

# Manage personalities effectively

Recognising and understanding different behaviour types is a valuable tool for every leader. Being able to adapt your management style to the different personalities in a team and behaviour can make a huge difference in both success and satisfaction levels of the group.

The different personality types (See the Chamber's Fact File on Recognising Personality Types): Amiables, Analyticals, Drivers and Expressives are all best engaged when you adapt your style specifically to suit.

This is called 'style flex', and, in the abstract for their paper Incorporating Social Style into Administrative Team-building in the Community College, John R. Darling & Anne S. McNutt say: "One should also seek to adapt the skills of style flex that can enable the parties to function in a comfort zone congruent with the situation. Style flex thereby provides a way of interacting and communicating within another person's comfort zone without losing one's integrity or naturalness of expression."

You can flex from your own natural style, into someone else's natural style. Darling has the following suggestions for these personality types:

If you are an Amiable, stretch yourself by communicating important points of view and setting yourself achievable 'stretch goals'. A slower-paced, people-oriented, co-operative, low-risk approach can create conflict & stress in others.

If you are an Analytical, make a decision and act on it reasonably quickly, even if you don't have all the facts yet – your slower pace can cause stress in others.

If you are a Driver, make an effort to listen to others as your fast-paced, goal-oriented approach can cause stress in others.

If you are an Expressive, practice restraint; our high-energy and verbal fluency can be intimidating and your tendency toward quick, impulsive decisions and actions can cause conflict and stress to others.

Cater to other personality types to make people feel comfortable during interactions with you and allow them to perform at their best. Follow these guidelines from Darling 1990 (to get the best from your interactions with other personality types):

## Flexing to Amiables

- Be relaxed, and moderately paced; have a comfortable composure, leaning back somewhat; speak softly; avoid harshness in voice
- Make person-to-person contact when possible. Be genuine. Do not engage in lengthy small talk unless it is real for you and the other person
- Invite their conversations; draw out their opinions. Listen reflectively; do not judge their ideas, counter them with logic, or manipulate
- Communicate patiently; encourage expression of any doubts, fears, or misgivings they may have. Facilitate decision making without putting excessive pressure on them
- Mutually agree on goals, perhaps initiated by you; negotiate action plans with completion dates for segments of the project; offer your co-operative support where desirable; be sure to follow through on your responsibilities and keep in touch on theirs
- Offer personal assurance that decisions will have minimum risk. However, overstating guarantees or lack of follow-through will erode trust
- Maintain ongoing contact more than with other social styles

## Flexing to Analyticals

- Be on time
- Be moderately paced; lean back somewhat; avoid loud voice
- It is better to be more rather than less formal in clothing, speech, manners
- Get to business quickly; be prepared, systematic, factual, logical, exact--but still keep a human touch
- List the pros and cons of your proposal and the alternatives
- Show why this approach is best and has relatively little risk. Do not exaggerate the advantages; these people are turned off by overstatement
- When possible, allow them to proceed deliberately, even slowly
- When they are too indecisive, encourage them to make a decision, but refrain from making it for them
- Follow up in writing
- See that milestone dates are in the action plan; set up progress reports if in doubt about their meeting schedules

# Manage personalities effectively cont.

## Flexing to Drivers

- Be energetic and fast paced; have erect posture and direct eye contact
- Be specific, clear, and brief. Do not over explain, ramble or be disorganized. From beginning to end, focus on results
- Select the key facts, and use them when making your case. Present them logically and quickly
- Provide a limited number of options so the Driver can make his/her own choice
- Provide data about the pluses and minuses of the options
- Stay on the topic; keep the pace up; and honour time limits
- If at all appropriate, ask directly for a decision
- Depart quickly but graciously

## Flexing to Expressives

- Be energetic and fast paced; have erect but not stiff posture and direct eye contact
- Allow time for socializing. Talk about experiences, opinions, and people. Tell about yourself, too. To a degree, adopt their enterprising, fun-loving behaviour
- Expressives like arguments – to a point. Avoid becoming too dogmatic even when they are
- Discover their dreams and intuitions
- In support of your ideas, use testimonials from people they like or see as prominent
- Focus first on the big picture. Follow up with action plans and details
- Tap their competitive spirit
- Find a way to have fun while achieving the objective
- Keep a balance between flowing with the Expressive and getting back on track
- Paraphrase agreements
- Ensure that action plans are made and followed and that necessary details are taken care of

## Sources:

\* *Incorporating Social Style into Administrative Team-building in the Community College*, John R. Darling; Anne S. McNutt, Community College Journal of Research and Practice, Volume 20, Issue 5 September 1996 , pages 455 - 473

*PTypes Personality Types*, Dave Kelly, 2009. August 4th 2010. [www.ptypes.com/index.html#whats\\_new](http://www.ptypes.com/index.html#whats_new)