SOCIAL STYLE
The Essentials

People approach their jobs in a variety of ways. Some people think and act quickly, while others like to take more time; some people are more friendly and sociable, while others are more formal and reserved. At times, these differences can create balance, spark innovative solutions and support a team's sustained high performance.

But all too often differences in "work style" lead to misunderstanding, mistrust, and frustration—not to mention lowered productivity and poor results.

This **self-reflection package** will help you better understand some of those differences in habit, and how those differences impact working relationships. You'll learn and practice skills for applying that understanding to creating better relationships and getting better results, especially in working with people who are very different from yourself.

Working with Other People | A Mixed Bouquet

Lessons in the Garden

It's a sunny June afternoon in my friend's garden. We're sitting with tall glasses of iced tea and she is both pleased and proud. I helped her re-create her garden two years ago, and for the most part, it looks wonderful. The blank spaces are starting to fill in, and some of the plants have spread quite a bit since last year.

"The only things I'm not happy about," she says, "are the roses. I expected them to be full of flowers by this time of year." She points to two shrub roses, a peachy-yellow one and a white one, at the back of the garden. They look all right, but they haven't grown as much as some of the other plants, and the blooms are a little sparse.

"Have you fed them?" I ask.

She looks anxious. "Fed them?"

"Oops, Did we not talk about this?" She shakes her head. "I'm sorry I didn't mention it," I apologize. "Roses need more nutrients than most of the other plants you've chosen. All you have to do is water in a little rose food—it's a kind of fertilizer—a couple of times a year. It's easy; you buy it at the hardware store and the directions are on the bag."

Relieved, she nods and takes a sip of her iced tea, looking over the garden. Then, frowning suspiciously, she looks at me again. "Is there anything else you haven't told me? Do any of these other plants have individual needs you haven't mentioned?"

I smile. "Well, yes, there is a lot I haven't told you. I didn't want to overwhelm you with information. And except for a few specific things, like the rose food, your plants will tell you what they need much better than I could. If you just pay close attention, and get a good book about plant care—so that you know how to understand what you're seeing and how to respond if there's a problem—you should be OK."

My friend has started to look a little disappointed. "What's up?" I ask.

She sighs. "Well, I guess I thought that once we did all that soil preparation and planning, and got plants that were right for the space I have, that would be it."

I nod, realizing I may have done a not-very-good job of managing her expectations. "Look at it this way— if you hadn't done all that, you wouldn't have gotten the beautiful garden you have today. And the rest of what you need to do is pretty straightforward. You've got a great beginning; from here on, it's just a matter of staying attentive to your garden to make sure that each plant is getting what it needs to continue to grow and thrive." Now she's looking worried. "We're talking about a few hours a week, max," I reassure her, and she relaxes—a little. "I'm with you every step of the way on this," I add. "I'll show you how to notice what's happening in your garden and I'll teach you some simple ways to respond to what you see."

Looking happier, my friend salutes me with her iced tea. "OK, you're on."

Staying Usefully Attentive

It's the same with building excellent relationships at work (or at home, for that matter, but we're focusing mainly on work here). It's essential to stay attentive to clients and colleagues, and discover how to best create comfortable and productive relationships with each one. And that's what this article is about.

My friend can spend 24 hours a day gazing at her garden, but if she doesn't know what she's looking for—or what it means when she sees it—that attention isn't going to help her keep her garden thriving. In the same way, you can pay close attention to how your colleagues and clients behave, but if you don't know what you're looking for, or how to understand what you see, your attention may be wasted. Staying usefully attentive means **directing your attention toward those things that will yield you the best information** about how to support a great relationship with a given person.

This article will introduce you to a behavioral model—one that we've used at Proteus International for many years as a tool in coaching individuals and building teams—that provides simple and very "high-yield" things to look for. The model, which was developed almost 50 years ago, is called the SOCIAL STYLE Model™.[1]

The SOCIAL STYLE Model

As anyone who's ever worked with others can tell you, people approach their jobs in a variety of ways. Some people complete tasks quickly, some more slowly. Some like to gather a lot of information before acting, and some like to decide and act quickly. Some are very friendly and personal with co-workers, while others are more reserved and formal. There are people who focus on managing risk and taking the "safe" course, and others for whom breaking new ground is essential. Sometimes these differences can create freshness, balance, interesting relationships and innovative solutions. But all too often, the differences in approach and focus among members of a group lead to misunderstanding, mistrust and frustration—not to mention poor results.

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[1] The Social Style Model is used with the permission of Tracom. We are grateful for their help in making these materials reflect the intent of the creators of the model. Our special thanks to Roger Reid for his insights and support.

The SOCIAL STYLE Model is a simple, practical tool for understanding these differences and for working well with people who are very different from you, so that all your team mates' strengths can be well used, and every client can be dealt with in a way that works best for them and creates the best outcomes.

Like many useful inventions, the SOCIAL STYLE Model was discovered by accident. In the early 1960s, two industrial psychologists named Roger Reid and David Merrill were working with a large US-based insurance company to find out whether there were simple behavioral markers that could predict leadership potential. They reasoned that if they could screen for these hypothetical behaviors when hiring new managers, they could create a culture of highly effective leaders.

Unfortunately, they were completely unsuccessful in predicting leadership potential through behavioral assessment. Fortunately, they discovered something else. Reid and Merrill found that when they assessed people relative to three behavioral dimensions—which they called assertiveness, responsiveness and versatility—they could predict many other useful things. For example, they could tell how people would be likely to approach tasks and relationships with others; what parts of a project they would tend to focus on and which would be less compelling for them; what some of their key interpersonal strengths and weaknesses would be; how they would like and need to be managed; and how they would tend to team and to manage others.

Over a period of years, Reid and Merrill tested and validated their model with a wide variety of men and women in many different work situations. The model's predictive value held true, even— with slight modifications—for cultures outside the US and for non-work situations.

Today the model is used in a variety of ways. For example, it can be taught as a way to help salespeople sell appropriately to customers of various styles. Anyone can use the SOCIAL STYLE Model to become more self-aware, to recognize and build on their style-based strengths and mitigate the impact of their style-based weaknesses. Teams can use the model to make best use of all team members' strengths and to better integrate people of any style into the team. Anyone, in any situation, can use the SOCIAL STYLE concept to begin to see him or herself as others see them (a very valuable insight) and to behave in ways that create productive relationships with people of every style.

I want to give you some simple ways to take advantage of the SOCIAL STYLE concepts in being usefully attentive to partners, team mates and clients; in order to do that, I need to give you a basic foundation in what the model is and how it works. If you're already familiar with the SOCIAL STYLE model feel free to use this next section as a review.

The Three Dimensions of the SOCIAL STYLE Model

As I mentioned earlier, three behavioral dimensions form the core of the SOCIAL STYLE Model. A behavioral dimension is an area of behavior within which people make different choices and have different capabilities. For instance, think of musicality as a behavioral dimension. Some people like to sing, some don't; some have excellent rhythm while some have difficulty keeping time to a simple beat; some people can convey tremendous emotion through music and some focus only on technique. All these behaviors can be ranged along the dimension of "musicality" from more to less.

The three dimensions Merrill and Reid focused on in creating the SOCIAL STYLE Model were—in their words—assertiveness, responsiveness and versatility. Let's look at each one separately.

Assertiveness means something very specific in this model. Merrill and Reid defined it *as "the extent to which other people perceive you as trying to persuade or convince them of your point of view."* In this model, people who are highly assertive are those who try to accomplish what's important to them by directly influencing others. People who are less assertive, in this model, accomplish what's important to them through other means; for instance through creating new systems or processes, through gathering supportive data, or through sounding out others on their ideas.

Merrill and Reid created a horizontal line, divided into four quartiles, along which a person's behaviors on this dimension could be placed.

ASSERTIVENESS

| Ask				Tell
D	C	B	A	
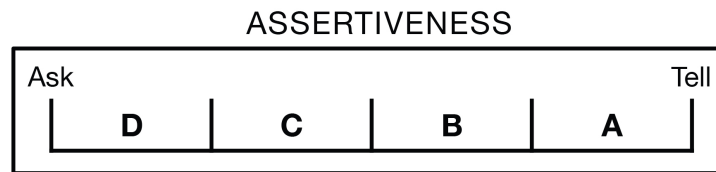
It's important to recognize that this definition is somewhat different than the general definition of assertiveness today. We've come to think of assertiveness as a good thing; we connect it with high self-esteem and an appropriate level of self-confidence. It's important to understand that in this model, higher and lower levels of assertiveness as Merrill and Reid defined it can be equally effective (or ineffective).

There are specific behaviors that go along with these differing levels of assertiveness: people who are more assertive tend to speak, move and respond more quickly; to tell others their thoughts and opinions; and to be forceful in their gestures and decisions.

People who are less assertive tend to speak, move and respond more slowly; to gather ideas and information from others before expressing their own opinions; and to be more reserved and moderate in their gestures and decisions.

Responsiveness, the second dimension in this model, means *"the level to which you are perceived as controlling or revealing your emotions."* People who are highly responsive are very easy to "read"; their face, voice, body and words convey how they feel about things. People who are low on the responsiveness scale are much harder to read; they give few vocal or facial clues, and they don't talk much about emotions, preferring to focus on facts. Merrill and Reid created a vertical line, again divided into four quartiles, along which they placed people's behaviors on this dimension.

RESPONSIVENESS

Control
1
2
3
4
Display
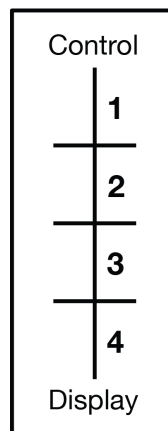
As with assertiveness, there are clusters of predictable behaviors that tend to go along with high and low responsiveness. People who are highly responsive also tend to be relationship- and people-oriented, fun-loving, intuitive, and holistic in their thinking.

People who are low on the responsiveness scale tend to be more task- and fact-focused, serious-minded, logical and linear in their thinking.

Reid and Merrill then laid the two dimensions over each other, creating a grid:
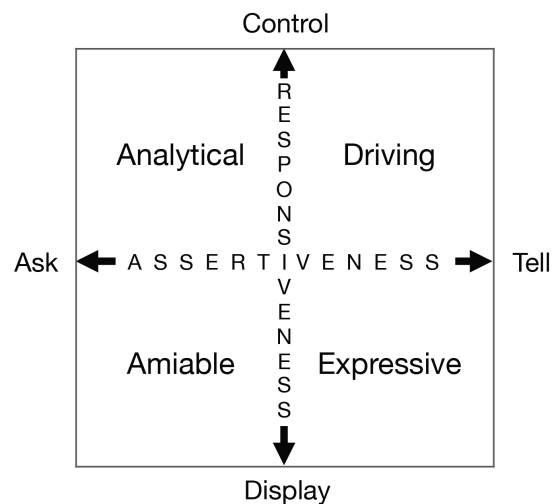
Four Styles

They discovered that each quadrant of the grid generally predicted a cluster of preferences, behaviors and approaches that they termed a Social Style. The four styles defined by the grid are as follows:

Driver: High assertive and low responsive (upper right quadrant). These people are fast-paced and decisive, and they can be impatient with those who don't keep up with them.

Their favored approach is to act quickly, based on the information they consider relevant—and to make course corrections later if needed. Drivers specialize in pragmatism, candidness, coolness under pressure, and completing tasks quickly. Others tend to perceive them as work-oriented, efficient and demanding.

Expressive: High assertive and high responsive (lower right quadrant). These people are fast moving and adventuresome. They like to come up with new ideas. Their favored approach is to create a vision of the possibilities and then get others' support by selling the benefits of their vision. Expressives specialize in energy, enthusiasm, humor and risk-taking.

Others tend to perceive them as persuasive, high-energy, creative and impulsive.

Amiable: Low assertive and high responsive (lower left quadrant). These people are considerate and supportive. They like to take time to build rapport and to focus on team results. Their favored approach is to get consensus and to mediate—they believe that the best solution is one where everyone involved is "on board." Amiables specialize in compassion, loyalty, mediation and building trust. Others tend to perceive them as kind, skilled with people and teams, and somewhat self-effacing.

Analytical: Low assertive and low responsive (upper left quadrant). These people are cautious and thoughtful. They like to make sure that all the details are in place before moving ahead. Their favored approach is to minimize risk by looking at all the options before making a decision. Analyticals specialize in correctness, precision, prudence and objectivity. Others tend to perceive them as cool, rational, and somewhat detached.

The Third (and most important) Dimension

Versatility, the third dimension, was defined by Merrill and Reid *as the level to which others perceive you as being willing to modify your preferred behaviors to make others more comfortable*. This dimension is by far the most important in a developmental sense. While there is no better or worse place to be on the dimensions of assertiveness and responsiveness—that is, no better or worse "style"—it is definitely better to have higher versatility.

For example, take a woman who is an Analytical—low responsive and low assertive. She is going to prefer a more deliberate pace; to plan and think carefully before making a decision; to look at all the facts. Let's say she's working on a project with a man who is an Expressive—high on both responsiveness and assertiveness. This colleague is likely to enjoy brainstorming new approaches, moving quickly, and being more informal in his interactions.

If our Analytical is highly versatile, she is likely to speed up a bit in this interaction and be less formal, and to be more open to entertaining ideas that may not make logical sense to begin with, all in order to help her interaction with the Expressive go more smoothly and be more productive. If she is a low-versatile Analytical, on the other hand, she would keep her pace and decision-making approach the same as usual, focusing only on meeting her own style needs, rather than responding to the Expressive's style preferences.

Merrill and Reid visualized versatility like this, dividing the dimension into four quartiles:

VERSATILITY

LOW My Tension			HIGH Others' Tension
W	X	Y	Z

V
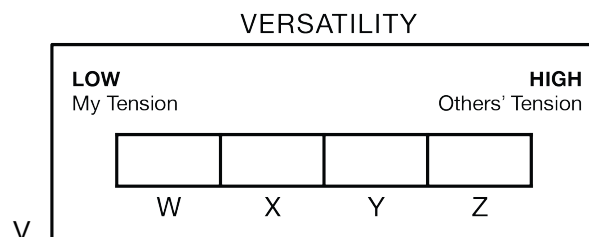
You'll notice that the low versatile end of this scale also says "my tension." This means that others perceive low-versatile people as doing those things that reduce their own tension and make them feel more comfortable.

Our low-versatile Analytical, above, is a good example of this. Facts, logic, and a deliberate pace make her feel most comfortable, and that's how she interacts with her Expressive colleague—even though it might be less comfortable for him. A high-versatile Analytical, on the other hand, would focus more on reducing the "other's tension," demonstrating the faster pace and less formal thinking that would probably feel comfortable to the Expressive. It's easy to see from the preceding example how a high-versatility person would be better able to build trust and rapport and to work more successfully with a wider variety of people.

When someone receives a Social Style profile as part of a coaching or workshop, they get an indication of how others rate their versatility. Without that profile, there's no sure way to measure your versatility. So, for our purposes here, I'll share something I've learned over the years of using this model. One informal way to get a sense of someone's versatility is to notice how and to what extent they seem to modify their behaviors when dealing with others. If they seem good at "reading" people, and if they are able to speed up or slow down, and to be more informal or formal, as the situation demands, then they probably have fairly high versatility.

Clues for Reading Assertiveness and Responsiveness

Now I'm going to give you a framework for directing your attention, based on the SOCIAL STYLE Model. There are a few simple clues that provide a quick and fairly reliable fix on a person's Social Style, and knowing a person's style can give you lots of good information about how to work most effectively with them.

Below you'll find "clues" for Assertiveness and for Responsiveness. Since SOCIAL STYLE is a behavioral Model, these clues are all fairly easy to observe in the course of interacting with a person.

ASSERTIVENESS	D	C	B	A
VOLUME	softer			louder
PACE	slower			faster
PERSONAL SPACE	away			in
COMMUNICATION	ask			tell
EMPHASIS	less			more
DECISION-MAKING	slower			faster

Volume: How loudly does the person speak? Also, how much "volume" do they have personally; do they slip quietly into a room, or do they have a "big" presence? People with less "volume" fall toward the left side of the assertiveness scale (very soft would be "D," while moderately soft would be "C"). People with more volume fall toward the right (very loud volume would be "A," moderately loud would be "B").

Pace: How quickly does the person speak, move, act, decide? For instance, if you ask some people a question, they'll start to answer even before you've finished speaking, while others will pause and reflect before they respond. People whose pace is slower fall toward the left side of the assertiveness scale (D or C); people whose pace is faster fall on the right (A or B).

Personal space: When you're interacting with this person, does he or she tend to "lean in" to the conversation physically, sitting forward or standing relatively close and gesturing toward you, or does he or she "lean away"—sitting or standing back and gesturing toward him or herself? People who "lean away" tend to fall on the left side of the scale, while people who "lean in" fall on the fun-loving more relationship intuition more Approach: Generally, how does the person approach life? Do they seem more serious-minded (even if they have a good sense of humor), or do they seem more fun-loving (even when engaged in a serious pursuit)? People who are more serious-minded fall above the middle of the responsiveness scale (very serious-minded would be "1," while moderately so would be "2"). People who are more fun-loving fall below the middle (very fun-loving would be "4," while moderately fun-loving would be "3").

Communicating: In working with other people, how much does this person focus on telling others what he or she thinks or feels, and how much does he or she focus on asking what others think or feel? For example, if you invite the person to share his opinion about something, is he more likely to state it immediately, or to ask some questions first? People who are more "ask" oriented fall on the left side of the scale, while people who are more "tell" oriented fall on the right.

Emphasis: With how much emphasis does this person express his or her point of view? For example, two people may feel equally strongly about a topic, but one will express her opinion by saying "we have to…" or "it's critical that we…" while the other person may say "we might want to consider…" or "it may be important to…" People who express themselves more moderately and less emphatically fall toward the left side of the assertiveness scale, while those who express themselves more strongly and definitively fall to the right.

Decision-making: How does this person make decisions? Some people feel most comfortable having the opportunity to gather information or opinions and think or talk through all the elements of a decision before coming to a final determination, while others feel comfortable assessing the situation and deciding more quickly. Those who prefer to take more time in decision-making fall onto the left side of the scale, while those who decide quickly fall on the right.

RESPONSIVENESS

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS	GESTURES	INFLECTION	APPROACH	FOCUS	THINKING
1 less	1 less	1 less	1 serious	1 task	1 logic
2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3
4 more	4 more	4 more	4 fun loving	4 relationship	4 intuition

Facial expressions: How easy is it to tell what this person is feeling by looking at his or her face?

For example, if you videotaped this person speaking on a topic about which they felt strongly, and then watched the tape without the sound, would you still be able to tell how they felt? People whose faces don't show much expression fall above the middle of the responsiveness scale (1 or 2); people whose faces show more of how they feel fall below the middle (3 or 4).

Gestures: How much gesturing or moving around does this person do when he or she is talking?

Some people tend to be pretty "set," even when they're discussing something about which they feel strongly—they sit in one place and don't move their hands much. Other people use their hands freely to emphasize what they say, or stand up and move around to make a point. People who gesture less fall above the middle of this scale, while those who gesture more fall below the middle.

Vocal inflection: When this person is speaking, how much does his or her voice vary—in pitch, speed, or volume? This is especially easy to notice on the phone; some people's voices stay within a fairly small range of pitch, speed and volume, while others' voices vary a lot—you can tell how they feel by listening to what's happening with their voices. People whose voices have less inflection fall above the midpoint of the scale, while people whose voices have more inflection fall below the midpoint.

Approach: Generally, how does the person approach life? Do they seem more serious-minded (even if they have a good sense of humor), or do they seem more fun-loving (even when engaged in a serious pursuit)? People who are more serious-minded fall above the middle of the responsiveness scale (very serious-minded would be "1," while moderately so would be "2"). People who are more fun-loving fall below the middle (very fun-loving would be "4," while moderately fun-loving would be "3").

Focus: Where does this person put his or her primary focus when approaching work? Some people "lead" with task; in a new job, for instance, they'll start by making sure they're clear on the objectives and creating a plan of work. Other people "lead" with relationship; they'll begin a new job by making connections with everyone they'll be working with. Those who prefer to lead with task fall above the midpoint of the scale, while those who lead with relationship fall below the midpoint.

Thinking: In thinking through a project or problem, does this person rely more on intuition or logic? For example, if you ask someone how he or she came to a decision, are they more likely to give you a rational explanation, or to tell you that it "felt right"? People who rely more on logic fall above the midpoint of the scale; people who are more swayed by intuition fall below the midpoint.

TRY IT OUT: Practice Style Reading

Below, I've described my interactions with two different people (actual clients who've been profiled in the SOCIAL STYLE Model). Using the clues I've just explained, assess each person's Social Style. At the end of the article, I've noted how these folks were actually profiled, so you can see how your assessments of them match up with their real profiles.

Ms. X

As I come into her office, Ms. X, a senior HR executive, looks up and nods to me. "I'm sorry I'm running a little late," she says gently, "it's a bit crazy here today." She asks me to sit down while she finishes writing an email. She taps on her keyboard for a few minutes, rereads what she's written, then pushes the send key. She gets up from her desk and, bringing a couple of folders, walks over to her conference table and sits down carefully across from me. She smiles and says hello, then asks me for my understanding of why we're meeting, to make sure we're on the same page. Her voice is low-pitched and soft, and her expression, while pleasant and open, is neutral.

The first item on our agenda is to discuss another senior executive at this company and how we might be able to help him build a more effective team. The person we're talking about really seems to be struggling—he's very bright and talented, but his people aren't happy—and they're increasingly less productive. Ms. X asks me my opinion, about both the executive and how he manages his team. As I speak, she listens attentively, making some notes on a piece of paper in one of her folders. After I've offered my point of view, I ask for her perspective. She nods thoughtfully, looks down at the page before her, and then responds. "What you've said makes a lot of sense," she says slowly. "I've thought about this a lot, and I agree that he needs to spend more time with his employees. He doesn't seem to recognize that they require more leadership and direction—that they're quite a bit more junior than he is." She stops and puts her pen down, sitting back and clasping her hands loosely in her lap. "Do you have a suggestion about how we might help him?" she asks.

I note that he would be an excellent candidate for executive coaching—he's open to feedback and has said to me on more than one occasion that he'd like to become a more effective manager and leader. Again, Ms. X nods thoughtfully. "Hmm, that might be a very good idea," she says, considering. "Let me think about how to present the possibility to him, and what would be the best way to bring the idea up to our president—his boss." She pauses again, thinking. "How about if I let you know whether we want to proceed on this next week?"

I reply that would be fine, and we move to our next topic…

Based on what I've written above, how might you assess Ms. X on each of the clues? Use the worksheet on the next page to practice "reading" her style.

ASSERTIVENESS

	D	C	B	A
VOLUME	softer			louder
PACE	slower			faster
PERSONAL SPACE	away			in
COMMUNICATION	ask			tell
EMPHASIS	less			more
DECISION-MAKING	slower			faster

RESPONSIVENESS

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS	GESTURES	INFLECTION	APPROACH	FOCUS	THINKING
1 less	**1** less	**1** less	**1** serious	**1** task	**1** logic
2	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**
3	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**
4 more	**4** more	**4** more	**4** fun loving	**4** relationship	**4** intuition

Average of all Assertiveness clues: _____

Average of all Responsiveness clues: _____

Style Reading: _____

Now, on the SOCIAL STYLE "map" below, write "Ms. X" in the box where her assertiveness and responsiveness averages intersect. For instance, "Joe," the made-up person noted below on the map, averaged "A," and "2".

OK, let's try it again with a very different person:

Mr. Z

I meet Mr. Z in the hallway, walking toward his office. "Hey!" he calls. "I'm just coming from a meeting. How the heck are you?"

He gives me a friendly pat on the shoulder. I tell him I'm having a great day, and we talk a little about our families as we arrive at his office. He motions me toward one of the comfortable chairs near his desk, as he settles into the sofa next to it. He sprawls comfortably, his long legs stretched in front of him. This is the first time I've been to see him since he took a new job, running a start-up venture within a larger organization. Mr. Z gestures around the big office, a large window providing a great city view. "Nice digs, right?" He rolls his eyes, self-deprecating and half embarrassed. "You deserve it," I answer, smiling. He clasps his hands behind his head, sighing. "You bet. For all the hard work that I haven't done here yet." I laugh, and so does he.

"OK, down to business," he says, still smiling. He sits up and leans toward me, putting his elbows on his knees. "I want to do some kind of an off-site with all my folks. I need to spend some time with them, make sure we're all on the same page." He speaks quickly and enthusiastically. "We're going to be hiring a lot of new people over the next six months, and the people who are already here need to be the core. I want them to know who I am and feel comfortable with me and with each other. You got some ideas about how to do that?" He grins. "What am I saying? Of course you have ideas!"

I smile back and note that I'd like to ask him a few questions first, so I understand more about what he wants to get out of the off-site. "Sure," he replies easily. "Oh, and while I'm thinking of it…" he gets up and goes over to his desk, sorts through papers for a minute, and picks out a sheet, which he hands me. "My current org chart," he notes, "including all the TBDs for the people we haven't hired yet."

"Do you want to do the off-site soon, or wait until you've got more of these positions filled?" I ask, looking at the org chart. He responds right away. "Well, I'm only missing one direct report—my finance person— and I've got two good candidates; I'm sure one of them will end up in the job. So let's do it as soon as that person's in place. I think if we scheduled it for early next month, it would be fine. Oh, wait." He smiles at me. "Do you have any time free early next month?" "I do," I respond. "How about if my assistant calls your office with my open dates?" "Great!" he replies, nodding...

Based on this, how might you assess Mr. Z on each of the clues? Use the worksheet on the next page to practice reading his style.

ASSERTIVENESS

	D	C	B	A
VOLUME	softer			louder
PACE	slower			faster
PERSONAL SPACE	away			in
COMMUNICATION	ask			tell
EMPHASIS	less			more
DECISION-MAKING	slower			faster

RESPONSIVENESS

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS	GESTURES	INFLECTION	APPROACH	FOCUS	THINKING
1 less	1 less	1 less	1 serious	1 task	1 logic
2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3
4 more	4 more	4 more	4 fun loving	4 relationship	4 intuition

Average of all Assertiveness clues: _____

Average of all Responsiveness clues: _____

Style Reading: _____

Now, on the SOCIAL STYLE map a few pages back, write "Mr. Z" in the box where his assertiveness and responsiveness averages intersect. (Remember, the actual profiles for both Ms. X and Mr. Z are at the end of the article.)

Tie-breakers

What if you're not quite sure of someone's style? For instance, what if you've clearly assessed someone as an "A", but they come out right in between a "2" and a "3" in responsiveness? How do you know whether this person is a Driver or an Expressive?

People of each style seem to have a "bottom line" when working on a project: the thing that, if they have their choice, they're generally most concerned about achieving. If you're on the fence about someone's style based on the clues, ask yourself, based on your experience of them, which style's "bottom line" is more descriptive of that person. Here are the SOCIAL STYLE "tie-breakers," the bottom line for each style:

<table>
<tr><td>"Get it correct"</td><td>"Get it done"</td></tr>
<tr><td>**Analytical**</td><td>**Driving**</td></tr>
<tr><td>**Amiable**</td><td>**Expressive**</td></tr>
<tr><td>"Get it together"</td><td>"Get it further"</td></tr>
</table>

Drivers want to get it done. They take deadlines seriously, plus they derive great satisfaction from completing tasks or projects and moving on to the next challenge.

Expressives want to get it further. They get excited about the idea of breaking new ground in their areas of interest, and rarely feel satisfied settling for the status quo. Amiables want to get to it together. They really enjoy figuring out how to reach a goal without leaving people behind; they'd prefer to see everybody on board and committed to the result.

Analyticals want to get it correct. They see accuracy as being key to excellence, and generally don't feel comfortable with "close enough."

In our example above, about the person you've assessed as either an A2 or and A3—Driver or Expressive—you'd ask yourself, "Is this person's bottom line get it done or get it *further*? And your answer would "break the tie" and let you know which style they are most likely to be.

TRY IT OUT: Real Life Style Reading

Using what you've learned so far, try profiling your colleagues, your clients, your boss and yourself. One caveat: rather than trying to do it right now, I suggest you spend the next few days being "usefully attentive"; note how these people actually behave. Then, when you feel reasonably confident that you've observed enough to use the clues on the style reading worksheet below, assess each person individually on the clues.

When you're done, create the "map" of your key work relationships on the next page.

ASSERTIVENESS

	D	C	B	A
VOLUME	softer			louder
PACE	slower			faster
PERSONAL SPACE	away			in
COMMUNICATION	ask			tell
EMPHASIS	less			more
DECISION-MAKING	slower			faster

RESPONSIVENESS

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS	GESTURES	INFLECTION	APPROACH	FOCUS	THINKING
1 less	1 less	1 less	1 serious	1 task	1 logic
2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3
4 more	4 more	4 more	4 fun loving	4 relationship	4 intuition

Average of all Assertiveness clues: _____

Average of all Responsiveness clues: _____

Style Reading: _____

My Style Map

D	C	B	A

Control/Task

| | | 1 |
| | | 2 |

Ask   Tell

| | | 3 |
| | | 4 |

Display/Relationship
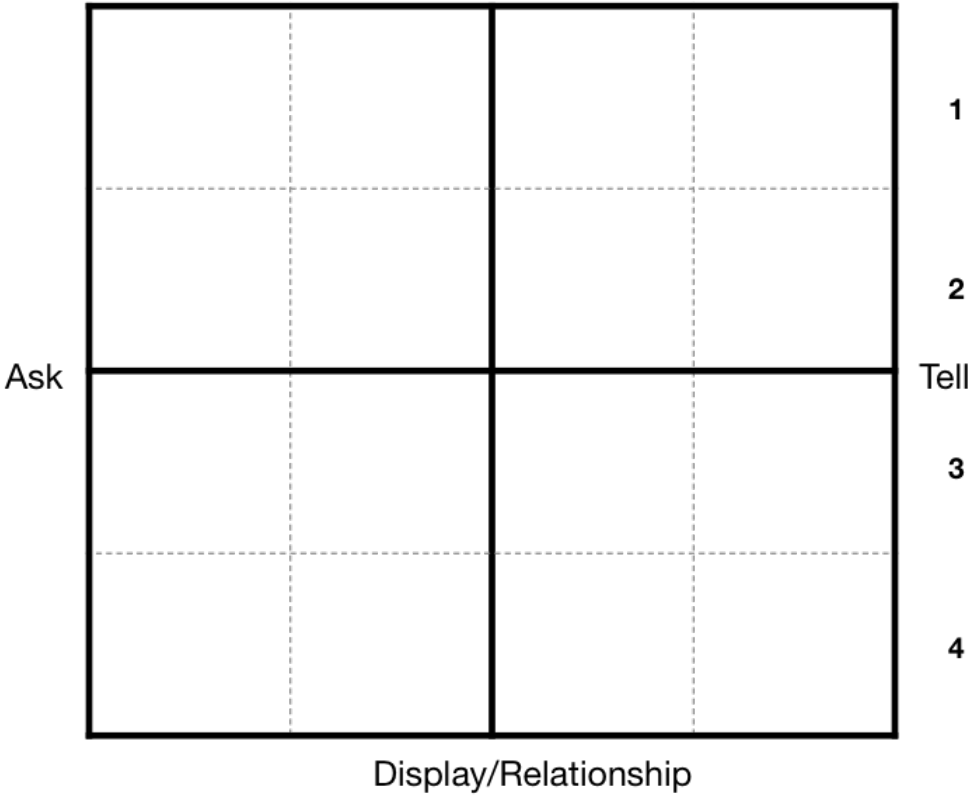
Making it Practical

Once you have a fairly clear idea of someone's Social Style, you have a lot of useful information about how they like and need to be worked with, and about how to help them succeed. So far in this article, we've focused on the "what to look for" part of being attentive to your colleagues and clients. Now I want to give you some insight about how to respond to what you see. The table below offers a top-line approach to working with each of the four styles. On the pages that follow, I've expanded on these key ideas.

Style	How They Like to Work	What They Need (but may not like)	Critical Growth Area
Driver	• Clear goals and timeframes • Rewards for meeting goals and deadlines • Succinct meetings and direction • Autonomy	• To learn to dialogue • To be encouraged to gather more data • To be required to build consensus • To be held accountable for the "how" as well as the "what"	**Look for others' perspective**
Expressive	• To talk through decisions and plans • To be supported to innovate • Acknowledged for contributions • Freedom to get results in their own way	• To learn to communicate the essence • To be encouraged to plan • To recognize the impact of their words and actions • To be held accountable for getting clear agreements	**Do reality checks**
Amiable	• Time to build teams and relationships • Knowing how decisions affect people • Well-defined structures and interactions • Support for their actions and decisions	• To learn to confront difficult issues • To be encouraged to say what they think • To recognize when a person or project can't be "saved" • To be held accountable for necessary decision-making	**Take a stand**
Analytical	• Sufficient information • Time to think through the implications • Lead time for making decisions • Calm and balanced feedback	• To learn to make quick decisions • To be encouraged to lead with the positives • To recognize when they need to "make a case" • To be held accountable for timely results	**Share their thinking**

Drivers

STYLE-BASED STRENGTHS

- Decisiveness
- Efficiency
- Candor
- Results orientation
- Pragmatism
- Toughness
- Willingness to take risks
- Encourage team to decide quickly and take action

Drivers are fast-paced and decisive, and they can be impatient with those who don't keep up with them. Their favored approach is to act quickly, based on the information they consider relevant—and to make any necessary course corrections later. They specialize in pragmatism, candor, coolness under pressure and completing tasks quickly. Others tend to perceive them as work-oriented, efficient and demanding.

For colleagues who are Drivers, remember that they tend to focus on *getting it done*. If you provide clarity about what's expected and whether they've achieved it, support them having as much autonomy as possible and then acknowledge them for reaching the finish line, they'll be quite satisfied and productive.

Typical Driver Weaknesses

However, this important strength, this ability to move forward to accomplish goals quickly and efficiently regardless of obstacles, is also likely to be their Achilles' heel. The main reason Drivers can get complex stuff done quickly is that they tend to tune out distractions and, unfortunately, Drivers can sometimes see other people and their ideas and concerns as a distraction! When they get too narrowly focused on moving things forward, they can be seen as autocratic, or as not taking time to consider alternatives, or as impatient or inconsiderate. So, you can support a Driver colleague's growth and effectiveness (or your own, if you're a Driver) by helping him or her learn to look for others' perspectives.

Expressives

STYLE-BASED STRENGTHS

- Stimulate creativity
- A sense of fun
- Energy and enthusiasm
- Focus on vision
- Promote team spirit
- Willingness to try new things, break new ground
- Encourage team to be the best

Expressives are fast-moving and adventuresome. They like to come up with new ideas. Their favored approach is to create a vision of the future and then get others' support by selling the benefits of their vision. They specialize in energy, enthusiasm, humor, and risk-taking. Others tend to perceive them as persuasive, innovative, and impulsive

Your Expressive colleagues, in general, will be most excited by the prospect of breaking new ground. Remember, their rallying cry *is getting it further.* They will enjoy working with you and do their best work if you give them as much freedom of movement as possible; let them think out loud, consider a variety of options, and accomplish the results in their own—sometimes quirky—way, rather than being constrained by unnecessary rules. Most Expressives also enjoy being regularly and sincerely acknowledged for their contributions—they want to know that someone "gets" them and the unique value they bring.

Typical Expressive Weaknesses

As with the Drivers, however (and as you'll see, with the Amiables and Analyticals as well) the Expressives' strengths, when overused or used to an extreme degree, can also be their greatest weaknesses. Their ability to think and act in innovative ways can slip into a stubborn unwillingness to look at the constraints, or follow even necessary rules, or take responsibility for the negative impact of their actions. You can help Expressive teammates and clients to balance out these tendencies by helping them to do reality checks.

By "doing reality checks," I mean looking at the downsides and implications of an exciting idea before recommending it or moving ahead with it. Because Expressives, as a group, are so focused on the possibilities inherent in a situation, they tend not to be looking at the pitfalls and consequences. You can help Expressive colleagues understand that thinking about what might get in the way of achieving the possibilities they can so clearly envision isn't just a buzz-kill—it will help them gain credibility, help them

sell their ideas, and keep them from making embarrassing and costly mistakes. Once your Expressives understand what's in it for them to do reality checks, they'll be much more open to your efforts to help them learn how.

Amiables

STYLE-BASED STRENGTHS

- Supportiveness
- Empathy
- Loyalty
- Team orientation
- Concern with others' development
- Willingness to share recognition
- Encourage the team to look for win-win solutions

Amiables are considerate and supportive. They like to take time to build rapport and to focus on team results. Their favored approach is to find common ground and to gain consensus. They believe the best solution is generally one where everyone involved is "on board." They specialize in compassion, loyalty, mediation, and building trust. Others tend to perceive them as kind, skilled with people and teams, and somewhat self-effacing

Amiables are, of all the styles, the people to whom teaming seems to come most naturally. Remember, their bottom line is *getting to it together.*

Amiables tend to understand the power of getting people fully engaged in and committed to creating results. Most Amiables are good at seeing both sides of a debate, and at encouraging different types of people to work together. Support them to build teams and relationships within a reasonably well-defined structure; offer the context they need to understand how the decisions they make will affect others; and be consistent in supporting their actions and decisions—and you will be rewarded with an extremely productive and mutually supportive teammate.

Typical Amiable Weaknesses

As with the other styles, these Amiable strengths have a dark side. When over-relied upon, the Amiable's focus on mediation and consensus can turn into an unwillingness to confront difficult issues, and a perception by others that the Amiable can be taken advantage of, can't take decisive action, or doesn't have a strong point of view. The key way to support increased effectiveness for your Amiable colleagues is to help them learn to take a stand.

Taking a stand involves communicating and acting on a definitive position on issues about which you feel strongly, even when others may disagree, or when your position may put a strain on relationships. Building on this, when working toward performance goals with Amiables, it's especially important to set up your work together so that they make timely decisions. If you don't set clear deadlines, not only for results but also for the decisions intrinsic to those results, they may avoid making difficult but necessary decisions.

Analyticals

STYLE-BASED STRENGTHS

- Objectivity
- Precision
- Thoroughness
- Attention to detail
- Systematic thinking
- Emotional consistency
- Willingness to explore alternatives
- Encourage team to think carefully and be rational

Analyticals are thoughtful and cautious. They like to make sure all of the details are in place before moving ahead. Their favored approach is to minimize risk by looking at all the options before making a decision. They specialize in correctness, prudence, and objectivity. Others tend to perceive them as cool, rational, and somewhat detached.

Any Analytical people in your work group are most likely to be the people you rely on for precision, accuracy, and a balanced presentation of the facts. Many teams informally rely on their resident Analyticals as a kind of safety net—to keep them from missing important elements of a situation or leaving things undone.

Most Analyticals devote a lot of focus and skill to *getting it correct*. If you provide enough information and time to do what you've asked, they will not only deliver excellent work, but with all the backup and contingency plans you could ever want! And if you, as their colleague, also offer feedback—either about their performance or their results—in a calm and balanced way, they will generally be quite satisfied and productive working with you.

Typical Analytical Weaknesses

The flip side of this strength—as we've already seen with the other styles' strengths—is problematic. When taken to an extreme, the Analyticals' focus on detail and precision, on facts and backup, can turn into an unwillingness to decide quickly when necessary, or to consider intangibles, or to see how others might look at a set of facts and come to a different conclusion. They can then be seen as negative, inflexible, and/or risk-averse. You can help your Analytical colleagues avoid these problems by encouraging them to share their thinking.

Here's how this works: many Analyticals don't share their thinking because they don't see why it's necessary. They tend to believe that everything can be decided factually, and that if two people look at the same set of data, they will come to the same conclusion. "Selling an idea" is a foreign concept to many Analyticals. You can help your Analytical colleagues understand that letting people know how they came to a conclusion, or why they are taking a certain course of action, or how a project is progressing, will make it much more likely that others will understand and support their efforts. When Analyticals start to see this positive impact of sharing their thinking, they are much more likely to want to continue doing it.

In setting performance goals with Analyticals, be especially careful to agree on reasonable timetables for results. If you don't specify a deadline, many Analyticals will assume that they can take as long as it takes to get it right. On the other hand, if you specify a deadline that the Analytical believes is unrealistically tight, he or she may not say so (not sharing their thinking). So it's important to set timeframes and deadlines that seem appropriate and realistic to both of you.

Developing Your Versatility

It's important to note that, the more versatile someone is, the easier it will be for him or her to accept the idea of doing things differently—highly versatile people are those who have already discovered how shifting their behaviors can create better relationships and help them overcome their own shortcomings. So, while it may be more difficult to use the growth strategies outlined above with teammates or clients whose versatility is low, it will be especially useful to them: helping them learn to "stretch" in these ways will significantly increase their versatility, and their effectiveness.

TRY IT OUT: "Flexing" Your Style

Let's put this into practice. You've already taken a pass at profiling team mates and clients. From that group, select the person with whom you would most like to work on creating a more productive and positive relationship.

1. Write his or her name and Social Style: _____

2. Based on what you've read above, decide and write down:
   One or two specific ways you can better work with this person in the ways they like, given his or her SOCIAL STYLE:

   _____

   _____

   _____

   One or two specific actions you can take to provide for them "what they need but may not like," in order to improve team results and help them develop in their style-based areas of growth:

   _____

   _____

   _____

Putting It All Together

I'd suggest that you try implementing your "flexing" plan on the previous page over the next few weeks, and see how it works and what you may have to do differently. Then, based on what you've learned (about yourself and the other person) you can use this same simple, practical approach to take advantage of what you've learned in this article to work with your colleagues and clients more effectively.

Here's a way to create a simple structure for yourself to help assure that you continue to explore and refine your use of SOCIAL STYLE as a tool:

• Make a copy of the SOCIAL STYLE "map" you created in earlier—the one that includes you, your boss, and your key colleagues and clients.

• Create a folder for your current files (or whatever system you use to keep track of ongoing activities) called "SOCIAL STYLE" and slip in the map.

• Use this folder to keep track of efforts you make (like the process you've just gone through above) to support and work with people in ways that acknowledge and build upon their Social Style. Any time you have an insight about someone's Social Style, or want to think through a conversation about how to take advantage of a person's style based strengths or help them overcome their style-based weaknesses, put it in the folder. After a few months, you may find you no longer need a separate folder, and that you will automatically factor in a person's Style when interacting with him or her.

How Did You Do?

Oh, by the way, Ms. X was profiled as a D3, and Mr. Z was profiled as a B4. How did you do on reading their styles?

BIG IDEAS

Once a gardener has planned and planted a garden, he or she needs to stay attentive to the garden, in order to make sure each plant gets what it needs to continue to thrive. A professional also needs to stay usefully attentive to the people critical for his or her success: clients, colleagues, partners, etc. to assure effective working relationships and great results.

The **SOCIAL STYLE Model** provides an approach to what to look for, and how to use what you see, so that you can work with each person in the way that will be both most enjoyable and most helpful to him or her:

Drivers: are task and goal-focused, compelled toward *getting it done*. They want clarity and autonomy from their colleagues, and they need to learn *to look for others' perspective*.

Expressives: are relationship and results-focused, and passionate about *getting it further*. They want interaction and freedom from their colleagues, and they need to learn to *do reality checks*.

Amiables: are relationship and team-focused, and they're most satisfied by *getting to it together*. They want support and structure from their colleagues, and they need to learn to *take a stand*.

Analyticals: are task and information-focused, and they feel most strongly about *getting it correct*. They want emotional balance reasonable timeframes from their colleagues, and they need to learn to *share their thinking*.

Working with Other People | Study Guide

We've created self-reflection questions and activities to help you translate what you've learned back to the real world. Feel free to try them all, or simply pick and choose.

Self-reflection Questions

- How can I best remember to use the Social Style tools and concepts offered in this article to improve my relationships with others?
- With which Social Style do I seem to encounter the greatest difficulties, and how can I work to improve those relationships?
- What unhelpful limiting or stereotyping statement do I make to myself about people of other styles, and how can I change those statements to support me working productively with them?
- If I were to choose one style-based strength I don't have, what would it be? How can I take better advantage of that strength in others?
- Thinking of a colleague I really want to support, what's one style-based "stretch" I could encourage him or her to make?

Style Reading Activity

1. Select 3-5 other people who have read this article; try to get a mix of SOCIAL STYLE.
2. Invite them to a session of "reading" each others' styles. Find a time when you can meet undisturbed for about an hour.
3. Once the group has gathered, pick one person to "read" first. Let's call this Person #1.
   - Everyone in the group should turn to one of the style-reading pages in this article.
   - Ask Person #1 questions to help determine where he or she falls on the assertiveness and responsiveness dimensions. Remind everyone to pay as much or more attention to how Person #1 responds (noting volume, facial expressions, pace, etc.) as to the content of her/his answers.
   - When everyone feels as though they have enough information, discuss and decide as a group where Person #1 falls on each dimension for each clue. Average the assertiveness clues to decide whether Person #1 has an A, B, C, or D assertiveness level. Then average the responsiveness clues to decide where s/he falls on the Responsiveness continuum.
   - Ask Person #1 whether this is how he or she would have assessed his/her own style. If not, discuss the differences, and try to pinpoint for Person #1 more specifically how others may see him or her differently than s/he sees him/herself. (Keep in mind that over 50% of people assess themselves as a different Social Style than others do. It's extremely valuable to know how others see us!)

4. Complete the activity as above for each member of the group.

Style Flex Activity: Build on a Strength, Minimize a Weakness

1. Once you have the benefit of hearing your colleagues' assessment of your style, re-read the descriptions of that style in the article, including the suggestions for minimizing style-based weaknesses.

2. Note the style-based growth area for that style, and think of a specific way to apply it that you think might help you become more versatile. For instance, if you're a Driver, a powerful way to "look for others' perspectives" might be to learn to build consensus; if you're an Analytical, one way to practice "sharing your thinking," might be to focus on giving people more consistent positive feedback.

3. Write down your intention—how you'll implement that growth area—and share it with a trusted colleague, asking them to "spot" you (i.e., let you know when they see you doing it or not doing in situations where it would be appropriate).

Style Flex Activity: Increasing Versatility with Temporary Behavior Changes

1. Turn to one of the style-reading pages in this article.

2. Given your style, note two behavioral "moves along the dimensions" you could make in order to create more productive relationships with people of other styles.

   • If you're an "A" in assertiveness, you might choose to slow your pace and ask more questions to move your behaviors toward the left on the assertiveness continuum; or

   • You could also choose one "move" on each of the two dimensions. For instance, if you're a D1, you could choose to move toward higher responsiveness by taking a little time to engage in more personal conversation with colleagues, and you could decide to move to the right on the assertiveness continuum by consciously picking up the pace of your speech and decision-making.

3. Once you've decided on the changes you want to make, ask a colleague to give you feedback on whether you succeed in implementing the changes and the observable impact of your changes on others.

Have fun, be honest, and let yourselves grow.

Warmly,

Erika Andersen
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