

FIVE ELEMENTS



Communication Styles Diagnostic

Five Elements Communication Style report for

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Introduction

The Five Elements model of communication styles is a powerful diagnostic tool that will enable you to:

- Understand your own style of communication, its benefits and potential pitfalls
- Improve your ability to communicate effectively with others
- Deal with opposing communication styles of others, your 'difficult' people
- Be aware of your communication style's adaptability quadrant and what it means
- Use as a problem-solving device for virtually any issue, personal, team or organisational

We all have different communication styles and these have a significant influence on our day-to-day life, whether at work, on holiday, or at home – whether we are communicating with friends, family, loved ones, or managers and work colleagues. Sometimes, when we can't seem to get our message across, we say that we are "talking at crossed purposes", or that we're "not seeing eye to eye". Most people encounter this frustrating experience very frequently in the workplace, whether it's working on a team project, liaising with a manager, or trying to explain something to a new trainee. It's very likely that when two or more people are struggling to cooperate, it is less about the specific detail and "content" of what they are saying, and more to do with the fact they have communication styles that are completely at odds. By understanding what the five communication styles are, and what our own personal communication style is, we can begin to overcome these obstacles.

Here is a good question for you: when considering your annual holiday or vacation, what is the first question that pops into your mind?

We have found that there are typically five responses to this question; and usually one's answer reveals something about one's type of focus. This 'type of focus' is important, since we firstly need to become aware of our own preferences. Secondly, whilst our preferred or communication styles tend to give us strengths, they also generate a corresponding weakness or Achilles' Heel. So, which of these five questions occurred to you? See the illustration below.

- 1 Where do I want to go, or what is my ideal destination?
- 2 How will I get there, or what's my preferred mode of transport?
- 3 How much can I spend, or how much will it cost?
- 4 What can I do when I get there, or what do I want to do?
- 5 Where did I go last year? Plus how good was my vacation last year?

These questions reflect the five communication styles. In order, they are: Visioning, Planning, Facilitating, Doing, and Checking.

Clearly, having one dominant style can give huge focus and strength to an individual's effectiveness, but it can also be too limiting as well. We use our style – our 'hammer', as it were – to solve every problem, but some problems may require a screwdriver or some other tool or style! Equally, having a range of styles can provide great flexibility, but sometimes perhaps more focus is needed: we need not this 'screwdriver' but one with a larger/smaller head. One scenario is not better than another; context is everything. And self-awareness is critical if we are to be truly effective in today's world. Your career, your promotion, your success depends more on communication effectiveness than any other one factor - with the possible exception of your motivation - in the first place.

You can see in the illustration below how these five styles form a wheel that also describes the complete stages of a project's conception, development, and completion.



VPFDC Wheel

In the illustration above, we see in the circle how one 'style' propels itself into another. Visioning must lead to Planning; Planning must go into Facilitating (another word might be "resourcing"); Facilitating into Doing; and finally, once we've "done" it, we have to perform Checking. If we imagine a situation where all we could do was, say, Visioning: constantly being decisive, challenging and generating fabulous new ideas – we would never move on from ideas in order to make them a reality. This is what the Five Elements model is addressing.

Notice in the VPFDC Wheel, the Checking quintile has a midway point.

Literally, a "Checkpoint". This is important because although it might seem that activity always starts with a vision of where are going, yet this vision must always be tempered by first considering the question: Where are we now?

Further to this, the five communication styles have their root in Chinese notion of The Five Elements that govern human affairs, including the seasons (see the Elements Corresponding illustration below). **As a result, there is a correlation between our communication styles and the five Chinese elements.**

This is not mystical psychobabble, but rather a framework and analogy that can help us to understand our communication style at a deeper level. As with project management, one season or stage always leads to another, and all are necessary for a complete year – a completion of anything – to occur.

Traditionally, we start with Spring, which is the Wood element and which gives birth to life; from there we go to Summer, Fire; then, late Summer, Earth; then Autumn, Metal; and finally, we arrive at Winter, Water, where life ends or becomes quiescent, awaiting the next surge of Spring. Each “season” or “element” has their own qualities, and each needs to be taken account of if the cycle of life – or a project – is to be successfully completed. No-one is better than the other; all are necessary to complete the cycle.

ELEMENT	COLOUR	ACTIVITY	VERB	CORRESPONDING
wood	green	to give birth	shouting	Visioning
fire	red	to flourish	laughing	Planning
earth	yellow	to mature	singing	Resourcing
metal	white	to decline	weeping	Doing
water	blue	to store	groaning	Checking

Elements Corresponding

For more information on the background to Five Elements, go to Further Resources in this report.

Now you have digested the overview, let’s take a look at your personal results on the next page.

Results

You have in your Five Elements Communication Styles profile 3 dominant styles of communicating.

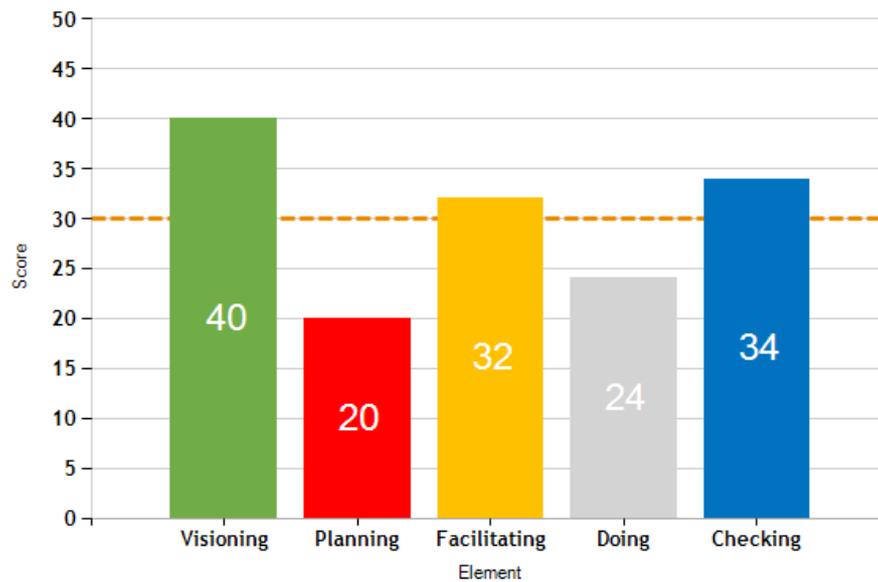
Dominant Style and Adaptability Quadrant

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Dominant Style	Visioning	Checking	Facilitating	
Adaptability Quadrant	Single Focus	Double Focus	Flexible	Adaptable
	1F	2F	3F	4+

Dominant Style

Looking at the graph below you will see that you have three Elements at or above the dotted score line of 30 points.

Your Scoring on Five Elements



Your Scoring

Your dominant communication styles are: Visioning, Checking and Facilitating

Read what the Strengths and Weaknesses of your dominant style are.



Visioning Strengths

Your dominant V communication style means that you prefer dealing with Vision, challenges and ideas.

You like to direct, be decisive, and also intuitive in how you behave and reach conclusions.

Alongside this your preferred mode of communication is through speech, which tends to short, fast, and to the point.

Your body language will tend to be strong, making direct eye contact, and appearing confident and assertive.

Your communication 'tense' is future, and because the future has not arrived yet, you love dealing with ideas since they help shape what the future may be like.

Your big contribution to leadership is: creative problem-solving.

And your big question is: Where do I want to be?

Visioning Weaknesses

Every communication style has big advantages, but corresponding 'Achilles' Heels' whereby the use of the style might upset, alienate, turn-off others, whether that be in a one-to-one situation, or in a group or team setting.

The V-type, Visioning-type, moves at speed, and one idea can cascade after another:

V Action Point 1

- Am I giving people more time to respond to what I say?

The V-type, Vision-type, imagines a bigger future, and sometimes that vision way beyond what colleagues or others can see as possible:

V Action Point 2

- Am I ensuring that all that I am asking for might be construed as 'reasonable'?

The V-type, Vision-type, is in a hurry to realise the new dream; this can make them insensitive to others' feelings and sensitivities:

V Action Point 3

- Am I practising being less abrasive, and continually thinking about the 'social niceties' which might smooth my way?

The V-type, Vision-type, needs also to

V Action Point 4

- Practise patience in order to avoid confrontation and conflict. Remember, for example, that the C-style of communicator does not want ideas; they want facts!



Checking Strengths

Your dominant C communication styles means that you prefer dealing with Checking, analysis and precision.

You like to be factual, accurate and self-aware in how you behave and reach conclusions.

Alongside this your preferred mode of communication is through writing, which is definitive, and questioning, which helps in your search for more information.

Your big contribution to leadership is: detailed analysis of any situation.

And your big questions are: What results have we achieved AND where are we now?

Checking Weaknesses

Every communication style has big advantages, but corresponding 'Achilles' Heels' whereby the use of the style might upset, alienate, turn-off others, whether that be in a one-to-one situation, or in a group or team setting.

The C-type, Checking-type, prefers analysis and precision:

C Action Point 1

- Am I ensuring that I do not make too many negative and critical comments?

The C-type, Checking-type, likes to be factual and accurate:

C Action Point 2

- Am I avoiding appearing overly pedantic?

The C-type, Checking-type, often deploys a questioning style of communication:

C Action Point 3

- Do I provide enough positive balance to what others may see as my questioning style?



Facilitating Strengths

Your dominant F communication styles means that you prefer dealing with Facilitating, persuading, and being socially aware.

You like to project positivity, optimism and a can-do mind-set.

Alongside this your preferred mode of communication is through speech, but because of your acute social awareness – perceptiveness - this manifests itself primarily through dialogue or conversations with others.

Your big contribution to leadership is: communicating both internally and externally.

And your big question is: How can I facilitate what needs to be done?

Facilitating Weaknesses

Every communication style has big advantages, but corresponding ‘Achilles’ Heels’ whereby the use of the style might upset, alienate, turn-off others, whether that be in a one-to-one situation, or in a group or team setting.

The F-type, Facilitating-type, is highly energetic and optimistic:

F Action Point 1

- Am I aware that it is important that I curtail over-optimism?

The F-type, Facilitating-type, loves dialogue and talking with others, but they can quickly overwhelm them:

F Action Point 2

- Am I allowing others to speak and participate fully?

The F-type, Facilitating-type, is excitable and can tend to judge at a superficial level:

F Action Point 3

- Am I avoiding the tendency to trust or accept ideas or ‘facts’ at face value?

Lowest Score(s)

Your lowest Element score(s) may prove a blind spot for you in terms of you being able to persuade others or successfully complete projects. Review your own lowest scores with the information below, and ask yourself the question(s) we pose. If you are unsure of how effective you are in the lowest Element area, then ask a trusted friend or colleague what they think of your performance here.

Your Lowest scoring Element is: Planning

P Lowest: consider whether you plan sufficiently to accomplish goals, provide enough structure to sustain developments, and tie up loose ends neatly and completely?

Handling Opposite Styles To Your Own

One of the most important issues for you in your life is to get on with other people: confrontation with and contradiction of other people is not the way to get the best from them, or to get them to align with you and your needs and wants. But obviously, from what has been said so far, the Five Elements contain communication styles which can obviously clash. For example, and assuming here that an individual only has one dominant style, the fast and future-orientated visionary V is going to get bored very quickly with the style of the slow, past-orientated, checking C; and conversely, the C is likely to view the V as rash and full of hot air! Neither is right, for remember that all styles are equal, and what is important depends on the context. And these styles, too, can work together: once perhaps the V has generated some exciting new ideas, it might be prudent to allow the C to methodically question the bases and validity of these 'exciting' ideas to see how strong and stable they really might be.

Be aware, then, of these typical oppositions of style and their respective perspectives. Seek to avoid stereotyping opposite styles to your own. Finally, remember that where an individual has more than one style, particularly closely scored, they may themselves experience some internal conflict in how they respond in any given circumstance.

Stereotyping Opposition Of Styles

VPFDC: STEREOTYPING - OPPOSITION OF STYLES		
V	D	V sees the D as too casual, unresponsive, slow and immune to new ideas
D	V	D sees the V as too impulsive, disruptive, and too uninterested in the real issues (and details) on the ground, not caring about people, and premature in judgements
P	F	P sees F as too light-weight, over-optimistic, lacking tenacity and far too talkative, thus preventing others from being able to explain things
F	P&C	F sees both P and C as too slow on uptake, academic, fussy over irrelevant details, over-cautious, difficult to persuade and often kill-joys
D	F	D sees F as a flashy fast-talker, lacking substance and understanding of what is really involved in any project, impatient and lacking perseverance
C	F	C sees F as far too careless, blind or unwilling to see the risks ahead, too garrulous, and so often seeming to be thoughtless when they speak
V	C	V sees the C as slow, pedantic, boring, and likely to die of pneumonia before they get anything actually done!
C	V	C sees the V as idealistic, rash, impractical, not in the real world, but full of feverish hot air!

Stereotyping Opposition

Being aware of your own style and of others' styles is one thing; but the key thing is to take action based on what you know.

Spotting Others' Five Elements Styles

Style/Trait	1	2	3	4	5
V	Wants things their way	Thinks they are right	Good in a crisis	Thrives in opposition	Decisive
P	Meticulous planner	Lateral thinker	Emotional, especially when things go wrong	Routine and habit orientated	Avoids spontaneity
F	Disorganised	Good storyteller	Very emotional	Not a finisher	Spontaneous
D	Detail orientated	Precise explanations	Wants feedback	Factual	Sequential
C	Good listener	Wants focus	Friendly with many friends	Steady	Avoids confrontation

Five Characteristics

Consider the illustration above and ask yourself how you are going to deal with people who style you find difficult or challenging. Use the 5 Trait pointers to identify what style they have which irritates you; remember, like you, they may have more than one style, which might explain the odd phenomenon in which sometimes certain people are 'OK' but then they change their style and we find ourselves under pressure from it.

Now create an Action Plan for how you will deal with these 'difficult' people. Keep in mind as you do so, that creating an action plan is also a 'style': this will come easy to and be pleasurable, especially for the P. The F might find doing this cramping their 'spontaneous' style. However, whatever your style, we recommend you do it by way of preparation: it will definitely enhance your ability to be more successful or effective with these 'difficult' people.

Action Plan for 'Difficult' People

My communication styles are:		
I find it difficult to communicate with: <i>Name of person(s)</i>		
A		
B		
C		
Their communication styles are likely to be: <i>You only need to identify one style that you find difficult</i>		
A		
B		
C		
Using the information in the weaknesses section, I intend to react in the future in the following ways:		

More Analytics: Reviewing Three Styles

Review your 3 dominant elements against the information in the table below, especially pay attention to any of the potential weaknesses in your 3 dominant strengths.

Style	Input/Need to	Potential Weaknesses
V	Control, Seek Change, Delegate, Be Competitive, Be Unemotional	My way or the highway
P	Organise, Be Meticulous, Careful, Routine-orientated, Value-based	Overreaction when plans go wrong
F	Be upbeat, Spontaneous, Expressive, Dynamic, Emotional	Disorganisation
D	Detailed, Sequential, Factual, Problem-orientated, Structured	Inflexibility
C	Listener, Friendly, Questioning, Adaptable, Steady	Difficulty making decisions

Potential Weaknesses

A further review of your style can be undertaken by considering the illustration above. Do your co-workers/social groups find your communication style 'highly useful' or do you adopt an 'inappropriate style' in a given context?

Type	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
ADAPTABLE	4 or 5 styles within the 27-33 range	Able to switch styles effortlessly, maximum style adaptability, very suitable for extremely fast changing environments	Lack of stylistic depth, perceived style inconsistency, difficulty finding one's 'true voice'
FLEXIBLE	Three dominant styles at 30+	Flexible styles, usually able to switch easily between three dominant ones; highly useful in small teams where certain styles may be absent from mix	Potential conflict of styles, leading to inappropriate style used in a given context, especially where all 3 nearly evenly scored
DOUBLE FOCUS	Two dominant styles at 30+	Powerful double focus – usually clear ability to deploy both effectively, and so to appear highly competent and able and perhaps more 'flexible' than one is	Two styles are not the whole picture – easy to forget or ignore the need for other styles involved in the solution
SINGLE FOCUS	One dominant style at 30+	Laser focus; perceptually for others a clear strength, especially when matched with appropriate skill sets; lends itself to a reputation for deep expertise	Seeing every problem as a nail and one's own style as the hammer; rigidity; inflexibility

Strengths and Weaknesses

Further Resources

The two most important factors for success in your personal life and in your work place are almost certainly motivation and communication style. One is the energy to get things moving; and the other is the effectiveness through which we persuade and influence others. The Five Elements Communication Diagnostic enables you see clearly how you prefer to communicate, and what the implications of that are on others; how you can optimise and leverage your own communication style and avoid the pitfalls that each style - used alone - inevitably has.

A number of points need to be kept in mind about The Five Elements Model. First, that your profile is likely but not certainly going to be stable over time. Under stress, duress, or other non-typical scenarios one's profile may change, and radically so; however, we believe that as things normalise, one tends to revert to one's own 'mean', as it were.

Second, the Five Elements model is a form of communication mapping. Like all maps it is not the territory; it is an approximation to help guide one through. It should always, therefore, be used in context. It should not be used in an 'absolute' sense, as in 'you are a P' or 'I am a V' and so to stereotype one's self or others. Remember, it is a diagnostic profile whose purpose is to be useful and relevant, not dictatorial and inflexible.

Finally, no responsibility is accepted for the misuse, misinterpretation and misunderstanding that may derive from any misreading of this report.

If you would like to have a more detailed understanding of The Five Elements Model, then we recommend you read:

Mapping Motivation for Leadership (James Sale and Jane Thomas, Routledge, 2019)

<https://www.routledge.com/Mapping-Motivation-for-Leadership/Sale-Thomas/p/book/9780815367567>

In particular, three chapters cover an enormous amount of ground:

- **Chapter 4** introduces the Five Elements model and how it is a heuristic device for problem solving.
- **Chapter 5** expands the idea of the Five Elements into practical questions to address personal and organisational issues.
- **Chapter 6** addresses core teambuilding aspects of leadership, and its powerful team questionnaire is invaluable.

At this point, therefore, it may be useful to have an overview of some of the properties of The Five Elements model.

STYLE	TENSE	SPEED	ORIENTATION	LANGUAGE	ISSUE
V P	FUTURE	FAST	TASK	SPEECH	IDEAS
		↑	↑	↑	
F D	PRESENT		PROCESS	LISTENING	ENGAGEMENT
		↓	↓	↓	
C ²	PAST	SLOW	TASK	WRITTEN	FACTS

Style Issue

We see in the illustration above, a process going on. At the beginning of this report we saw the Five Elements as a circle. Here we can see that as we move from one style to another we also shift from one 'factor' to another. The most important is tense (or time): we see that V and P are future tense orientated; but that F and D are more present tense; and finally, the C style (and note the C², which refers to the fact that in the table above you will note that the C style has not one - as V, P, F, D have - but two core questions) is past tense orientated. All are equal, but context determines which is most useful in a given situation. Similarly, with Speed, Orientation, Language and Issue. This, then, is a handy check list that enables us to see at glance what the likely strengths and qualities of our style are likely to be.

The creator of The Five Elements Communication Styles Diagnostic is James Sale.

James Sale is also the creator of Motivational Maps and author of the Mapping Motivation series of books.

<http://www.motivationalmaps.com>

<https://www.routledge.com/authors/i17927-james-sale#books>