar system that people use to monitor their interactions with others. By accurately assessing the impact you are having on others, based on the verbal and nonverbal feedback others give you, you can adjust your communication as needed. Therefore, Feedback is a critical component of Versatility. By monitoring your impact on others, you can adjust the other Versatility skills – Image, Presentation, and Competence.

The ability to both give and receive Feedback can be affected by Style. For example, Amiable Style individuals have a natural orientation toward relationships, which means they are advantaged in terms of building relationships. TRACOM's research has confirmed that there is a slight statistical correlation between Responsiveness and Feedback. This means that, on average, Amiable and Expressive Style people tend to score slightly higher on Feedback. However, this does not mean that all Expressive and Amiable Style people have good Feedback skills.

By contrast, Driving Style people are oriented toward action, making it more of a challenge for them to listen attentively to others. (Recall that their Growth Action is to listen). Likewise, Analytical and Expressive Styles can be challenged in their own ways to listen attentively. For example, a message may be delivered too quickly and with too few details for an Analytical Style person, or too slowly and with too many details for an Expressive Style person.

Ensure that the message and feedback fully consider both the sender's Style and the Style of your co-worker. When listening to co-workers, make a sincere attempt to see things from their points of view, even when there is disagreement. This advice applies to both what the co-worker literally says, and of equal importance, to his or her choice of words, tone of voice, facial gestures, and body language.

Solidly giving and receiving feedback, then, involves using the senses both to hear their message and to interpret the accompanying nonverbal clues. When the message and the nonverbal behaviors mismatch, tension is probably

increasing. In most situations it is non-verbal behavior that carries the most meaning and has the largest impact on others. Acknowledge others' messages, both in terms of content and in terms of the emotions attached to that message.

Finally, make sure your communication to your co-workers conveys that you are open to their input. This approach fosters good communication and helps to build stronger interpersonal relationships.

### ***How Does Style Impact Feedback?***

Each Style of person approaches Feedback in unique ways.

As mentioned earlier, listening is the Growth Action for Driving Style people, so they are going to have a natural challenge in this regard. When they are listening and understanding another person, they will usually state that they have heard what was said, or give some other indication that they understand. These people are often brief in their interactions (and patience), so they tend to communicate using as few words as possible. This can sometimes make it difficult for other people to decipher exactly what the person wants or is really saying. The relationships they form with others tend to be formal and professional, yet they can be open to more personal involvement. Their primary need is to get results, so once a person has established his or her competence and abilities, a Driving Style person is more open to forming a personal bond or friendship. This need for results also often drives the skilled use of professional networks for these individuals, since they understand that they can get things done by knowing key people.

Expressive Style people are oriented toward personal relationships, so in some regard they are naturally advantaged in their use of Feedback skills. Because they have behaviors that are more Emote Responsive, in combination with Tell Assertiveness, these individuals may be able to communicate their intentions in ways that are apparent to others. In other words, they talk a lot and they are physically animated, which makes their feelings clear. Likewise, these individuals tend to be very outgoing, which may aid them in developing relationships at work. They seek personal approval, so these individuals might use their networking skills to their advantage by getting to know important people within the organization. While their natural tendencies might assist them in these areas, the degree to which they actively listen and understand others might be less apparent. For example, during a conversation an Expressive Style person might do the majority of talking, and this can leave

the other person feeling a bit overwhelmed and uncertain as to whether he was heard or understood.

Like Expressive Style people, Amiable Style individuals also display their emotions more than other Styles, and this can naturally help them in their use of Feedback skills. They tend to be good listeners who are attuned to others' feelings and well-being, so during interactions they will often leave the other person feeling like she has been heard and understood. Since they are naturally friendly, they will usually go out of their way to maintain good relationships with their co-workers. However, they might not always develop deep and personal relationships with a large number of people. Instead, they reserve their more personal sides for a select group of people, while maintaining cordial relationships with most other people.

Displaying Feedback skills can be more challenging for Analytical Style people since they tend to be reserved and somewhat hesitant to engage with other people. They tend to be good listeners, so others will often feel that they have been heard after an interaction. However, because they are emotionally controlled, it might be difficult for others to determine whether the Analytical Style person truly understands or cares about them or their issues. This does not necessarily mean that the person does not care; it is simply that he may not communicate his concern in a way that is obvious to others. These individuals might form personal relationships with only a small number of people within the organization. Being socially cautious and reserved by nature, they might not be inclined to form networks that could inevitably help them in their work and careers.

### ***How Do Styles Respond to Feedback?***

When communicating with Driving Style people, keep the key components of Feedback in mind: active listening, empathy and adaptive communication. Listen for deadlines, specific requests, and actions to be taken. Clarify things as needed, to show and ensure that you understand what they plan to achieve. Show empathy by reflecting the person's need for results and requests for action. Respond promptly to messages and requests. Show that you understand their frustration when things aren't moving fast enough for them or in the way they desired. Ask direct questions to better understand their motivations, which they may not reveal unless they feel revealing them is necessary for achieving the goal. When communicating with them, be direct and concise,

making down-to-earth comments. When they are communicating with you, respond directly and get to the point quickly.

When communicating with Expressive Style individuals, listen for their feelings, enthusiasm and ideas. They want you to see their spontaneity and ability to explore possibilities. Avoid appearing to be aloof or too task-focused, and allow time to build a relationship. Show empathy by being attentive. Touch base on a personal level, and avoid starting discussions with work issues or action items. Acknowledge their feelings and share some of yours, for example, by talking about things that are happening for you and others. Understand their frustration when others don't seem to appreciate their input or when they are frustrated by details, routines and standard procedures. When communicating with Expressive Style individuals, allow time for conversation, and for processing their feelings. Don't concentrate just on specifics and avoid overwhelming them with facts. Show your concern for the human side of issues by expressing warmth and interest. Avoid looking too critical. When they are communicating with you, try to respond in a positive and upbeat way. You may need to help them narrow down options, and plan to follow up with them. If you do not respond in ways that meet their needs, they might react by becoming visibly impatient and vocal.

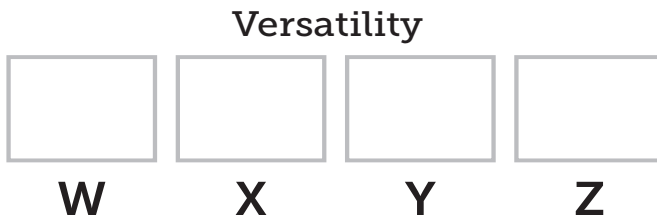
When communicating with Amiable Style people, listen for their feelings, sensitivity and awareness. They want you to see their helpfulness and cooperation. Avoid behaviors that could be seen as unfeeling, tough-minded, or unnecessarily competitive. Allow time to build a relationship. Show empathy by giving these individuals sincere and genuine personal attention. Always starting discussions with work issues or action items can suggest that you don't care about them personally, so be sure to take a moment to touch base with them on a personal level. When communicating, give them time to take their concerns and feelings into consideration before they respond. Show that you see the human side of things, and not just the bottom line – especially when making a decision or implementing a change. Avoid coming on too strong and overwhelming them. Make suggestions rather than bold statements. Show that you're open for input and negotiation. Amiable Style individuals are sometimes uncomfortable with conflict, so don't expect them to spontaneously give you constructive criticism or corrective feedback.

When communicating with Analytical Style people, listen to their details and plans. They want you to see their logical organization, thoroughness and

thoughtfulness. Slow down, talk less, and put things in writing for them to review. Give them time to study and to think. Show empathy by giving them time to be thorough and thoughtful. Understand that they need time to think, to review plans and to check for accuracy. You'll get the best from them by not imposing tight deadlines or demanding quick decisions. When communicating, allow them to respond thoughtfully. Give them enough time to consider your viewpoints. When you request changes, provide a sound rationale to justify your request. Examine and discuss advantages and disadvantages of options. Because they tend to be uncomfortable with conflict, don't take it personally if they withdraw and withhold Feedback. When they are communicating with you, take the time to listen carefully to them and allow them to make all their points before you respond. Approach their input in a rational way.

## Versatility Scores

TRACOM scores Versatility in a way that is very similar to scores on Assertiveness and Responsiveness. Versatility is normed, meaning that an individual's scores are compared to a large sample that is representative of the population.



This sample is divided into four equal quadrants. From low to high scores, these are labeled W, X, Y, and Z.

A W score is the lowest quartile, indicating that the score is lower than 75% of the norm group. The X quartile is lower than 50% but higher than 25%. Y is the quartile that is higher than half the norm group, and Z scores are those in the top 25%.

### Scores on the Four Sources of Versatility

TRACOM provides results on total Versatility, as described above, and on the four sources of Versatility separately. The four sources are scored the same

way as overall Versatility, using the W to Z scoring system. This is important because a person may have a high Z score on Image but a low W score on Feedback. This information helps people pinpoint specific areas where they can improve. It is most helpful to consider each of the four sources separately, instead of focusing on a single overall Versatility score. Results for the four sources are independent. That is, one might score high on Feedback but low on Competence, or vice versa.

As noted previously, Versatility is not related to Style. Any Style can have higher or lower Versatility. However, there is an exception to this rule. There is a slight relationship between Feedback and Responsiveness, so Amiable and Expressive Style people are naturally advantaged in terms of higher Feedback scores. This natural advantage, however, is slight and does not mean that all Expressive and Amiable Style people will score high on Feedback.

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## Chapter

# 11

## Conclusion

Now that you've learned about Style and Versatility, you can understand the many ways that this knowledge can be applied. Regardless of the particular workplace or situation, people can use Style awareness to improve their effectiveness.

Through awareness of others' Styles, people can increase their effectiveness by communicating in ways that appeal to people's Styles. They can even write emails more effectively. Individuals who work in customer-facing industries can particularly benefit from Style training. Being aware of the different Styles allows these individuals to tailor their approach to their customers' Styles.

### Continue Preparing with Other Materials

While this publication provides an in-depth description of Style and Versatility, there are a number of other publications that are valuable for facilitators. Consult the TRACOM website, [tracom.com](http://tracom.com) for a current list of these available resources.

In addition to reading this book, there are some other key things you can do to prepare yourself:

- First and foremost, become professionally certified by TRACOM. This ensures you have the training and resources you need to succeed.

- Complete the SOCIAL STYLE Profile and participate in a workshop as a participant. This will give you the perspective of a first-time learner.
- Review additional resources and materials, in particular, Facilitator Guides for various programs. This is necessary for facilitating a program.



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## Glossary

**Assertiveness** – a measure of the degree to which one tends to ask or tell when interacting with others. It is a reflection of how others see a person influencing others. Those who are more Tell Assertive tend to state their opinions with assurance, confidence and force. They make positive statements and declarations and attempt to direct the actions of others. Those who are more Ask Assertive tend to be more cautious and reserved about sharing their opinions. They attempt to influence the thinking and actions of others in a quieter, lower-key manner through the questions they ask and the points they make.

**Backup Behavior** – an exaggerated form of Style behavior used by a person to reduce stress. This occurs when an individual is unable to meet his or her needs. In particular, it occurs when a person is trying to meet his or her needs by engaging in typical Style behaviors, but is frustrated in this attempt. This leads to stress and results in Backup Behavior. Backup Behavior can be a significant contributing factor in unproductive relationships because the individual in backup mode is not concerned with the effects such behavior is having on others. Backup Behavior always occurs within the interpersonal relationship that caused the stress, and it is the most ineffective use of Style behavior.

**Behavior** – every observable act that we engage in; what we “say and do.” Behavior is one component of our personalities, but it is the most noticeable

aspect of our personalities. Other people rely heavily on our behavior to understand who we are and what motivates us.

**Competence** – one of the Four Sources of Versatility. Co-workers assess Competence based both on how good one is at achieving his or her individual goals, and how much help and support one provides them in achieving theirs. Competence includes a number of abilities, including dependability, perseverance, and flexibility. Competence is also influenced by one’s level of optimism and creativity in terms of solving problems and offering unique ideas.

**Feedback** – one of the Four Sources of Versatility. Feedback includes listening carefully and attentively to others and responding in a way that reflects that understanding. It also helps build a mutually productive relationship. A critical component of Feedback is empathy, which is the ability to understand others’ situations and take this into account during interactions.

**Image** – one of the Four Sources of Versatility. Image is the appropriateness of one’s dress, demeanor, and the organization of one’s work area. Image is most important in initial interactions with co-workers. Negative impressions of Image can usually be overcome over time with high Versatility in the areas of Presentation, Competence, and Feedback.

**Interpersonal Effectiveness** – the extent to which a person interacts productively with others, earns their respect and support, and gains their trust. Having good interpersonal skills can differentiate successful individuals from those that have more difficulty in their careers. The Versatility dimension of TRACOM’s Model is a measure of behaviors that lead to interpersonal effectiveness.

**Personality** – a set of characteristics that uniquely influence a person’s thoughts, motivations, and behaviors. It can be thought of as the combination of our thoughts, beliefs, motivations, and actions.

**Presentation** – one of the Four Sources of Versatility. Presentation includes assessment of a person’s comfort level when making a group presentation, of organization and delivery of information, and of how comfortable he or she makes others feel about the delivery of information.

**Responsiveness** – a measure of the degree to which a person tends to control emotions (i.e., keeping feelings and emotions inside), or emote (i.e., outwardly display feelings and emotions with others). In part, it is also a measure of the

extent to which one reacts to emotional influences, appeals or displays. Those who control feelings usually do not react to emotional appeals and are more likely to focus on ideas, things, data and tasks. They are also less likely to share their feelings publicly. Those who are more emoting tend to share their emotions and readily express anger, joy, happiness or hurt feelings. They are also more likely to respond to emotional appeals and influences.

**“Say and Do” Behavior** – behavior that people can observe in others, or what they say and do in their daily interactions. Observable behavior does not include judgments, assumptions, or biases that an individual may have about another person.

**SOCIAL STYLE** – a pattern of behavior that people tend to use in their interactions with others. Those patterns can be described according to four broad Styles: Driving, Expressive, Amiable, and Analytical. Style is based on observable behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, that co-workers agree upon as typical of a person’s behavior.

**Steps to Increase Interpersonal Effectiveness** – there are four steps to increasing interpersonal effectiveness: 1) know yourself, 2) control yourself, 3) know others, and 4) do something for others. The fourth step, “do something for others,” is where Versatility behaviors are utilized.

**Style Growth Action** – Style-specific behaviors that are used infrequently, and that can be frustrating for others. These behaviors are viewed by others as a fundamental weakness of a person’s Style. Each Style has a Growth Action, and it represents a primary aspect of behavior that is ignored or overlooked during interactions with other people. Instead, people prefer to engage in behaviors that are common and comfortable for their Style.

**Style Need** – the primary motivating force for each Style. People of each Style are heavily motivated to meet their Style-specific need, which represents a conglomeration of the primary motivations of people of each Style. When we don’t meet our Style-specific need, we feel stress and discomfort.

**Style Orientation** – the way in which people go about meeting their Style Need. It is a behavioral way in which people meet their Style Need.

**Tension** – a force that leads people to act. A moderate amount of tension is ideal for propelling people to behave productively. Too little tension or too much tension is unproductive.

**Toxic Relationship** – a situation that occurs when two people of different Styles fall into a pattern of conflict due to fundamental Style-related differences. The greatest potential for a Toxic Relationship occurs on the diagonal of the Model. That is, between Analytical and Expressive, and Amiable and Driving Styles. This is because these Style pairs have the most stark behavioral differences on both the Assertiveness and Responsiveness dimensions.

**Versatility** – an indicator of the support and respect one earns from others, as measured through behavior in four areas: Image, Presentation, Competence, and Feedback. Unlike Style behaviors, which are habitual and consistent, versatile behaviors require conscious awareness and effort, and can change across situations. These are the behaviors we perform in order to meet the expectations of others.


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# Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions from Learners

You need to sound and feel credible when facilitating a session. This will help you collapse the learning curve and quickly achieve that desired level of self-confidence.

Part of that credibility will build when you can answer participants' questions about Style and its application in the classroom. This FAQ Appendix will arm you with some of the most common, predictable questions and brief, well-informed answers.

## Common Questions About Style

### 1. **Is tension always a bad thing?**

In moderate amounts, tension is productive. Too much tension causes discomfort that prevents progress. Likewise, too little tension results in a lack of focus and productivity.

As an analogy consider a student taking an exam. If the student cares too little about the outcome, he or she will not focus and consequently may not do well on the exam. Similarly, too much anxiety will negatively impact performance. A balanced level of tension, however, will lead to a level of activity and focus that gets results.

**2. Is there anything good that comes out of Backup Behavior?**

The answer to this is no. Backup Behavior is a significant contributing factor in unproductive relationships because the individual in backup mode is not concerned with the effects such behavior is having on others. The Backup Behavior serves a temporary need for the person who exhibits it, but it negatively impacts others, and eventually the person himself.

**3. Why is it so difficult to take a Growth Action?**

It is difficult because our Growth Action is not a habitual behavior for us. In fact, for many, our Growth Action is uncomfortable for us. Over the years we've become accustomed to our behaviors, and our Growth Action is unlike our usual comfortable behaviors.

**4. I'm in one of the middle sections of the profile (B2, B3, C2, C3). Do I have behaviors of all the other Styles?**

Yes, this is truer for these people than for people who profile on the outside edges of the Model. Also, the four Styles in the center of the model are less opposite than the extremely opposite Styles (e.g., A1 Driving and D4 Amiable).

Sometimes people in the four corners of the SOCIAL STYLE Model (D1, D4, A1 and A4) perceive those in the middle four Styles as slippery or trying too much to create the right effect. That may not be the intent at all, only the perception of others.

**5. Do Analytical Style people have emotions?**

Yes, all human beings have emotions, but some reveal them to others more easily in their day-to-day relations. The manner of expressing emotion for people who are more controlled may not be as apparent, open, or as frequent as in those who are less controlled (or more emoting). Expression of emotions by highly controlled persons may only portray one or more of the components seen in such expression by others: inflection, assertive emphasis, etc.



## 6. Do Driving Style people have feelings?

Yes, just as Analytical Style people don't display their emotions with the frequency and intensity of some other Styles, Driving Style people don't always come across as very sensitive to others.

## 7. What is the best level of Assertiveness?

This question can mean two different things, depending on the context.

In the first meaning of the question, the questioner wants to know the optimum level of Versatility. They are asking whether one is more likely to be successful with more telling, asking or average Assertiveness. There are two key factors in the response to this version of the question. First, one's average level of Assertiveness does not predict the likelihood of success in any occupation. What really matters is one's Versatility, which is related to effectiveness.

For instance, an emergency such as a fire or an accident may call for high levels of Assertiveness to address the situation. By contrast, during a moment of silence any form of assertive speech would be considered inappropriate. Between two such extremes, a person's Assertiveness should vary with the demands of the situation.

In the second meaning of this question, the questioner asks whether there is an optimum level of Assertiveness in a given role or position. This question is often asked in other forms: Can an Amiable Style person succeed as a manager? Can Analytical Style people build good relationships? The answer is that one's Style does not predict one's likelihood of success in any role. On the other hand, it may predict one's comfort level with the tasks involved. There are many examples of successful leaders of every Style.

For instance, Expressive Style people typically have less interest in detailed work tasks, while Analytical Style people often like details. Similarly, Expressive Style people enjoy meeting and talking with new people while many Analytical Style people find this uncomfortable. However, if highly versatile, either can adapt to what the situation demands.

### **8. What is the best level of Responsiveness?**

See the previous question on the best level of Assertiveness, because the same concepts apply. This question really asks if it is better to be more controlling or more emoting. As with the previous question and answer, people exhibit varying levels of Responsiveness in different situations. Highly versatile individuals show a wider variety of situationally appropriate levels of Responsiveness.

As with the previous answer, a person's Responsiveness score is the average of all of the situations observed by others. In any given situation, any of us may feel more comfortable if the situation calls for a level of Responsiveness that matches our Style, and less comfortable when we have to address a situation that requires us to show more or less emoting or controlling than is normal for our Style.

### **9. What is the difference between behavior and personality?**

Behavior is perceived through the senses. It is every observable act we engage in, thus it is what we say and do. Behavior is only one component of our personalities, but it is the most noticeable aspect of our personalities. Other people rely heavily on our behavior to understand who we are and what motivates us.

Personality is a set of characteristics that uniquely influence a person's thoughts, motivations, and behaviors. It can be thought of as the combination of our thoughts, beliefs, motivations, and actions.

### **10. Is Assertiveness the same thing as “assertiveness training?”**

No. Assertiveness in the SOCIAL STYLE Model is a dimension of behavior. Assertiveness training teaches people to assert themselves in order to meet their needs and desires. Assertiveness training helps people who are shy or reluctant to ask for what they want and to gain comfort with those behaviors.

Remember that Ask Assertive individuals typically assert themselves with questions rather than with Tell statements; their assertive behavior just looks and sounds different from more directive Tell Assertive behavior.

**11. Are Driving Style managers more effective than other Styles?**

No, our research shows no evidence for this. The more important attribute for any manager is Versatility. Versatility is associated with many measures of managerial success, including building better relationships with direct reports and ability to lead teams.

**12. Is this workshop trying to change my behavior?**

Your Style, no. Your Versatility, yes. Style is generally stable from early adulthood throughout life. Versatility is a key to workplace success, based on behaviors we each choose. Highly versatile behaviors can be taught and applied.

**13. Sometimes I am “ask” assertive and sometimes I am “tell” assertive. I don’t think I can be classified as one or the other.**

At times, we are all either more Ask or Tell Assertive. It depends on the situation. The SOCIAL STYLE Profile provides an “average” of behavior. It indicates the level of Assertiveness that is most common.

When responding to this question, it may also be helpful to emphasize to participants that self-perception is notoriously inaccurate.

**14. Is my Style different at home and work?**

One’s Style is one’s Style in every environment. Style usually remains very consistent. Nonetheless, at home, one’s roles – sibling, parent, spouse, son or daughter – may include more frequent uses of certain behavior patterns than at work. The same can sometimes be said of behaviors at play, at a party, or in other roles.

If participants in a program insist that they have a different Style at home, remind them of subtle differences between various environments and how this might impact Style. However, ask them to check with their spouse or roommate about their behavior. Encourage them to share their Profile with these individuals, and get their feedback about whether they display similar behaviors at home.

**15. Why are family members discouraged from filling out the questionnaire?**

Their familiarity with you, especially their understanding of the intent behind your behavior and their willingness to accept you and love you as you are, skews their feedback. Research early in the history of the SOCIAL STYLE Profile proved that family members' perceptions are simply unreliable indicators compared to others who know you from working with you.

The TRACOM Group believes the nature of the relationship can so bias the outcome that it is no longer useful. For example, the mother's assessment of her son who is seen by her as a loving child, but is about to be expelled from school for disciplinary reasons. "But you don't know Johnny; he's a warm, loving boy!"

**16. What is meant by "appropriate behavior?"**

Appropriate behavior means that in a given situation, when you monitor your tension and behavior effectively, you can achieve your goals in a satisfying and mutually productive way. You can use skills in Image, Presentation, Competence, and Feedback that minimize tension for others. This is what "appropriate behavior" means for a certain individual in a specific situation. Being appropriate requires sensitivity to, and judgment about, behavior that causes interpersonal tension, which can interfere with achieving mutual goals.

**17. What is meant by "tension"?**

Tension is an awareness of a need. Tension motivates us to behave in a way that satisfies the need.

**18. What is "interpersonal tension"?**

Interpersonal tension always exists between two or more people. It is an awareness of needs that results from your interactions with others. It spurs all your efforts to lead or motivate others, or influence their behavior.

**19. What is the relationship between tension, stress and activity?**

Tension is an awareness that something is happening in your environment. Thus, it stimulates you to take action to minimize whatever is affecting you. In general, less tension results in a lower productivity level, and too much tension results in stress that can also diminish productivity.

**20. What exactly is a SOCIAL STYLE position?**

A SOCIAL STYLE position is a particular pattern of actions that others can observe and agree upon for describing a person's typical behavior.

**21. How did TRACOM develop the Style Need, Orientation, and Growth Action?**

The SOCIAL STYLE Model began with observations of specific behavior. The basis of this system lies in the measurements of Assertiveness, Responsiveness and the four components of Versatility. The conclusions drawn about each Style are logical extensions relative to the positions of the two scales of Assertiveness and Responsiveness.

When we talk about the Style Need, we make broad assumptions. These assumptions concern how a set of Style-related behaviors might have been learned and reinforced. The Style Need, therefore, is the most speculative part of our system.

However, as we move into Style Orientation, which really is a summarization of the frequently seen behavior, we are closer to the basic facts we possess – the measured behavior. Someone who is Ask Assertive and Control Responsive does appear to spend more time in thinking while someone who is Tell Assertive and Emote Responsive does show more spontaneity, etc. The orientation is the focus of the behavior seen.

As we then move to the next level of abstraction that concerns Growth Action, we once again move away from the basic facts a bit. We identify the behavior that is seen the least for each Style. Such behavior would create a broader repertoire than is usually seen for a particular Style. Therefore, it would be valuable for increasing

interpersonal effectiveness by reducing inter-Style tension. These generalizations are confirmed by observation.

Thus, if we put Need, Orientation and Growth Action in order of degree of data, we would rearrange them. Orientation would come first with the focus on solid, observable behavior. Growth Action would be number two because we can observe the absence or infrequency of such behavior. Need would be third because we are generalizing about a likely cause, which sometimes can be verified through observation, but is not truly known about any individual.

## Common Questions About Versatility

### 1. **If I have high Versatility, do I still need to work on these skills?**

Yes. Wise people react with the thought, “That’s good. So, how can I make a good situation better?” However, some believe that a high Versatility score means that they are doing well enough to rest on their laurels. The latter reaction is both immature and short-sighted. Versatility is a temporary condition, and just as a low score can come up through effort, with greater swiftness a high score can fall. Versatility requires constant effort, vigilance and thoughtfulness about one’s own behavior and how it impacts others.

### 2. **Can an Amiable Style person have low Versatility?**

Yes. People of any Style can have high or low Versatility. However, TRACOM’s research has found that people with higher Responsiveness (Amiable and Expressive) have somewhat higher Feedback scores, on average. This means that some Amiable and Expressive Style people are perceived as more skilled at interpersonal communication.

### 3. **Is the fact that I see my Style differently from others see me related to Versatility?**

Interestingly, the answer is no. TRACOM’s research has shown that there is no meaningful difference between self-perception of Style and co-workers’ perceptions of Style, as categorized by Versatility. People

with low Versatility are just as likely to perceive their Style differently as are people with high Versatility.

Self-awareness is a cornerstone of the Versatility concept, so people who have a good understanding of their own behavior are likely to perceive their Versatility more accurately than people who do not have high self-awareness. However, even people with high Versatility will not always see their own Style-related behaviors the same as those they work with.

**4. What percent of people see themselves differently from others, on Versatility?**

TRACOM's research has shown that self-perception of Versatility is different from others for 65% of the population. This is somewhat higher than Style, which is different for just over 50% of the population.

**5. Are there different levels of Versatility between job levels (individual contributor, manager, and executive)?**

Yes, this is partly true. TRACOM's research has found small but meaningful differences across job levels. On average, Versatility rises from individual contributors to managers, and from managers to executives.

**6. Is it harder to identify the Style of a person with high Versatility?**

In some circumstances this can be true. Some people with high Versatility are extremely adaptable to different situations and people, and therefore it can be more difficult to pinpoint their Style. However, with enough opportunities for observation, people's Styles will become apparent.

**7. Do people in the inner four quadrants (B2, B3, C2, and C3) receive higher levels of Versatility?**

No. The variability of their Versatility scores is the same as for the other Styles.

This question arises because these four Style sub-quadrants have close to average Assertiveness and close to average Responsiveness. Thus,

their behavior patterns appear to be more like other Styles than the 12 Styles bordering the outside of the Model. Further, the four styles in the center of the Model are less opposite than the extremely opposite Styles (e.g., A1 Driving and D4 Amiable).

**8. Can a person have too much Versatility or adaptability (chameleon effect)?**

Versatility is clearly a strength. Higher Versatility has been shown to be related to more successful job performance. People often confuse adaptability with Versatility. These are different sets of behaviors. A person who is too adaptable to situations or people can sometimes come across as fake and insincere. However, high Versatility is virtually always a good quality.

## Common Questions About Research

**1. Where did SOCIAL STYLE come from?**

The Style and Versatility dimensions came from research into what people see and report in the behavior of others. The original research, utilizing engineers, teachers, salespeople and many others was done by Dr. James Taylor at the Martin Corporation (now Martin Marietta) in Denver. His data was analyzed by Dr. David Merrill, one of the founders of TRACOM. The factors, or dimensions, that emerged from the analysis were then portrayed in graphic form (the SOCIAL STYLE Profile) by Merrill and Roger Reid, who interpreted the findings and developed the Model.

**2. When do you actually form your SOCIAL STYLE?**

It will be different for every person, but psychological research has shown that personality evolves through adolescence and becomes fairly stable by early adulthood. The same can be said for Style. Like personality, Style will evolve and change throughout life more for some people than for others. This is primarily impacted through life-changing events, such as personal trauma or a profound personal experience.



### **3. Is there any research that proves this stuff works?**

Yes. Refer to the SOCIAL STYLE & Versatility Technical Report for specific information about studies. In summary, Versatility has been related to higher job performance and even higher salary. In addition, the SOCIAL STYLE Model was found to be more effective than similar programs (DiSC and Myers-Briggs) for impacting participants' knowledge and ability to use concepts learned in the training program.

You will often hear anecdotal evidence from participants about the impact Style has had on their lives.

### **4. What cultural differences are there between countries?**

It's difficult to answer this question specifically for individual countries. You can refer to the SOCIAL STYLE & Versatility Technical Report for specific information.

TRACOM regularly analyzes data from countries throughout the world in order to examine the differences. We then develop country- or culture-specific norms, as well as translated materials (e.g., China, French-speaking Canada). In general, there are always differences in the levels of Assertiveness, Responsiveness, and Versatility across cultures. For example, the average Assertiveness score in China is higher than the average score in the U.S.

The Model itself has been shown to be valid across cultures.

This means that no matter what the country, Style and Versatility behaviors exist.

### **5. Are there any ethnic differences in SOCIAL STYLE patterns?**

No. TRACOM regularly conducts this analysis and our research has not shown any meaningful differences across race or ethnicity on any of the Style or Versatility scales.

Keep in mind that the U.S. is the only country where data on race and ethnicity are collected (e.g., Latino, African-American). These distinctions are not meaningful in other countries or cultures, though other countries do make distinctions within their own cultures.

**6. What percent of people sees themselves differently from how others see them (Style and Versatility)?**

Regarding SOCIAL STYLE, just over half (53% in recent research) of people see their Style differently from how others perceive them. Over the years, research has consistently found this number to be near 50%.

Regarding Versatility, the most recent research shows that 65% of people see their Versatility differently from others. More specifically, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  (72%) of people with low Versatility (“W”) rated themselves as having higher Versatility. In contrast, barely over 50% of people with high Versatility (“Z”) rated themselves lower. The other 50% had accurate self-appraisals.

**7. I’m from a different country; does this work for me?**

TRACOM’s research has shown the Model to be valid across cultures. The SOCIAL STYLE & Versatility Technical Report contains more information on the specific countries examined.

There will always be differences in the levels of Style and Versatility behaviors across cultures. This is why country-specific norms are so valuable. They provide a way for people to understand their Style as perceived within their own culture. For example, a German person can receive a Profile that is scored against German norms, providing the person with an accurate understanding of how his behavior is perceived within his culture.

## Common Questions Comparing SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility to Other Models

This section answers questions related to the comparison of SOCIAL STYLE to other models for interpersonal effectiveness.

**1. What is the relationship between Versatility and Emotional Intelligence?**

The TRACOM Group utilizes a measure of interpersonal effectiveness called Versatility. In recent years we have been increasingly asked how Versatility relates to emotional intelligence. The research and

development of the Versatility measure spans five decades and has always been based on factors that differentiate people who perform effectively at work from those who are less effective. In this sense it is similar to much of the research that EQ practitioners have relied on to form their own models.

A recent study conducted by researchers at Colorado State University found that Versatility is highly related to two separate measures of emotional intelligence. When compared to another multi-rater assessment, the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue), they found a correlation of .88 with Versatility. On a self-report measure of EQ, the Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), they found a correlation of .78 with the Versatility self-report form.

This research shows that Versatility and emotional intelligence are highly related to one another and overlap in many ways. In fact the research found that 79% of participants who scored in the bottom quartile of Versatility also scored in the bottom quartile of the TEIQue. Likewise, 88% of people who scored in the top quartile of Versatility also scored in the top quartile of the TEIQue.

What this research indicates is that by working to improve Versatility, people will also be improving their EQ. The opposite is also true; however, a critical aid in increasing interpersonal effectiveness is awareness of SOCIAL STYLE and the different ways in which people interpret and respond to interpersonal behavior. In essence, our Styles are a reflection of how we behave with emotional intelligence and also how we interpret that behavior in others. By paying attention to people's behavioral Styles and preferences, you can gain critical insight into how to work most effectively with them and display high EQ. In other words, interpersonal effectiveness is about more than just emotional intelligence, and Style helps to makes EQ real.

## **2. What is the difference between SOCIAL STYLE and MBTI?**

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, or MBTI, is published by CPP Inc., and is based on the personality theories of Carl Jung. The most

fundamental difference between the two models is that the MBTI measures personality, whereas SOCIAL STYLE measures behavior.

To our knowledge, there has never been empirical research that supports a relationship between MBTI and SOCIAL STYLE dimensions. Theoretically, there is a relationship. For example, an Introverted person (e.g., INTJ) would be expected to profile as Analytical. However, behavior is often different from personality preferences, so this relationship will not always exist.

A research project conducted by Colorado State University and Regis Learning Solutions, (a Regis University affiliated company) compared the workplace effectiveness of MBTI, DiSC, and the SOCIAL STYLE multi-rater programs. The study found that TRACOM's SOCIAL STYLE Model was a more effective program in several important ways. You can read about the study in the SOCIAL STYLE & Versatility Technical Report and a separate white paper.

### **3. What is the difference between SOCIAL STYLE and DiSC?**

The original and most popular DiSC model is published by Inscape Publishing. There are a number of key differences and a few superficial similarities between SOCIAL STYLE and DiSC.

First, DiSC Profile products do not include a Versatility dimension. Since Versatility is a key factor of success in business, this difference is crucial to the end user.

DiSC Profile reports typically show a score for each individual on four scales, the four behavior patterns represented by the acronym: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. Some correspondence exists between certain DiSC Profile reports and SOCIAL STYLE Profiles. For instance, a person with a high score on the D scale of a DiSC report is more likely to have a Driving Style. However, overall there are significant differences in the way the profiles are reported and interpreted.

As a facilitator or instructor of SOCIAL STYLE, you should also be aware that there are a number of products in the marketplace that use the DiSC name, as well as several based on the same model that do not have DiSC in their name. The single most popular DiSC product is published

by Inscape Publishing. However, there are competing products called Insights Colors, Extended DiSC, and a number of others.

A research project conducted by Colorado State University and Regis Learning Solutions, (a Regis University affiliated company) compared the workplace effectiveness of MBTI, DiSC, and the SOCIAL STYLE multi-rater programs. The study found that TRACOM's SOCIAL STYLE Model was a more effective program in several important ways. You can read about the study in the SOCIAL STYLE & Versatility Technical Report and a separate white paper.



# Appendix:

## Key Teaching Points

This section includes a number of key teaching points facilitators need to emphasize to program participants. These points help explain the Model and address some common stumbling blocks participants may have when first learning about Style and Versatility. These are critical lessons that should be reinforced to participants.

### Key Teaching Points About Style

#### 1. **Style is Behavior, not Personality.**

SOCIAL STYLE is a measure of people's behavior, not their personality. Participants will often ask about the difference between Style and personality. Style is based on behaviors that we can see and hear. Personality involves more than behaviors; it includes traits, preferences, values, beliefs and attitudes. Style focuses only on what is there for all to see – behavior.

Beyond the differences between Style and personality, there are several things to keep in mind about behavior itself.

First, there is often a difference in others' perceptions of our behavior and in our intentions. For example, a manager's intention might be to give helpful feedback to an employee by telling him how he can

improve his relationships with co-workers. However, this feedback might come across to the employee as invasive and unwarranted.

Second, there is often a gap between how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us. TRACOM's research has consistently shown that over 50% of the time self-perception of Style differs from the perceptions of others.

Third, behaviors that are desirable for some people are not desirable for others. This is fundamental to understanding Style differences and how disagreements can occur between people.

**2. Behavioral observation is nonjudgmental.**

No type of behavior on the Assertiveness and Responsiveness scales is better than another. The Model is concerned with observable behavior, not traits and judgments. This point should be reinforced throughout a program.

**3. The Assertiveness and Responsiveness scales are independent from one another.**

A person's standing on one scale is completely independent of his or her standing on the other scale. The two scales are statistically independent, therefore there is no meaningful relationship between the two sets of behaviors.

**4. A person's position on a scale is an average of a collection of behaviors.**

People demonstrate behaviors along the whole continuum of both Assertiveness and Responsiveness. Where a person ultimately falls on a scale represents an average of his or her behavior. It can be thought of as a person's theme of behavior.

**5. Behavior on Assertiveness and Responsiveness remains relatively consistent over time.**

People generally remain relatively steady on Assertiveness and Responsiveness. This point foreshadows what will be learned and reinforced throughout the program – that Style stays relatively steady across time.

**6. There are no good or bad Styles.**

This is a reiteration of points the facilitator should make earlier in the workshop about Assertiveness and Responsiveness. Research shows Style is not related to success. People of any Style can be successful across a broad spectrum of occupations and pursuits.

**7. Be careful about stereotyping.**

Do not stereotype people because of their Styles. Don't assume that all Driving Style people are leaders, or that all Analytical Style people like detailed work.

Likewise, do not stereotype by occupation. Don't assume that all engineers are Analytical or that all HR people are Amiable. TRACOM's research clearly shows that this is not the case.

Style is about differences, and people aren't easily placed into convenient boxes. Most of us can see characteristics of each Style within our own behavior.

**8. Style emerges from the two dimensions.**

Always focus on observing behavior along the two continuums of Assertiveness and Responsiveness. These are what we measure empirically; we don't directly measure Style.

**9. The key characteristics of Style are only a convenient way of summarizing basic Style characteristics.**

The descriptions of key characteristics are generalizations of behavior that fit most characteristics of each Style. They do not perfectly describe any single individual.

**10. About 50% of people see their Style differently from others.**

Reiterate this point as a way of letting people know that it's understandable and expected that their Style will be different from how they rated themselves.

**11. Help people take ownership of their results.**

People will sometimes experience "cognitive dissonance" when they see how their behavior is perceived by others. This means that the



person is somewhat shocked by the difference between his or her self-perception and how others view him or her.

You can help people come to grips with how other people see their behavior. Reinforce the importance of working well with others, and that one of the cornerstones of working effectively with others is understanding and accepting how they see the person behaving.

## **12. Norms are independent of one another.**

Each score is normed separately. Assertiveness and Responsiveness are normed separately, and those two scores are combined to produce Style position.

This point is more important for Versatility scores. Each of the four sources of Versatility, as well as the overall Versatility score, is normed separately. On rare occasions, this makes it possible for a person's overall Versatility score to be lower (or higher) than the individual scores on the four sources.

## **13. Clearly define tension.**

Tension can occur in both positive and negative forms. A certain degree of tension is positive, and can be productive. Don't overemphasize or focus solely on the negative forms of tension.

## **14. Backup Behavior is always self-serving.**

Reinforce the notion that Backup Behavior is selfish and never results in positive outcomes. There is nothing that is mutually productive in this form of behavior.

## Be Realistic About Style

As a facilitator, you should be prepared to deal with participants who question the accuracy of their Style Profile report. There can be a variety of reasons for this, and a common one is defensiveness. Whatever the cause, you can be assured that the questions will come up, and that you must be ready to help the participant go beyond questioning accuracy to questioning what the behaviors are that placed him or her in a certain Style position.

It is important that you anticipate questions, deal with them openly and help the individual understand what the feedback means. You will not want to allow the participant to spend too much time seeking confirmation (or denial) of his or her position on the Model during the workshop. However, you might point out that it can be valuable to go back to his or her references and discuss the feedback on the Profile with them as a way of gaining insight into his or her behavior.

TRACOM is quite open in pointing out that no specific behavior is only displayed by one Style. Thus, the information in the SOCIAL STYLE Profile Report should be viewed as generalizations others have made about the participant's behavior. The participant should be helped to focus on those generalizations – the “handle” others may be using as a foundation for dealing with the participant.

You should help participants reach the point where they can say to themselves, “I don't feel like an Amiable all of the time, but I'm comfortable with the idea that others generally perceive my behavior this way.” When they can say this, they are ready to take the next step of recognizing what the feedback means in terms of improving their interpersonal effectiveness with others.

## Key Teaching Points About Versatility

### 1. **Versatility is independent of Style.**

Reiterate this point. Any Style of person can display any level of Versatility. People should view Versatility as separate from Style.

There is one minor caveat to this independence. Research has shown that Responsiveness and Feedback are moderately related to one another. This means that, in general, there is a tendency for Emote Responsive people to score higher on Feedback.

### 2. **Versatility is a measure of interpersonal effectiveness as based on behavior in four areas.**

Versatility measures specific behaviors in four areas – Image, Presentation, Competence, and Feedback. When a person is doing well across these areas, he or she is likely to earn the support and respect of co-workers.

### 3. **Versatility is a more abstract concept than Style.**

Once learned, Style is straightforward. It takes longer to understand and internalize all the components of Versatility. This is partly true because these behaviors can change, whereas Style is relatively more stable.

### 4. **Versatility is variable.**

Reinforce for participants that their Versatility results are merely a “snapshot in time.” Their Versatility can change with different audiences and across time. People display Versatility differently in different circumstances.

### 5. **Versatility can be learned.**

This is a critical message to impart to participants. All of the behaviors that make up Versatility can be learned, practiced and applied.

Because Versatility is changeable and can vary with the audience, it should be viewed as a starting point for understanding where to improve and work better with people. If people get low scores in

specific areas, focus them on understanding how to improve in the future, rather than obsessing on the past.

**6. Feedback skills can be used to understand areas for improvement.**

Feedback is an important component of Versatility because it is the “gateway” through which we take in information about other areas of our behavior. By listening and communicating well, and understanding others’ points of view (empathy), we can gather information about Image, Presentation and Competence. This guides us to understand where we should focus our efforts



# SOCIAL STYLE® & Versatility FACILITATOR HANDBOOK

SOCIAL STYLE & Versatility Facilitator Handbook is an in-depth look at the world's best-known interpersonal skills model. It describes the history of SOCIAL STYLE and explains how SOCIAL STYLE makes individuals and organizations more productive. The Facilitator Handbook is a must-read for anyone involved in leadership development or human resources.

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“For two decades, I have used SOCIAL STYLE to enhance our Leadership Development efforts. In addition, Style has been a valuable tool to improve the productivity of our sales force, supporting the ‘art’ as well as the ‘science’ of selling. SOCIAL STYLE is widely accepted and embraced as a way to drive successful organizational behavior, and as having a direct impact to the bottom line. This book is a must-read for every senior HR professional.”

*John Koynock, HR Director, Global Sales and Marketing, Parker Hannifin Corporation*

“TRACOM’s SOCIAL STYLE is one of the most readily understood behavioral models in use today, and one of the most powerful tools I have in my executive toolkit. I use the concepts and principles in almost every interaction to facilitate more effective and successful communication. The new Social Style for Facilitators Guide will be the ‘go to’ resource for those whose role it is to develop more productive communications, whether that’s in commerce, education or social interaction.”

*Jennifer Smyth, President, Performance Solutions Group, LLC*

“For over twenty years, I have incorporated SOCIAL STYLE concepts into my teaching of MBA courses and Executive Education programs at the Columbia Graduate School of Business. Today, Style continues to be at the core of my teaching and publications on Executive Leadership and Corporate Governance. TRACOM’s SOCIAL STYLE Facilitator Handbook is a welcomed addition to my library and helpful resource in building my expertise.”

*William M. Klepper, PhD, Academic Director, Executive Education, Professor of Management, Graduate School of Business, Columbia University*

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