

One On One

Pointers for working with people's different behavior styles.

by Kindra Gordon, field editor

Whether it's co-workers, family members, kids, or being part of a committee, all of us find ourselves in situations where we must communicate and work with others. Most of us have probably realized that sometimes it goes smoothly — and sometimes it does not.

What's the reason for this? Largely, it's because people have different behavioral styles and preferences, says Sally Amtmann. "Some people's behavior favors a fast pace," she says, and gives the example that those people want you to "be brief, be brilliant and be gone." Conversely, other behavior styles may prefer a slower pace to allow for analyzing and making decisions, she explains.

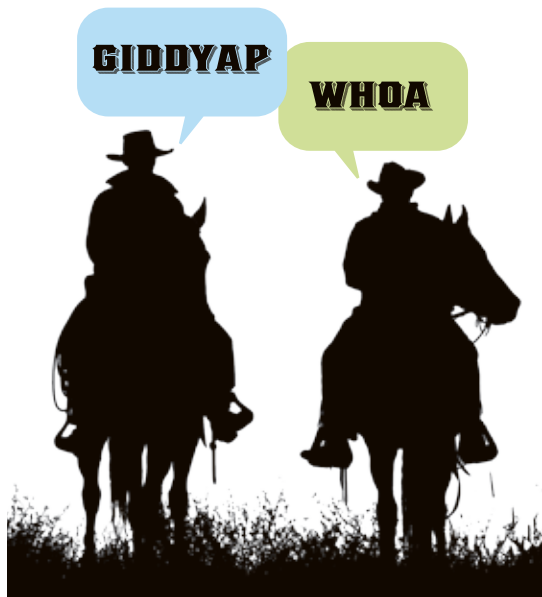
Amtmann, who has worked in sales for much of her career, says recognizing and understanding behavioral styles can help improve work productivity, teamwork and communication. As a senior area business manager with Zoetis, she often conducts presentations and training sessions with Zoetis employees and farm and ranch customers on the subject. She utilizes the DiSC personal assessment tool to help people identify and discuss behavioral differences. Here, she shares a quick overview of the four DiSC behavioral styles (Dominance, Influencing, Conscientiousness and Steadiness), as well as tips for working with each style.

Amtmann notes that we all have some of each behavior, and she emphasizes that no one behavior is "better" than another. Rather, she says, it is important to focus on learning about each of the behaviors and then using that information to better understand yourself, as well as adapting your behavior to better work with others.

"I like to remind people of the Platinum Rule: Treat others the way *they* want to be treated, which means you may have to adjust," she states.

Determine the pace

Amtmann notes that one of the first differences in behavior styles is pace. Some individuals prefer a faster pace — they like to get information quickly — and often make decisions quickly. They are often more willing to take risks. The Dominance and



Influencing behaviors typically reflect this preference for a "fast pace."

"These individuals are task-oriented; they want to get to the bottom line," Amtmann summarizes. She does note that Influencing behaviors do prefer more socializing than Dominant.

On the other end of the spectrum, Conscientiousness and Steadiness behaviors prefer a slower pace and are more reserved at first. They typically like to listen, gather information and then make decisions.

"These individuals tend to put people before the task; they want to make sure everyone is comfortable and understands," says Amtmann.

To help in identifying each of the four behavioral styles, Amtmann shares the favorite question that each likes to ask:

Dominance behaviors ask "What?"

Influencing behaviors ask "Who?"

Steadiness behaviors ask "How?"

Conscientiousness behaviors ask "Why?"

Find ways to 'flex'

Recognizing these differences, Amtmann says you can then learn to "flex" or adapt to the behavior of the person you are communicating with. For instance, if someone is a Dominant behavior, you would want to be on time, be energetic and fast-paced, get to business quickly to use time efficiently, and focus on results from beginning to end.

If you were communicating with an Influencer, you would also want to be energetic and fast-paced, but their behavior also likes some socializing and having fun while achieving the objective, explains Amtmann. Thus, you'd want to talk a little about social topics of interest to them, while still staying cognizant of time and the task at hand.

When communicating with someone who has a Steady behavior, it is important to be genuine and not to hurry.

"Their preference is person-to-person contact over emails or texts. They also want to be listened to without having their ideas judged," Amtmann explains. Rather than being told what to change or do, the Steady behavior prefers to come to a mutual agreement on decisions — and they like assurances that decisions will have minimal risk.

"This behavior style may need more ongoing contact and communication than the other three styles," Amtmann says. She also notes that in agriculture there tends to be a lot of individuals with this behavior. "They are caretakers; they put people [and land and livestock] first. They are the calm in the storm."

Finally, for the Conscientious behavior Amtmann says, "Be prepared to provide information and the 'why' questions. This behavior likes systematic, factual, logical and exact, but also needs a human touch."

This behavior likes to follow procedure and protocol. They are focused on quality and things being done right. She adds that Conscientious individuals are turned off by exaggeration and overstatements.

With that insight, Amtmann says it becomes easier to start understanding people and situations — why they may not be comfortable with a proposed change or why conflict is occurring. As you develop the ability to respond and communicate with people's different behavior styles, you can move closer to improving that relationship and helping all involved work together more effectively.

For more information about DiSC, visit <https://www.discprofile.com>.

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Editor's Note: Kindra Gordon is a cattlemaster and freelance writer from Whitewood, S.D.