

Communicating Effectively: An Essentialist's View

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Author Name: Stephanie Smith, PE
Title: Principal Engineer
Company: Risk Management Professionals
Address: 8717 Research Drive, Suite 150
City, State Zip: Irvine, CA 92618
Tel: 949-282-0123 x234
Email: stephanie.smith@rmppcorp.com



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Communication is a multi-way exchange of words, thoughts, and body language between two or more people. It is conveying a message that is deemed important enough that it needs to be shared and understood by others. All animals, including human beings, learn to communicate at a young age, in part for survival and in part for the regular socialization with the world around them. To strive for essentialism in communication is to aim for the most efficient and effective mechanism and method of communication to the intended audience.

“If you don’t know what’s important right now, then what’s important right now is figuring out what’s important right now.” – Greg McKeown, Author of Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less (McKeown, 2014)

What is important to you, right now? Is communication at the top of that list? Is the need to learn how to communicate more effectively the most important thing for you to do, right now? There are many books on the subject, and more detail and analysis can be found in other resources. The intention of this paper is to introduce the DISC personality model in a simple and easy-to-understand manner. This paper focuses on a brief account of each personality type and how to effectively communicate with those types of persons.

Communication takes an important personal / professional development topic and relates it back to how we communicate in the industrial refrigeration industry. How can the CEO of a company communicate with an operator in a “language” that they both understand? What’s the best way to communicate safety issues in a diverse group and ensure that the recipients understand what’s being said? How do we communicate an emergency to individuals who may not have a calm nature in the situation? It is a especially applicable topic for a diverse industry of people of different generations, backgrounds, and personalities.



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INTRODUCTION

Communication. While we begin learning to communicate at a very young age, successful communication takes years (if not decades) to master. Merriam Webster's Dictionary (Dictionary, n.d.) defines communication as:

- “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior,” and
- “information communicated: information transmitted or conveyed.”

Whether it be words, facial expressions, or movements, we communicate in a variety of ways that “fits” within our core personality traits. Our pre-disposition to predominantly act and feel certain ways is reflected in our communication with others.

What makes communication successful? We will investigate methods to communicate based on four (4) primary personality types and why these personality types matter.

How do you fully understand what someone else is really communicating to you? The approach is to provide the audience with information regarding how communication may differ depending on the personality type on the receiving end.

How do you communicate to others in a way they understand? By understanding the recipient's predominant personality type, we engage them more fully in a conversation and can deliver our message in an easy, well-received manner.

Additionally, you will develop insight into what personality type you may fall under, which can assist you in conveying to others the most effective way to communicate with you and address how best communicate with them.

Most importantly:

*“Learn to discern the vital few from the trivial many.” - Greg
McKeown, Author of Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less
(McKeown, 2014)*

In reading this paper, learn what's important for you. Break it down into its most basic information and pieces. Focus on those. Come back to this paper or the associated presentation and build on that later. Don't try to learn everything or attempt to practice what you learned all at once. Focus on the essential, master the essential, and then move on to more.



A BRIEF HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

In 1928, William Moulton Marston introduced the DISC model of personalities in his book "Emotions of Normal People." In summary, he presented that all people have four (4) "primary emotions." He explained that all human beings interact with their environment by tonic reflexes. "...tonic reflexes were designed to counteract environmental influences such as gravitation, atmospheric pressure, etc., which if not counteracted, would abolish the posture and attitude necessary to the life and activity of the organism" (Marston, 1928). His studies showed that human beings balance the interactions around them with these "primary emotions," which he referred to as the following.

- **Dominance (D)**
- **Inducement (I)**
- **Submission (S)**
- **Compliance (C)**

Dominance (D) is additionally explained as the part of the brain that exercises control over things or prevails. In essence, it's the action of the brain to overcome an environmental impact on the being itself and overcome the challenge presented. In Marston's book, he uses an example of a river encountering a dam. The river continues to flow against the dam with a rising level, which imposes more force on the dam as the water level increases. As a result, the river will eventually overflow the dam and its "domination of its weaker opponent is consummated" (Marston, 1928).

Inducement (I) is the influence to act on something or to lead to an action. It is using the brain's natural activity to persuade an outside influence (or a person) to achieve a certain result or counter-action. Inducement is described by Marston as attracting a weaker force to oneself or to "exercise initiative" (Marston, 1928). An example is an individual's ability to be emotional leaders in relationships and influence the way others feel in relationships.

Submission (S) is defined as giving up or yielding authority to another. In the human brain, this results in voluntary obedience to the introduced stimuli. Submission, in contrast to compliance, is described by Marston as a pleasurable response to environmental stimuli. In submission, the individual is more willing to submit or comply with another to improve the relationship. "It may be distinguished from compliance by the ease and pleasantness with which submission response is acquired" (Marston, 1928).

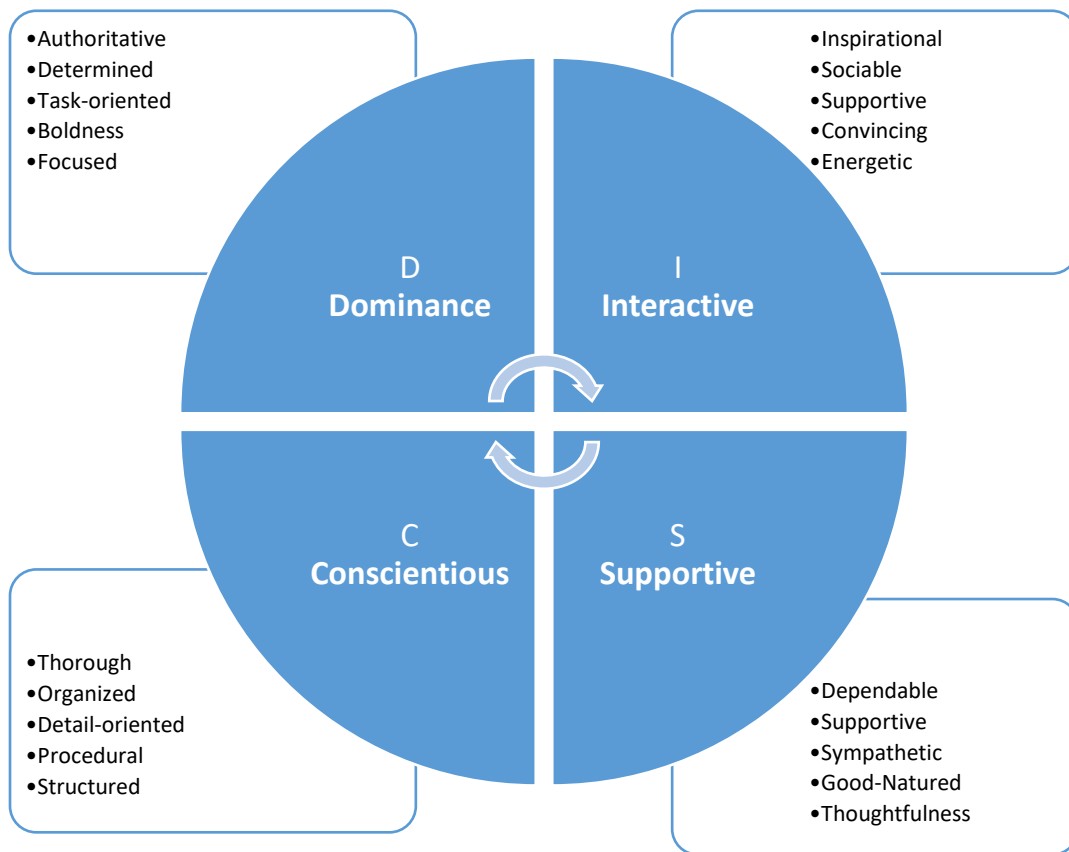
Compliance (C) is to be complacent or courteous. This is the part of the brain that will align with the outside force, complying with the stimuli introduced. Marston uses examples of children obeying their parents' wishes and the fear responses that invoke compliance with rules or force someone to stand back from a dominant position. Marston discusses compliance as more of a learned response to environmental stimuli.



The DISC model was developed from the original Marston publication where these terms became re-defined as the following and to also explain human being personalities as having four main traits, rather than emotions. Essentially, each person has a different ratio of all four traits. However, the most dominant one or two traits define how we interact with the external world and influences.

- **Dominance (D)**
- **Interactive (I)**
- **Supportive (S)**
- **Conscientious (C)**

Figure 1: DISC Model



DISC Introduction

In referencing the personality types in this paper, they refer to the predominant categorization of an individual's personality. While the descriptions are extreme in their bias, it is important to note that all individuals have a different variable of all four personality types. In addition, everyone has the capacity to tap into each personality type, depending on what is needed for specific interactions. While one person may have



a predominantly D-style personality, their counterpart on a team may have a predominantly I-style personality. To foster the most effective communication within a working group, the goal is to learn the style of communication that works best for each personality type, and converse with them in that fashion (or as best as possible).

Dominance (D)

In "Taking Flight!" (Rosenberg & Silvert, 2013, pp. 123-124), the four personality styles are described in comparison to birds. The D-style personality is compared to an eagle. D-style personalities are predominantly task-focused individuals. They will act quickly and are guided by long-term visions and big-picture ideas. These are the individuals that enjoy challenges and take risks in all aspects of their life (career, personal, and spiritual). They make rapid decisions and don't "waste" time on planning. These individuals are assertive, confident, and direct. Typically, D-style personalities will thrive in positions of power or positions that require big decisions to be made (often with big consequences to go with them).



Interactive (I)

In the book "Taking Flight!" (Rosenberg & Silvert, 2013, pp. 124-125), the I-style personality is illustrated as a parrot. Individuals with an I-style personality are seen as interactive with people and their environment. They typically require a lot of stimulation in their lives and have active minds. These individuals are likely to be more extroverted and have excellent people skills. I-style personalities are very optimistic and instill play in the environment around them. The most accurate way to describe an individual with this personality style is that they are intuitive and project positive energy around them. Often, these people are seen as "flighty" and unfocused but are actually able to retain information by socializing with others and learning in discussion.



Supportive (S)

S-style personality types are illustrated in “Taking Flight!” (Rosenberg & Silvert, 2013, p. 125) as doves. These individuals minimize conflict and are seen as peacemakers. They are typically described as friendly, compassionate, and empathetic. S-style personalities typically have deeper relationships with fewer, more trusted, people. They focus on the steadiness of their lives and thrive in predictable environments and patterns. S-style personalities tend to work behind the scenes and enjoy being in roles of support rather than leadership.



Conscientious (C)

Finally, “Taking Flight!” (Rosenberg & Silvert, 2013, p. 126) describes the C-style personality with the illustration of an owl. C-style personalities are highly focused and aim to achieve complete accuracy in everything they do. They often are systematic, efficient, and pay close attention to detail. These individuals appreciate procedural methods of working and interacting. C-style individuals are very logical in nature and appreciate observable and quantifiable information. It is understood that they work well independently and can remain very diplomatic when interacting with others.



COMMUNICATING WITH DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES

The big question: How do we communicate effectively? The answer lies in our ability to recognize our own DISC personalities. Everyone has the capacity to use their own, developed DISC matrix when needed. No specific predominant personality is better than another. All four DISC categories have their positive and negative attributes. It takes practice and skill in knowing which part of the quadrant to use more, and when to use it, but everyone has the capability to do so.

The four DISC categories are based on two main observations on how people behave.

- “Outgoing vs. reserved: This trait describes each person’s “internal motor” or pace. Some people engage their motor quickly and others tend to engage their motor more slowly.
- Task-oriented vs. people-oriented: This trait describes individuals’ external focus that guides them. Some people focus on getting things done, while others are more tuned into the people around them.” (Herrity, 2023)



Most people know the adage “Treat others as you would like to be treated.” A different variation applies to communicating with others using the DISC model as a guide. It is: “Communicate with others as they would like to be communicated to.” Effective communication portrays not only the information we want to convey or about how we communicate that message, but also, within the DISC model, how someone else will receive the information. It is pertinent that individuals ascertain how the message will be accepted by the audience.

Communicating with D-Style Personalities

D-style personalities, as discussed above, are dominant in nature, business-oriented, and efficient. To communicate the most effectively, it is best to take those qualities into account and communicate as D-Style personalities would with others.

The best tactic is to be direct. Focus on getting to the point of the conversation. Do not “over talk” or “over sell” ideas. Bring answers, not questions. Define the problem starting with the solution and work back with more explanation as needed. D-style personalities lose interest quickly and see too much information sharing as time consuming. Get to the point!

Bring efficient solutions. It will help to think in terms of the bottom line. D-style individuals are constantly thinking about the bottom line (in business and in their personal lives). They see their time as ultimately valuable and will not spend a lot of time thinking or brainstorming. They want to act and they want solutions to make quick, informed decisions. Try to avoid generalizations when communicating with these individuals.

Be decisive. It is best with D-style individuals to present solutions and allow them to choose. Solutions should also include consequences or complications, if any. These individuals like to get tasks done and thrive on efficiency in completing those tasks. The best course of communication is to use that to your advantage and be prepared to provide solutions that have definitive answers.

Don't expect D-style individuals to be too sensitive or empathetic. These individuals can come off as demanding or confrontational and it's important not to take it personally. D-style personalities do not need a detailed story of how a decision was made (or too many details about your weekend or family BBQ). Stick to the short story and you'll keep their attention.

These individuals do not walk on eggshells. It should be expected that D-style individuals will tell it like it is and not think about how it may affect the recipient. Again, don't take it



personally. They also tend to be intense. D-style personalities thrive on completing tasks and getting things done.

In leadership positions, these individuals are highly motivated (think Elon Musk and Donald Trump). They can be the supervisors that “walk all over” people, but many do that unintentionally. They thrive in environments where they are in charge and make big, risky, quick decisions. They lead authoritatively and get things done. To effectively work and communicate with these leaders, you’ll have to put more effort into assessing the intention behind the person’s communication if you tend to be more sensitive to authoritative personalities.

You may typically see D-style personality individuals in roles that are more entrepreneurial, an officer of an organization, an attorney, a police officer, or in “high powered” finance. Those with some combination with their neighboring personalities on the chart may lean towards management, the medical field, journalism and sales.

Communicating with I-Style Personalities

I-style individuals are intuitive, social, and impulsive. Communicating with I-style people is almost the opposite of the D-style personalities. The use of persuasion to communicate with I-style personalities will elicit better responses to ideas. Sharing how a solution will be better for the reputation of an organization or discussing how much an idea will be “liked” grossly advances the success of effective communication with these individuals. I-style individuals want to live their lives influencing and being positive.

Communicate positively! Spinning the conversation in a positive way will catch I-style individuals’ attention. Relaxed and informal discussions are the best way to communicate. Phrases like “Great news...” or “So-and-so will love...” are effective ways to have ideas heard and accepted. Even if the news may be negative, using positive language will make it easier to communicate your ideas to these individuals.

I-style personalities like brainstorming and creative solutions, focus on this area. They often are the people coming up with out-of-the-box ideas. These creative ideas and solutions will be best received by I-style individuals, who are usually looking for a new way to do things or new solutions to try.

They do not like minutiae. It could even be said that they couldn’t care less about the data provided. Stay away from too much data and focus on the positive aspects of the ideas and the acceptance of the ideas from others. Keep in mind that I-style personalities tend to “be all over the place” so don’t get frustrated if a meeting or conversation drifts off course.



Finally, skip the negativity. I-style personalities do not focus on negative things, stay positive even when delivering bad news.

When it comes to leadership, I-style individuals are influencers. They make excellent salespeople (if they also learn to hone in on the other communication styles of other individuals). These individuals enjoy the more social nature in leadership and will make a work environment fun and inviting. They are usually the people that can talk to anyone and know a lot about other people's lives and interests.

You may notice that I-style individuals tend to succeed in positions where they can be more creative, such as a graphic designer, an artist, a creative director, in public relations, or a travel agent. Individuals who also fall into a combination with another personality category may also look at careers in recruitment, marketing, career coaching, financial advice, or counseling.

Communicating with S-Style Personalities

S-style personalities communicate much differently and much quieter than D- and I-style personalities. These individuals crave steadiness and quiet in their lives. To communicate effectively, take a gentler approach. They don't like their lives and activities to change too quickly, so keep the communication focused on one topic before jumping to the next.

S-style individuals are excellent at processing information. They often will process for a while and then, seemingly, make quick decisions. Don't forget that while everyone else moved on, they are still thinking the last topic over subconsciously. These individuals tend to need more guidance and instruction because they are inclined to be weary of doing things incorrectly.

These individuals do not like to be rushed into decisions and appreciate a safe space to voice their opinions or vision. In addition, being too open or vague in communication will not be effective with S-style personalities. As stated before, they do not change tasks or topics in conversation too quickly, so don't expect them to keep up if that is the communication style being used. It is important not to assume they aren't leadership material. They very well are, but have a different way of leading.

In leadership roles, these are our quiet leaders. They are often very calm and reserved. They can dispel disagreement and settle down emotions rapidly with their presence and quiet responsiveness. People with S-style personalities make excellent listeners and often provide effective advice. Their steadiness is calming and brings a sense of peace to an otherwise chaotic world. Moreover, these individuals' intuition, listening skills, and attentiveness to others will help them succeed in leadership roles.



An individual with a predominantly S-style personality may be more successful in human resources, nursing, therapy, or other career paths that aid others. In combination with other personality categories, they may be successful as an academic advisor, teacher, accountant, pharmacist, or data analyst.

Communicating with C-Style Personalities

C-style personalities are very precise and seek accuracy in everything they do. They are often perfectionists. They are very procedural in nature and calculated in their thoughts and actions. C-style individuals can solve complex problems but may take the evaluation to a very detailed level.

These individuals are independent, self-reliant, and they often prefer working by themselves. They enjoy working with data and like to evaluate problems with as much data as possible. They are rule-followers and have very high expectations for themselves and others around them.

C-style people do not like to be put on the spot. They like to plan and organize their thoughts and responses. Including logic and clarity into the conversation is very effective in communicating with these individuals. Communication with them should resist being too disorganized or emotional. They cannot relate to that information. Try not to rush the conversation, they need some time to process the complexity and ask questions.

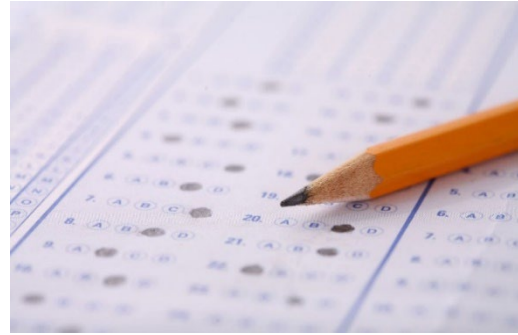
Individuals with C-style personalities are very data driven leaders. They are often less emotional and more focused on the work to be done and doing it correctly. These individuals are quiet in their leadership role, but very organized and can assume a complex role in supervision and management responsibilities. They can often offer suggestions on how to get something done efficiently and correctly.

C-style individuals may find career paths in software engineering, investment analytics, science, or economics more appealing. In combination with other personality categories, success may open to being an architect, warehouse manager, strategist, database administrator, information technology, or research.



HOW DO YOU DETERMINE YOUR OWN PERSONALITY?

There are a few avenues for determining your own personality. Simply put, you can take an online personality test. There are countless analyses available online for the DISC model and other personality model tests. Some are free and some require payment. In general, they all basically function the same, but may have different levels of output and/or reflection.



Another option is to be self-reflective. Depending on how honest you are with yourself, you may have already determined what your one or two most dominant personality traits are, based on the previous parts of this paper.

DISC assessments available typically categorize individuals into one of 12 personalities. These include the four main DISC categories plus combinations of two of the four categories. Most people will likely fall into some combination of multiple categories because very few individuals are that strong in one category or another.

It's not so much what type of personality you are, but really...what are you going to do about it? Like any information or data, it's only as useful as application and analysis. Do you see areas to improve your communication with one or more individuals at your workplace? How can you use the information you've learned to realign your communication to be more effective?

Why Does It All Matter?

We work in an industry that efficiently and effectively feeds the population of the United States (and other countries) on a good day and can create an utter and complete disaster at a facility on a bad day. Communication is the key to tying the industry together and ensuring that most, if not all, days are good days, by that definition. We are not only divided by our country or language we speak, but also by our ability to effectively communicate the message we intend.

What if there's an emergency and you don't know how to communicate effectively with the responders? What if there's a near-miss that someone deemed unimportant, but it is? What if someone you work with is more direct, but is also causing difficulties in the communication structure? By honing the skills in communicating with different personality types, communication during an emergency or when the message is difficult to deliver becomes easier. The importance of working with others and communicating what you need understood and received is essential to the everyday work in the industry.



Think about a time where communication broke down. How did you feel? How did the other person (or people) feel? What could have gone better? How could you have made it better? Take responsibility for your part of that conversation. Learn how to communicate with others in a manner that they like to receive. Finally, see how your communication skills (both at work and in your personal life) improve as you develop effective communication skills in reading other individuals' prominent personality types.



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