

RATING SCALE 2.1 Identifying Your Social Style¹³

Following is a list of twenty personality characteristics. Please indicate the degree to which you believe you display each characteristic while interacting with others by marking whether you (5) *strongly agree* that you exhibit the characteristic, (4) *agree* that you exhibit it, (3) are *undecided*, (2) *disagree* that you exhibit the characteristic, or (1) *strongly disagree* that it applies. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly; record your first impression.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Helpful | _____ 11. Dominant |
| _____ 2. Defend my own beliefs | _____ 12. Sincere |
| _____ 3. Independent | _____ 13. Gentle |
| _____ 4. Responsive to others | _____ 14. Willing to take a stand |
| _____ 5. Forceful | _____ 15. Warm |
| _____ 6. Have strong personality | _____ 16. Tender |
| _____ 7. Sympathetic | _____ 17. Friendly |
| _____ 8. Compassionate | _____ 18. Act as a leader |
| _____ 9. Assertive | _____ 19. Aggressive |
| _____ 10. Sensitive to the needs of others | _____ 20. Competitive |

Scoring instructions:

Add your ratings for these characteristics to determine your Assertiveness score:

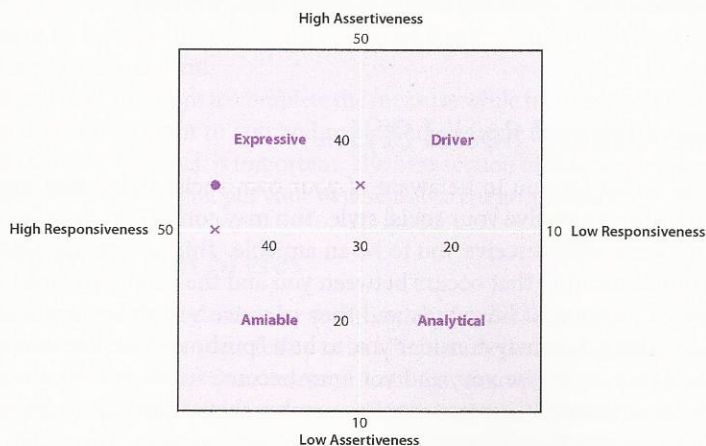
$$2 + 3 + 5 + 6 + 9 + 11 + 14 + 18 + 19 + 20$$

Add your ratings of these characteristics to determine your Responsiveness score:

$$1 + 4 + 7 + 8 + 10 + 12 + 13 + 15 + 16 + 17$$

Scores above 34 indicate high assertiveness or responsiveness. Scores below 26 indicate low assertiveness or responsiveness. Scores between 26 and 34 indicate moderate levels of assertiveness or responsiveness.

Now map your assertiveness and responsiveness scores on the graph below to determine your social style. First, find the point on the vertical axis that corresponds to your assertiveness score, and draw a horizontal dotted line in from that point on the axis. Then find the point on the horizontal axis that corresponds to your responsiveness score, and draw a vertical dotted line up from that point on the axis. Place a dot at the point where these two lines intersect; the quadrant in which the dot falls indicates your social style. For example, if you scored 35 on assertiveness and 46 on responsiveness, you would fall within the "Expressive" quadrant.



One of the ways you can make your awareness of social styles work for you is to style flex.¹⁴ To style flex, follow three steps: (1) identify your social style, (2) identify the other person's social style, (3) use the following style-flexing strategies and communication skills.

If You Have an Amiable Social Style

When communicating with an **Analytical** person

- Be punctual, focus on the task, use a formal tone
- De-emphasize feelings: minimize eye contact, avoid touch
- Be systematic: develop a plan, follow the rules
- Be organized: prepare in advance, use specific details in presentations

When communicating with an **Expressive** person

- Increase your speed, respond and decide promptly, minimize paperwork
- Increase your energy: stand up straight, use expressive gestures and eye contact, talk louder, faster, and with more intensity than you might normally
- Focus on the big picture: prioritize topics and focus on those of highest priority; avoid specific details
- Initiate conversations, avoid tentative language, disagree tactfully

When communicating with a **Driver**

- Set realistic goals and develop a plan
- Prioritize topics and focus on those of highest priority; avoid the details
- Be organized: present options, anticipate questions and prepare answers, focus on results
- Avoid tentative language
- Identify problems; disagree tactfully

If You Are a Driver

When communicating with an **Analytical** person

- Slow down: analyticals react negatively to pressure to be speedy; avoid pushing
- Listen more: drivers tend to want to talk; invite the person to speak, and paraphrase what she or he says
- Minimize expressive gestures and monitor your speech; speak more slowly and with less intensity than you might normally
- Prepare thoroughly; gather all necessary details and information to build credibility

When communicating with an **Expressive** person

- Be aware of and acknowledge the other person's feelings; be warm and enthusiastic
- Allow for fun and joking; pay attention to and comment on the other person's physical space (office decorations, photos)
- Be confirming: recognize the other's contributions; be supportive; provide incentives
- Be flexible with your time; listen and respond; practice patience

When communicating with an **Amiable** person

- Be genuine: engage in personal conversation and offer appropriate self-disclosure
- Be supportive: be a good listener, paraphrase what the other person says and respond appropriately; be appreciative and helpful
- Focus on feelings: pay attention to the other person's nonverbal cues; amiables will not always voice their unhappiness
- Slow down: as a driver, you often speak fast because you like to get things done; relax deadlines and avoid rushing

FIGURE 2.2 Style Flexing Guidelines for Enhancing Communication Effectiveness

Identifying Others' Social Styles

Although it's important for you to be aware of your own social style, what may be more important is how others perceive your social style. You may consider yourself to be a driver when others you work with perceive you to be an amiable. This perceptual difference may influence the communication that occurs between you and the people you lead. For example, if you supervise a team of lifeguards and they perceive you to be very laid back and easygoing (an amiable), they may consider you to be a "pushover." Rather than you supervising them, they may supervise you, and you may become frustrated at your inability to take control and direct them. It's important to remember that others communicate not with the person *you* perceive yourself to be, but with who *they* perceive you to be. If the lifeguards perceive you to be an amiable, even though you perceive yourself to be a driver, the lifeguards will communicate with you as though you were an amiable. Effective leadership begins with understanding this important perceptual difference.

If You Have an Expressive Social Style

When communicating with an **Analytical** person

- Be task-focused, punctual, formal
- Be systematic: follow the rules, have a plan
- Prepare thoroughly, focus on facts and specific details, provide evidence
- Minimize expressiveness; avoid dramatic gestures and vocal intensity

When communicating with a **Driver**

- Be task-focused, punctual, formal
- Plan your work: determine specific goals and objectives
- Be organized: prepare thoroughly and know what you intend to say; use facts and be results-oriented
- Avoid power struggles: both Expressives and Drivers are assertive; make an effort to listen more; slow down and be willing to negotiate

When communicating with an **Amiable** person

- Allow the other person to speak more; paraphrase what you hear
- Be supportive: make the other person feel understood; listen with empathy
- Minimize expressiveness, use tentative or provisional language ("possibly," "maybe," and "could")
- Slow your speech, relax deadlines, avoid rushing; amiables tend to take longer to make decisions

If You Have an Analytical Social Style

When communicating with an **Expressive** person

- Be warm, build rapport, offer appropriate self-disclosure
- Speak more rapidly than you might normally; react quickly
- Say what you think: speak up, disagree tactfully, identify problems rather than ignoring them
- Be flexible; improvise, relax the rules, be encouraging

When communicating with a **Driver**

- Prioritize your information and share the most important points; avoid subpoints or details unless asked
- Be results oriented and practical
- Say what you think
- Present options, but allow the person to determine his or her own objectives and goals; relax the rules

When communicating with an **Amiable** person

- Be genuine; build rapport; offer appropriate self-disclosure; be loyal
- Provide structure: define the job, assist in planning
- Avoid logical appeals; focus on main points and leave out details
- Be supportive and helpful; make the other person feel understood; recognize his or her contributions

FIGURE 2.2 (continued)

To become more aware of how others perceive you as well as of how you perceive others' social styles, we encourage you to complete Rating Scale 2.1 again. This time, however, we suggest using the measure in a couple of different ways. First, you may want to ask a classmate or someone you work with to use the measure to evaluate you. This way, you can become more aware of how others perceive your social style and you can compare those perceptions with your own self-perception. This information will also help you better understand why others communicate with you in a particular manner. For example, maybe you have always wondered why some people seem to be scared of you or appear threatened by you. It may be because they perceive you to be a driver, but what they may not know is that you're really an analytical.

Second, you may also want to complete the measure while focusing on a real-life workplace relationship that is important to you and could benefit from more effective communication. What you do with the feedback is important. The next section of this chapter provides you with some practical skills to help you put your new self-awareness of social styles to work for you.

Adapting to Social Styles

Being aware of your social style and the social styles of others allows you to adapt your communication, which enhances your ability to be effective. **Style flexing** is a process of adapting your communication to how others communicate. For example, if you're an analytical leader who is working with a team of drivers, you will enhance your leadership effectiveness if you communicate more like a driver. This would include being direct with members of the team, focusing on outcomes, and allowing them the freedom to determine goals and objectives. Again, this is not your preferred way of communicating with others, but it's how drivers communicate. Figure 2.2 suggests ways to help you style flex to others' social styles.

terms & definitions

Style flexing the process of adapting your communication to how others communicate.