

BEHAVIOR PROFILES: ITS INFLUENCE ON YOUR WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

Nancy E. Algert, Ph.D., LPC Karan Watson, Ph.D., PE

ABSTRACT

The use of behavior profiles has been used in numerous environments to help groups of people perform better individually and as a team member. For example, in the Look College of Engineering at Texas A&M University, the DISC Instrument has been utilized: by the instructors of the first-year engineering courses as a pedagogical tool for enhancing teaming skills; by the staff that operates the academic programs for the college in order to enhance cooperation, and communication; and by numerous leaders of different student organizations as an important aspect in leadership training. Here we will briefly explain this behavioral tool and propose its uses in enhancing students, faculty and staff performance.

WHAT ARE BEHAVIORAL PROFILES

The DISC Instrument is a behavioral assessment measure. This measure identifies an individual's natural and adapted behavior. The DISC is not a personality measure but rather a behavior measure. The definition of behavior as the manner of conducting oneself is significant because behavior can be changed if so desired. However, personality is defined as the complex of characteristics that distinguishes an individual or the quality or state of being of a person. Personality is viewed as more complex, and researchers still debate the balance of genetics and environment, which may mold the personality. It is difficult, and altogether uncertain if it is wise in most situations, to attempt to change a personality. Certainly, the propensity toward certain behaviors is influenced by personality; however, the behavior profile tends to focus on how someone tends to act, not why they act that way.

Theoretical Orientation and the DISC

Classifying people into types, especially four types, has been a human endeavor for centuries. As early as circa 400 BC, Hippocrates taught that abnormal behavior was not attributable to the anger of the gods, but to natural causes in the person's life. He observed similarities and differences in human behavior and classified four different behaviors, or temperaments. There were Guardians, who needed to be members and to belong to a group; Artisans who needed freedom and variety; Idealist who needed identity and significance; and the Rational who needed competency and knowledge. In trying to heal people, Hippocrates taught that you should understand the person's temperament as well as the physical circumstances. In 1921, Carl Jung spoke of classifying people into four types, oriented by four psychological functions: thinking, feeling, sensations, and intuition. He further divided the types into introverts and extroverts. This is the work that the Myers-Briggs Personality profile is based upon.

SECOND STAGE TRANSFORMATION: CREATING A NEW VISION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

2000 **WEPAN** National Conference

Shortly after Jung's work on classifying people into types, William Marston presented his work on classifying people by their behavior type. This work in 1928 was the first version of the DISC profile. Marston viewed people as behaving along two axes with their actions tending to be active or passive depending upon the individual's perception of the environment as either antagonistic or favorable (see fig. 1). As a side note, it is interesting to know that under the name of Charles Moulton, Marston was the writer and producer of "Wonder Woman" from 1942-1947.

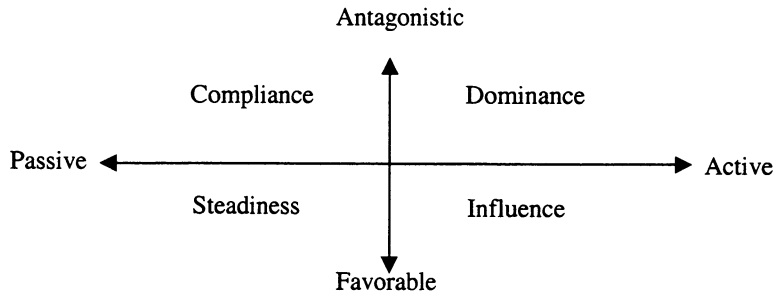


Figure 1 Concept for Classifying Behavior by Marston

By placing these axes at right angles, four quadrants were formed and defined as behavioral patterns: **Dominance**, **Influence**, **Steadiness**, and **Compliance**. Again, the DISC is not a personality evaluation but rather an exploration of your natural and adapted behavioral styles and how it influences your work, others, and yourself. Dominance pertains to how you respond to problems or challenges. Influence is defined as how you influence contacts (others) to your point of view. Steadiness deals with consistency – how you respond to the pace of the environment. Finally, Compliance addresses the issue of constraints – how you respond to rules and procedures set by others. The discrepancy between your natural behavior style and your adapted behavioral style indicates the level of stress you may be experiencing in your workplace setting.

Dominance descriptors include adventuresome, competitive, daring, decisive, direct, innovative, persistent, problem solver, result-oriented, and self-starter. Possible limitations for a "High D" person can be overuse of position, setting standards too high, lacking tact and diplomacy, taking on too much too soon and too fast, and anger.

Descriptors for Influencers include charming, confident, convincing, enthusiastic, inspiring, optimistic, persuasive, popular, sociable, and trusting. Possible limitations include being inattentive to details, unrealistic in appraising people, trust of people indiscriminately, and being a situational listener. "High I" people often display the emotion of optimism.

Steadiness terms include amiable, friendly, good listener, patient, relaxed, sincere, stable, steady, team player and understanding. Possible limitations include yielding to avoid controversy, difficulty in establishing priorities, dislike of unwarranted change, and

difficulty dealing with diverse situations. “High S’s” are sometimes described as nonemotional.

Finally, Compliance descriptors include accurate, analytical, conscientious, courteous, diplomatic, fact-finder, having high standards, mature, patient, and precise. Possible limitations include being defensive when criticized, getting bogged down in details, being overly intense for the situation, and appearing somewhat aloof and cool. Emotion of the “High C” is often fear.

DISC Report Structure

The report generated from the TTI™ DISC addresses fifteen specific areas. First, General Characteristics, provides a broad understanding of one’s work style. Second, Value to the Organization, addresses one’s role within their professional organization. Third, Checklist for Communication provides a list of things to do when communicating with the assessed individual. Fourth, Don’ts on Communicating, is a list of things not to do while communicating with the particular assessed individual. Fifth, Communication Tips are suggestions on methods that can improve your communication with others. By adapting to the communication style best understood by another, one will become more effective in communicating with them.

Next, Ideal Environment looks at specific duties and responsibilities you may enjoy at work and those which create frustration for you. Seventh, Perceptions identify how one may perceive themselves as behaving and how this may be compared/contrasted to what others may perceive. Eighth, Descriptors are simply words that describe your personal behavior with regard to solving problems, meeting challenges, influencing people, responding to the pace of the environment, and how you respond to rules and procedures set by others. Next, Natural and Adapted Styles, looks at your natural style of dealing with problems, people, pace of events and procedures and how/if they fit what the environment needs. This section provides information related to stress and pressure you may feel to adapt to your environment. Tenth, based upon your wants the Keys to Motivation were determined. People are motivated by the things they want; thus wants that are satisfied no longer motivate.

Next, Keys to Managing identifies some needs you must have met in order to function at an optimum level. Some needs can be met by you, while management must provide for others. Twelfth, Areas for Improvement list possible limitations without regard to a specific job. Next, Designing an Action Plan provides examples of areas you may want to improve in. The report includes Behavioral Factor Indicators, Style Analysis Graphs, and the Success Insights Wheel which relay some of the same information above more graphically or visually.

Adapted and Natural Behavior Styles

In the responses to the DISC instrument, individuals are asked to respond to situations regarding behaviors that are most likely to choose in their focus environment. They also respond to the behavior that is least like themselves for the same situations. These two

sets of responses are used to render two profiles. The first, and most adaptable profile, is based on the most likely response answers, and represents the behavior to meet the demand of the environment. This is the behavior you most likely demonstrate to others and is referred to as the adapted behavior. The second profile uses the least likely responses, and moves the profile away from the style indicated by that response. Thus, in identifying and then contrasting what you are least like, the profile generates what your natural behavior is. The natural behavior is much more difficult to change. In addition, large contrasts in the natural and adapted behavior are indications of stress generation for the individual.

The Success Insights Wheel

The TTI™ DISC instrument also generates a success insight wheel. This wheel is based upon the Marston axes and is shown in fig 2. This wheel can be used to graph an individual or groups natural or adapted behaviors. The graph can also be used to show a particular job description, based upon the behaviors needed for the job, in contrast to individual's behavior profiles.

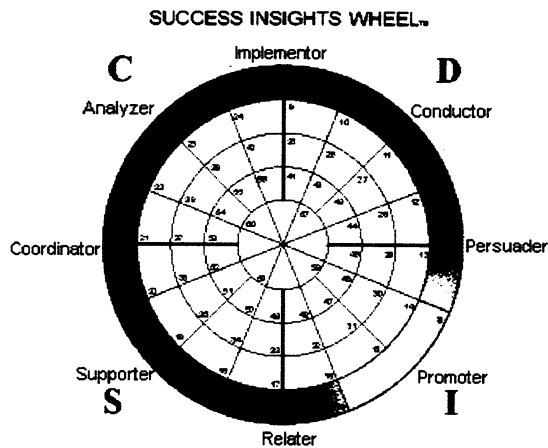


Figure 2 TTI™ DISC Success Insight Wheel format

BEHAVIOR PROFILES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON YOUR WORKPLACE

As with any self-reporting profile instrument, the validity of the results can vary significantly. However, based upon numerous self-reports from various people profiled, the TTI™ DISC tool is very valid. The validity study can be found on the TTI-disc.com website. An important aspect beyond the validity of the tool is how it can be used to initiate and guide discussions about the behavior patterns among groups of individuals.

SECOND STAGE TRANSFORMATION: CREATING A NEW VISION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

2000 **WEPAN** National Conference

In these discussions individuals may come to understand the effects of their behaviors on others. The issue of what is the 'right' behavior can be placed in context of whether there is a 'right' behavior for the job at hand. For example, a job or a class which requires careful analysis of information and data does lend itself more to an analyzer type behavior rather than a promoter.

Another aspect of the use of the profiles is to understand that behaviors have a significant impact on first impressions and social interactions. Using the four major categories for the DISC profile, TABLE 1 demonstrates the level of comfort two individuals may have in interacting with each other.

TABLE 1 DISC Behavior Comfort Level in Interactions

Style\Style	D	I	S	C
D	medium	medium to high	medium to low	low
I	medium to high	very high	medium to low	low
S	medium to low	medium to low	high	medium
C	low	low	medium	medium to high

The Office Environment

There are numerous reasons and ways to use a behavioral profile to help an office to work more effectively. This paper cannot present all of these possibilities. We do offer various recommendations for aspects of the TTI™ DISC report which can be used to focus interactions and learning for groups of workers. Table 2 represents some of these recommendations.

The Students Learning Environments

The TTI™ DISC Behavior profile can be used with students as an instrument for explicit instruction on teaming skills, or as an instrument for faculty to use to understand and better motivate their students. Much like co-workers in an office situation, students can use the behavioral profiles to form and perform in teams more quickly and effectively. Faculty may use the profiles to form teams with various diversities to better educate the students on teamwork. In addition, faculty members may gain insights into the success or failure of students' performing in class based upon their natural styles and possible stress levels. This can lead to modifications of pedagogy to create a better learning environment and/or intervention programs to strengthen students whose behavior is not aligned well with the expectations of a class or curriculum.

Table 2 Recommendations for Use of the TTI™ DISC reports for co-workers

Situation	Report Element	Reasoning
Co-workers need to know each other better	General Characteristics Success Insight Wheel	The use of this area of the report allows those who general do not talk about themselves a mechanism for comfortably expressing things about their behaviors, and it provides a format to contain those who have no difficulty talking about themselves.
Performance issues of a group call for evaluating the organization	Value to the Organization Ideal Environment	The use of these aspects of the report allows individuals and a group to consider how they can best contribute to the vision and mission of an office or organization.
Communication concerns among workers	Checklist for Communication Do's & Don'ts on Communicating	These elements in the report provide a vehicle so that people can dialogue about effective and ineffective means of communicating with them.
High stress levels among workers	Natural and Adapted styles	This section of the report can be used to facilitate a discussion about stress on the individual, whether the stress in job-related or personal.
Under-performance or achievement	Keys to Motivation Keys to Managing	Difficult to use in a group if they do not know and respect each other, so it may be more effective with individual performance discussions. Can be used so that a group works on creating mutually motivating environment.

SUMMARY

The benefits of using a behavioral profile are many. They can be used to measure before-and-after improvement in performance in a targeted behavioral area. They can help an individual and an organization have long-lasting improvement that will continue for as long as you use the procedures. They have universal application to any human performance area for any behavior or output, and with any individual, department or organization. You receive a large return on your investment of behavior assessment cost. Continuing to refer back to the profiles allows individuals and groups the opportunity to continue to reinforce and practice the behaviors that are best for them as individuals and best for the group as a whole. Finally, and possibly most importantly, better employee relations and a better, more productive working environment will exist.