



Using DISC to Improve Workplace Relationships

By way of introduction, DISC is an assessment which can be used to help improve relationships in the workplace. My introduction to the DISC model, many years ago was through Everything DiSC®, a Wiley Company. My research indicates although the DISC model could not be trademarked, use of this acronym, DiSC® assessments and resulting reports could be trademarked. The small “i” was a marketing decision used to distinguish between other assessments based on the DISC model.

A little bit of trivia about the D.I.S.C. theory which is the work of Dr. William Moulton Marston (1893-1947), both a lawyer and a psychology professor, was published in 1928 in the *Emotions of Normal People*. I researched the DISC model to complete the Master’s thesis work associated with my work-based study of DISC and the impact of using this assessment with workplace teams. Marston’s DISC theory was the basis for one of his inventions, the Polygraph Machine (Lie Detector). It was from this work the DISC model assessment was later developed but not by Marston. Maybe you are beginning to sense the validity of the assessment from this interesting detail.

A couple of other “fun facts” about Marston pertain to his personal life. He and his wife, Elizabeth Marston (Rebecca Hall) lived a polyamorous relationship with a grad student, Olive Byrne (Bella Heathcote) both of whom bore children with Marston. Marston was also a writer using the pen name Charles Moulton which you may recognize from when he wrote the DC Comics series, Wonder Woman from 1941-1947. I promise, you cannot make this stuff up! My research used a lot of credible resources but for speed, you can look up Wonder Woman on Wikipedia.org and you will find Marston mentioned in the introductory line of the wiki.

Sorry, I still get caught up in the drama surrounding Marston. Let’s get back to how the DISC model and assessment can help you with workplace relationships. I am going to try and give you a short and simple explanation for this.

1. DISC is an assessment which measures the four behavioral styles we all possess, in varying degrees: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Compliance. (These styles’ names may vary depending upon the vendor assessment selected.)
2. Those varying degrees on the DISC continuum determine our Primary, and sometimes Secondary, communication styles.
3. DISC helps create awareness of our Primary style and the characteristics associated with this style.
4. After learning first about ourselves, we then learn about the other communication styles and the preferences those other styles have when it comes to communicating.
5. Then choice comes into play when we decide if we want to improve relationships through communication by adapting our style preference to the preferred style of others; the people we work with, or even with the clients whom we serve or may prospect. It is not

uncommon to hear from my clients that DISC, though introduced in the workplace, has helped with communications with family members.

DISC can benefit you individually but it multiplies in value when used with a team of people because it contributes to developing a culture where everyone speaks the same language, DISC. There is no right or wrong, people are just different and learning to understand those differences is where there is power in improving and building relationships through strong communication skills.

In this VUCA world – volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity – in which we now live, the number one skill that leaders say is most needed is communication skills. I use the Assessment 24x7.com version of the DISC Assessment. If your interest has been peaked and you want to learn more for yourself, or for your team, I would like to hear from you.

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