

Communicate with Style

By Dean Savoca

Conflict in the workplace costs time, energy and money. Conflict is inevitable and needs to be addressed. When Sales and Operations clash over proposal content, or when someone is perceived to be a slacker, we spend much time attempting to resolve these issues. It can be frustrating and exhausting. Conflict occurs when two or more interdependent individuals perceive incompatible needs, opinions or goals. Individuals feel the pressure to give up something they value or want. Reduce the pressure - and you reduce the conflict.

Knowing your behavior style and appreciating the behavior styles of others can reduce this pressure because it leads to effective communication. The ability to “communicate with style” (i.e. considering the other person’s behavior style) is directly linked to building more trust, productivity and fulfillment on the job. One of the best tools in understanding behavior style is a DISC® assessment. DISC® is the universal language of observable human behavior, and while it provides an extensive report, for simplicity, we’ll look at four broad behavior types - **dominance, influence, steadiness** and **conscientiousness**.

Follow these three steps to improving how you “communicate with style”:

Step 1 - Understand *Your Own* Behavior Style

Which of these for behavior styles best describes you?

- **High D (Dominant):** You are ambitious, aggressive, forceful, decisive, direct, independent, challenging.
- **High I (Influencer):** You are optimistic, enthusiastic, friendly, demonstrative, talkative, stimulating.
- **High S (Steady):** You are methodical, systematic, reliable, steady relaxed, patient, consistent.
- **High C (Conscientious):** You are analytical, contemplative, conservative, exacting, careful, diplomatic.

Now that you have started to understand *your* style, identify others’ style by observing their behavior.

Step 2 - Appreciate *Others’* Behavior Styles

Think of a person with whom you have experienced conflict. Identify their style to improve communication. No one responds the same all the time, but when we are under pressure we tend to resort back to our natural style.

High Ds are extroverted, task-focused and direct. They use a lot of hand movements, lean forward and may interrupt. They may appear impatient or restless. They are aggressive and may be very critical or strong willed.

High Is are extroverted, people-focused, optimistic, trusting, enthusiastic, and talk a lot. They may see conflict as a waste of time and appear manipulative. They can be impulsive and their solutions may seem unrealistic. They want to move on to more positive topics.

High Ss are introverted, people-focused, non-emotional, relaxed, patient, and resistant to change. They may give in easily but can be defensive. They will listen first and maybe indecisive or offer no opinion at all. They can be possessive.

High Cs are introverted, task-focused, direct, critical, careful, reserved, neat and like alone time. They need time to think things through. They are resistant to change and like to follow the rules. They are slow to act and may become stubborn or resentful.

Recognize anyone here? As we strive to understand others we can learn much about ourselves.

Step 3 - Flex Your Style

We often live by the golden rule “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” This is fine when the “others” have the same values, needs, goals and behavioral style. Our challenge comes when we work with someone who is different. Then the rule that will better serve us is the *platinum* rule: “Do unto others as *they* would have you do unto them.” Flex your style to accommodate their style.

When communicating with a High D: be clear, specific and stick to business. Present facts logically, efficiently; persuade them by referring to results. Help them maintain control of the situation and themselves.

When communicating to a High I: allow time to socialize. Let them know they are appreciated. Talk about people and goals and put details in writing. Ask their opinion and listen. Provide testimonials or stories. Stay positive.

When communicating with a High S: start with personal comments and then move on to business. Be sincere, listen and be responsive. Present your case logically, softly, and nonthreatening. Give them time to think.

When communicating with a High C: provide details and facts. Give them time to think. Maintain high standards, less chitchat, stay task focused and be diplomatic. Ask questions and answer their questions. Let them know that they are right about something.

Addressing conflict saves time, energy and money. Follow the three steps and communicate with style.

To learn more about the DISC® assessment contact Savoca Performance Group.



[Dean Savoca, M.Ed., BCC, CSP™](#) is the performance development partner for leaders who want highly-effective teams that are focused, aligned and inspired. Simply put, Dean helps leaders coach their people. A 25-year veteran of the meetings and events industry, Dean combines an early career in hospitality sales and operations with a Master’s Degree in Organizational Performance and Change, and has spent the last 15 years speaking, training and coaching on leadership and development. He helps people identify the core issues they face daily that impact performance development, people management and team alignment – and rallies them to action, *often right there in the room*. **The result is a better bottom line** – boosted by improved performance, higher productivity, and more cohesive teamwork. Dean is a board-certified coach and has conducted more than 10,000 executive coaching sessions. He is also a Certified Speaking Professional™, conferred by the National Speakers Association, and actively involved in several industry associations.