

# Communication Styles at Work

Behavioural Styles Overview Research carried out by Bolton and Bolton helped identify four key behavioural styles which enables individuals to categorise their personal preferences against two dimensions - the degree to which they are Assertive in getting tasks done and the degree to which they Respond to others by way of relationships. The four individual styles are as follows: Driver High Assertiveness and Low Responsiveness Expressive High Assertiveness and High Responsiveness Amiable Low Assertiveness and High Responsiveness Analytical Low Assertiveness and Low Responsiveness Examples of some of the typical behaviours in the four categories are summarised below

By supporting your client to identifying their own preferences and those with whom they work and interact, they will be able to explore how to adapt their style during interactions with others who may have similar or different preferences. Ref: Robert and Dorothy Bolton – People Styles at Work

## Flexing your style



# Driver

## THEY NEED

- to get things done

## THEY ARE

- direct, goal orientated, professional, decisive, confident, task-focused

## THEY LIKE

- to have status and control
- the big picture
- defined goals
- solutions and outcomes
- clarity of communication
- pace, energy and action
- to be able to delegate tasks
- competence and direct communication in others - as long as they don't challenge them too much

## THEY DISLIKE

- people who threaten their authority
- restrictive rules and regulations
- repetitive or non-task-focused discussion
- indecisiveness
- prevarication
- too much attention to detail
- having to handle emotional colleagues

## BEHAVIOURS YOU WILL SEE AND HEAR:

### THEY CAN BE

- assertive and pro-active
- up-front, honest, tell it like it is
- physically commanding
- strong in terms of eye-contact
- happy to express their opinion
- not too worried about being liked at work
- fair if offered clear, logical advocacy
- highly productive
- calm in stressful conditions

### THEY CAN ALSO

- be abrupt, aggressive or bullying
- speak over others or shout to get their point across
- use strong cutting or 'stop' gestures
- interrupt or dominate a conversation
- be dismissive of others needs and ideas
- be impatient, stubborn and short-tempered
- be focused on their own goals
- present their perception as fact in order to win their argument

## FLEXING TO COMMUNICATE WITH A DRIVER

- Get to the point of the conversation quickly
- Be logical, task-focused and succinct
- Focus on 'the big picture'
- Be decisive about your own actions
- Show that you are competent and in control of what you are doing, without being overbearing
- Demonstrate respect by acknowledging a Driver's past and current achievements, as well as their areas of expertise
- Ask questions and offer suggestions which will enable the Driver to feel in control of their own choices and tasks
- If under pressure, stay neutral (unemotional) and professional. Use advocacy

# Analytical

## THEY NEED

- to get things right

## THEY ARE

- logical, methodical, meticulous, specific, process/task-focused

## THEY LIKE

- attention to detail
- verified facts and figures
- structure and order
- written instructions
- a considered approach
- efficiency
- dry intelligent humour
- technical terminology

## THEY DISLIKE

- generalised or unclear task requests
- others impatience with their attention to detail
- inaccurate or shoddy work
- being thrown in at the deep end
- being rushed
- being told they have no sense of humour
- showing emotion in the workplace
- dealing with others emotions

## BEHAVIOURS YOU WILL SEE AND HEAR:

### THEY CAN BE

- patient, focused listeners (when talking about task)
- conscientious
- willing to discuss alternative logical solutions and to work through every angle of a problem
- enthusiastic and verbose about their area of expertise
- good at working alone
- dryly witty

### THEY CAN ALSO

- fail to meet deadlines due to their need for detail and accuracy
- use too much technical jargon
- be perceived as cold, humourless and dull
- get stressed if pressurised
- find it challenging working as part of a team
- become obstinate and withdrawn when challenged
- be patronising if someone doesn't understand their way of seeing things
- pause before and during sentences
- avoid eye contact when conversing
- read from notes or documents in front of them

## FLEXING TO COMMUNICATE WITH A ANALYTICAL

- Keep your conversation clear and process-focused
- Use logic to make your point
- Go into more detail than you might normally
- Ask for their point of view then listen patiently and don't interrupt
- Reflect back what you've heard to acknowledge understanding
- Acknowledge their conscientiousness and skills
- Back up any task requests or feedback with documentation (facts and figures)
- Summarise points covered
- Agree structured action points
- Follow up conversation with written summary of agreed actions

# Amiable

## THEY NEED

- to be liked

## THEY ARE

• empathetic, genuine, thoughtful, considerate, approachable, loyal, people-focused

## THEY LIKE

- justice, fairness
- sincerity, honesty
- working with a team
- supporting people
- keeping everyone else happy
- feeling useful
- to be appreciated and acknowledged
- their feelings to be respected
- building strong, open relationships

## THEY DISLIKE

- their good nature being taken advantage of
- being bullied or shouted at
- being dealt with in a direct, task-focused way
- being treated unfairly
- seeing others treated unfairly
- being the centre of attention

## BEHAVIOURS YOU WILL SEE AND HEAR:

### THEY CAN BE

- friendly, open
- good, patient listeners
- considerate of others' points of view
- effective mediators
- conscientious, thorough
- understanding
- good at demonstrating active listening
- strong in terms of eye-contact and connection
- willing to discuss alternative solutions and options
- passionate about a cause, idea or belief

### THEY CAN ALSO

- be hesitant, lacking in assertiveness
- be over-emotional or over-involved in others emotional issues
- become distressed and withdrawn if put under pressure
- store up resentment then let it out all at once in a show of temper
- over-react to a perceived slight or injustice, particularly if their integrity is questioned
- retain pleasant, smiling demeanour even when broaching difficult subjects

## FLEXING TO COMMUNICATE WITH AN AMIABLE

- Be sincere
- Exchange pleasantries and ask about life outside of work before focusing on task
- Volunteer some personal information in response to personal information from them
- Ask questions and listen patiently to the answers
- Be open, honest and express emotions about tasks in hand
- Acknowledge their endeavours and any positive impact they've had on the team
- Acknowledge the validity of their emotions (demonstrate empathy)
- Motivate them by focusing on how their actions at work may have a positive impact on the team
- Check how they feel about points discussed

# Expressive

## THEY NEED

- to be seen and heard

## THEY ARE

- creative, witty, articulate, outgoing, energetic, enthusiastic, persuasive, people-focused

## THEY LIKE

- the company and attention of others
- having a laugh
- to be optimistic
- to be forward-thinking
- keeping everybody entertained and motivated with humour
- to share anecdotes
- coming up with new ideas
- to get things in perspective

## THEY DISLIKE

- analysing what went wrong
- having to work in too much detail
- being ignored
- being patronised
- people being stressed and uptight
- others stealing their limelight
- slow-paced discussion
- people with no sense of humour

## BEHAVIOURS YOU WILL SEE AND HEAR:

### THEY CAN BE

- good at lightening the mood using humour
- able to enthuse and inspire others
- facially expressive
- vocally bright and loud
- physically energetic with large gestures
- adaptable, embracing new challenges
- emotionally open and honest
- charismatic and charming
- relaxed and good-humoured in a crisis

### THEY CAN ALSO

- be egotistical, self-centred
- be overpowering
- be superficial
- use humour inappropriately
- lack focus and fail to make ideas reality
- become sarcastic when challenged
- sulk when not being recognised
- opt out when under pressure
- demonstrate erratic moods
- intrude on personal space

## FLEXING TO COMMUNICATE WITH AN EXPRESSIVE

- Adopt an informal style
- Allow humour in the conversation from both sides
- Give them plenty of 'air-time'
- Give them your full attention and show that you appreciate their humour
- Avoid slipping into a 'parental' mode and remain relaxed in tone
- Speak with energy and enthusiasm, using positive language
- Acknowledge their contributions and successes in the workplace and give/ quote positive feedback
- Motivate them by focusing on how their actions at work may make them look impressive or may gain them positive attention in some way