

It's a Zoo Out There!

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There's no doubt about it — people are different! It has been said that 95 percent of the conflict that occurs between people at home, at work and in families, is not due to the issues being discussed but rather to the different ways people view the issue.

Those who understand and respect the normal and natural differences in the way others gather information and go about deciding things, will be able to “talk the other person's language” and thus, will be better able to work more effectively with them.

There are four distinct personality (behavioral) styles that can normally be observed in people. Generally, most of us fall into a dominant style and, sometimes, a secondary style.

Effective people make an effort to understand the characteristics of the different personality styles. They respect the fact that others need to be approached within their preferred style. Their knowledge of a family member or coworker's style enables them to adjust their vocabulary, tone of voice, information gathering and problem solving methods to the other person's style and, as a result, “speak the other person's language.”

We also need to be aware of our own style and recognize that we tend to treat others the way we ourselves prefer to be treated. This can be a mistake because people are different and do things for their reasons, not our reasons. Let's take a look now at the four different styles and some of the characteristics of each.

EXPRESSIVES — PLAYFUL OTTERS

These people tend to be the folks who make the workplace more lighthearted and enjoyable. Like the Playful Otter, they like to have fun. They enjoy being where the action is and are spontaneous in their actions and decision-making. They work enthusiastically with others, always seeking variety and new challenges. They are generally not interested in the theoretical,



abstract, or conceptual. Expressives prefer discussions that are concrete and immediately relevant. They are assertive and responsive.

People of this style are often keen observers of human behavior. They are skilled at seizing opportunities. Their best capabilities are often seen in crisis and emergency situations where they are usually able to see exactly what needs to be done. They have a talent for improvising.

Expressives can appear to be unpredictable, impatient and excitable. Sometimes they may fail to think things through carefully before acting. They tend to resist detailed planning, and prefer to keep their options open and flexible. They don't always follow established rules and sometimes avoid commitments or may not follow through on plans.

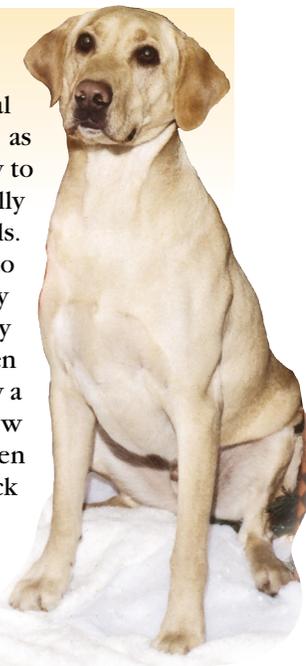
When working with expressives, give them opportunity to talk and freely express their opinions and ideas. Spend time building the relationship. Don't hurry the discussion. Allow for spontaneity. Explore different alternatives, be flexible, and don't put them in a box. Show your sense of humor, have fun, and keep the action moving.

AMIABLES — LOYAL LABS

Loyal Labs prefer close, personal relationships with their work associates as well as with suppliers. They have the ability to gain support from others and normally possess good listening and counseling skills. They dislike conflict and tend to work to preserve harmony. Amiables seek security and a sense of belonging. Like the friendly Lab, they are loyal to others even when mistreated. In their relationships, they show a high level of responsiveness and low assertiveness. Amiables are slow when making decisions and often like to check with others before moving forward.

People of this style excel at communication and have a natural way of understanding and nourishing others. They have a keen ability to reflect and anticipate the unspoken issues and intentions of others. They are good at giving compliments, are natural appreciators and are able to personalize the impersonal. They exhibit participatory leadership and contribute to the growth of others. Amiables are supportive, reliable, and pleasant.

This style tends to make decisions based upon their own likes and dislikes. They may have trouble staying detached and their soft heartedness can leave them vulnerable. They tend to



take other peoples' problems to heart and can sometimes appear to look the other way or avoid tackling a tough issue.

When working with this style, make sure your pace is slow and that you pay close attention to the people issues. Work very hard to understand their feelings. Don't be all business. Take a personal interest in them and in their world. When you must disagree, do not debate using facts and logic. Discuss personal opinions and feelings. Offer assurances of support. Be open in your discussions and show the Amiable that you are 'actively' listening. Individuals of this style are often referred to as 'relationship' people. They are warm, friendly, and willing to talk.

ANALYTICALS – BUSY BEAVERS

People of this style are cautious and precise in their actions and decisions. They appreciate organization and structure. They tend to ask many questions about specific details, and place a high priority on data collection and analysis. They prefer an objective, task-oriented environment. Analyticals work slowly and precisely, seeking security and predictability.



Analyticals are good at anything that involves vigilance, detail, monitoring, and regulatory activity. Their comfort zone involves the establishment and articulation of rules, sanctions, standard operating procedures, timelines, and routines. Like the busy beaver, analyticals are hard workers, always chipping away, trying to get it right — the first time.

These people are rooted in the here and now. The future doesn't attract their attention as much as the past and present. Long range planning is usually not one of their strengths.

Analyticals sometimes make decisions too quickly. They tend to see things in black and white, rather than in shades of gray. As a result, they run the risk of being unable to change or adapt quickly, and coworkers often see them as resistant to trying new approaches that may be untested.

When working with these folks, make sure you do your homework and have your ducks in a row. Their focus is on the facts, the details, and the rationale behind your proposals. They are generally well organized, and want to see the bottom line. They like it when people set appointments, are on time and stick to a schedule.

DRIVERS – MIGHTY LIONS

Drivers have their eye on the future. They can imagine almost endless possibilities and they are determined to take control in order to achieve their vision. Like the Mighty Lion, they are cool, independent, and competitive. Drivers have a low tolerance for what they consider to be incompetence in others. They like to

be in charge; they like to run things.

Drivers have a unique ability to focus on theories, planning, forecasting and trend analysis. They naturally think 'systems', both technical and social. Their focus is on the big picture. Such versatility enhances their skills in design, reasoning, analysis, logic and problem solving. Drivers almost always are the ones who ask "why?" They are the creators of constant change. They are the world's chief innovators.

Drivers often appear to be too complex for others to understand. They have a tendency to overlook necessary details. They can be deeply skeptical, and often challenge rules, assumptions, and customs. They sometimes fail to see how their actions affect others, and they may show little interest in maintaining group harmony. Mighty Lions can be fiercely competitive.

Drivers prefer other people who are forceful, assertive, and competent. When working with drivers, don't give a lot of opinions. Show the facts and explain your logic. Discuss future possibilities but don't be overly detailed with your information. Get to the point quickly. Don't spend a lot of time on personal things, which the driver may consider irrelevant and too time consuming. Respect the driver's desire to be in control.



You might be thinking that with all these animals running around in the workplace, no wonder life often seems like a zoo! On a serious note, however, it should be noted that those who make an effort to understand not only their own style, but also to appreciate the different styles of others, will find less conflict, and greater satisfaction when working and living with others. ●