

CHAPTER ONE

TWO QUESTIONS

IMPROVE THE ELEVATOR EXPERIENCE

According to Stephanie Rising, 10% of people are Dominant, 25% of people are Influencers, 40% of people are Steady, and 25% of people are Compliant.

Some of the first things I researched and learned, when training and coaching became my career IPath, were behaviors and motivators. While there are a number of popular strength assessments, personality profile tests, type indicators, and attitude identifiers, I chose to use DISC. DISC has become popular in the professional world, particularly in the last twenty or so years, but the DISC personality assessment was originally created by PhD. William Moulton Marston in 1928. It's been modified and improved upon by professionals and psychologists in the almost century of implementation since, but it is as respected and—some would say—even more accurate than other assessments such as Myers-Briggs. The latter was actually not originally published until four years after the initial DISC emotional profiles.

I was driven to learn about the process of profiling for personality types because of the poor communication I had been a part of or witnessed throughout my career. I recognized that there was a potential for harmful disconnects and miscommunications

between persons. A lot of that disconnect comes down to what type of personalities the people in the conversation have.

Every successful sitcom of the past half a century makes sure to have representatives of the four DISC personality types: Dominance, Influence, Steady, and Compliance. From “*I Love Lucy*,” to “*M*A*S*H*,” to “*Cheers*,” to “*FRIENDS*,” each program has had a person in the cast to whom the audience members in the general population could relate. Why? Because the audience was so vast and they were unsure who was watching. In the era of Nielsen ratings, producers wanted to be certain television viewers would connect with somebody.

When I became certified in DISC, I discovered that one’s personality type is a big part of determining *at least* that person’s:

- Motivation
- Priorities
- What an Individual Trusts
- What Bothers an Individual

Looking back at the morning elevator scenario, imagine a leader who was aware of his staff’s personalities and helped them to be aware of one another’s personalities as well. Imagine that the team had communicated about the differences they had in motivation and priorities. Imagine that they understood the things that could turn off or shut down their colleagues.

Everybody would recognize that Dylan is Dominant. As a “D,” Dylan is results-oriented and time bound; Dylan trusts confidence and is bothered by small talk; Dylan dismisses the little details and dislikes when a presumed authority is challenged. We would know that Indi, who has the “Influence” personality, prefers action, enthusiasm and relationships. Sam trusts openness and is bothered by what could be perceived as negative callousness. Steady Sam is seeking to accommodate others while Chris needs to address very specific and measurable objectives.



If these four people, and the leader who awaits them on their work floor, simply recognize their differences, how could the day get off to a better start?

Dylan is still the first on the elevator, but instead of pushing the <CLOSE DOOR> button, the <OPEN DOOR> button is pushed. Dylan is still in control; so as long as it’s Dylan’s finger on the button, the Dominant personality is not offended. Dylan makes eye contact with Indi so that Indi doesn’t feel ignored, but it is Sam for whom Indi waits. Sam engages Indi due to the accommodating nature of a Steady personality. Sam even confirms to Chris that the capacity of the elevator is fine.

When the doors open on the work floor, the leader says “good morning,” to Dylan first, and then lets Dylan go. The leader doesn’t want to get the Dominant personality off-track, short of some big picture initiatives for the day. With Indi, the leader may ask how the family is doing. “Can I help you with anything today?” could be a common approach to Indi each day before asking when a report or other to-do item will be ready. Sam needs to pull out a calendar and also seeks input and opportunities to accommodate the leader while Chris is given some specific detail-oriented objectives to accomplish.

The difference between a negative and positive start to this team's work day (and ultimately their overall engagement, the customer experience, and the bottom line) is simply knowing how to read one another and respond appropriately. A successful organization (just like those successful sitcoms) are likely to have a mix of team members who are dominant, influencing, steady, and compliant, and this is a good and healthy reality. A leader

UpBeat!

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may initially look for dominance in the people put in charge as these are often the innovators, but organizations are just as much in need of relationship makers typically found among influencers, customer service persons who often have steady personalities and accounting, engineering, or human resources people that are common among compliant personalities. This is not to say that these particular areas are the only roles for the related personality types; it is more likely that there

may exist some natural draws to certain types of work among the dominant, influencing, steady, and compliant personalities. Furthermore, *all* types are needed in a professional engine and everybody will do their best work when communicated with according to type.

Assessments are a great way to learn about a team and its leadership. If you have the resources to bring in a certified assessor, it could be a great exercise in building a team as a unit, but it doesn't have to be so complicated. For the purposes of working through team strengthening and improving the customer experience, let's break down the in-depth assessment process to a simple two-question survey.

1. Are you more of an impulsive person (fast) or more of a calculated person (methodical)?
2. Do you communicate and base decisions more on relationships (people) or on data (facts)?

While *Growing On Purpose* does not focus specifically on DISC personalities, for simplicity, consider what these two questions could identify for you, as a leader:

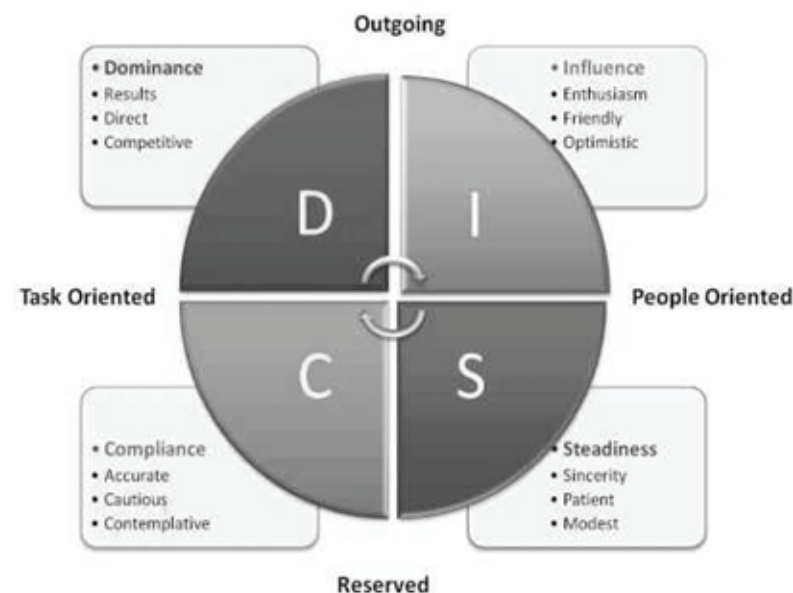
Personality	Fast	Methodical	People	Facts
Dominance	Yes	No	No	Yes
Influence	Yes	No	Yes	No
Steady	No	Yes	Yes	No
Compliance	No	Yes	No	Yes

With just two questions, leaders have a starting point as to how to communicate with their teams.

With just two questions, leaders can help to identify team strengths.

With just two questions, leaders can help a team engage in the customer...and company...*experience*.

With just two questions, a company can begin the fundamental steps toward profit.



CHAPTER TWO

ACKNOWLEDGE THYSELF

Start with a Blank Page

“Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person—not just an employee—are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability.”

- Anne M. Mulcahey

According to a 2010 study of seventy-two senior executives from thirty-one different companies by Green Peak Partners and Cornell’s School of Industrial Labor and Relations, self-aware leaders with strong, interpersonal skills deliver better financial performance.

Early in my leadership years, I noticed that, if I were in front of a group of twenty people in my company, speaking in the way I would like to be spoken to in return, some of the people would stay with me...*some of them*. It didn’t matter whether the topic was sales training, leadership, or specific to a project; I started to notice that a group of people weren’t staying with me. It wasn’t that they didn’t understand what I was saying. Some people seemed disengaged simply because the flow of the meeting didn’t work for them.

I could actually see people internalize and process differently. I would answer the questions of those who wanted clarification and see others methodically take their time to work through scenarios. In reality, these methodical processors weren’t disengaged; they just needed a little more time.

It would be easy, as a leader, to discard those who don’t react in the way that we might choose to respond in the same situation.

On the customer side, particularly in sales situations, it would also be easy to get frustrated. A fast-paced personality type may be seeking a signature when a more calculated person might want to Read.Every.Single.Word. (And then require a detail-oriented third party opinion of the paperwork.)

It got even worse when realizing that not everybody learned in the visual way that I learned. Some wanted to hear the message, while others were better with hands-on learning. People learn one of three ways. They learn visually, by seeing; they learn auditory, by hearing; or, they learn kinesthetically, by actually doing. Sixty-five percent of the population learns by seeing. A smaller percentage of people (about twenty-eight percent) learn by hearing and only about seven percent of people learn by touch, or doing.

It's very important that you understand how your clients learn and how your team learns so that you know how to share a message with them in such a way that it will resonate with them. If you're a visual person and I tell you ten things to do in an auditory way, the likelihood of you grasping all that is slim to none. When you understand how your clients and team learn, you're able to mimic that learning style. An email is good for somebody visual, as it's laid out for that person in print. An auditory learner would benefit from a follow-up phone call. A doer, or kinesthetic learner, may need you to walk through step-by-step with him or her. Consider in which of the three ways you most prefer your learning: visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. To take it to the next step, it's important to also ask yourself whether your client (or team member) learns in the same way.

Within my team, my partners, and with my customer base, I noticed the disparity between reactions to me from roughly half of the people I spoke to.

By taking a personality assessment, I learned about my own personality type and learning style. It was important for me to understand that I was dominant and visual, not to determine that this was a "right" way of communicating and learning, but because the first part of understanding others is understanding

yourself. You must know what it is you bring to the table in order to find understanding in others.

If you don't know yourself, it would be easy to start an interaction that is self-focused, not necessarily on purpose, but with an agenda based on your own communication style. Fast-paced people dominate, methodical personality types allow the domination, and nobody leaves the conversation feeling fulfilled.

In Stephen Covey's respected book, "7 Habits of Highly Successful People," he addresses the need for understanding in his fifth habit:

HABIT 5: SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Communication is the most important skill in life. You spend years learning how to read and write, and years learning how to speak. But what about listening? What training have you had that enables you to listen so you really, deeply understand another human being? Probably none, right?

If you're like most people, you probably seek first to be understood; you want to get your point across. And in doing so, you may ignore the other person completely, pretend that you're listening, selectively hear only certain parts of the conversation or attentively focus on only the words being said, but miss the meaning entirely. So why does this happen? Because most people listen with the intent to reply, not to understand. You listen to yourself as you prepare in your mind what you are going to say, the questions you are going to ask, etc. You filter everything you hear through your life experiences, your frame of reference. You check what you hear against your autobiography and see



how it measures up. And consequently, you decide prematurely what the other person means before he/she finishes communicating.

So, why begin with yourself if your goal is to understand others?

We don't have control over how others are going to react in a communication or situation, only over how we are going to react in situations and communications. By understanding yourself, you can choose to use that knowledge to adjust your own communication style and teaching or learning approach in order to understand others. In other words, "seek first to understand and then be understood."

I used my knowledge of myself to discover the areas for improvement that existed in my own person. As a dominant personality, I needed to keep my controlling side in check and make certain that I didn't take over in a conversation. However, because I didn't want to lose my own engagement in communications, I had to find a way that I could be involved when not sharing my own ideas. I needed to work on being PRESENT in conversations in which I was the listener. This is an intentional choice and practice.

For me, the purposeful action I took to ensure that I was both engaged and listening, was to take, not *my* ideas or notes along, but a blank notepad in order to write down the thoughts of others.

- 1. Based on the two-question survey as well as with consideration to your learning style, what do you understand about yourself and how you behave in conversations?

- 2. Are there purposeful actions you need to take to ensure that you are engaged to understand rather than seeking to be understood in conversations?
