

DEMISTIFYING DiSC[®]

A hand holding a magnifying glass over the text 'DiSC'. The magnifying glass is positioned over the word 'DiSC', which is written in a large, orange, sans-serif font. The word 'DiSC' is the focal point of the image, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to its upper right. The background is a light yellow gradient.

How to Understand the
DiSC Behavioral Model
and Explain it to Others

KEITH AYERS

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DiSC Behavioral Model
and Explain it to Others

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Introduction

DiSC® is one of the most widely used behavioral models in the world. We use it to help understand human behavior, but how well understood is the model itself? There are many variations of this simple but powerful model in the marketplace, using different terminology and different theoretical models as their base. In the interest of contributing to a deeper understanding of this model, I have decided to share my simple and practical approach to understanding DiSC and the theory behind it.

The key to using DiSC effectively is to understand that whatever your DiSC profile is, it is just perfect for you. There are no good or bad profiles. And no matter what your profile is, there will be times when being yourself will work just fine for you, and there will be times when it doesn't work. At times like this, when being yourself does not produce positive results for you, you need to be able to adapt your thinking and behavior to be more effective.

The main reason for doing a DiSC profile, I would argue, is to learn how to be more adaptable. It is not a tool for pigeon-holing or labeling people—it is a liberating tool. It frees you up to be yourself when that works for you, and to adapt and do something different when the situation calls for it.

My information is based on research conducted by Inscape Publishing Inc., a Minneapolis-based company that has done considerably more research into DiSC and its application in the workplace than any other DiSC provider.

My focus for using DiSC is to keep it simple and practical. People are complex beings, but there are some things DiSC can help us learn about ourselves and other people that make it easier to communicate effectively with others and to build more productive trust-based relationships.

Trust Inside

Have you noticed that the companies that you really like to do business with are the companies you trust? The restaurant that always provides great food and service that you recommend to your friends. The bank that you have been with for many years because they know you personally and provide the safe and secure products you need, coupled with personalized customer service.

I'm sure you can also think of organizations that you won't do business with again because you don't trust them to provide you with a quality product or service.

Organizations that have "trust inside" build trust outside with their customers. The organization is more successful when each individual knows and values the strengths of his or her co-workers, and team members support each other in ensuring that the customer receives the value they deserve. The DiSC profiles and their effective application at every level can help your organization achieve this level of trust, inside and outside the organization.

Discovering My DiSC Style

Discovering my own behavioral style over thirty years ago was a life changing experience. I was selling life insurance at the time and I remember experiencing a lot of "call reluctance" as it is referred to in the selling profession—I just hated getting on the phone and calling prospective clients to set appointments. When I took my first DiSC profile I came up high in both the "i" and "S" dimensions of *Influencing* and *Steadiness*. In Inscape Publishing's DiSC Classic Profile that makes me a Counselor Pattern, and the words that leapt off the page in my profile were "fears pressuring people".

I had been selling insurance for three years after a career in the Australian Air Force, and I was making a decent living. I did call enough people to fill my calendar with appointments, but my stomach was in knots every time I got on the phone. And although I believed in the importance of life insurance, I wasn't passionate about it.

But by now I was becoming very passionate about this DiSC profile. It not only helped me understand myself, my needs and fears, and my strengths, it also gave me a whole new understanding of the people I worked and lived with. Yes, my wife took the profile too!

You Are in the People Business, Whether You Realize it or Not

What made me even more passionate about DiSC was that the company that introduced me to the profile, Intégro, used it as a tool to help managers and salespeople build relationships based on trust. Have you ever noticed that the people who are easiest to understand and trust are the ones who are most like you? And those you find most difficult to trust are those who are a mystery to you. You look at them and say to yourself: “how can they do that?”

I joined Intégro in May of 1977 because I really believed that my mission in life was to help organizations realize that they are all in the people business. You might think you are in the banking industry, the oil industry, or a government agency. But your organization is made up of people. You deliver products and services to people. People make decisions, and people serve customers. Your customers are people. And people have feelings and needs. The more *people literate* your organization is, the more successful it will be both internally, and externally.

The first chapter in this eBook focuses on the *Whole Person Concept*, a model that I think takes the mystery out of why people do what they do. It also helps to understand what DiSC is measuring, and what it is not measuring. In the subsequent chapters I have presented a simple way of understanding the theory behind DiSC, the instinctive needs that drive the four behavioral dimensions of DiSC, and finally, an in-depth demonstration of the differences between the four DiSC dimensions.

Chapter 1

The Whole Person Concept

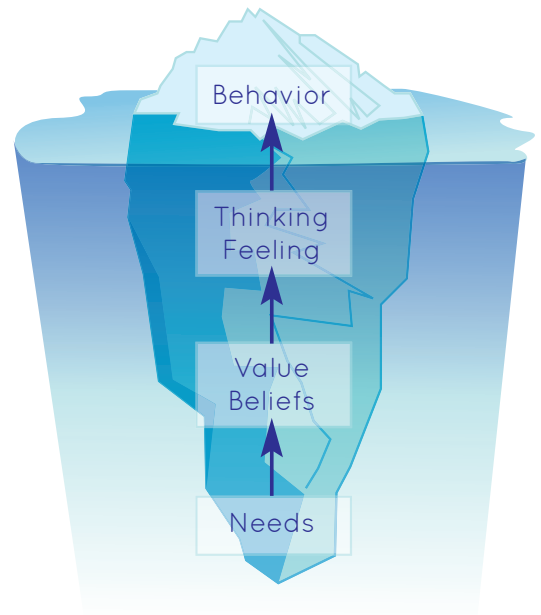
Do you know how your behavior is perceived by your coworkers? Everything you do at work creates a climate around you that determines how other people feel about being around you and how comfortable they are working with you. If you are in a leadership role, this is even more important for you to be aware of. How people feel about coming to work every day is largely determined by the climate their immediate manager creates. But even if you are not a manager, you need to know that your behavior affects your coworkers, and the productivity of your team. Do you want to have a positive impact, or a negative impact? It is important to be able to take a step back and look at yourself objectively, and the Whole Person Concept can help you do that.

Have you ever noticed that wherever you go, there you are? All of you! This is not some existential question designed to confuse you. Take it literally. You know you cannot leave part of yourself at home when you go to work. You are a *whole* person. The Whole Person Concept is a simple way of understanding what you take with you everywhere you go and how others see you. I also refer to the Whole Person Concept as the *iceberg model*, because, as you can see in the graphic, people have a lot in common with icebergs.

There are four aspects to the Whole Person Concept:

- Behavior
- Thinking and feeling
- Values and beliefs
- Needs

The Whole Person Concept



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Behavior

Scientists say only about one-seventh of the entire iceberg mass, just the tip, is obvious and visible above the waterline; the rest is beneath the surface. People are like that too. Your behavior is the tip of the iceberg because that is what everybody else can see. When you meet people for the first time, all you can see is their behavior; you really don't know anything else about them. You only have their behavior by which to attempt to understand them and figure out how you want to relate to them. That is one of the primary benefits of the DiSC model—it describes behavior that is easy to observe in others, which makes it a very practical tool for managers, salespeople, and customer service staff.

But there is so much more to people than their behavior and so many things going on below the waterline that you can't see. I am sure you can think of people who are a complete mystery to you. You look at them and say to yourself, "Why do they do that? That just doesn't make any sense to me."

Their behavior doesn't make sense to you because what's going on inside them is very different from what goes on inside you. So, if you are going to create a positive climate around you, and one that gets positive responses, you need to understand your behavior, and what is going on underneath the surface that drives it. This will also help you understand how your behavior can be misinterpreted by people with different DiSC profiles from you, who look at your behavior and say, "Why does she do that?" or "Why did he say that?"

Thinking and Feeling

Everything you do happens because you think you should do it, or because you feel like doing it. The *thinking and feeling* aspect lies just below the waterline of the Whole Person Concept. In many ways, thinking and feeling are inseparable. When you think about something, you have feelings associated with that thought. When you think about something you love to do, hopefully your work, you feel energized and enthusiastic. But when you think about something you hate to do, hopefully not your work, you experience feelings of dread and you may want to avoid doing it.

You also have thoughts about your feelings. When you are feeling angry with people, you are likely to be thinking about all the reasons why you should be angry with them, why they should not have done what they did. Or, you could be questioning your *feelings*: "Why am I getting so angry over something so insignificant?"

Even though they are so closely linked, thinking and feeling often come into conflict. Have you ever woken up and not felt like getting out of bed? That question is rhetorical; of course you have. What do you do? Do you hit the snooze button and go back to sleep because that is what you feel like doing, or do you drag yourself

out of bed and get ready for work because you think you should? Hopefully, your feelings about facing the day change by the time you get to work. If not, then what do your employers and customers get from you? Someone who is going through the motions with no enthusiasm, no commitment, and certainly no passion!

At the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, I was a sprinter and 220-yard hurdler on the track team. At training one night the week before the National Inter-Varsity Championships, I had absolutely zero motivation to train. I told my coach how I was feeling, and being the wise coach that he was, he suggested I jog a few laps to warm up and then see how I felt. He was right! After a few laps and some short sprints, I really felt like training, and I had a great workout. I subsequently finished second in the 220 yards hurdles final. The same idea probably holds true for you when you don't feel like going to the gym to work out. You think you should, and, once you get there, most of the time you are glad you did. Start doing what you believe you should be doing and let your feelings catch up. But always be aware of how your thinking and feeling are affecting your behavior.

Values and Beliefs

We are more complex than merely our thinking, feeling, and behavior. Deeper motives stir within us: our *values* and *beliefs*. Like thinking and feeling, they are interconnected. A value is something you believe in and it serves as a compass for how you think and feel. If you value honesty, then you no doubt have established beliefs about what honesty is, what it means to you, and what you believe to be right or wrong. When someone does something wrong according to your standards of honesty, it impacts how you feel and think about that person, and maybe how you behave towards him or her as well.

The difference between a belief and a thought is that beliefs are thoughts that became a fact. When you first hear something, you mull it over a bit then decide upon its validity as a truthful statement. You say, "I agree with that. It's a fact." Once you've made that decision, it is no longer just a thought, it is a belief. Beliefs are much deeper down in the iceberg than thoughts. They are more personal and exist closer to the core of your being. You make decisions based on your beliefs and values all the time without questioning them.

But beliefs are not always right. Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of a mistaken belief occurred in Europe just before the Renaissance when, until the publication of **De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium** in 1530 by Nicolas Copernicus, people believed the earth was a fixed, immovable mass located at the center of the universe with the sun and stars revolving around it. Copernicus refuted this belief, citing astronomical and mathematical evidence that the earth revolved around the sun, but he did not publish his work at the time because it went against the philosophical and religious teaching of the time that mankind was the center of the universe.

After his death, two other Italian scientists, Galileo and Giordano Bruno, published work based on Copernican theory only to find that the Church was still not ready to believe it. Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600 and Galileo was imprisoned for life, albeit comfortably, in 1633. The world leaders at that time operated on beliefs that were false, but they were so convinced they were right that they were willing to put to death anyone with alternative views. Of course, we now have scientific evidence that the sun is the center of our solar system, but the fact that people stubbornly held on to their beliefs for so long, even though they were false, shows how our beliefs can potentially stand in the way of progress.

What are your beliefs about what it takes to create a great workplace and achieve outstanding results? If some of your beliefs have actually prevented you from getting the best possible performance out of yourself, your team, or your organization, are you willing to question what you believe to be true? I'm not asking you to throw out your beliefs. What I am suggesting is that there is real value in being open-minded enough to question your beliefs. If you are right, you will be even more certain of it by being open to the possibility of being wrong.

Differences in values and beliefs are the cause of so much unnecessary conflict in the world. It is very important to understand that if someone else's beliefs vary from your own, it does not mean that person is wrong and you are right. I was brought up in the Salvation Army religion, believing that smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol were sins—they destroy God's holy temple: my body. Yet they are not sins in the Catholic Church. Who is right? Ok, so enough about religion, but I hope you get my point. Every belief you have about the way people should behave or how work should be done are your beliefs that you got from somewhere and decided to believe in. That doesn't mean you are right. Other people hold opposite beliefs, and they are convinced they are right. It may be that you are right. It may be that you are both right. What is more important, to be right, or to be effective? Effective people are open-minded enough to listen to other people's points of view and are willing to question their own beliefs.

The key to minimizing values-based conflict in the workplace is to focus on the values you and your coworkers have in common. Yes you will have different values based on ethnic, cultural, gender, and generational differences. But there are many values that all people share. For example, everyone wants to be respected—so make respect a value that all your team members are committed to. Everyone wants to make a difference, to know that what they do is significant. Why not have a discussion with your team about the values that are important to them and draw up a list that is important to everyone.

Needs

At the bottom of the iceberg, at our core, are our *needs*. Needs are the most instinctive part of us. These are necessities like eating, drinking, and breathing that spring from something primal in us all. Eating is a good example of how our needs connect with our behavior, thinking and feeling, and values and beliefs. When we are hungry, we eat. Eating is the behavior that satisfies our need. Sometimes these needs are filtered by your beliefs and values before you act to satisfy them. When you're hungry, you don't necessarily grab the first edible thing in sight because you feel like it. You may believe it is not good for you, so you choose something more appropriate to eat. The need to eat is there, nonetheless, and must be satisfied.

Some needs are more instinctive and go straight through from needs to feelings to behavior, bypassing values, beliefs and thinking altogether. For example, if you see something flying through the air towards your head, you will instinctively duck. You don't have time to check out your beliefs or even to think—you just react. None of us is born with values and beliefs because the cognitive thinking part of the brain is not yet functional at that stage; we have no language, only primal needs, feelings, and behavior. As babies, when our needs were satisfied, we felt happy, content with sleeping, playing, laughing, crawling around, and just being inquisitive. When our needs were not met, however, we were not satisfied and acted accordingly. In other words, we cried.

Unfortunately, some adults still operate in such a basic and primal way. They do not think about their actions; they merely react to their needs and feelings without having learned to manage their emotions. Yelling and screaming at people is inappropriate behavior in the workplace or, for that matter, anywhere, except perhaps when you are a spectator at a football match. It accomplishes nothing positive in the long term, especially if the goal is to create a great workplace. Yet, I hear stories all the time about managers who yell and scream to get employees to do what they say.

Why? To regain control when they feel they are losing control. They are control freaks! Those who work with them will do just about anything to make sure their managers don't yell and scream again. So it works—in the short term. People who scream at other people are a liability to the organization, no matter what they are producing. It also seems very immature to have no more emotional control than a baby!

Two Sources of Motivation

I have found this Whole Person Concept very helpful for increasing emotional intelligence (EQ)—my own, and those I provide coaching and training for. The starting point for EQ is *self-awareness*. What better way to increase self-awareness than to understand what your needs and values are, how they influence your thinking and feeling, and the impact they have on your behavior.

So first, you need to understand the two primary sources of motivation—*needs* and *values*.

Needs Motivation is doing what makes you happy, makes you money, gets you recognition, gets you affection, earns you respect, or achieves results. Unsatisfied needs create desire or fear, driving you to get the need met. When you are thirsty, your desire to satisfy this need will motivate you to get something to quench the thirst. When you feel like you have lost control of a situation, your fear of losing control kicks in and you retake control.

Notice that in each of these examples, you satisfied the need by doing something through your behavior. The only way you can satisfy your own needs is through your own behavior, even if that need is going to be satisfied by someone else. For example, we all need affection from time to time. The way to get this need satisfied is not by sitting around, waiting for someone to give you affection. You meet the need by doing something that will get someone else to want to give you affection. This applies to any need you have. You usually have to do something to get the need satisfied.

DiSC is a Needs-driven Behavioral Model

People don't walk around thinking: "I might just use my dominance behavior on this person who is irritating me." It doesn't happen that way. They get irritated with someone, become impatient, and act it out in some typically high dominance way of behaving. DiSC behavior is instinctive. We do it without thinking because it satisfies our instinctive needs at the bottom of the iceberg.

Values motivation, on the other hand, is doing what you believe you should do, what you believe is right, and what you believe is appropriate. It may not suit your short-term needs at the time—but it will serve you in the long haul. For example, I'm sitting in my office working on a writing project and can see that it is a beautiful sunny day outside. I would really love to be out there playing golf—that would make me very happy. But then I have made a commitment to others that I will finish this project today, so I stay and do it. It is not uncommon to have some internal conflict between needs and values.

Because your behavior has an impact on those around you, the people you live with and work with, it would help you a lot to understand what your needs and values are, how they influence your thinking and feeling, and ultimately your behavior. If you want your coworkers to work well with you and give their best every day, then you need to be aware of your own behavior and the impact you have on your work relationships.

You do that by creating a balance between the natural instinctive drives of your DiSC profile, and a level of flexibility and adaptability driven by your values and your belief that it is important to behave appropriately and effectively.

The Instinctive Drives Behind Your DiSC Profile

It surprises those who know me now that when I was a boy, I had an explosive temper. Until I was eight or nine years old, I easily flew into fits of rage at the slightest provocation, most often as the result of my older brother, Kevin. He knew which buttons to push and when he did, I could be a dangerous ball of rage. Once, Kevin locked me out of the house after I chased him around the yard, trying to hit him for teasing me. I was so angry at him for locking me out that I punched the glass door so hard it shattered. I was not cut or seriously hurt, but I got into a heap of trouble for breaking the glass. My mother repeatedly told me what a bad-tempered little boy I was, and this was just another example. But as far as I was concerned, I was a really nice person with many friends who liked me. I did not see myself as bad-tempered—it was all my brother's fault! If he hadn't teased me, then I wouldn't have reacted the way I did. I vehemently denied that I had a bad temper and got defensive about it when my mother brought it up.

Breaking the glass door was a wake-up call for me. I realized that I did lose control of my emotions and behavior and that I could be dangerous. In fact, I became quite afraid of what else I might do if I did not learn to control myself. I was not in a position to change that aspect of my behavior until I accepted the fact that I did have a bad temper! Interestingly enough, once I accepted responsibility for my own reactions, my brother's teasing did not have the same effect and he eventually stopped. We have been the best of friends ever since.

How well do you know yourself? Have you ever had someone tell you something about yourself you thought was untrue? When people give you feedback you don't agree with, how do you respond? Do you reject it outright and tell them they don't know what they are talking about? Or are you open to exploring the situation to see whether it may be something you didn't realize about yourself?

I am a very keen golfer and play at least once if not twice a week, weather permitting. I have been a student of the golf swing since taking up the sport and continue to take lessons every few months because I believe my handicap does not reflect my true potential. I know what a good golf swing looks like and what I need to do to improve, but I still feel that I need a coach to watch me hit a few balls on the range to get a sense of what I am doing and where the ball's going. Afterwards, my coach and I go inside and videotape my swing from different angles. When we sit down to watch my swing on the monitor, I immediately see what I do that causes the bad shots, even before my coach says anything. It felt like I was doing what I should be doing when I was swinging, but the reality was, I was doing something different. Every successful

golfer, even Tiger Woods, has a swing coach. Why? Other people see things in our behavior that we can't see.

When we add the DiSC Model to this situation, not only does the other person see things that I may not be aware that I am doing, they also may interpret that behavior very differently depending on their DiSC behavioral style.

Your self-awareness is primarily inside of you, below the waterline, and your behavior is on the outside for others to see, at the tip of the iceberg. You are far more aware of what you think and feel than you can be about your behavior. How aware are you of the degree to which your feelings impact your behavior, especially when you are experiencing emotions such as anxiety, anger, or frustration? How aware are you of your values and beliefs and the degree to which they impact the decisions you make? The more aware you are about yourself, that whole person that is you, the more effective you will become.

Chapter 2

Understanding Needs

The key to understanding the DiSC dimensions of behavior is to understand the instinctive needs that drive them. The great thing about the DiSC model is that you don't need to be a psychologist to understand the two basic needs that influence how people behave in relation to each other: the need for affiliation and the need for control.

The Need for Affiliation

When you first meet someone, do you tend to be friendly and open, or are you more likely to keep your feelings to yourself? Everyone has a need to affiliate with other people to some extent. People with a high need for affiliation need to be with people. They are friendly, sociable, and like to talk with others because they care about people. They show their feelings in their facial expressions and tone of voice because of their need to connect with people on a feeling level.

Conversely, there are people with a low need for affiliation. They don't need to be around people so much, and when they are, they often don't need to connect on a feeling level. As a result, they don't show much feeling in their facial expressions, and their tone of voice tends to be more matter-of-fact. They are likely to be more interested in working on a project or task, doing research, or undertaking some intellectual pursuit, and they generally tend to detach from people to do it. If they don't detach physically, they will detach mentally and emotionally to focus on their own priorities.

There is neither a good or bad, nor a right or wrong level of need for affiliation. People are just different. Some have a high need for affiliation, some have a low need, and still others may fall somewhere in the middle of the scale. Problems caused by the differences between people on this dimension occur when we expect people to be like us. If you have a high need for affiliation, you want to affiliate, so

you expect other people to be friendly towards you. When a person with a low need for affiliation is not friendly towards you, or does not want to engage in conversation because he or she is busy, you may judge that person as antisocial, or worse, as a person you can't trust.

It is just as OK to have a low need for affiliation as it is to have a high need. Being aware of your own level of need for affiliation and being able to adapt to where others are, is more important than where you are on the scale.

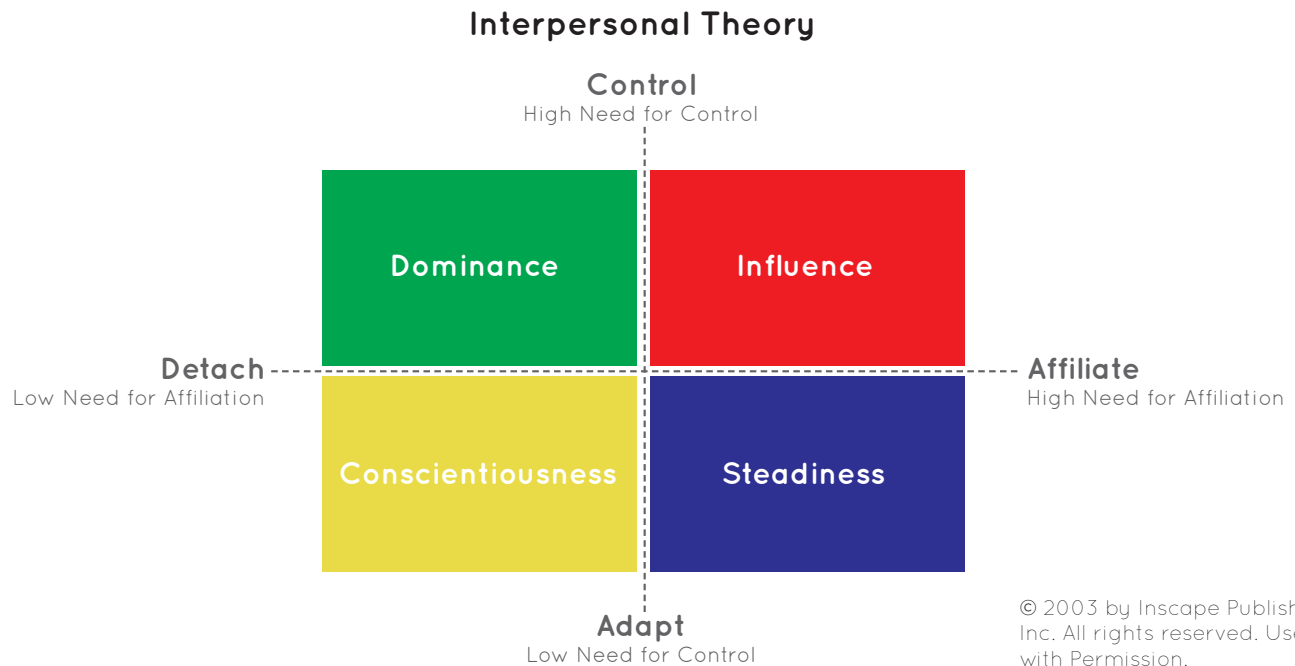
The Need for Control

The other factor coming into play whenever two or more people get together is the need for control. If you have a high need for control, you prefer to take charge of situations and projects. You enjoy guiding and directing, making decisions, taking the lead, encouraging, supporting, protecting, and teaching others. If you have a low need for control, you are comfortable adapting to those who are in control. You may prefer to do the work yourself rather than take charge of others who are doing the work. You have a need to trust the people who take control so you can have confidence in the direction and guidance they provide.

Again, there is no good or bad, no right or wrong. It is perfectly normal to have a high need for control or to have a low need for control. We just need to be careful not to judge others who are different. For some reason, people with a high need for control often view themselves as superior, and yet they could not have achieved anything without the support of those who allowed them to take control. People with a low need for control are content to say, "No, I don't want to be in control. Let them have it."

We'll talk more about the importance of behavioral adaptability later, but for now I want to emphasize that just because you have a need does not mean you have the right to satisfy it all the time. Having a high need for control does not mean that you have a right to be in control all the time, or that you will be effective if you are in charge. Having a low need for control does not mean you should not or cannot take charge when needed.

Having a low need for affiliation does not mean that you should not attempt to be friendly to someone who has a high need for affiliation, or that your high need for affiliation must always be met.



The DiSC Behavioral Model

When these two dimensions of *affiliation* and *control* are combined and placed at right angles to each other (see Interpersonal Theory graphic), we have four basic behavioral styles. The next section goes into an in-depth understanding of each of the four behavioral styles, but here is an overview of the **DiSC** dimensions:

- **Dominance, or the D dimension:** People strong in this dimension have a high need for control and a low need for affiliation. As a result, they are direct and decisive and tend to be more task-oriented, taking control of projects and tasks, and organizing them. They prefer to have others do the detail work.
- **Influence, or the I dimension:** People strong in this dimension have a high need for control and a high need for affiliation. While they also want to be in control, their focus is on influencing and persuading people. Because of their enthusiasm and optimism, they get people moving. They also prefer to have others to do the detail work.
- **Steadiness, or the S dimension:** People strong in this dimension have a low need for control and a high need for affiliation. They are friendly, helpful, and supportive and they genuinely care about people and get satisfaction from doing things for others. Supportiveness is another “S” word that I think is a good fit for this style.
- **Conscientiousness, or the C dimension:** People strong in this dimension have a low need for control and a low need for affiliation. As a result, they tend to have a preference for doing tasks themselves rather than taking charge or working closely with others. They are focused on quality and accuracy, making sure the task is done right the first time.

The **DiSC Model** describes behaviors that are easily recognizable in people. Since your behavior helps to create the environment your team members work in, it is a practical tool for helping coworkers understand behavioral style rather than delving into personality models or psychological type. If you think it makes sense for you to take a **DiSC** profile so that you have an accurate awareness of your own behavioral style, see the appendix at the end of this eBook.

Why Use DiSC?

The most recent developments in DiSC profiles from Inscape Publishing Inc. are application specific. These tools no longer just provide the individual with an understanding of their own behavioral style, their profile gives them specific application strategies for improving communication, relationships, and results with others of different styles. To make them even more application specific there are profiles for managers and leaders, salespeople, and everyone in the workplace. It is now possible to get the whole team, department, or organization talking the same language and working on application projects to increase productivity and customer loyalty.

Being Different Is Not Wrong

You have no doubt been compared to a brother, sister, or parent at some time in your life. Maybe it was a teacher comparing you to another student: “Why aren’t you more like Elizabeth (or Johnny)?” Either way, the message you likely interpreted was that the other person was better than you. Many times when we were growing up, we got the message: Different = Wrong. The converse may also be true, that when we are compared to others as an example for good performance or behavior, we may also get the message that we were better than other people. It may have been a while since someone else compared you negatively to another person (I hope it has), but have you now carried over this tendency to compare yourself to others? Do you need to see yourself as better than other people because you are different from them? Do you compare yourself negatively to others because you are different? Being different doesn’t make anyone better than anyone else. It just means you are different!

With an understanding of the DiSC Model we can now see how many of these comparisons arose because of the different talents we had. Some kids are naturally more neat and tidy and keep everything in its place—most likely to be high in the Conscientiousness dimension. Other kids are naturally more patient, and find it easier to sit still and listen to the teacher—like the Steadiness child. We don’t need to carry these negative judgments forward into the work environment. In fact you can’t afford to. Your organization needs to capitalize on the talents of all team members.

Different = Different

The important point here is this: different behavioral styles are neither good nor bad. They are just different. Each style has its strengths and its limitations. Each style has needs and fears. In the next chapter, we'll delve into those differences in depth so that you have a much better idea of how to recognize the differences.

Chapter 3

Why People Do What They Do

Diana, a Human Resource Director, was participating in a train-the-trainer seminar to learn how to apply DiSC in her organization when she recalled a recent work situation. Diana, who happened to be strongest in the Influencing dimension, is naturally friendly, outgoing, and enthusiastic, and with her high need for affiliation, enjoys being with people. Diana had just hired a new administrative assistant named Barbara.

Diana saw Barbara sitting alone at a table in the crowded company cafeteria on her first day at work. Barbara appeared shy and reserved, so Diana went over and sat with her with the intention of making her feel welcome. She is good at that. So she started asking Barbara questions to get to know about her and her family, where she grew up, and what schools she went to. Diana noticed that Barbara was becoming flustered and her face had turned red. Diana said, “What’s wrong, Barbara? Are you OK?” but Barbara suddenly got up and rushed out of the cafeteria. Diana was confused. She couldn’t figure out what had gone wrong, so she assumed that Barbara must have been feeling ill.

Now weeks later, Diana is attending this seminar to learn how to apply DiSC in her organization and, as I was describing that people who are high on the Conscientiousness dimension have a high need for privacy, the penny dropped! Diana realized that Barbara fit the description of the high Conscientiousness style, and that she had totally invaded her space at lunch that day by asking so many personal questions. Diana would have been very comfortable answering the same questions she asked Barbara; she would have felt very welcomed. But not everyone likes what we like. Quite frankly, I like it that way, but it does make it more challenging to be an effective team member.

Diana realized some of her natural behaviors made Barbara feel very uncomfortable, and that to gain Barbara’s trust, she needed to adapt her natural style and respect Barbara’s need for privacy. As Barbara began to trust Diana more, she also began

to feel more comfortable with Diana's outgoing style, and even started to be more open with her. But trust needed to be established first.

If you want to have a successful, high-performing team, it is essential for all team members to value the differences each person brings. In this chapter we will explore in depth the differences between each of the four DiSC dimensions, and learn how to bring out the best in each team member.

Exploring DiSC in Depth

Understanding the differences between people—why people do what they do—is a very valuable skill. There are ten factors we are going to explore to understand what goes on below the waterline: how each style thinks and feels, what their needs are, how they make decisions, and how all this affects their behavior. We'll first identify the ten factors, and then examine how they apply to the four DiSC dimensions.

1. **Initial Impressions:** How to recognize a person's style.
2. **Preferred Work Environment:** The environment each style expects at work.
3. **Security:** What each style needs to feel secure in their environment.
4. **Outstanding Need:** What each style principally desires more than anything for fulfillment.
5. **Measures Progress By:** How people of each style are tangibly reminded of how well they are doing.
6. **Major Fears:** What does each style fear the most?
7. **Irritated by:** What annoys each style most about other people?
8. **Making Decisions:** How each style naturally makes decisions.
9. **Major Limitation:** The one thing that can stop each style from being successful. Please pay special attention! To overcome your own limitations, you must be aware of them. Otherwise, it will trip you up time and time again.
10. **Need to Learn:** What attitude and behavior do people of each style need to learn to overcome their major limitation?

Now let's focus on each of the four behavioral styles. The numbers correspond to the criteria listed above.

Dominance: High Need for Control/Low Need for Affiliation

1 You will recognize people who are high in Dominance by their high self-confidence, assertiveness, goal orientation, competitiveness, and high sense of urgency. This is not to say other styles aren't competitive, just that people high in the D dimension tend to show their competitiveness outwardly, to the extent of being verbally competitive, and enjoying getting into debates or arguments.

2 People high in Dominance prefer fast-paced, busy, formal, task-oriented environments where they can get things done without the distraction of small talk or socializing.

3 People high in the Dominance dimension feel secure when they are in control and, of course, they don't feel secure when someone else is in control. Being in control of their time is particularly important and, as a result, they tend to work on a tight schedule. Everything is planned!

4 The outstanding need for people high in Dominance is achievement. They're more task-oriented. They set goals, and then achieve them. If they play a sport, they compete to win. What do they do in their leisure time on weekends? Set goals and achieve them. What do they do on vacation? They achieve things! Relaxation for this style is achieving things, even in their leisure time. It may appear to others that their real motivation is to have power and control, but the underlying reason for that is that they believe more power and control will help them achieve more.

5 People high in Dominance measure their progress by the results they achieve. They seek acknowledgement of their achievements in tangible terms (outcomes, the bottom line, etc.), not by the praise or credit they get from other people. Once they see results, it's "been there, done that" and on to the next project. This style is easily frustrated, and may appear to be a troublemaker if they cannot see the results of their own efforts. They are often resistant to participating in teams for this reason. It is important for this style to be able to measure the results of what they do. If they can't see results from their own efforts, they will turn their attention to projects where they can, even if that is outside the workplace.

6 Although their outstanding need is for achievement, a person high in Dominance does not fear failure: their major fear is the loss of control. As risk-takers, they don't see mistakes as failures; mistakes are not that big of a deal. They learn from their mistakes and set another goal. However, if they're not in control or others are trying to take advantage of them, their ability to achieve their goals is threatened. They may see those in control as the enemy, trying to undermine their achievements. This is a primary reason why many managers over-control or micro-manage others. They believe that if they don't control everything and are not watching people all the time, they will be taken advantage of and they won't get results.

7 People high in Dominance are irritated by inefficiency, indecisiveness, and slowness. Who would these people see as being most inefficient, indecisive, and slow? A good first guess would be those people high on Steadiness—the style directly opposite the D. It makes sense because of their differences in styles, but, in reality, people high in Dominance may see anyone else who is not high in Dominance as inefficient, indecisive, and slow. If this describes you, the reason these things irritate you is because of your outstanding need for achievement, and your natural sense of urgency. You want results quickly! When you perceive others as inefficient, indecisive, or slow, at an unconscious level you believe these behaviors will limit your ability to achieve results. The fear of losing control kicks in, and you react. The key to dealing with these situations more appropriately is to first recognize them when they arise as teachable moments. It is an opportunity for you to learn to be more effective. Second, you need to think about why this person behaves the way they do. The DiSC model puts you in a better position to understand why people are behaving the way they are, and you will be able to respond more appropriately.

8 People high in the Dominance dimension tend to make quick decisions because of their high sense of urgency. They are results-oriented, so if there is a decision to be made, they will quickly sum up the facts, decide, and act. As a result, some of their decisions don't work out well for them because they make mistakes! But they see these mistakes as experiments rather than anything fatal. OK, so that didn't work, let's try something else! It is not necessarily reckless, but they are, by nature, risk-takers and are action-oriented. They learn from their mistakes and make another decision—quickly.

9 The major limitation for people who are high in Dominance is impatience. In fact, they view their impatience as a strength. They have a high sense of urgency, make quick decisions, and they get things done. However, because of their impatience, they tend not to listen to what others have to say, especially others whom they see as inefficient, indecisive, and slow. Because of their strengths in taking charge, high self-confidence, and results-orientation, it is not hard to see how they could come to the conclusion that they are superior to others, and therefore be somewhat dismissive of others' ideas. This can be counter productive in the long term as people stop giving them ideas and information that would help them achieve even greater success. They can come across as arrogant and lacking humility, further reinforcing others' belief that it's futile talking to them because they just won't listen.

10 People high in the Dominance dimension must learn humility if they are going to overcome their limitation of impatience. Part of the reason people with this style often find themselves in leadership positions is that they like to take charge, they are quick decision-makers, and have high self-confidence. Therefore, they are good at achieving results. One of the reasons they tend not to listen to other people is that they don't think their input will be worthwhile. Seeing oneself as superior to others means judging others as inferior or lacking acceptance of them. This erodes

trust and extinguishes any desire for others to work with this person. The final result is diminished team performance. Humility means recognizing that different equals different. Different does not equal better or worse: just different. All people have strengths and weaknesses, and everyone has a different perspective from my own, therefore I benefit from listening to other people's input. That is the behavior that the Dominance dimension needs to learn: to actually listen. This requires patience and it lets the other person know their input is worthwhile.

Influence: High Need for Control/Low Need for Affiliation

1 People high in the Influence dimension can be identified as talkative; filled with enthusiasm, optimism, energy; and as having vivid imaginations. They have many ideas and feel a need to share those ideas with as many people as possible in order to garner support. They neither hide nor spare their feelings and tend to be very expressive with their tone of voice, their facial expressions, and in their mannerisms.

2 They also prefer a fast-paced work environment, but expect it to be stimulating, personal, and friendly, where there are many opportunities for interaction with others.

3 Security for people high in the Influence dimension is created when there is a high level of flexibility: when they don't feel boxed in, and where there is an opportunity for variety. As a result, they tend to resist working to a fixed schedule, so time management can be quite a challenge for them. The key is to schedule responding time in their day, in addition to the tasks that must be done. They are going to respond to people spontaneously, so why not allow for it?

4 People high in the Influence dimension have an outstanding need for social recognition, to be highly visible, respected, and well-regarded by others. Their high need for both control and affiliation drive them to be in leadership roles, but with a focus on gaining the support of others rather than controlling them. They have a need to use their ideas to influence people and enjoy the respect they get from others as a result.

5 Because of their need for recognition, the Influencing style measures their progress by the amount of praise or applause they get. Getting an email that they have done a great job is nice, but for this style, being told in front of the whole team is significantly more inspiring. In the work environment, this style understands that they don't get much recognition unless they achieve something, so they are usually very focused on achieving results as well. But unlike those high in Dominance, once they achieve the goal they will be looking for the applause or praise. If it doesn't come, they feel unappreciated. If they fail to get the credit they deserve, the fire within them will be extinguished.

6 For the Influence dimension, the primary fear is the loss of influence. Their need for recognition can only be met when they have influence. This fear can result in someone who is strong in the “i” dimension wanting to lead all the time because they feel as soon as they stop being the leader, their influence will cease. Being ignored or not listening to their ideas will also stimulate this fear.

7 People high in the Influence dimension are irritated by routine and formality. They love variety and like to do things differently. They’ll take a different route on the way to work, or catch a different train just for a change. They’ll experiment with doing their work differently because they loathe boredom and tediousness. Because this style tends to be a casual, informal kind of person, formal protocol like filling out unnecessary paperwork to get approval for something irritates them. They prefer to deal with people on a first name basis. They unconsciously see formality as limiting their freedom and spontaneity—as unnecessary rules others have created to control them. It is not uncommon to see people high in Influence resent routine, even rebel against it and do their own thing. If this describes you, you need to learn to recognize the situations when you do tend to resent or resist, and choose the self-directed course of action. This means you need to agree to do it, or disagree, if that is appropriate. If you disagree, you need to let others involved know what you are doing, and the reason why you don’t agree. Then you need to be prepared to accept the consequences of your decision.

8 People strong in the Influence dimension are also fast-paced, but they tend to trust their feelings and intuition more, so their decisions are more spontaneous. They can be compulsive shoppers when they see something and their gut feeling says: I have to have it. Although it is feeling that drives their decisions, they are very good at retroactively justifying that decision with logic. Like those who are high in Dominance, they are less concerned with making a wrong decision. It felt right at the time and if it didn’t work out, they can always make another decision.

9 The major limitation of the Influence dimension is a lack of follow-through. Again, we can best understand this limitation by looking at their strengths of enthusiasm, optimism, and energy. If you have these strengths, you will be good at getting things started. If you want to get a project moving, you need someone with enthusiasm, optimism, and energy from the outset. But, when the project gets into maintenance mode, you need strengths of persistence, patience, and attention to detail to follow through and finish the project. Their strengths don’t apply at that stage of the project, so what they typically do is lose interest and start another project. After all, that’s what they are good at. Another challenge for people high in the “i” dimension is their tendency to over-commit themselves, and run out of time to do everything. Again, it is their strengths that lead to them over-committing. They just have so much enthusiasm and energy, thinking of course I can do it. Unfortunately, far too often they fall short of what they committed to do.

10 The attitude the Influence dimension needs to learn to overcome their lack of follow-through is self-discipline. Because they get carried away with their enthusiasm, optimism, and energy, they can lose touch with reality. When they are involved in an interesting conversation or when they are doing something about which they are passionate, they can be oblivious of the time. The behavior they need to learn is to stop and think, perhaps count to ten, before making a commitment to do something or leaving a task to go on to another one. Because they are so spontaneous, they need to ask themselves: “What are the consequences of doing this?” before they do it! I’ve found that setting alarms works well for those high in the “i” dimension to remind them of their commitments—but set these alarms to allow enough time for preparation or unforeseen challenges. For example, because of their optimism, people with this style expect that all the traffic lights will be green on their way to a meeting. That may happen one in a hundred times, so allow for some red lights. If a meeting starts at 10:00 a.m. and it takes you five minutes to get there, then start preparing for what you need to take to the meeting at 9:30, not at 9:55 while you are walking to the meeting. In fact, you better leave for the meeting at 9:45 because you are sure to run into someone you know on the way. You’ll just have to stop for a chat! Every computer and personal organizer has an alarm system. Learn to use it.

Steadiness: Low Need for Control/High Need for Affiliation

1 You’ll notice calmness and patience with people high in the Steadiness dimension. They are cooperative and friendly, although because they are more subdued, their friendliness is more low-key than the effervescence of the “i” dimension. You may need to pay closer attention to their mannerisms to see their friendliness, until you get to know them. Persistence is another one of their strengths.

2 People high in Steadiness prefer a slower-paced environment that is team-oriented and friendly. They want to be busy, but without the pressure and sense of urgency those high on Dominance tend to create. Harmony is also important to them.

3 The Steadiness style feels secure when they’re in close relationships. They may be slow to make a friend, but, once they have, they will be loyal to that friendship. Since it does take time to build close relationships, it is important to invest that time with new people on your team who are strong in this dimension.

4 The outstanding need for the Steadiness dimension is acceptance. They satisfy this need for acceptance by giving support to others. They often unselfishly do things for others without being asked, expecting nothing in return. Stability is also an important need for people high on Steadiness, especially when it comes to relationships.

5 People high in Steadiness are a low key, more reserved “people-person” than the Influence dimension so their feedback needs to be low-key. They seek appreciation, not applause, and may feel embarrassed if your feedback is too over-the-top in praise of them. People high on the S dimension do not give help and support because they are consciously thinking about the appreciation they’ll get. They sincerely care about people, and want to be helpful. Their fire is stoked when they get genuine, sincere, and appropriate appreciation, but you have to really mean what you say.

6 People high on the Steadiness dimension most fear disappointing others. Because of their outstanding need for acceptance, they are concerned about how other people feel about them. Because they genuinely care about people, they fear they will in some way let others down or hurt their feelings. This fear can paralyze a manager. If they base their decisions on consensus because they want everyone to be happy, but only some team members agree on what that decision should be, then they’re stuck. Because of this fear, this style can have difficulty giving straight answers to questions because they don’t want to disappoint anyone. You need to take these things into consideration when you have people high in Steadiness on your team. Pushing them to make quicker decisions, or asking them to just get to the point, increases their fear, and could result in them being even more indirect and, worse still, less engaged.

7 The Steadiness dimension is irritated by insensitivity and impatience. Because they care for and are focused on supporting others, they are most irritated by people who are insensitive toward and impatient with people. Patience is among the S dimension’s strengths, so they find it troubling to understand how anyone can be so unaware of others’ feelings. If this description is you, be careful you don’t become guilty of the very things you find irritating in others, insensitivity and impatience. Remember, they don’t see the world or the people in it through the same filters you do. Be sensitive to their need to achieve results and patient with them in helping them understand what your needs are. If you judge them as being not OK, you can be sure their insensitivity and impatience towards you will increase.

8 The Steadiness dimension, like the “i” dimension, relies a lot on feelings in making decisions, but in their case it is more to do with having empathy for others who may be affected by their decision. They are considerate decision-makers and, as a result, they take more time to make decisions. They need input from others to consider how the decision might impact them. This is a good approach until they get conflicting input. There comes a time when the right decision must be made regardless of how everyone feels about it.

9 The Steadiness dimension’s major limitation is to be overly modest. Their strengths of persistence, patience, and procedure-orientation make them really good at supporting others in achieving their goals. They can be so focused on other people’s goals that they see their own strengths as having less value than the

strengths of others. They also tend to be concerned about how others perceive them because of their outstanding need for acceptance. This can lead to them being very self-conscious, even self-effacing, which makes accepting compliments difficult.

10 People high in the Steadiness dimension need to learn the attitude of self-determination: to be determined to take care of their own needs and develop a stronger belief in themselves. Behavioral style is not an indication of a person's worth. Everyone, regardless of their behavioral style has strengths and limitations. People who are strong in the Steadiness dimension need to pay even more attention to acknowledging their strengths, and recognize that they have as much to contribute to the organization as anyone else does. Their strengths in getting things done, building and maintaining relationships, and increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty are indispensable to any organization. These strengths are often not valued as much by some people, but that does not mean they are not equal in value to the strengths of others. The behavior people who are high in the S dimension must learn is to set and achieve their own goals. They can be so focused on meeting their need for acceptance by helping others to achieve goals that they neglect to establish goals for themselves. Their goal becomes helping others, and unfortunately, some people will take advantage of that.

Conscientiousness: Low Need for Control/Low Need for Affiliation

1 What you may notice first about people high in the Conscientiousness dimension is their concern for accuracy and high standards. They have an analytical mind, an eye for detail, and typically enjoy solving problems. They usually keep their feelings to themselves, which can make it more difficult to get to know them. They are more cautious in answering questions and communicating information because they need to think through what they say and make sure it is accurate before they say it.

2 The Conscientiousness style prefers a structured, organized, functional work environment. They want a quiet, formal workplace, where there are no distractions, allowing them to focus on achieving their high standards of quality and accuracy.

3 People high in the "C" dimension need preparation to feel secure. They can't ensure accuracy and high standards without time to prepare, especially when required to do a formal presentation. They need to have enough time to make sure everything will go perfectly.

4 People high in Conscientiousness have an outstanding need for correctness. Especially important to them are the high standards they must achieve when they take sole responsibility for a task. People high in this dimension also have a strong need for privacy. They need to be able to concentrate on their project, so don't invade their personal space like Diana initially did with Barbara.

5 The Conscientiousness dimension measures their progress by being right. Not only getting things right, but also doing the right thing. They not only want to meet their high standards for quality and accuracy, they also want to make sure they are playing by the rules. They want to know what the policies and procedures are so they can stick to them. Like those who are high in Dominance, the feedback this style looks for comes from the task itself. The Influence and Steadiness dimensions, by contrast, look for feedback from other people, due to their high need for affiliation.

6 The greatest fear for the Conscientiousness dimension is to be criticized for what they do. They put so much effort into doing the task right the first time. They do all the research and analysis thoroughly because they need to be right. Yes, they also fear making mistakes, but to be criticized for it is, to them, the worst thing that could happen. If this is your style as a team member, beware of the temptation to believe that you are always right. You may have the evidence to prove that you are right, but so did the church leaders have evidence that the sun revolved around the earth. There is more than one way to do things. Experiment with new solutions to improve performance or customer satisfaction, knowing that in the process of experimenting you may make mistakes. But don't let your fear of making mistakes kill creativity and innovation.

7 People high in Conscientiousness are irritated by surprises and unpredictability. Remember the saying: I can take good news, I can take bad news, but I cannot take surprises. You cannot predict accurate results or produce high quality output when you are uncertain about your facts or when people are not predictable. Being surprised by new information, especially after the completion of work, is extremely irritating to this style. If this describes you, remind yourself when you start to get irritated that some people really thrive on a lack of structure and predictability and don't share your core needs. Striving for total certainty and predictability could kill innovation and bog people down in a mire of rules, policies, and procedures that will have customers and maybe employees leaving in droves. Don't let a lack of certainty or predictability hijack your emotions or behavior. When you feel yourself getting anxious, ask yourself: Do I really have to be certain in this situation? If you do, choose the appropriate course of action, and explain to others why you feel it is essential. If you don't have to be, then learn to let it go!

8 Like the Dominance dimension, those high in Conscientiousness base their decisions on facts and logic, but they are more deliberate than quick in their decision-making style. They do their research, gather and analyze information, and deliberate over it so they can come to the right decision. This style is much more concerned about making mistakes because of their outstanding need for correctness, so they tend to put off making a decision until they are certain it is right. This can lead to paralysis by analysis and, in some cases, the decision not being made. People with this style must learn to work through the fear of making mistakes when making decisions.

9 Because they have such high standards, the Conscientiousness dimension's major limitation is to be overly critical of themselves. They can also be highly critical of others. However, it is their own self-criticism and self-doubt that limits them from performing at their best. They expect perfection in everything they do and their eye is well tuned to notice flaws. When they critique what they have done, they tend to look for what is wrong, not what is right. They tend to critique other people's work the same way. If you have ever worked for a manager who was strong in Conscientiousness or had a parent with this style, you know what I am talking about. You may have scored 97 percent on the test, but they will be focused on the 3 percent you got wrong. Focusing on the negative produces negative feelings. Criticism, even if it is called constructive criticism, is still criticism that results in negative feelings.

10 The attitude people high in the Conscientiousness dimension need to learn is self-acceptance. Their strengths in accuracy, attention to detail and producing high quality are needed in every organization, but when these strengths are taken to extreme, this style becomes overly critical. Often, even though they have done a great job, they tear it down because it isn't quite perfect. One example would be of an artist tearing up a canvas—that someone would quite happily have bought and put on the wall—just because there were a couple of imperfect brush strokes. Once people with this style have learned to be more accepting of themselves, they will be more accepting of other people. The behavior this style must learn is to experiment with taking risks. Their needs for certainty and predictability limit them from achieving their true potential. If this is you, then give yourself permission to make a mistake. Try something different in an area of your work where you can recover from a mistake. If it doesn't work out, learn from it, and move on. Don't start beating yourself up!

There is one more area of difference between people that is important to understand, but I have left it until last because it is the most important. In the next chapter, we'll look at this area: the strengths and potential limitations of each DiSC style in building trust.

Chapter 4

DiSC and the Elements of Trust™

Here is an example of how trust can break down between trustworthy people just because their behavioral styles are different.

A few years back, I took a senior executive team through a five-day leadership program I had developed called, “Leadership at the Summit.” The program included a number of outdoor adventure experiences, one of which was a cross-country navigation exercise where participants had to find their way across difficult terrain, build a rope bridge across a creek, and solve some interesting challenges along the way. To spice up the challenge, I gave each team a bucket of water to carry with them with the instructions that the liquid was their company’s secret formula. To spill it would be to fail the mission.

At one of the checkpoints along the way, participants were handed personalized envelopes marked “private and confidential.” Inside were cards that read: There is a traitor in your group who is going to spill the formula. All the cards said the same thing. It was a test to see how the team handled a challenge to the trust level in the team. One group of five executives had two members whose highest DiSC dimension was Dominance, and three others whose respective highest dimensions were Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. The person who was highest on the “I” dimension immediately upon opening his envelope blurted out, “Mine says there’s a traitor in the group. What does your say?” The two high “D’s” and the high “S” quickly confirmed that their cards said the same thing, and everyone turned toward Simon, the person high on “C” (who happened to be carrying the bucket of water at the time), and asked him what his card said. His response, as he put his envelope and card away in his inside jacket pocket was: “I can’t tell you!”

One of the managers who was high on “D” immediately yelled, “You’re the traitor!” and tried to wrestle the bucket of water away from him. Simon did not let go and, after a short but fruitless struggle, the group reluctantly allowed Simon to continue to carry the bucket. But the rest of the team watched Simon like a hawk for the remainder of

the exercise. Though no “formula” was spilled and the team successfully completed the mission, the trust level continued to be low as Simon stubbornly refused to let anyone else have the bucket or reveal what was on his card.

To understand what happened in this group, let’s look at the strengths and potential limitations of each of the four DiSC dimensions in the context of the Elements of Trust™.

High Dominance

Strength: Straightforwardness

People who are high in Dominance typically do not hesitate to let you know what they think. They say what they mean and mean what they say. In fact, sometimes you wish they weren’t so eager to tell you, or at least do it with more empathy! They are straight-shooters and pride themselves on their ability to call a spade a spade.

Limitation: Acceptance

You’ve heard the expression: They don’t suffer fools gladly. This often epitomizes the feeling people high in the “D” dimension have towards others, particularly those who do not communicate directly or appear to be indecisive or slow. They can be impatient and intolerant of people because of their high sense of urgency and need to achieve results. More than anyone, this style needs to work on valuing differences in others, and to recognize and appreciate the strengths that other styles bring to the situation.

The two “D” team members in the example above did not hesitate to be straightforward about what was on their cards, and one was very quick to judge Simon as untrustworthy and attempt to take the bucket away from him.

High Influence

Strength: Openness

People high in Influence love to talk and are the most emotionally open people in the DiSC model. They will tell you how they feel, and they want to know what’s on your mind. They have a tendency to wear their hearts on their sleeves, and therefore, are more self-revealing; sometimes too self-revealing—they tell you some very personal things about themselves that you didn’t really want to know!

DiSC and the Elements of Trust



Limitation: Reliability

People high in Influence are the ones most likely to have a reputation for being late. They're just so busy! Because of their strengths of enthusiasm, optimism, and energy, people with this style frequently over-commit themselves and then have trouble following through on all of their commitments. As mentioned above, self-discipline is the key for the Influence dimension. It does not come naturally, so it must become conscious. Stop and think. Pause. Count to ten (well, maybe five) before committing yourself.

Notice in the example of the executive team above, that it was the team member who was high in Influence who blurted out what was on his card as soon as he opened it. He did not stop and think about the fact that the envelope had said "private and confidential." He was operating instinctively, which for this style means: Let's get it out in the open and talk about it! In this situation, it was an appropriate response. However, there are times when his tendency to blurt things out without thinking would be inappropriate and diminish the trust others have for him.

High Steadiness***Strength: Acceptance***

Accepting others is very important to people who are high in the "S" dimension because of their own need to be accepted by others. Their focus is on giving support to others. They get personal satisfaction out of doing things for others, and do not expect anything in return. They take others' needs into account when they are making decisions because the last thing they want to do is offend anyone or hurt their feelings.

Limitation: Straightforwardness

Because of their fear of hurting others' feelings, people who are high in Steadiness feel uncomfortable being direct with people, especially with bad news. Their natural tendency is to be hesitant in communication, preferring to think things through before saying anything to make sure they won't get a negative reaction. Others may perceive this thoughtful silence as an indication that they are not listening, or worse, being evasive. Just because there is no immediate response from someone high in the "S" dimension, does not mean they are not listening—give them time to think it over and respond. If you are high in the "S" dimension, you need to learn to communicate more directly, give straight answers, and be willing to risk offending people with the truth. To do this, you need believe in yourself and recognize that you contribute as much as anyone else. Only then will you be able to be straightforward with people about how you really think and feel.

The executive team member who was high in the “S” dimension in the example above did not play a very big role in the story. He did not have any trouble being straightforward with other team members about what was on his card, because the others had already spoken up.

High Conscientiousness

Strength: Reliability

People who are high in the Conscientiousness dimension are strong on self-discipline. If they say they’ll do it, it’s as good as done. Before making a commitment, they think through all the implications to make sure they can follow through. When they agree to do something, you can be sure it will be done accurately, and to a high standard of quality. If information is confidential, you can rely on this style to keep it confidential.

Limitation: Openness

There are two primary reasons people high on Conscientiousness may lack openness. First, they do not want to divulge information until they are certain it is correct. Second, they have a high need for privacy. They are cautious about trusting people, so they tend not to volunteer much information about themselves until they get to know you. If you are high on the “C” dimension, you need to understand that others have a need for more information. Think about what others might like to know, and volunteer it rather than waiting to be asked.

The team member high in the “C” dimension in the example above, Simon, refused to divulge to the rest of the team what was on his card, because it had said “private and confidential” on the envelope. As far as he was concerned, anything that is private and confidential, you keep to yourself. He did not stop to think about the impact his decision would have on the trust level in the team, because his focus was on sticking to the rules. Simon was primarily responsible for the breakdown of trust in his team in that situation. Had he stopped to think about his options—to reveal or not to reveal what was on his card—and what the consequences of each would be on the ability of the team to work together effectively, the answer would have been more obvious.

Building Trust with People Who Are Different

This is one of the most important ideas in this eBook: each behavioral style judges others’ trustworthiness by their own strength in building trust.

- People high in Dominance trust people who are straightforward

- People high in Influence trust people who are open
- People high in Steadiness trust people who are accepting
- People high in Conscientiousness trust people who are reliable, according to their standards

While it is important to be conscious of using all four **Elements of Trust™**, special emphasis must be placed on meeting the expectations of the person whose trust you want to gain. The biggest challenge for all of us is when we need to build trust with someone whose style is the opposite of our own.

The implications of this are enormous!

If you are high in Dominance and you have someone who is high in Steadiness in your team, it would be easy for trust to break down between you, even though you are both trustworthy, simply because of your differences in behavioral style. The same thing can easily happen between the Influence and Conscientiousness dimensions. Building trust requires conscious and persistent effort. If you are not working at building trust with your fellow team members all the time—thinking about the impact of your behavior and decisions on the trust level—you may well be diminishing trust without realizing it.

It takes conscious effort for:

- A person high in Dominance to be accepting and attentive to someone high in Steadiness.
- A person high in Steadiness to be direct and brief with someone high in Dominance.
- A person high in Conscientiousness to share thoughts and feelings with someone high in Influence.
- A person high in Influence to produce the quality and detailed work expected by someone high in Conscientiousness.

The reward for putting in the effort and focusing on using these behaviors to build stronger trust relationships is the opportunity to help build a high-performance team. How successful you are will be determined by your willingness and ability to adapt your behavior.

Conclusion

No matter what kind of organization you work for, you are in the people business. People are essential to your success. Customers are people, employees are people and suppliers are people. Nothing gets done without the creativity, support and effort that people contribute.

It makes sense therefore to be *people literate*—to understand what makes people tick. We know people are complex and that we don't come with a user's guide to help others understand us and learn how to relate to us.

That is why practical tools like the *Whole Person Concept* and the *DiSC® Behavioral Model* are so valuable for understanding and managing the people side of business. Organizations that fail to capitalize on the people side of business cannot achieve their full potential.

And the key ingredient is TRUST. Customers do business with organizations they trust, and that trust is developed through every interaction they have with your organization. To deliver the level of quality in products and service that earns that trust and creates customer loyalty requires a high level of trust inside the organization. The organization must be able to trust all employees to deliver the value customers expect.

Visit my blog "Trust Inside" at <http://keithayers.typepad.com> to learn more about how you can increase customer loyalty by building trust inside your organization and share your experiences with trust in the workplace.

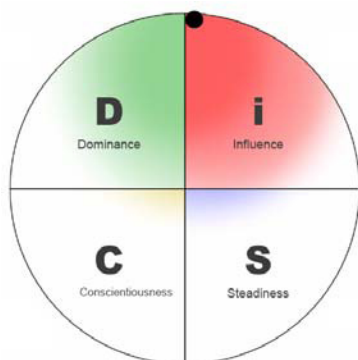
Appendix

The following is an excerpt from *How My Graph Became a Dot*.

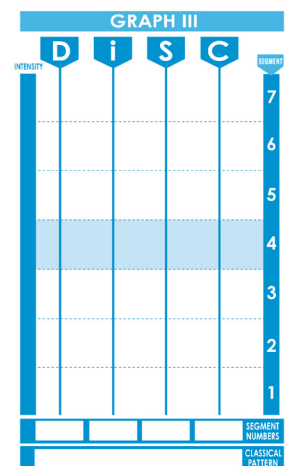
The DiSC® model has been used for decades to help people understand themselves and others. Practitioners continue to find ways to make the model simpler, more intuitive, and more relevant, while still enhancing the richness of insight that has made DiSC so popular. In this paper, we'll discuss some of the different ways in which the DiSC model can be both measured and represented. More specifically, we'll explore how DiSC is measured and represented in the Everything DiSC® report, and discuss the implications and benefits of this approach relative to some of the more traditional approaches to teaching DiSC.

The traditional way to represent the DiSC model is a line-graph format, as shown to the right. This format is used in Inscape Publishing products such as the DiSC Classic profile and provides separate scores on four scales: D, i, S, and C. The interpretation of this graph within the profile is based on a Classical Pattern, which describes a person's overall DiSC pattern as it's influenced by all four styles.

This line graph representation of DiSC, however, is only one of many ways to discuss DiSC and present a participant with his or her DiSC style. The earliest representation of the DiSC model, as described by William Marston in his book, *The Emotions of Normal People*, was a circle.



Harkening back to the roots of DiSC, the DiSC circle, to the left, provides an intuitive way to show a participant her or his location within the DiSC model. This representation of DiSC is used within the Everything DiSC profiles. For instance, the circle, or circumplex, to the left shows a participant who tends toward the i or Influence style but also has a strong tendency toward the D or Dominance



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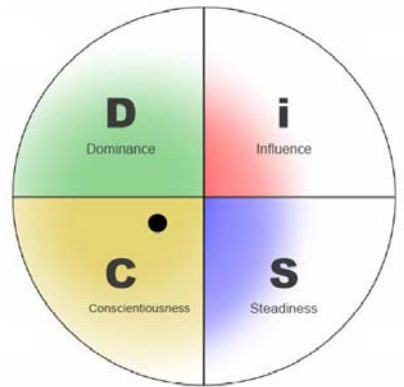
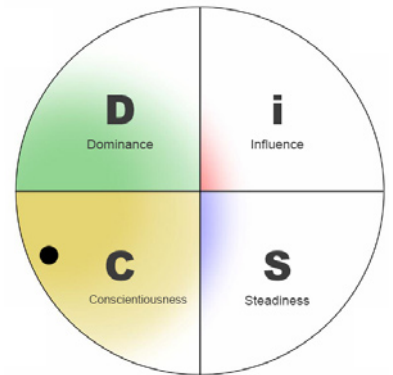
style. If one were to take the line graph above and represent it in a circular format, this would very likely be the resulting profile. In both cases, we have a person who is very high in the i and D styles and very low in the S (Steadiness) and C (Conscientiousness) styles.

How does the DiSC® circle work?

Although the circular representation of DiSC® is designed to be simple and intuitive, it also conveys a great deal of information about a person's DiSC style at a glance. To start, the angular location of a person's dot indicates the person's primary DiSC style. Many people also lean toward a second DiSC style. For example, in the circle to the right, we have a participant who tends toward the C style, but also has some tendency toward the D style. Most likely, if he had taken the DiSC Classic assessment, he would have ended up with a Creative Pattern (composed of the C and D styles) or an Objective Thinker Pattern (composed mostly of the C style.)

The distance from the dot to the center of the circle also communicates important information about the person's DiSC style. A person whose dot is close to the outer edge of the circle is probably very committed to his or her DiSC style. The shading within the circle reinforces this principle and shows the participant that he has a large amount of the C style and a significant, but slightly less, amount of the D style. The shading also shows that he probably exhibits very little of the S style and even less of the i style. The shading, however, still reinforces that he has each of these four styles within him. As a result, this participant understands that he probably has some difficulty shifting into an i or S style for long periods of time.

To the right we have another participant who tends toward CD, but her dot is much closer to the center of the circle. Her CD style will not be as pronounced, and the shading tells her that she will find it easier to shift into the i or S styles without significant stress.



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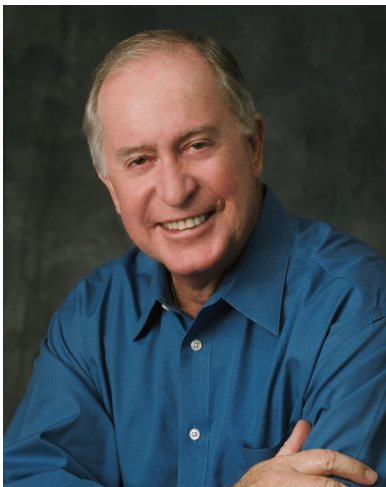
Find Out More...

To find out more about DiSC[®], go to

www.integrolearning.com.au/demystifying



About Keith Ayers



Keith Ayers is the President of Intégro Leadership Institute and author of the acclaimed book *Engagement is Not Enough: You Need Passionate Employees to Achieve Your Dream* (Elevate, 2008).

Keith Ayers is a 30-year expert in workplace performance, and one of the world's foremost DiSC® aficionados. He has worked with executive teams in Fortune 500 organizations, SMEs, and owner-managed enterprises all over the world, including Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, China, and the U.S. His expertise in working with leaders led him to specialize in helping organizations create a high performance culture: one that is based on a high level of trust and personal responsibility.

Keith is a regular keynote speaker at conferences and events in the United States, his native Australia, and around the world.