DISC Assessment: What Kind of Leader Are You?

Ever wonder what your behavior says about your leadership style? One assessment tool that can help you find out is DISC.

The DiSC model of behavior was first outlined by psychologist William Mouton Marston in his 1928 book, "Emotions of Normal People." Marston's theory stated that behavioral expression of emotions could be categorized into types (Dominance, Inducement, Submission, Compliance), based on a person's perceptions of self in relation to his or her environment. Understanding your primary behavioral trait, he believed, would help you understand and manage your experiences and relationships with others.

In the decades that followed, several assessments using Marston's theories were developed, which eventually led to the modern DISC assessment and its current types or styles: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Conscientiousness.

Today, the DISC assessment is most frequently used in business and government organizations to help teams work more effectively together. Respondents rate a series of behavior-related statements (e.g., "Getting results is one of my top priorities" or "I like to be involved in group projects") based on how strongly they agree or disagree with each.

Why it works

Like other personality or behavior-assessment tools, DISC works by helping you become more self-aware. This will help you recognize and acknowledge the strengths and shortcomings of not only yourself, but your team.

"Assessment tools ... can indicate whether the group is likely to bond or fracture by examining qualities that predict both success and failure," Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic and Dave Winsborough wrote in a 2015 Harvard Business Review article. "For example, we know that teams with members who are open-minded and emotionally intelligent leverage conflict to improve performance, whereas neurotic and closed-minded teams fall apart in the face of disagreement."
Chamorro-Premuzic and Winsborough also noted that teams perform better when their members share values, and assessment tools can help identify the values that are expressed through your everyday behavior.

"Teams whose values cohere identify more strongly as a group and display greater levels of innovation," the authors wrote. "Because values are a guide for behavioral choices, group members who share similar values are more likely to agree about group actions, and vice versa."

**Finding your DISC style**

Which DISC style are you most closely aligned with? DISC profile offers an outline and overview of each.

**Dominance**

A person with a Dominance (D) style wants to shape his or her environment by overcoming opposition to accomplish results. He or she values confidence and focuses on the bottom line.

**Traits:** Blunt/direct; forceful; strong-willed; driven; fast-paced; self-confident  
**Behaviors:** Sees the big picture; accepts challenges; gets straight to the point  
**Leadership styles:** Commanding; resolute; pioneering  
**Needs to work on:** Patience; sensitivity; looking at details; allowing for deliberation

**Influence**

Someone with an Influence (i) style aims to shape his or her environment by influencing or persuading others. This person values openness, friendship and building relationships.

**Traits:** Enthusiastic; optimistic; convincing; warm; trusting  
**Behaviors:** Likes to collaborate; dislikes being ignored; fears loss of influence/disapproval  
**Leadership styles:** Energizing; pioneering; affirming  
**Needs to work on:** Complete follow-through; speaking directly and candidly; researching all the facts
**Steadiness**

A person with a Steadiness (S) style wants to work with others within existing circumstances to carry out tasks. He or she values cooperation, sincerity and dependability.

**Traits:** Humble; calm; patient; deliberate; consistent; accommodating  
**Behaviors:** Provides supportive actions; doesn't like to be rushed; tends to avoid change  
**Leadership styles:** Inclusive; humble; affirming  
**Needs to work on:** Adapting to change; multitasking, confronting others

**Conscientiousness**

As the name implies, someone with a Conscientiousness (C) style wants to work conscientiously within existing circumstances to ensure quality and accuracy. This person values expertise, competency and objective reasoning.

**Traits:** Independent; analytical; careful/cautious; systematic; diplomatic; tactful  
**Behaviors:** Maintains stability; wants details; challenges assumptions; fears criticism and being wrong  
**Leadership styles:** Deliberate; humble; resolute  
**Needs to work on:** Delegating; compromising; making quick decisions

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