

Recognizing Communication Styles At Their Best and Worst

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(Adapted from The Secrets of Facilitation)

Professional facilitators often find it helpful to have a model for recognizing different communication styles. People communicate differently and have different needs in a meeting. By having a mental model of the different communication styles, as well as their needs and typical dysfunctions, you will be better able to prevent, detect and resolve dysfunctional behavior.

There are a number of models for understanding behavioral and communication styles, including Meyers-Briggs Type Indicators, Hermann Brain Dominance Indicators and DISC Communication Styles. In our organization, we utilize the DISC Communication Styles from TTI Performance Systems, LTD to focus on communication styles. We find that it is an insightful, yet simple, model that is easily understood, retained and applied by casual users of the information.

In the DISC model, there are four basic communication styles. While all of us communicate across each of the four dimensions, we do so to varying degrees. And for most of us, we tend to naturally communicate in one of the four styles most of the time. Below is a very abbreviated summary of each of the styles. The summary describes the styles when at their best and worst in a facilitation session, and additional prevention strategies to prevent dysfunction from occurring.

Hi-D Style

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|-----------------------|--|
| At Their Best | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Driving for efficiency, participating, directing, making direct comments, giving end point first |
| At Their Worst | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Alienating by being forceful, not letting people catch up, making snap decisions, killing creativity, unaware of what's happening in the group |
| Prevention Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Keep session fast paced, well planned ❑ Lay out the process and the benefits ❑ Get them on your side to go with the flow |

Hi-I Style

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|-----------------------|---|
| At Their Best | <input type="checkbox"/> Participating, creative, talking, keeping energy up, cheer leading and supporting |
| At Their Worst | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't stop talking, don't listen, don't want to take time for important details, blue-skying, unrealistic |
| Prevention Strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> Give lots of chances to talk
<input type="checkbox"/> Enlist help for out of box thinking and getting others to speak
<input type="checkbox"/> Have ground rules : keep discussions relevant, end point first, avoid bar discussion |

Hi-S Style

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|-----------------------|---|
| At Their Best | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly, supportive, nodding, agreeing, paying attention, good listeners, tolerant, peace makers |
| At Their Worst | <input type="checkbox"/> Going along with what they don't believe, being the silent martyr, checking out, passive-aggressive actions in response to change |
| Prevention Strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> Check for agreement
<input type="checkbox"/> Use teams to avoid putting on the spot
<input type="checkbox"/> Reinforce with praise |

Hi-C Style

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|-----------------------|--|
| At Their Best | <input type="checkbox"/> Looking at the details, constructive critiquing, identifying impacts of decision, keeping on task, providing reality check |
| At Their Worst | <input type="checkbox"/> Boggling down in details, giving all the reasons why something won't work, not allowing intuitive judgment, unrealistic expectations of quality |
| Prevention Strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> Set expectation that more detailed analysis will be done outside of the session
<input type="checkbox"/> Remind of the level of detail needed for each decision
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage praise first and seeking new solutions |

To learn more about communication styles, check out our online course, [DISC Online!](#) You can also learn more about facilitation techniques in our instructor-led course, [The Effective Facilitator](#). Click here for additional information.

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