Interpersonal Communication Behaviors

Improving Communication through Interpersonal Dynamics

Understanding Diversity of Perspective

Interpersonal dynamics and the approach or style we display in interacting with others can be determined through observed behaviors! The key to effective interpersonal dynamics is understanding and valuing a diversity of perspective as we are all different in our interpretation of the world around us. While many communication experts have concluded that an individual’s personality is made-up of a combination of beliefs, attitudes, actions and behaviors, very few have concluded the impact of individual perspective and perception. Our personality is often “played-out” by the manner in which we communicate with other people but what most people cannot see is our inner map of the world driven by perceptions, perspectives, opinions, and memories.

Interpersonal Communication Style is distinct in all individuals and is predictable through distinct behaviors. Organizing these distinct behaviors into a simple learning model helps identify communication patterns and how they impact the communication process. This allows us to recognize and respond to specific patterns or habits of communication behavior. These patterns combine to determine an individual’s unique Interpersonal Communication Style.

Effective interpersonal communication is extremely critical in building high-performance teams. Effective communicators are careful to recognize and respond appropriately to different communication styles. Recognizing, understanding, and accommodating differences in how we communicate creates the framework for effective organizational communication and enables true diversity of perspective.

People send out signals when they communicate. These signals tell us an individual’s style of communication as well as HOW they wish to be communicated with. Our communication styles can be examined by applying two criteria: POWER (Control) & EMOTION (Comfort of Interaction). These are called “signals”. Interpersonal Communication Style can be described by examining these two (2) distinct signals of perspective:

**Power or Control of Communication:**

Personality-based desire and/or capacity to exert control and power in the interpersonal process.

**Emotion or Level of Interaction:**

Personality-driven expression of personal feelings and personal level of comfort when interacting and communicating with others.
Interpersonal Communication Style

Understanding the POWER & CONTROL Perspective

Interpersonal Signals:

People transmit “interpersonal signals” during the communication process based on individual personality or style. These “signals” can tell us secrets about how an individual may wish to be interacted and communicated with. These “signals” can be positive or they can be negative depending upon how we perceive the signal and the associated behaviors. During any single interpersonal exchange – one on one or group – these signals are exchanged simultaneously. Our inner attitudes (perspectives) cause us to react to how we perceive the signals. Unfortunate in the interpersonal process, our response is too often based on our own point of view (perception) and NOT the desires or intent of the person we are interacting with! This creates false perceptions and results in unintentional yet ineffective interpersonal communication.

Perceptive interpersonal signals can be extremely useful if we know how to recognize and respond to them based on the point-of-view or the “interpersonal style preference” of the person we are interacting with.

The Use of POWER & CONTROL:

One of the key interpersonal signals we all send to some degree is POWER & CONTROL. POWER & CONTROL in interpersonal behaviors is revealed in level of “control” with which people interact with others and the level of power we see in communication during interactions. POWER & CONTROL can determine an individual’s desire and/or ability to exert control and be powerful during the interpersonal process. The use of POWER & CONTROL as an interpersonal signal can be observed through any combination of tone of voice, volume, projection, emphasis, key words, body language, and overall physical behavior during the interpersonal process. It is NOT about positional power or level in the organization. The use of POWER & CONTROL is easily recognizable through descriptive behaviors likely to be displayed at opposite ends of the behavioral continuum on the right:

It is important to understand that that such interpersonal behavior on either end of the POWER & CONTROL continuum can be perceived to be either positive or negative – it depends on the perception of each individual who may be interacting and communicating. It also depends on the approach or “style” used in communicating with an individual and that individual’s perception of the style used. What may be “assertive” or “receptive” to one person may be perceived as perhaps something very different to the other person.
Interpersonal Communication Style
Understanding the EMOTION & COMFORT Perspective

EMOTION & COMFORT is another key interpersonal personal perspective signal observable through behaviors. We each have varying levels of personal comfort and emotional response to those we interact with at any time.

The EMOTION & COMFORT signal indicates the amount or level of emotions and personal feelings people share or demonstrate during the interpersonal process and the level of personal comfort individuals feel in interacting with others. Some people are comfortable, others are not!

EMOTION & COMFORT signals, similar to POWER and CONTROL signals, are easily observable behaviors. EMOTION & COMFORT is likely to be displayed by individuals at opposite ends of the following arrows:

Similar to POWER & CONTROL, it is important to understand that such interpersonal perspectives on either end of the EMOTION & COMFORT continuum can be perceived to be either positive or negative. Again, such depends on the perception of each individual who may be interacting and communicating and the style or approach used when doing so.
Interpersonal Dynamics Behavior Assessment

The following Self-Assessment Tool measures individual styles of interpersonal communication behavior. This tool is constructed with two distinct (2) groups of comparative statements. You will be comparing the left within each group to the right statement and making a single choice – separately within each of the 2 groups. You will be making a single choice for each statement applicable to your communication practices. Your choices will be indicated by circling a single number for each statement you feel best describes you.

**CIRCLE ONLY ONE (1) NUMBER BELOW FOR EACH STATEMENT** under each set of statements that you feel BEST DESCRIBES how you interact and communicate in the work environment. Use the following scale to help you determine which number to circle, either in the Left Column or the Right Column:

- **1 = ALL OF THE TIME**
- **2 = SOME OF THE TIME**
- **3 = SOME OF THE TIME**
- **4 = ALL OF THE TIME**

(LEFT COLUMN) OR (RIGHT COLUMN)

(Note: Remember to circle only 1 number (#1 or #2 or #3 or #4) in each pair)

(Total each column across & down and transfer to plot chart on page 4)

**Comparative Statement Group # 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges What Others Say or Do</td>
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<tr>
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**TOTALS (Add #'s Down & Across)**

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**Score = ________ (8 – 32)**

**Comparative Statement Group # 2**

<table>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>Decisions Intuitive</td>
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SAMPLE ASSESSMENT

The following assessment is a SAMPLE ONLY to illustrate how to complete this assessment. There is also a SAMPLE PLOT CHART on Page 3. Your results from your actual assessment should be plotted on the Plot Chart on Page 7 plotting the SCORE from **Group # 1 on the RED** and the SCORE from **Group # 2 on the BLUE**. Your Plot Chart should be compared to the Interpersonal Dynamics Behavior Model on Page 5 to better understand your interpersonal communication behaviors.

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**TOTALS (Add #'s Down & Across)**: 2 12

**SCORE = 14 (8 – 32)**

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SAMPLE PLOT CHART

Interpersonal Dynamics Personal Plot Chart
Interpersonal Dynamics Personal Plot Chart
Interpersonal Dynamics Perspective Model

- **FASTER PACE OF WORK**
  - Right-Brain Dominant

- **ASSERTIVE**
  - Forceful
    - Control Driven

- **EMOTION & COMFORT LEVEL**
  - Reserved
  - Detailed
    - Compliant Driven

- **POWER & CONTROL**
  - Responsive
  - Steady
    - Support Driven

- **SLOWER PACE OF WORK**
  - Left-Brain Dominant
# UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIVE GAPS

## Dynamic

### Forceful (Control)
- Goal-Oriented
- Disciplined
- Organized
- Efficient
- Intense
- Pragmatic
- Determined
- Directional
- Objective
- Competitive

### Social (Relationships)
- Idea-Oriented
- Creative
- Enthusiastic
- Personable
- Expressive
- Stimulating
- Energetic
- Spontaneous

## Intent

### Forceful (Control)
- Goal-Oriented
- Disciplined
- Organized
- Efficient
- Intense
- Pragmatic
- Determined
- Directional
- Objective
- Competitive

### Social (Relationships)
- Idea-Oriented
- Creative
- Enthusiastic
- Personable
- Expressive
- Stimulating
- Energetic
- Spontaneous

## Perception

### Forceful (Control)
- Narrow-minded
- Over-Bearing
- Insensitive
- Ruthless
- Critical
- Short-Ranged
- Lacks Trust
- Self-centered
- Domineering
- Acts before thinking

### Social (Relationships)
- Unrealistic
- Shallow
- Phony
- Lacks follow-through
- Far-out
- Scattered
- Out-of-touch
- Impractical

## Steady (Supportive)

### Steady (Supportive)
- People-Oriented
- Loyal
- Team Player
- Accepting
- Cooperative
- Friendly
- Empathetic

### Detailed (Compliant)
- Task-Oriented
- Precise
- Thorough
- Inquisitive
- Persistent
- Prudent
- Stabilizing
- Rational
- Objective
- Introspective

### Steady (Supportive)
- Un-businesslike
- Wishy-washy
- Gutless
- Time Waster
- Lacks Focus
- Impulsive
- Manipulative
- Sentimental
- Subjective

### Detailed (Compliant)
- Stubborn
- Impractical
- Picky
- Dull
- Remote
- Perfectionist
- Indecisive
- Over-cautious
- Over-serious
- Rigid
Strategies for Exceptional Interpersonal Interaction

Forceful Interpersonal Style Needs: (Dominant & Control Driven):

**Motives:** Authority, challenges, prestige, freedom, variety, assignments with growth, “bottom-line” or impact approaches, opportunities for control, advancement, independence:

- Provide direct answers -- Brief and to the point.
- Ask “what” questions -- Avoid “how-to”.
- Stick to results and outcomes.
- Allow for results often independent of methods.
- Agree with facts not feelings.
- Deal with deadlines and restrictions immediately as they apply to end results.

Social Interpersonal Style Needs: (Relationships & Interactive Driven):

**Motives:** Social recognition, popularity, people to talk to, freedom from control and details, favorable work conditions, recognition of talents, chance to motivate, inclusion by others:

- Provide a friendly and warm environment
- Allow to verbalize ideas
- Push into action
- Provide time for stimulation and social activities
- Provide details in writing
- Provide interactive or participative relationships
- Provide incentives for taking risks
Strategies for Effective Interpersonal Interaction (continued…)

Steady Interpersonal Style Needs: (Support Driven):

Motives: Security of situations, time for adjustments & change, appreciation, identification with group, repetition, limited scope of responsibility, areas of specialization:

- Provide a sincere and personal environment
- Provide a sincere interest in them as a person
- Focus on “HOW” to help clarify issues.
- Be patient in getting to goals.
- Be non-threatening when presenting change.
- Clearly define goals, role, relationships, and procedures.
- Provide personal assurance of follow-up.
- Emphasize team contributions.

Detailed Interpersonal Style Needs: (Compliant & Cautious Driven):

Motives: Personal autonomy, planned change, personal attention, focuses on detail, exact job and assignment descriptions, controlled work environment, precise expectations:

- Take time to prepare
- Provide pros and cons of all issues
- Support ideas with information and data
- Be accurate
- No surprises
- Provide exact job descriptions with details
- Be systematic and routine
- Be specific -- Avoid global issues
- Be patient, persistent, and diplomatic.