

DISC TEMPERAMENTS UNDER STRESS

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Awareness of individual communication styles will help you to provide more meaningful support during stressful times.

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FACT *Stress is a huge side-effect of any sudden change.*

We all react to stress differently. Have you noticed an occasional change in behavior in your team members and agents? Ever wondered how to increase your effectiveness as a leader especially during these unprecedented times?

In my previous *Pipeline* article, “The COVID-19 Crisis: Do We Put Our Energy into People, Process or Technology?,” I shared top stressors that frontline agents are facing in the current environment and how leaders can make a difference by listening and communicating based on individual needs. We are now going to dig deeper into understanding the different temperaments described in the DISC Model of Human Behavior.

My interest in sharing strategies for better communication stems from a quote I read in a classic book years ago: “About 85% of the factors contributing to... success are related to the ability to work effectively with people” (“How to Win Friends and Influence People,” by Dale Carnegie). With many of us currently working from home, effective communication is more important than ever.

Regardless of the tool used for communicating, it is vital to be mindful of WHAT we say and HOW we say or write it. Many times, there is a big difference between “what you **think you said**” and “what you **actually said**” and “what the other person **actually heard**.” We say things based on our own communication style, which is driven by our own personality and temperament blend. Likewise, the per-

son we are communicating with hears words based on their own perception, set by their specific personality and temperament blend.

Understanding communication styles and needs based on personality temperament is very helpful as we navigate through stressful times. It is also important to be aware of your own temperaments and styles. Note: We all can adapt once we are aware of our behaviors and tendencies. The goal is to:

- Understand *yourself* and how you tend to communicate under a variety of stress levels.
- Understand *each other* and how those around you will respond to your communication style.
- Adapt *your* style to communicate in a clear, concise and thoughtful manner to serve the needs of those around you.

In the DISC Model of Human Behavior, there are four main temperaments, and we are a **blend** of all four. There are many psychometric assessments utilized in the industry, but for purposes of this article, we will refer to the DISC model.

Why do you need to become aware of your temperament/personality blend and of those around you? Here are some basic outcomes that can occur when you become AWARE of your tendencies and then AWARE of the temperament/behavioral blends of those around you:

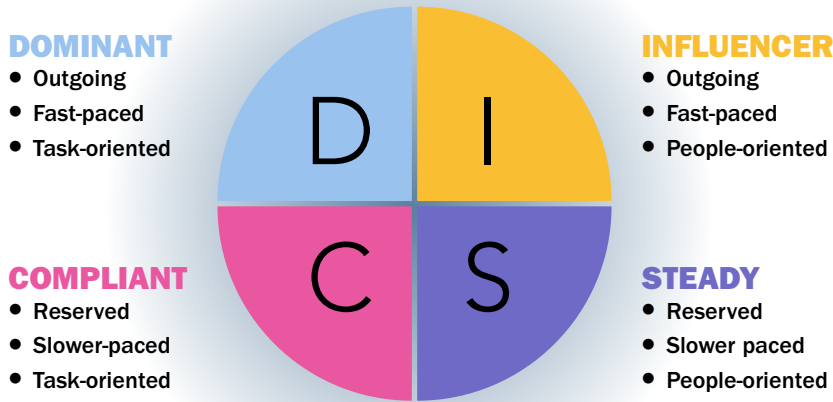
- **REDUCE STRESS** while communicating, working together and giving feedback.
- **MINIMIZE CONFLICTS** and empower your team.
- **BUILD TRUST** with team members while coaching to change.
- **RAISE MORALE** through positive communication.
- **ENHANCE COMMUNICATION** by understanding one another.
- **MAXIMIZE TEAM PERFORMANCE** by working together towards common goals.

Let’s Take a Look at the Different Personality Styles!

Take a quick glance at **FIGURE 1**: This is a good way to start understanding ourselves, others, and their needs.

Right now, our team members are under significant stress. Our frontline agents are taking more calls from more upset customers in an environment they may not be comfort-

FIGURE 1: The Four Main Temperaments



able working in. The imbalance between work and home, isolation, call volumes, technology not working, productivity challenges can impact the behavior of the various personality blends. By examining the general blends and how they typically may react under stress, we can identify a need and then support our team member accordingly to get them through stressful times.

To be most in tune with those around us, we really need to listen. True listening will help you identify the needs of your team members and agents and will help you to see if your agents are experiencing stressful situations in their work or personal lives.

Here is how to recognize the different personality/temperament blends:

D DOMINANT “DO IT NOW”

TYPICAL “D” COMMUNICATION STYLE

- Bottom line: Get to the point!
- Fast-paced, high volume and a fast rate of speech.
- Results-driven—there should be a purpose to the conversation.
- Takes charge in most interactions.
- States more than asks.
- Outgoing.

UNDER STRESS OR PRESSURE, this person can be rough, defensive, tough, abrasive, short and impatient.

Have you seen any of these scenarios or examples in your team members, agents, family or customers when under stress?

- Quit listening too early, make mind up quickly without listening in full.

- “Acting out” before understanding or listening to all the information.
- Jumping to conclusions too quickly!!!
- Getting irritated when customers are not able to “get to the point” quickly enough.
- Becoming frustrated when things cannot get done quickly.

ACTIONS LEADERS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT A “D” TEAM MEMBER

Under ideal circumstances, this agent is typically a high performer, loves to get things done and usually takes the lead wherever possible. Since this temperament can be defensive while under stress, give them space to de-stress and come down on their own.

While coaching a “D” team member, remember that this agent is not “chatty,” and they do not want long written feedback forms. Instead, give them a few task challenges, showing that you know that “they got this” and that this was a one-off situation because of stress.

Acknowledge how they are able to take initiative, address challenges that come up and that you respect how they typically can control a call and deliver great service so efficiently. By speaking less and listening more, you will allow the agent to self-correct, become better and build even more trust with you!

Bold minimal text is helpful when sharing information with someone with a lot of the “D” traits as they do not like too much written text instead they like communication that is to the point and bottom line.

I INFLUENCER “LET’S HAVE FUN”

TYPICAL “I” COMMUNICATION STYLE

- Dramatic, high volume, fast speech.
- People-oriented, typically extroverted.
- Enthusiastic, life of the party!
- Tells stories with inflective tones!
- Animated verbal and facial expressions.
- Talks and listens in terms of “feeling.”
- Approach to tasks is “make it FUN.”

UNDER STRESS OR PRESSURE, an “I” person can be careless, reckless, makes silly errors, can be too emotional and unpredictable.

Have you seen any of these behaviors?

- Daydreaming, distracted by environment, interrupting.
- Wanting attention or recognition in the conversation (using the word “I” a lot).
- Thinking of what to say instead of listening (not actively listening).
- Jumping to conclusions too quickly!!!
- Get irritated or “tuned-out” with boring conversations or too many details.
- Exaggerating a problem in their mind and then when sharing with you.

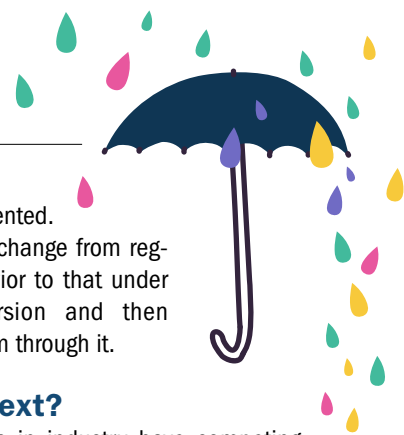
ACTIONS LEADERS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT A “I” TEAM MEMBER

Since these outgoing, people-oriented members communicate based on feelings, when they are frustrated, they really need to feel heard and that you care for them. Highlight all that is going well, the strengths they bring to the team and what “their best” typically looks like.

Be encouraging of them and let them see your excitement around what they have accomplished and then they can hear the call or review the process that may have been handled incorrectly while under stress. They feel it—let them hear or see it and let them tell you how they could fix it. Saving their self-image and focusing on the joy they bring will do wonders! Help them by not giving them too many details that bore and overwhelm them.

Bold, colored instructions help them focus on what is important as they typically do not like lots of written detailed instructions.

These special people thrive off things that are fun and exciting. Under the stress of today, make sure you include them in anything fun—they will thank you for it!



S STEADY “LET’S WORK TOGETHER”

TYPICAL “S” COMMUNICATION STYLE

- Steady, even-tempered rate of speech.
- Less forceful tone, lower volume, warm tones.
- Routine, stressed under too much change.
- Asks more than states.
- Listens more than talks.
- People-oriented.
- Typically reserved.

UNDER STRESS OR PRESSURE, this person becomes increasingly hesitant and indecisive.

- Very selective listening.
- Only wants to deal with one subject at a time.
- Shuts down when processing or not understanding.
- Shows lack of interest or indifference with minimal responses.
- Gets frustrated by fast talking and talking that is too loud.

ACTIONS LEADERS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT A “S” TEAM MEMBER

They may need to “double-check” more with their team leaders or peers. Be patient and let them know no question is silly and that the sudden change is difficult for all. When sharing with this temperament, make them feel comfortable with the question but encourage them in a very soft tone and pace to suggest the correct decision back to you. This will give them confidence in their own decision-making skills and make them less indecisive.

This person would appreciate kind gestures showing your level of care for them.

Slow down a little!

Slow down a lot!

C COMPLIANCE “LET’S DO IT RIGHT”

TYPICAL “C” COMMUNICATION STYLE

- Bottom line, structured and careful specific speech patterns.
- Standard Procedures, process.
- Accurate, detailed, facts.
- Minimal inflection, less verbal, more written.
- Believes they are usually correct.

UNDER STRESS OR PRESSURE, this person can become overly pessimistic, “we’ll never get through the queue,” glass half-empty and overly nitpicky, critical, depressed. They may also;

- Be judgmental if speaker seems illogical.
- Try to remember too many details and not seeing the big picture.
- Focus on one word or concept that may be incorrect instead of seeing the overall picture.
- Irritated by lack of details or vagueness.
- Frustrated by changes in process that do not seem logical to them or if the reasoning was not explained in detail.

ACTIONS LEADERS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT A “C” TEAM MEMBER

Be mindful of this person’s need to be right. Let them self-discover by hearing a call that might not be up to their typically perfect level. These agents love following standard operating procedures and pride themselves on complying with processes and procedures.

Allow them to save face if the “stressed-out behavior” pops up as a rarity during this time. Give facts and figures to help them see the logic and create a more positive outlook.

We Are All a Blend of Temperaments

Please be mindful that **we are a blend of the four temperaments**. This information is not meant to pigeonhole people, but rather to help understand our own tendencies as well as the patterns and behaviors of those around us.

By adapting enough to serve others in **THEIR** preferred style, you show how much you care. I always remember this great quote: “People won’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” (Theodore Roosevelt).

Some quick questions to ask yourself as you work to adapt yourself to others:

1. How should you adapt your natural communication style to best connect with your team member, agent or customer?
2. Consider their rate of speech as a good indicator of what pace they are wired for and what rate they prefer (outgoing or reserved).
3. Identify tone to assess if they are task or

people oriented.

4. Identify a change from regular behavior to that under stress version and then coach them through it.

What’s Next?

Many leaders in industry have competing demands of supporting their team while at the same time ensuring that they meet expectations set by the senior leadership team, various shareholders and customers. The stress can add up.

The purpose of this article is not to add more work but to increase awareness so that each interaction you have is more meaningful and with greater impact. We are all human, going through unprecedented times. By identifying your general temperament, you will be able to recognize some behaviors within yourself as well as your team members. This will enable you to recognize team members who may be undergoing stressful situations instead of thinking they are sloppy, careless, indecisive, abrasive or pessimistic.

Recognizing and identifying a team member under stress is the first step in being there as a leader to support them to get through situations in the manner that matches with their general temperament.

I always remember what a mentor of mine told me years ago and I keep remembering to improve and apply that principle in every interaction: “You have two ears and one mouth—so use them in the right proportion.”

Wish you much success as we all navigate through these challenging times together! I have faith that we can come out of this as better people, better servant leaders and an overall better version of ourselves. 🍀



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