

Leadership letter: *Is your personality showing?*



I recently came away from a meeting feeling quite frustrated at the lack of process included in the decision making and spoke to another leader who was complaining about the lack of implications thinking involved. However a third leader in attendance, came away feeling that it had been one of the best meetings to date because there was clear movement forward. How does that happen? When it comes to meetings, there's either too much time catching up with each other or not enough decisions made, people not initiating enough or making unilateral decisions. You just can't keep everyone happy! All these issues of course are to do with personality and style and unless we understand our diversity and differing views, we will continually find working in team very tedious. You have your own stories of blessing, frustration and challenge I am sure.

I have taught the personality tool, DISC, for many years and still find it one of the best for helping teams to develop in their relationships. It is also easy to understand and apply in all areas of life. Individuals can pick up the key elements in an hour or so, especially if the training includes the four different personalities sharing and modelling from the front. There are always those aha moments in seminars where there are insights into situations explaining *why that kind of person responds in that kind of way*, why decision processes are so varied and why disagreements or disappointments have occurred.

Here is a quick review of the 4 personalities. As you read through the following characteristics, take a note of the words that you relate with best:

D is for DOER and their strengths may include: goal & action oriented, enjoys challenges, ambitious, practical, productive, strong-willed, decisive, takes charge and is a risk taker. Weaknesses may include: bored with the task before completion, independent, insensitive, domineering, unemotional, self-sufficient, lack team building skills, doesn't like extended process and needs patience. *They need others to: consult with, think through details and facts, build team, help process decisions & plans, communicate and provide caution.*

I is for INFLUENCER and their strengths may include: people oriented, networkers, outgoing, responsive, warm, friendly, talkative, enthusiastic, compassionate, initiating, full of ideas, fun to be with, creative and intuitive. Weaknesses may include being undisciplined, lack follow through, tendency to exaggerate, highs and lows emotionally, over commitment, too spontaneous, talk too much, jump to conclusions and can manipulate. *They need others to: help follow through on detail, concentrate on the task, share and talk through ideas, help them pause, create plans from ideas, help with time and with objectivity of decision making.*

S is for STEADY and their strengths may include: developing deep relationships, team player, easy-going, dependable, loyal, objective, humorous, relational, good listener, long term outlook and likes established work patterns. Their weaknesses may include: Slow processor, avoids conflict, procrastinator, unmotivated, indecisive, fearful, worrier, lacks initiative, may miss opportunities and has difficulty with change. *They need others to: provide motivation, to stretch them to do new things, to set goals, help confront others, deal with difficult issues and provide sincere appreciation.*

C for CONSCIENTIOUS and their strengths may include: focusing on the task, likes quality, thinks before action, diplomatic with people, administration, analytical thinking, self-disciplined, organized, thorough, detailed and aesthetic. Their weaknesses may include: Being a perfectionist, difficulty in sharing feelings, moody, pessimistic, unsociable, self critical and critical of others, workaholic, rigid on how-to's, indecisive and avoiding controversy. *They need others to: encourage optimism, quick decision making, help in persuading people, openness with feelings, having fun, relaxing and seeing the big picture.*

We all have a tendency towards a primary and secondary personality profile. No one has the ability to be all 4. That's why we need team. Opposites often attract and so it was with my wife & I. She is an I/D and I am a C/S. So we cover all four personality styles between us and our high scores are 'I' and 'C', summarising as 'relational possibility thinker' and 'task oriented implementer'.

Task or Relational: This means that one of the main differences in the way we see the world is through task eyes and relational eyes. I was just talking to my wife recently and she was bemoaning the fact that I seemed to get so much more accomplished compared to her. Let's look at a typical day briefly. We wake, get coffee and have our devotions together, walk the dog and have breakfast – that's where any similarity stops. I took off to town to do some errands, did some shopping for things that had been on the list for the last few weeks. She had a surprise visit from a team member and spent time connecting, encouraging and praying for her, had a skype with one of her preschool team in Africa and then with our daughter in Canada while she cleaned up the kitchen and then prepared some late lunch. Meanwhile, having returned home, I completed a couple of practical jobs, answered emails, started to make a handbook with practical tools for debriefing and ticked off the to do's I had accomplished from my list. As we compare notes – I have jobs done, she has related. One of the nice things about being married is that we are so different and accomplish very different goals – both vital and important.

Obviously relational and task orientation can cause conflict when you are making decisions together. Do we make the decision based on logic or personal values? Do we focus on the details and facts, or on the possibilities and intuition thinking? Do we make the decision now or give time for more process? I still find that a high percentage of conflicts in decision-making can be explained by difference in personality and the different way each profile sees the task at hand.

Introvert or extrovert: I had an 'aha' moment or revelation some months ago. It is often said that introverts burn out in community quicker than extroverts but I have changed my mind. We have a small community but if we are in our bedroom (our only escape), and would like a coffee, I am the one who runs the errand. Why? Because I have a task to fulfil, leave the room, head for the kitchen, say hi to anyone I meet on route but come back to the room 5 minutes later with two steaming cups of coffee. If Rite were to go for coffee, I would be waiting for a long time while she converses with everyone on route, in the kitchen and on the return journey. She feels an obligation to chat and catch up and make sure everyone is happy. It's no surprise that she is tired from conversation and connecting with everyone as a High I and me, Mr task High C is doing fine in his own little world! Let me just say for clarity sake that I do love to relate with people and spend much time doing so, but not in the exuberant way that Rite does – that's the difference in personality. We both do tasks but I fill in the details and establish a plan where Rite's tasks are, shall we say, more free flowing!

Different perspectives: We all live with ourselves every day but the question is, 'How aware are we of our words, actions and interactions with others?' All of us have a certain perspective that comes from our specific personality and it's easy for us to be locked into that one way of seeing the world. However, we know, with our minds at least, that other people can have a very different perspective on the world and see it very differently from us. The problem comes when our way of viewing things or dealing with life or interacting with others causes others problems. Where there is damage taking place to ourselves and/or others we need to first be aware and then do something about it. We need to change.

Think back to a recent stressful moment, conflict or difference of opinion. Now think about your context – how were you looking at the situation? Now try to put yourself in the other person's shoes – how were they looking at it?

Working in a team: For instance imagine you have a team of 4 with personalities of D, I, S and C running a DTS. As you come together for a planning meeting, you hear the news that there are very few applications and the question is raised by Ms C whether the school should be cancelled. Mr D jumps into action mode and comes up with a plan to add a 'last minute' advert to the website and get on the road visiting churches to bring in the recruits. Ms C clears her throat and mentions the fact that the 2 students accepted may well be booking their flights and they need to be warned that the school may not be running. Miss 'I' chips in that there are all kinds of possibilities of students and even if they do come and the school doesn't run, they could link in with other stuff happening around the base. Mr S, concerned by the tension in the room says, "Guys, do you think we should pray so we are on the same page and can really hear from God on this? I am feeling a little uncomfortable with this situation." Mr D answers quickly, "Where is your faith? Didn't God say to run a school?" And so it goes on. Sound familiar? Whether it's a God card, cultural card or gift card we pull out, usually the strongest card that clarifies our view of things is shaped by our personality.

Becoming more self aware: Let me introduce into this context of multiple personalities what I think is the biggest problem of all – we don't like the thought that the problem could be me!! The fact is we don't always appreciate evaluation, feedback, or debriefing when the spotlight is on me! Well let's rephrase that – we like positive feedback but often struggle with constructive criticism and we can become defensive and think of it as negative feedback. Some (often D's & C's) don't mind giving “honest feedback” as they call it which means being straight with the facts and with their opinions. However S's would describe it more like “being hurtful” and the ‘I’ on a difficult day might call it ‘mean and spiteful.’ These are very different perspectives. Challenge a D or C on it and they will probably respond with: *‘Well they need to recognise the truth. We are to speak the truth to one another aren't we? Besides, they need to learn I wasn't meaning it to be hurtful.’* This kind of thinking is not very helpful for the person on the receiving end who is needing a more sensitive approach. The bottom line is that we all need to be aware that we can rub others up the wrong way, we can cause hurt and frustration and communicate in a way that the other doesn't understand or is able to receive. So let's learn and receive some feedback. Ask, *‘How did that come across? How did you receive that? What was just communicated?’* Let's not assume too much and in general believe the best of one another.

Differences: When it comes to following through on commitments and implementing responsibilities, the I's and S's can sometimes struggle with getting things done on time and have a tendency for procrastination which frustrates the D's and C's.

Then there is that issue of communication in the team. The I's are always talking and coming up with new ideas and the S's and C's can't get a word in or can't think quick enough to respond before the I's and D's are on to another topic. Or the D's are wanting to bring closure and make decisions and the S's and C's want to process and make sure they have looked at the safest, most effective and efficient way to go forward before making any decision.

We have a tendency to not be aware of how our way of seeing and deciding causes frustration and tension for others. Then even if we are aware we can have trouble hearing it from them. Let's reflect on some of Paul's words; Philippians 2:3 “Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.” Romans 12:10 “Be kind and affectionate to one another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”, 1 Timothy 5:21 “Observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.”

In conclusion, you might like to pray this prayer: *‘Lord, thank you for making me, me. You have created me in a marvellous way so help me to accept myself as you do. Thank you for my gifts and strengths but help me not to push them too far so they become weaknesses. Thank you for revealing my limitations that encourage me to work in team with others who will complement my lacks. Help me to be aware of the way I can cause hurt to others and to be intentional to see changes come about in my life. Lord, I receive grace and strength from you, to enable me to give the right response*

in every situation I face. Help me in my journey of personality and character growth to become more like Jesus every day.'

A taster online [DISC personality test](#)

In linking you to these online tests, I am not endorsing these particular websites.

with a slightly different analogy: <http://smalley.cc/images/Personality-Test.pdf>

or as a quiz <http://uquiz.com/cYDSJq>